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**Fighting the odds to make it even:
Mapping an affordance ecosystem in a kindergarten community**

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy in Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education
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by
Jeanette Grace Clarkin-Phillips
(née Wills)



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Abstract

This thesis is a case study of a kindergarten in one of the most deprived areas of Aotearoa New Zealand. Through the documentation of the stories of management, teachers and families, the thesis explores how the transformation of the kindergarten and a policy intervention have provided multiple opportunities and affordances for adults to realise their aspirations. Bourdieu's logic of practice thinking tools and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory are intertwined to theorise about the contribution of macrosystem ideologies that position communities as vulnerable and frame up subsequent exosystem policy attempts to intervene.

The concept of habitus is applied to explain how a commitment to social justice and an empowerment view of individuals and communities can afford conditions for the transformation of habitus. The thesis argues that the level of strength of an affordance is significant in the recognition and utilisation of opportunities and that early childhood teachers can be mesosystem agents in mediating affordances. Inherent in the thesis is the acknowledgment that early childhood services have the potential to contribute to positive life trajectories for adults as well as children, particularly for those in communities who have the odds stacked against them.

The thesis adds to the scholarship about habitus and its transforming features and contributes to a deeper understanding about the role of effective early years services as powerful intervention sites for adults. The unique combination of Bourdieu and Bronfenbrenner's theories offers new insights about the individual/environment relationship and impacts on agency. The thesis outlines a range of policy implications for consideration with respect to communities who are poorly provided for due to dominant ideological discourses and reiterates the right of all individuals to realise their hopes and dreams.

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Prologue

This thesis has its roots in personal experience. After living in Hamilton in the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand for 27 years I moved with my husband and our two sons to the West Coast of the South Island. The move offered my husband a job with a house, an opportunity to establish a career and some much needed financial security during a time of unprecedented rising interest rates and stock market crashes. However after eight months of living on the West Coast, which included the arrival of a daughter, it was apparent that our dream was unlikely to become reality and we shifted to Christchurch, the largest city in the South Island. The dreams I had of a family, home with picket fence and a respected place in my community were beginning to fade. Instead the reality was three children under five years, a husband looking for work and a cold house during a cold winter. The small financial gains we had begun to make were quickly eroding. Feeling somewhat vulnerable; after all this kind of thing was not meant to happen to ‘people like us’, I went in search of the local kindergarten to enrol my four-year-old son. Although I knew that it was very likely that Liam would have to go on a waiting list I thought that perhaps the teachers wouldn’t mind us ‘visiting’ on a regular basis. I was hoping that going to kindergarten could provide some contacts and possible friendships.

Arriving at the kindergarten with my six-week-old daughter in a front pack, the two-year-old in the buggy and Liam beside me, holding my hand, I was greeted by the head teacher. Hearing that we had just shifted she immediately said, “we are here to help, Liam can start tomorrow”. I nearly hugged her! From then on the kindergarten became our ‘haven’, providing a place where; my ‘bullet train’ two-year-old could explore and have fun with his brother, I could talk to other adults, it was warm and, someone else was ‘paying the bills’. Two years later when I faced the future as a single parent, kindergarten, this time in a different location, played a significant role in helping keep me sane and maintaining my self

confidence. My involvement with the parent committee and recognition, by the teachers, of my skills and previous qualifications gave me the incentive to complete an early childhood teaching qualification.

Now 24 years later after a successful teaching and academic career in the field of early childhood education, I have been prompted to reflect on those earlier experiences and think about where I stood in terms of the 'odds'. What were the odds of me making my way in the world and having a positive trajectory, and how did my involvement at kindergarten help change the odds for me?

I grew up in a family where education was highly valued. My three older brothers, later, all held the title of doctor and my father at 59 years old had fulfilled a lifelong dream of going to university. Three daughters were all encouraged to pursue tertiary study and after leaving school, aged 18, I went to university. Although I had not gone to university with any particular career in mind (being a wife and mother seemed a good alternative to me), when later faced with the choice of being on a sole parent benefit or having a career, it was a matter of 'which career?' Navigating the processes and systems of tertiary study were far more familiar and accessible to me than the machinations of the welfare system. I did not have too many odds stacked against me; I was a young woman from an educated middle class family with strong family and social networks. Although I found myself in a situation I had never dreamed of, and despite some fairly dark moments, I was able to marshal my resources to create a positive and successful future for myself and my children.

My experience as a mother and subsequently as a teacher has given me a strong belief that early childhood centres can be great places for adults as well as children and that they have the potential to afford positive opportunities for parents. This belief about the potential impact of involvement in an early childhood centre for adults has been sustained throughout my teaching career and is confirmed through the writing and research that informs this thesis.

Chapter 1.

Establishing the odds

Introduction

This thesis is the story of a kindergarten community in a small town in Aotearoa¹ New Zealand. The town is in one of the more deprived regions² of the country and this kindergarten is located on the ‘wrong side of the tracks’ in the poorest area of town. From 2006-2009 the kindergarten was in receipt of a government policy initiative specifically targeting families at risk of poor outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2005). Prior to 2006 the fate of the kindergarten hung in the balance due to falling rolls, staffing issues and a negative reputation. By 2014 the kindergarten employed fourteen staff in various capacities and roles, had expanded its operations, and provided a range of services for the community. By documenting the experiences of seven families involved with the kindergarten from 2004 to 2014, this thesis explores the transformation of the kindergarten and what this transformation has meant for these families.

One of these families includes Kirstie³. I first met Kirstie in 2006 when I was involved in a research project at the kindergarten. Over the past seven years I have had the opportunity to get to know Kirstie and I share some of her story at the outset of this thesis to provide further context as I outline my argument.

¹ Aotearoa is the name for New Zealand used by the indigenous peoples (Māori). It is often combined with the English name to acknowledge the significance of Māori and their language as indigenous.

² According to data from the 2013 census and New Zealand Deprivation Index.

³ Real names have been used throughout this thesis. Chapter 5 discusses the ethical considerations and reasons for identifying location and participants.

Kirstie grew up in Levin, not knowing her father, coping with a mother addicted to gambling, an absent stepfather and having to assume responsibility for her younger sister. When her mother died, Kirstie, then aged 15 years, left school without completing any formal qualifications and found a job at the local fast food outlet. Kirstie had her first child when she was 21 after being in a relationship for a short time. This relationship lasted less than 6 months. In the majority of western countries and Aotearoa New Zealand, in particular, Kirstie would be seen to have the odds stacked against her. She recognised few career opportunities and held few parenting skills. However, despite these ‘odds’, close to two decades later she is a mother of five children in a long-term relationship, a respected and active member of her community, and she is in her final year of a three year Bachelor of Teaching Early Childhood. Kirstie has to all intents and purposes defied the odds and been able to realise a different life for herself and her children. Similar to my case, it was largely through Kirstie’s involvement with a kindergarten that the ‘odds’ have been ‘evened’ for her.

The analogy of odds and evens, although having its origins in gambling, is often used to describe people’s circumstances either positively or negatively. In gambling terms to have the odds even is to infer that the chances of winning or losing are equal. However in my use of the analogy, evening the odds is to illustrate the social justice tenet of providing a more level playing field. For those who have the odds stacked against them I am interested in opportunities that enable individuals and groups to have similar chances to those for whom the odds are stacked in favour of positive outcomes. In Kirstie’s example her life chances are now more likely to favour continued positive outcomes in terms of education and overall wellbeing.

Kirstie’s story raised questions for me that became the basis of this thesis. These questions were centred on ‘who?’ and ‘what?’ can provide positive interventions for adults whose wellbeing has become precarious? Intrinsically connected to the ‘who’ and ‘what’ of providing positive

interventions is the ‘how?’ and ‘why?’ people get the odds stacked against them in the first place. It was these questions that cemented my decision to return to the kindergarten in the hope of discovering some answers about the relationship between early childhood education, opportunities for adults, issues of social justice and policy interventions. It seemed apparent that the kindergarten had, in the process of transforming itself, provided positive opportunities for Kirstie, and I was curious to know whether (and if so, how) other families had found the kindergarten helped them realise their aspirations. In listening to the families’ stories I was interested in identifying the affordances: the objects or features of an environment that might be recognised and appropriated by an individual to achieve certain goals (Gee, 2008, p. 81). My interest was in the affordances offered by the kindergarten environment and a policy intervention to re-stack the odds in favour of positive outcomes for families and their aspirations.

This chapter introduces Pierre Bourdieu’s thinking tool of capital (1977) and Urie Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979) to theorise how people come to have the odds stacked against them. The chapter then outlines some history and context about Aotearoa New Zealand and provides a social and economic profile of Levin, the town where the kindergarten involved in this thesis is located.

Bourdieu: Capital as a means of stacking the odds

Bourdieu, a social theorist who sought to understand ‘human relations in action’ (Robbins, 1991 p. 1), was committed to reflexive research that encouraged academics and others to use the possibilities at their disposal to effect social change. His research and philosophising was focussed on making sense of how individuals operate in the social world. He was particularly interested in how groups of individuals reproduce, modify and mediate their practices. His research about the Kabyle peasants of Algeria, as well as the reproduction of French class structure and its influence on the education system, have led to a theory of practice that includes a set of thinking tools or concepts designed to assist our understanding of social practices. Bourdieu’s research and theorising about the role of education in reproducing inequalities is, as Barrett and Martina (2012)

suggest, also helpful in explaining the influence of education in promoting social justice.

Capital is considered by Bourdieu as a tool for thinking about power relations, inequalities and dominance. Although Marx had introduced the powerful influence of economic capital on the structure of society, Bourdieu widened the concept from its grounding in economics to include social and cultural capital. This broader definition of capital recognised that it is not only through the possession of material resources that dominance occurs but the possession of social and cultural resources contribute to an individual's or society's 'wealth' (Crossley, 2008). Material possessions can produce symbolic capital (driving the latest BMW, owning a Van Gogh painting). Symbolic capital encompasses culturally-valued tastes and goods such as art, education, forms of language and scientific knowledge. Capital constructs structures; either institutional or canonical structures that govern a society, or abstract structures that determine whether or not an individual knows the 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu, 1980/1990, p.64) in specific situations.

Capital is found within social relations acting as a form of exchange and can be applied

to all the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation – which may be 'fair words' or smiles, handshakes or shrugs...powers or pleasures, gossip or scientific information...(Bourdieu, 1972/1977a, p. 178)

Thus capital is only valuable because a group, community or culture values it within a particular field. Capital (particularly symbolic capital) gives status and often legitimacy or authority; therefore domination occurs through the accumulation of capital and the power that is carried through positions of authority. This positioning of individuals or a group as authorities allows them to 'call the shots', and create the official or accepted version of truth. Capital is a means of stacking the odds against or in favour of positive outcomes.

Concomitant with capital are Bourdieu's other thinking tools of field and habitus. According to Bourdieu, field is the social structure in which individual and collective habitus operate. A field is defined as a "network, a configuration of objective relations between practices" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97) where each field has its own logic of practice and players struggle for positions according to the accumulation of capital. Those players (Bourdieu uses the analogy of a game in relation to field, habitus and capital: his logic of practice) who have particular forms of capital are at an advantage because, as Thomson argues, "the field depends on, as well as produces more of, that capital" (2008, p. 69). Habitus contributes to the reproduction of capital in that it

expresses first the *result of an organising action*, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure: it also designates a *way of being, a habitual state* (especially of the body) and, in particular, a *predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination*. (Bourdieu, 1972/1977a, p. 214)

Habitus is for Bourdieu a way of explaining the regularities and reproduction of specific groups and why individuals act according to the expectations of their social class or family groups in the absence of explicit rules. Habitus is the inclination or disposition to act in a certain way and those actions have been shaped by past and present social interactions within a field. Hence practice, what we do here, is a result of the relations between one's habitus and "one's position in a field (capital) within the current state of play in that social arena" (Maton, 2008, p. 51). Those individuals with significant amounts of capital will continue to shape the field and their habitus (dispositions and inclinations) will assist them in shaping the field while at the same time their interactions in the field will reinforce their way of being:

on one side it is a relation of *conditioning*: the field structures the habitus...
on the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or *cognitive construction*.
Habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world.
(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.127)

Bronfenbrenner: The work of the macrosystem in stacking the odds for the microsystem

Bourdieu's notion of capital has similarities with Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem attributes in his ecological systems theory (1979). The structures defined by Bronfenbrenner in his ecological model are illustrated as five systems: micro, meso, exo, macro, and chrono. He argued that the interactions between these systems offered a diversity of options for growth, particularly when congruence between systems and the individual are evident.

Like Bourdieu, Bronfenbrenner was intrigued by the relationship between the individual and their environment. It was not enough for Bronfenbrenner to carry out research with individuals in the isolation of the laboratory; instead he was determined to consider the impacts of the individual's environment on their development. He depicted the ecological nature of human development as a set of five nested structures to illustrate and analyse the inseparability of individual and environment. These structures begin with the individual in their immediate environment. The expanding outer layers exemplify contexts that have decreasing direct impact on the individual but are, nevertheless, influential. The first layer (the microsystem) is the context in which the individual actively participates in "patterns of activities, roles and interpersonal relationships in a setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (p.22). Such settings include home, early childhood centre, school or workplace, with the mesosystem being the interrelations between two settings of active participation, for example, home and early childhood centre. The exo and macrosystems are further removed from the individual but still have a direct impact on the individual's capacity to be a competent, contributing member of society. Aspects of the exo and macrosystems would include policies about welfare, housing, education and health. The chronosystem is about time, not just time in relation to chronological age but specific periods when significant events or transitions may occur.

Similar to the interdisciplinary nature of Bourdieu's theory of practice and thinking tools, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, too, has influenced research and policy development in a range of disciplines. The emphasis on the

ecology of the individual has appealed to disciplines such as social work, health, community development and education (Eamon, 2001; Howard & Johnson 2003; Johnson, 2008; Sallis, Owen & Fisher, 2008). Just as Bourdieu contributed to research design through his theory of practice, Bronfenbrenner's process-person-context model of research that encompasses the principles of his ecological theory has added to the methodologies of researchers across disciplines (Liles & Juhnke, 2008; Myer & Moore, 2006; Spence & Lee, 2003).

Bronfenbrenner and Bourdieu had another common interest: social justice. Bronfenbrenner was cognisant of the effect that public policy had on individuals and their ability to function positively in the world. He argued for research that could inform such policy and was particularly concerned with policies that impacted on children and families, striving to influence bureaucrats in their decision-making. Being one of the co-founders of the Head Start programme for disadvantaged children living in America demonstrates Bronfenbrenner's commitment to issues of social justice. He was interested in making the odds more even. It is the components of the macrosystem that parallel with capital in that the macrosystem includes consistent structures erected by the ideologies, values and beliefs of the culture and subcultures of a particular social system. Thus the capital held and utilised by the dominant culture results in macrosystem structures matching this group's ideologies and beliefs.

To introduce an understanding of how the odds have been stacked for and against in Aotearoa New Zealand the following section provides some historical and sociological context.

Stacking the odds in Aotearoa New Zealand

Aotearoa New Zealand is a nation state of 4.5 million people located in the South Pacific. There are four main ethnic groups: European (often referred to as Pākehā, meaning non-Māori); Māori (indigenous peoples); Pasifika (peoples from the main island nations of the Pacific); and Asian. A fifth group includes a mixture of other ethnicities: Middle Eastern, Latin American and African. The category of European also includes 'or other' with a footnote explaining that 'other' are those

individuals who used the unofficial category of New Zealander. The statistics in Table 1 are taken from the 2013 national census (Statistics NZ, 2014). The census asks individuals to identify their ethnicity by choosing as many categories as they wish, therefore the percentages indicated by the graph will include multiple countings of some individuals.

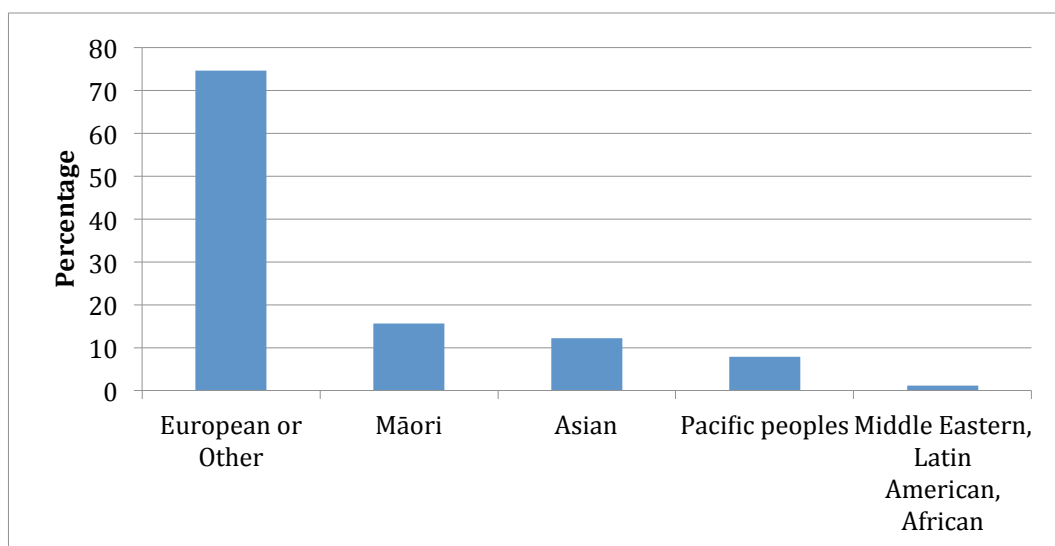


Figure 1. Population of Aotearoa New Zealand by ethnic grouping

Aotearoa New Zealand has a democratically elected government and its largely market driven capitalist economy relies heavily on trade and export. The largest export industry is from farm products with 43.18% of the total land area devoted to agriculture (Statistics New Zealand, 2015a). Economic reforms over the last two decades have seen income inequality increase during the 1990s at a rate higher than any other country in the OECD, remaining comparatively high today (Perry, 2011). This inequality has resulted in a growing and distinct socioeconomic stratification of society. Figure 2 illustrates income inequality in Aotearoa New Zealand over the past three decades. The measure used for income inequality is a P80/P20 ratio showing the difference between household incomes in the 80th percentile and those in the 20th percentile.

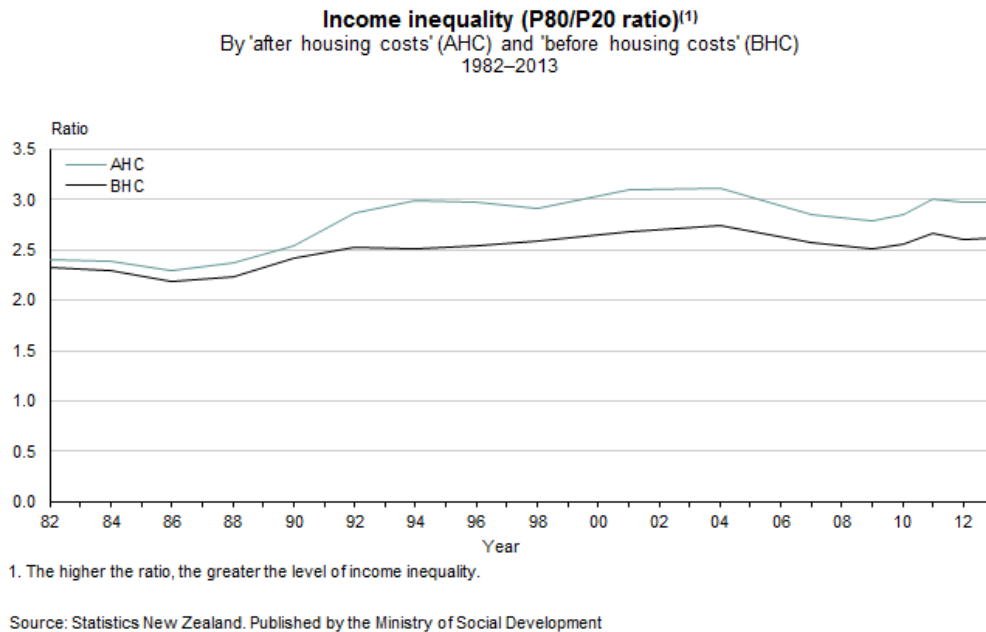


Figure 2. Income inequality in Aotearoa New Zealand over last 3 decades

In contrast to the Marxist construct of class which groups people according to economic capital, socioeconomic classification accounts for “the patterned unequal distribution of opportunities, advantages, resources and power among subgroups of a given population. Distinct “socioeconomic strata” may thus be said to exhibit differential life chances, living standards and associated cultural practices” (Davis, McLeod, Ransom & Ongley, 1997, p. 8). Hence the term socioeconomic encapsulates more than just economic disadvantage and provides a wider exploration of the implications of individuals having the odds stacked against them. Being poor has consequences that go beyond economic constraints. International studies of children living in poverty show a strong correlation with poor health, inadequate housing and educational achievement (Irwin, Siddiqi & Hertzman, 2007; Shonkoff & Gardner, 2012) while Aotearoa New Zealand research confirms these correlations (Boston & Chapple, 2014; Child Poverty Action Group, 2011; D’Souza, Turner, Simmers, Craig & Dowell, 2012).

Inequity is glaringly apparent in statistics for Māori and Pasifika peoples. Both these groups are over-represented in all negative statistics to do with health, income and educational achievement. The 2013 national census shows in relation

to the 2006⁴ census figures the gap between personal median income and the national median income increased for Māori with a personal median income \$6,000 less than the national median of \$24,000. Similarly Pasifika peoples are also over-represented in the lower income bracket. Figure 2 indicates that in 2006 the income of Pasifika peoples was \$3,900 less than the national median of \$24,400 with the gap widening by 2013 to \$8,800 less than the \$28,500 national median. The national median income of Pasifika peoples is the lowest of all the ethnic groups in Aotearoa New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2014).

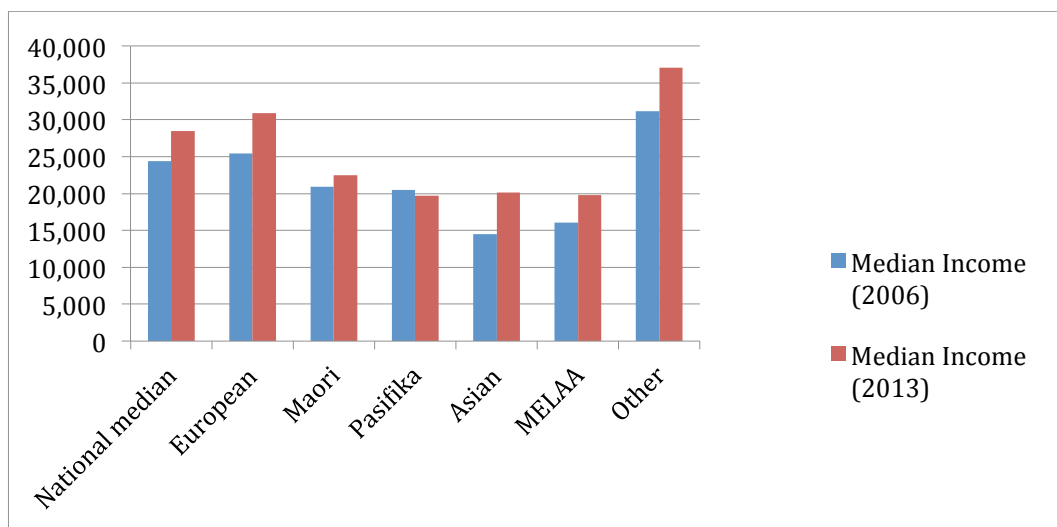


Figure 3. Median income of the different ethnic groups in Aotearoa New Zealand from the 2006 and 2013 national census.

Thus Māori are heavily represented in the lower socioeconomic strata. They are also less likely to have a formal qualification and are over-represented in poor health statistics. Findings from a 2012/13 New Zealand Health Survey (Ministry of Health, 2013a) place Māori adults as having high rates of most health conditions including asthma, heart disease, stroke and diabetes while the proportion of Māori children suffering from asthma, diabetes and rheumatic fever is higher than any other ethnic group. Educational disparities amongst Aotearoa New Zealand's ethnic groups are evident with Māori representing the highest

⁴ The five yearly census scheduled for March 8th 2011 was cancelled after an earthquake of 6.3 magnitude struck the city of Christchurch in the South Island on February 22, 2011 killing 185 people and causing widespread damage to the region.

proportion (approximately 43%) of those without a formal qualification (Statistics New Zealand, 2015b).

Pasifika peoples also feature in poor health outcomes and life expectancy. Diabetes, heart disease and stroke as well as child obesity and youth mental illness are all conditions that affect Pasifika peoples in higher proportions than most other ethnic groups in Aotearoa New Zealand (Ministry of Health, 2013b). Obtaining formal qualifications is difficult for Pasifika peoples with the 2006 census details showing this group to have the highest proportion of people without a qualification. This situation has improved slightly in 2013 with Pasifika just overtaking the proportion of Māori with a qualification (Statistics New Zealand, 2015).

The growing numbers of children living in poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand (Boston & Chapple, 2014; Child Poverty Action Group, 2011) and subsequent risk of underachievement at school demonstrates a structure of education and capital domination that stacks the odds against those who are poor. The Child Poverty Action Group report of 2011 estimates around 22% of children under the age of 18 experience significant or severe hardship due to poverty.

Stacking the odds either for or against in Aotearoa New Zealand has largely come about through the colonisation of Māori and Pasifika peoples, a capitalist ideology and market economy that favours business owners and the domination of Western values and beliefs (Kelsey, 1999). It is the dominant Pākehā population who have established what Bourdieu classifies as capital, the 'rules of the game' about the acquisition of capital, and a field in which some capital is valued and some capital is not (Alanen, Brooker & Mayall, 2015).

Education and the odds

A major contributor to increasing economic capital and individuals being able to realise their aspirations is education. Education enables the acquisition of skills and knowledge for a range of employment opportunities as well as assisting an individual's ability to learn about the world they live in. However as Bourdieu has

so aptly demonstrated in his research about class and inequality, education is also a construct of the dominant group (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1977). The curriculum that is reinforced through institutions and their structures will mirror the values and ideology of whomever has the economic and political power. Thus those individuals who do not ‘fit’ the institution in terms of possessing the necessary cultural capital or value education the same as that offered in early childhood centres, schools and tertiary institutions are likely to have the odds stacked against them.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1970/1977) in their work entitled *Reproduction in education, society and culture*, outline the ways in which education reproduces the structures and values of the dominant group. The constitution of education is based on principles that originate from a particular group and although arbitrary in nature, these principles serve to exclude. Grenfell (2008) in his explanation of Bourdieu’s ideas, writes that “education, by imposing meanings, ways of thinking, and particular forms of expression, acts as a carrier for the culture of the dominant classes; it therefore operates to perpetuate specific power relations...”(p. 159). Research in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand (Harker & Nash, 1990; Macfarlane, 2004) indicates that schooling best serves children from the middle classes thus reinforcing Bourdieu’s contention about the relationship between education, inequality and social capital. Bronfenbrenner, too, highlights that school replicates the macrosystem beliefs where “educational inadequacy represents a response to discriminatory practices found in the larger society” (1979, p. 251).

The kindergarten community that is the focus of this thesis has a low socioeconomic profile. As the introduction to this chapter outlined, the kindergarten is located on the ‘wrong side of the tracks’ in a small town in one of the more deprived areas of the country. The following discussion describes how this town, Levin, has become representative of deprivation as a result of the economic policies that have pervaded the political and economic climate of Aotearoa New Zealand over the past two decades.

Levin, a microsystem example of both national and international macrosystem ideologies.

Levin is a small town (population 20,300) in the lower North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand under the jurisdiction of the Horowhenua District Council⁵. The town is separated by the main highway and railway line that run the length of New Zealand. The Māori name for Levin (or area around Levin) is Taitoko: this name implies someone who sets up boundary points and is one of the titles of the chief of one of the major iwi⁶ of the region, Muaupoko (McLean, 1994). It was originally intended that Levin would be called Taitoko but instead it was eventually named after the director of the Manawatu Railway Company. The south-east area of Levin still bears this name as does the kindergarten and school in this study.

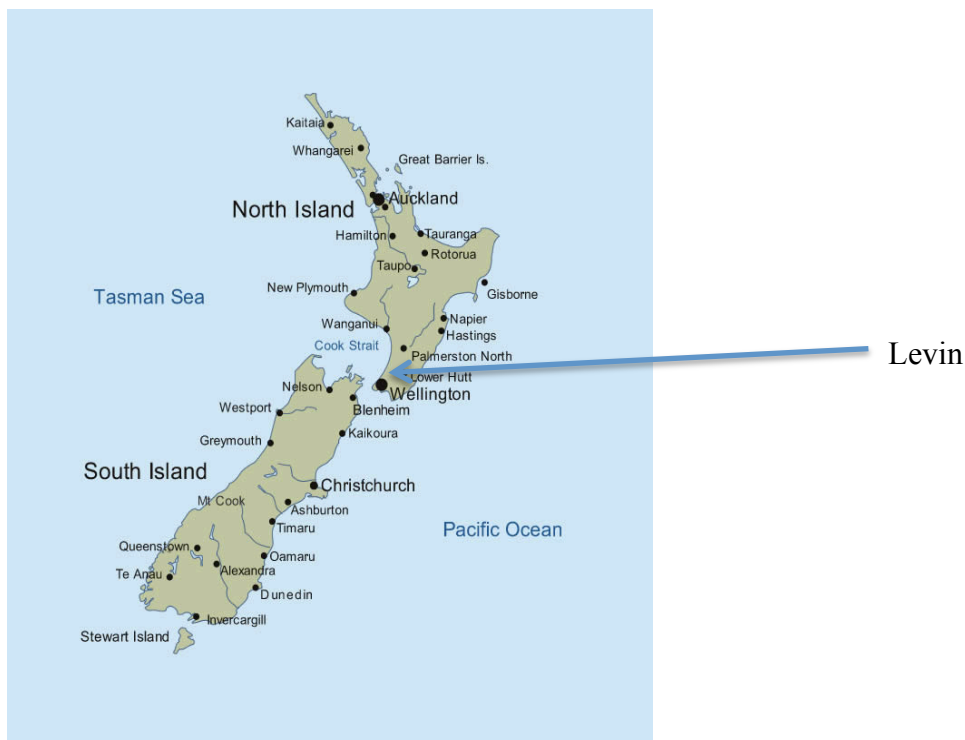


Figure 4. Map of Aotearoa New Zealand showing location of Levin.

(Google Maps)

⁵ A district council is a territorial authority, a structure of local government. The Horowhenua District Council serves a population of 3, 300 over an area of 1,066sq kms.

⁶ A tribal grouping comprising of a number of hapu (clans or descent groups)

Levin serves an area of 109.02 square kilometres with market gardening, dairy farming and agricultural services being the main industries. Levin has experienced both growth and loss as originally a market town serving a rural community (1906- c1970) and then as a manufacturing centre (c1970- c1987). Carr's (1966) Master's thesis explored the transition of Levin from a predominantly agricultural service centre to a significant national supplier of textiles and clothing. This dominance of textile and clothing manufacturing brought growth and prosperity to the town, providing employment for a high proportion of women, old and young. However, the last thirty years have seen a steady decline in the economy of the town with unemployment reaching a record high in 1993 as factories and manufacturing industries closed (Dreaver, 2006). The market driven approach adopted in the 1990s by a conservative government encouraged international competition, the removal of import licensing and the lifting of clothing tariffs. These changes resulted in the closure of the majority of clothing manufacturing factories. The introduction of sales tax on luxury items such as caravans also significantly affected industry in Levin.

Dreaver's history of Levin highlights the commitment of enthusiastic advocates for the advancement of the town as a prosperous and entrepreneurial centre. But as he suggests:

most influences on town growth and prosperity, however, were outside local control: the growth and nature of the population, the economic climate, the decisions of entrepreneurs and above all government policies. Until the late 1980s these favoured Levin; from then on, new policies hit the town hard. (2006, p, 259)

In many respects Levin is a microsystem example of both national and international macrosystem ideologies. The town's fortunes have mirrored the economic highs and lows of the implementation of policies, regulations and agreements by various governments. High unemployment, a rapidly rising crime rate and drug culture prevalent through the 1990s to early 2000s has added to a very negative perception of the town.

The last fifteen years has seen the revival of some industry and endeavours to regain some economic viability through diversification but according to both 2006 and 2013 national census figures Levin is one of New Zealand's more economically vulnerable towns. This economic vulnerability is reflected in the following 2006 and 2013 (Statistics New Zealand, 2006; 2014) national census statistics. The number of unemployed for the Horowhenua Territorial Authority of which Levin is part was 6.3% in 2006 and 10.1% in 2013. The national unemployment figures rose from 5.1% in 2006 to 7.1% in 2013. In Levin South where the kindergarten is located unemployment was 15.5% in 2006 and 23.8% in 2013 showing a significant increase in 7 years. In Aotearoa New Zealand 25% of the population in 2006 over 15 years of age had no formal qualification and in Levin South this figure was more than double at 54%. By 2013 the national figure had lowered to 20% while the statistics for Levin South remained at 54%.

The graph (Figure 4) below shows unemployment and formal qualification figures for New Zealand, Horowhenua Territorial Authority and Levin South comparing 2006 and 2013 census statistics (Statistics NZ, 2006; 2014).

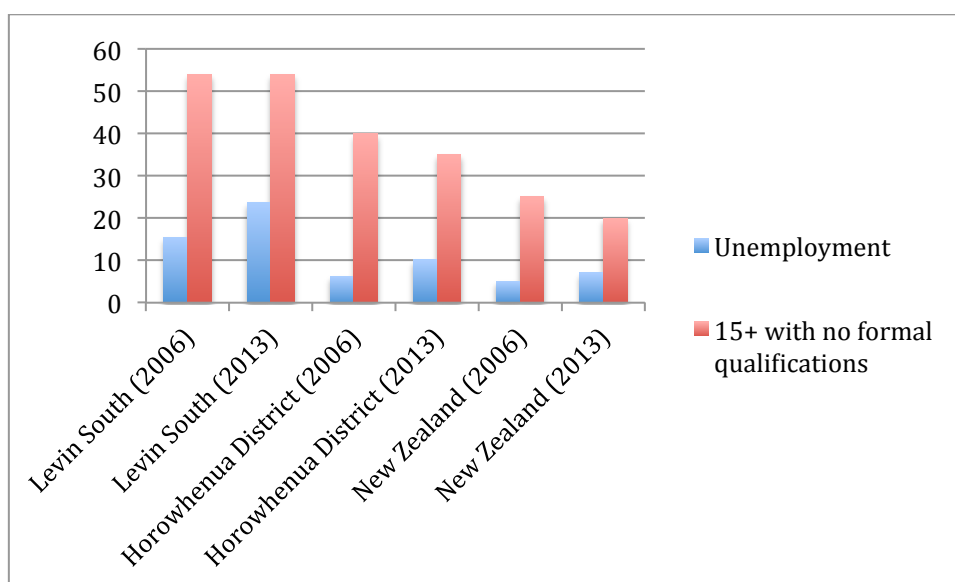


Figure 5. Unemployment and formal qualification figures for New Zealand, Horowhenua Territorial Authority and Levin South comparing 2006 and 2013 census statistics.

The 2006 median income for those people aged fifteen years and over in Levin South was \$15,300 in comparison to the national median of \$24,400. (See Table 5), rising to \$17,700 in 2013 against a national median of \$28,500.

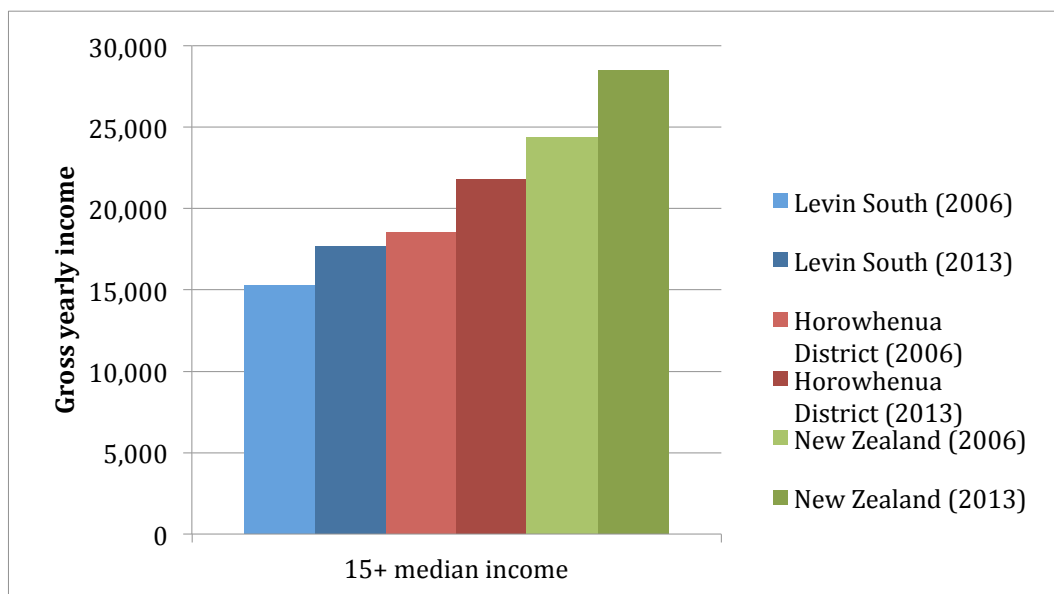


Figure 6. Comparisons of median income between New Zealand, Horowhenua Territorial Authority and Levin South comparing 2006 and 2013 census statistics.

The twenty-year span from 1950-70 saw an enormous growth in housing with 100-120 new houses being built every year in Levin. Many of these low cost and government owned houses were built on the south eastern edge of the town eventually creating a ‘wrong side of the tracks’ community as the economic downturn forced families to be reliant on government assistance. Much of the drug related crime was concentrated in the Levin South neighbourhood. This residual impression remains today with Taitoko Primary School having a high proportion of children coming from low-income households. The school is allocated extra funding because of its low decile rating (1).⁷

Figure 6 shows a comparison of figures for households living in private dwellings with or without a mortgage in 2013.

⁷ Schools in Aotearoa New Zealand are given a decile rating based on aggregated socio-economic components of a meshblock. Decile 1 schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socioeconomic communities, whereas decile 10 schools are the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of these students.

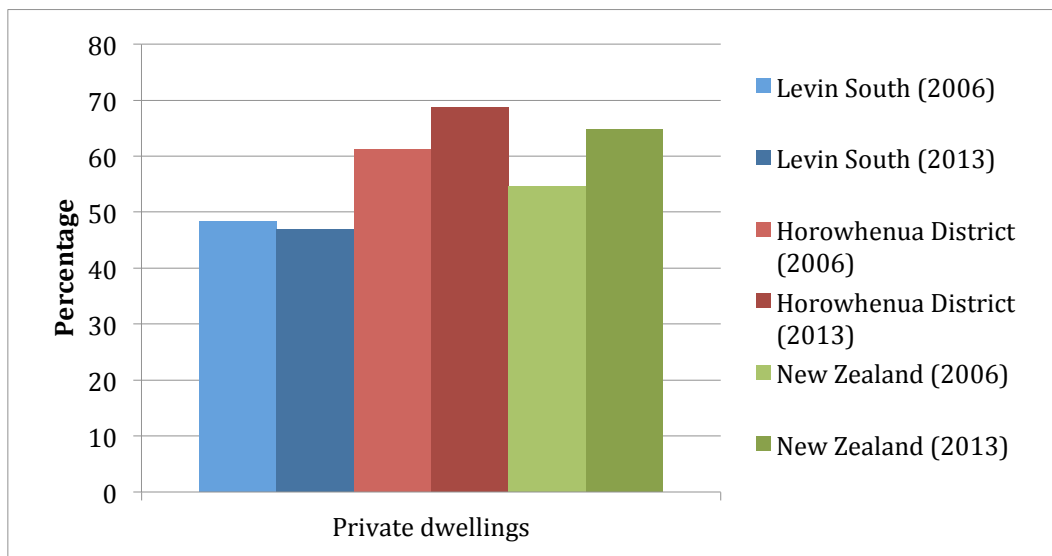


Figure 7. Comparison of households living in private dwellings with or without a mortgage in 2013.

There has also been a reduction in public services in Levin. The local hospital, which provided geriatric care, minor day surgery, laboratory, pharmacy and some psychiatric services, closed in the late 1990s. The nearest hospital is now in a city, 48 kilometres away. There is no ambulance service or public transport. A website providing information about General Practitioners (GPs) in Levin states that all GPs have waiting lists. Taitoko Kindergarten is 5 kilometres from town with one medical centre offering a range of primary and hospital services and one church in the area. The Levin South area has a population of 1800 people.

According to the New Zealand Deprivation Index Levin is in one of the most deprived regions of the country. The New Zealand Deprivation Index is a measure of the level of socioeconomic deprivation in small geographic areas of New Zealand (meshblocks). It is created using Census data for the following variables (Aitkinson, Salmond & Crampton, 2014):

- access to car, internet
- receipt of means-tested benefits
- unemployment
- household income
- sole parenting
- educational qualifications

- home ownership
- home living space.

The index ranges from 1 to 10 with 1 representing the areas with the least deprived scores and ten the areas with the most deprived. In the division of the country into meshblocks, a score of 10 for a meshblock places that area in the most deprived ten percent of areas in New Zealand (Aitkinson et al., 2014, p.7). The four meshblocks constituting Levin have a Deprivation Index score of either 9 or 10. Taitoko Kindergarten, the site for the study is situated in Levin South, which has a Deprivation Index score of 10, thus making it one of the most deprived areas in the country.

All of the above paints a picture of a town that is susceptible to the ideologies of government and the prevailing influences of the macrosystem. It is evident that families in Levin and the community of Taitoko Kindergarten, more specifically, are likely to have reduced employment opportunities, earn low wages due to seasonal and casual employment or be dependent on welfare. These economic disadvantages can constrain families' abilities to provide adequately for those in their microsystem and could be described as having the 'odds stacked against them'.

In a Western economy like Aotearoa New Zealand communities that have high concentrations of people who are unemployed or low wage earners and/or Māori and/or Pasifika will often be regarded as vulnerable or at risk of poor life outcomes. Examining discourses of vulnerability is significant to the 'fighting the odds' focus of this thesis. The following chapter examines the constructs of vulnerability and outlines some interventions designed to mitigate vulnerability amongst children and families. The thesis adds to a general body of research about interventions for vulnerable families while contributing specifically to research about vulnerable communities and implications for policy making in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. The thesis also introduces research on the relationship between early childhood education and opportunities for adults to change their life trajectories.

Outline of this thesis.

The remainder of this thesis is constructed thus: **Chapter 2** focuses on vulnerability discourses and early years interventions to mitigate the effects of having the odds stacked against while **Chapter 3** continues to explore the Bourdieusian concept of habitus and Bronfenbrenner's microsystem level to further examine the relationship between the individual and the environment to ascertain how the odds get reproduced or changed. This chapter concludes with a conceptual framework for the thesis. **Chapter 4** explores the notion of *affordances* that help change the odds with a particular emphasis on the concept of integrated early years services for supporting families lives in a range of ways. The chapter synthesises a range of literature to identify components of effective integrated early years services and their ability to transform trajectories. **Chapter 5** outlines the methodology of the research and introduces the case study of Taitoko Kindergarten. **Chapter 6** tells the story of the transformation of Taitoko Kindergarten and the strategies used by the leadership to fight the odds and begin to change the odds in favour. This chapter draws on habitus as a thinking tool to help explain decision-making and the provision of affordances for families. **Chapter 7** introduces the family participants, and constructs a framework for analysing *levels of strength of affordance*. It characterises two of four levels of strength of affordance. **Chapter 8** continues with the discussion of strength of level of affordance through an analysis of levels 3 and 4. **Chapter 9** then maps the trajectories and affordance networks of each of the family participants. The chapter also explains the relationship of the affordance networks and the transforming aspects of habitus in changing the odds. **Chapter 10** outlines the development of Taitoko Kindergarten as a *Whānau Tangata* centre and returns to the components of effective integrated early years services to explore the kindergarten's effectiveness as an integrated early years service and discusses a range of implications and recommendations for early childhood education and social policy development. **Chapter 11** summarises the role of habitus and conditions

for developing a secondary habitus and draws conclusions about early childhood education as a transformational field.

Chapter 2.

The odds against: The discourse of vulnerability

The previous chapter has demonstrated the vulnerability of Levin. The macrosystem ideologies have helped to stack the odds against the town resulting in a population that is economically and socially disadvantaged. The construction of social and cultural capital favouring the white middle-class has further disadvantaged families' chances of educational achievement and perpetuated a habitus of 'being in deficit'. The purpose of this chapter is to explore definitions and constructs of vulnerability as an example of the connections between Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Bourdieu's logic of practice. Ways of mitigating vulnerability are also examined with a particular emphasis on literature that discusses early years interventions for vulnerable children and families.

Vulnerability definitions

Vulnerability appears in many texts as a taken-for-granted construct that is applied to multiple situations and populations, for example: humans, animals, flora and fauna, natural disasters, technology and economies (Beman, Arrigo & Matson, 2005; Ni, 2011; Noddings, 2002; World Health Organisation, 2005). Its definitions are both broad and specific but, as Morawa (2003) argues, there appears to be no single definition or approach to defining vulnerability. The etymology of vulnerable comes from the Latin *vulnerare*: to wound. Dictionary meanings include: "being capable of being physically or emotionally wounded" or 'open to attack or damage' (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vulnerable>).

These definitions simultaneously imply both a concrete and a perceived condition. While concrete conditions are more easily recognised, perceived vulnerability has

dual possibilities of meaning. On the one hand an individual or group may perceive themselves to be at risk while conversely others may perceive particular individuals or groups as vulnerable. Brock (2002) provides a useful explanation of vulnerability by distinguishing between vulnerable populations according to three moral categories: injustice, misfortune and individual fault.

Vulnerability definitions tend to be concerned with identifying factors that place populations in a vulnerable category. Identifying common and/or significant factors impacting on populations better enables the deployment of resources or protections to mitigate the vulnerability status. There is a consensus that certain factors contribute to people's potential vulnerability. These factors include both individual and environmental factors with socioeconomic status being the most significant underlying common background feature (Rogers, 1997). Socioeconomic status is most likely to impact on health, housing, education and social supports while other factors such as poor health, age, ethnicity, being a young, single parent or having a disability can all contribute to levels of vulnerability (Rogers, 1997). As discussed in Chapter 1 socioeconomic status is derived from the construction of capital and macrosystem level ideologies but as is evidenced by studies of vulnerability socioeconomic status has a significant direct impact on an individual's microsystems. Levin is a clear example of the effects of macrosystem ideologies and their impact on a community's microsystems.

Studies examining aspects of people's lives that contribute to their vulnerability are mostly found in the fields of health and sociology (Blacksher, 2002; McLeod, 2012; Noddings, 2002; Rogers, 1997; Spiers, 2000). Health studies of vulnerability focus on access to treatment and care (Fox, 2002; Rogers, 1997; Spiers, 2000) or bioethical issues of research involving vulnerable populations (Backlar, 2000; Ruof, 2004) while sociological studies emphasise the impacts of policy on vulnerable populations (Blacksher & Stone, 2002; Noddings, 2002) and other well-being determinants (McLeod, 2012). There are some studies in education that explore notions of vulnerability in relation to resilience (Ecclestone & Lewis, 2014) and service access (Boag-Munroe & Evangelou, 2012; Crozier & Davies, 2007).

Vulnerability: Ideological framing

Individual responsibility: A deficit view.

Furedi (2008) explores the growing use of the term *vulnerable* in policy making through the 1990s, coinciding with the ideological emphasis on individual responsibility. Rather than viewing vulnerability as a consequence of political, global and economic events, individual vulnerability is conceptualised as a “condition people are in, not something that is done to them” (Fairclough, 2000, p. 54-5) reinforcing Brock’s (2002) moral category of individual fault. Hence the *perception* of vulnerability becomes real and frames the discourse of intervention and support as well as determining who is vulnerable. Furedi (2008) and Fairclough’s (2000) discussions add to the arguments put forward by Noddings (2002), Fox (2002) and McLeod (2012) in relation to the discursive construction of vulnerability as an individual condition.

A number of the health and social work studies explore vulnerability from an ideological epistemology. Noddings’ (2002) consideration of the ethics of care in relation to social policy and the homeless reiterates the reluctance of liberalism to “intervene in the private lives of individuals” (p.441). Her analogy of an ‘ideal home’ exposes the shortcomings of policies for the homeless in providing for the expressed needs of this vulnerable population. Noddings (2002) argues that rather than homelessness being viewed as an outcome of wider social and economic impacts it is likely to be seen as a result of individual choice. The emphasis on personal choice rather than need then becomes the identifying framing for policy decisions. Fox (2002) also argues that vulnerability is often the result of structural constraints that produce social injustices through the domination of economic and social capital. In his case study of Hotep, a young African American, Fox explores the intersection of race and class in health care and the policies that perpetuate the impoverishment of marginalised groups (2002). Both these studies (Fox, 2002; Noddings, 2002) make a contribution to the discourse of deficit that often accompanies vulnerability from a policy perspective.

Another study that provides further insights into the theme of the ideological framing of vulnerability is McLeod’s (2012) analysis of Australian youth and community policies. This analysis highlights the discourse of vulnerability in light of youth citizenship

identifying issues of exclusion based on constructions of vulnerability that ‘signifies “otherness”, as a marker of the non-citizen and dysfunctional community’ (p. 13). The author contends that ideology focussed on individualisation and self-responsibility marginalises individuals, rendering them incapable of citizenship.

This ideological construct of vulnerability assumes that individuals who have a low income, and who have not achieved educationally are likely to have poor life outcomes and be a financial and social burden on society. There is a sense in this socially conservative and economically liberal influenced construct of vulnerability that it is individuals’ conditions that render them vulnerable.

Determining who is vulnerable and providing the necessary support is closely related to Bourdieu’s notion of capital and his railing against statistics as the manifestation of ‘state thinking’ (2004). Similarly Bronfenbrenner suggests that a macrosystem blueprint perpetuates ecological environments specific to groups (1979, p. 26). Those who have capital define and categorise other members of a population and as Noddings (2002) so aptly argues:

when citizens are defined by race, gender, adult rationality, and/or economic status, those who do not fit the definition become vulnerable. To improve their status, the vulnerable must either become more like the privileged or accept some charitable form of the respect taken for granted by those acknowledged as full citizens.
(p. 441)

This deficit view of certain groups carries with it a sense of ensuring that the vulnerable take responsibility for ‘fixing’ themselves and their conditions so as to not be a burden on society. The labelling of groups as vulnerable can also serve to impact negatively on peoples’ perceptions of themselves and their communities. Having a negative view may become a self-fulfilling prophecy and affect an individual’s sense of agency or, as Bourdieu would explain, become part of the individual and collective habitus. So although individuals or groups may not have perceived themselves as vulnerable, the impacts of state categorising can lead to an acceptance of being defined as vulnerable. Individuals and communities may adopt

dispositions and practices that perpetuate the ‘expectations’ of the label without being aware they are doing so. As Ruof (2004) suggests ‘vulnerability is an abstract construct that has concrete effects for those labelled vulnerable’ (p. 412). These concrete effects are embodied in policies, the allocation of resources and special protections that may be afforded to various groups.

This state categorising and labelling of vulnerable has occurred in Aotearoa New Zealand with respect to three particular categories: Māori, Pasifika and low socioeconomic status. Both Māori and Pasifika are over represented in negative statistics, socially and economically, and feature in initiatives and policies for ‘priority learners’ (Education Review Office, 2013), ‘priority families’ (Ministry of Education, 2013; Mitchell, 2014) or ‘vulnerable families’ (Office of the Minister for Social Development and Employment, 2004). The constant categorising of Māori and Pasifika as vulnerable contributes to a negative and racist homogenous acceptance of the ‘failure’ of these groups and a resentment that a significant allocation of resources are targeted at ‘fixing’ problems. Accepting moral responsibility for indigenous populations suffering from the impacts of colonisation and injustice by the dominant culture can often be rendered invisible within an ideology of personal responsibility and individual fault.

Another example of state categorising in Aotearoa New Zealand that contributes to perceived ‘vulnerability’ is the decile ranking of schools based on the median incomes of a particular population meshblock. Those schools in the lowest percentiles are deemed to be disadvantaged and are awarded extra funding. The decile rating of schools has in the public’s eyes become synonymous with quality and there is a general acceptance that those students attending low decile schools are disadvantaged (Ladd & Fiske, 2003). Being classified as a low decile school can help perpetuate feelings of hopelessness and reproduce a collective habitus of ‘this is our lot’.

Bronfenbrenner (2005) argues that some policies require parents to ‘prove they have become inadequate’ (p. 267) in order to get assistance. However it is the ideology of viewing parenting as a private responsibility needing no ‘national

recognition or protection’ (p. 297) that has led to parents needing support. The deficit model of ‘fixing’ families becomes the basis for policies and practices.

‘Hard-to-reach’ families: Education and vulnerability.

Another ideological framing of vulnerability is found in education literature focussing on parent/family involvement in children’s education. Built on the premise that parental involvement in children’s education has positive outcomes for achievement, families that are disengaged, have little involvement or knowledge of education or resist efforts to engage are labelled hard-to-reach and their children deemed to be at risk or vulnerable (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Doherty, Stott & Kinder, 2004; Sheldon, 2003).

This framing of vulnerability reinforces the deficit discourse of vulnerable in that it categorises a child or family as vulnerable according to the level and willingness of engagement with the school. Research by Crozier and Davies (2007) found teachers regarded Bangladeshi and Pakistani parents as disengaged and hard-to-reach and therefore put their child’s education ‘at risk’. Similarly Sheldon (2003) emphasises that it is the school’s perception or expectations of parental involvement that construct a definition of ‘vulnerable’ children who are at risk of poor educational achievement. In comparison to the perception by educationalists that parents need to be engaged with their child’s schooling, an analysis of case studies from a wider large-scale quantitative project by Siraj-Blatchford (2009) found that the home learning environment had a significant impact on disadvantaged children’s success at school.

As Boag-Munroe and Evangelou (2012) point out it is often the attitudes or assumptions of the school, about the family, which results in a lack of engagement rather than the family actually being hard-to-reach or vulnerable. The authors also suggest that the labelling of families as hard-to-reach “disguises the complexities of the lives of these families and the factors which led to their disengagement” (2012, p. 210). Studies in Aotearoa New Zealand (Mitchell, 2014) and Australia (Eurydice Network, 2009) about families accessing early childhood education confirm that it is the unresponsiveness of the early childhood setting, particularly in regards to culture and language, that creates the main barriers for families. Examples from

Mitchell's (2014) study showed that families who felt unwelcomed, their parenting was being judged or their culture ignored or disrespected were reluctant to enrol their child or continue attending.

Social exclusion.

Social exclusion has been identified as a strong predictor of being at risk of poor outcomes (Brynnner, 2001; Edwards, 2004). Brynnner defines social exclusion as individuals who "have been denied access to the resources (material, cultural, emotional) that enable them to acquire capabilities" (2001, p. 288). The concept of capabilities becomes closely entwined with economic productivity and thus policymakers are motivated to alleviate social exclusion. Jack and Jordan (1999) writing about social exclusion suggest that to prevent exclusion, communities need to be built on trust and co-operation while promoting "strong associations and voluntary organisations for the common good" (p. 242). Preventing social exclusion has been tackled through building networks of services, initiating collaboration across services and addressing accessibility and engagement barriers to participation in support services (Edwards, 2004). Policies and administrative structures such as the Social Exclusion Taskforce in the United Kingdom (2012) attempt to provide opportunities and initiatives to alleviate poverty through connecting people to services that can support them to be economically productive.

An emphasis on risk and resilience.

There has been a shift in some spheres of study to move from identifying populations as vulnerable to determining the risk factors for negative life outcomes (Rose & Killen, 1983). Differentiating between the concepts of vulnerability and risk, Rose and Killen (1983) suggest in relation to health, vulnerability best describes the "personal factors that interact with the environment to influence health while risk refers to hazards within the environment" (p. 61). Coupled with risk is the counterargument of protective factors and people's resilience in the face of risk. Furedi (2008) argues that resilience has become the new antidote for dealing with risk and vulnerability. He suggests that policy makers are now preoccupied with interventions that increase resilience. Ecclestone and Lewis (2014) echo this argument, citing various

American and British government texts that discuss resilience and vulnerability in the face of a growing fear of risks from terrorism, pandemics and natural disasters.

Although not clearly defined, resilience is seen as an attribute that enables populations or individuals to challenge or resolve risk into positive outcomes: in other words to withstand the odds. Much has been written about resilience in recent times from the perspective of identifying factors that promote resilience (Aranda, Zeeman & Scholes, 2012; Coaffee, 2009; Windle, Bennett & Noyes, 2011) as well as interrogating resilience from a discursive stance (Bacon, Brophy, Mguni, Mulgan & Shandro, 2010; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Schoon & Brynner, 2003). Resilience is not a focus of this thesis as rather than determining an individual's ability to withstand the odds, the focus here is about structural and relational aspects of early childhood education, which change the odds. This thesis is about social justice and policy. There is, however one significant Aotearoa New Zealand study about resilience that is pertinent to this thesis because of its context, methodological approach and findings. This study by Duncan, Bowden and Smith (2005) is discussed in Chapter 4.

Vulnerability and social justice

While the theme of a vulnerability discourse constructs theories of blame and deficiency, a social justice centred discourse argues for ideological changes that address issues of inequality (Ecclestone & Lewis, 2014). Both discourses, for similar yet contrasting reasons, are interested in finding solutions to mitigate factors that contribute to individuals', families' and communities' potential vulnerability. The blame discourse concentrates on interventions that will provide solutions to making individuals or populations less vulnerable through the modification of behaviour: eating more healthily, taking regular exercise, attending workshops or programmes about budgeting or parenting. Such interventions can and do have success. However such interventions run the risk of homogenising populations to meet the values of the dominant group and fail to address systemic inequalities. A social justice approach to vulnerability focuses on reducing inequalities while also providing opportunities for individuals to experience new and different ways of living. In the studies mentioned earlier,

these scholars all call for policies to recognise the collective responsibility for the impacts of inequality (Fox, 2002; McLeod, 2012; Noddings, 2002).

Strengths-based or empowerment discourses.

Another alternative discourse of vulnerability is the 'strengths-based' or empowerment discourse (Blundo, 2001). This discourse is often concomitant with a social justice ideology. Strengths-based approaches to vulnerability view individuals, families and groups as "people with promise" rather than "people at risk" (Biddulph, Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003, p.171). Such an approach assumes individual agency and the use of resources to act on and in the environment to make changes. It interrupts the pathologising of vulnerability (Laursen, 2000). Strengths-based approaches have originated in the field of social work in a move away from a medical model of diagnosis and treatment to solutions-focussed practice (Graybeal, 2001).

Different to an approach that has an expert - the doctor, social worker, policymaker, making decisions and deciding 'treatment' - a strengths-based approach assists individuals to identify and recognise the resources they have and can access in order to make changes (Blundo, 2001). The role of the 'intervener' or 'intervention' is to help the individual recognise and decide what assistance and support they require to realise their aspirations while also emphasising the resources and abilities they are currently utilising to 'survive' (Graybeal, 2001). A strengths-based approach to vulnerability has a strong focus on advocacy and a collective responsibility to finding solutions, it recognises the frailty and fluidity of human development and life trajectories. In this recognition there is a component that endeavours to stack the odds more in favour of positive outcomes through socially just interventions. Policies and initiatives that recognise the tenuous and dynamic nature of human development and life trajectories and are cognisant of inherent advantage and disadvantage can take account of these complexities by providing opportunities for populations to determine their own solutions.

A socially just perspective of vulnerability may recast vulnerability as a universal attribute or dimension of human experience: we all have the potential to

experience vulnerability, thus taking the focus off particular and marginalised groups (Beckett, 2006 as cited in McLeod, 2012). However as McLeod (2012) suggests this is a rather utopian view of vulnerability that gives an openness to the concept evoking a compassionate response to others. It can therefore detract from vulnerabilities that represent more damaging and exclusionary experiences than others. Vulnerability can be seen as a continuum where some individuals or groups have a mix of factors that contribute to stacking the odds against them more than others. One group of individuals regarded by governments and scholars as more vulnerable than others is children.

Vulnerability and children: Policy responses

Children's vulnerability is often viewed as a universal condition because of their reliance on others for their basic needs or, from a legal perspective, children's vulnerability can be captured in the following definition from Morawa:

[I]n the context of human rights and, in particular, of the right to development, the terms vulnerable and vulnerability are often used to describe segments of the population which are or should be the recipients of extra care and attention. (2003, p. 139)

It is universally recognised that children warrant extra care and attention and in the face of overwhelming research that early childhood is a critical period of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Brooks-Gunn, Currie, Emde, & Zigler, 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) much attention is given to the resourcing of positive early experiences for young children. It is considered a particularly beneficial investment to provide interventions for vulnerable or disadvantaged (in many cases the discourse of vulnerability makes the two adjectives synonymous) children and their families. The positive effects of early intervention have been shown to have long-term benefits for cognitive and social-emotional development, resulting in better qualification prospects and rates of employment, less delinquency and crime, and better health outcomes (Heckman, 2006; Irwin, Siddiqi & Hertzman 2007; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). The emphasis on early childhood education as a pivotal foundation for children's long-term development

tends to suggest that the die may be cast, the odds already stacked, on the basis of a 'successful' or 'unsuccessful' early childhood.

In Western countries such as the UK, USA, Canada and Australia there have been a range of interventions for increasing positive outcomes for those children and families considered vulnerable. In the first instance the criteria for support are similar in all countries: low socioeconomic status, ethnicity, evidence of poor health and poor educational outcomes (Brackertz & Meredyth, 2008; Edwards, 2004; Fox, 2002). These interventions have all been founded on the premise that children belong to and are dependent on their families, therefore it is necessary to involve families in the intervention (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The majority of interventions are designed around the provision of some form of early childhood education with various additional parenting support.

The following section outlines three specifically designed interventions from the USA designed to mitigate factors contributing to potentially poor outcomes for children. The section then discusses a United Kingdom intervention, which was directly influenced by the USA examples. Research findings from these programmes have been used in significant amounts of academic literature to argue for the cost benefits, both economic and social, for investing in early childhood education. These interventions are largely based on a premise of two-generation impacts: providing early childhood education for a positive start and simultaneously offering job and literacy training and vocational education to adults.

Vulnerability and early childhood interventions

In the USA Head Start was an intervention programme developed in 1965 in response to Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty and John F. Kennedy's concern about juvenile behaviour. Bronfenbrenner was instrumental in the development of the Head Start programme and it was at his insistence that families, and not just children, were included in the intervention (Vinovskis, 2008). Initially Head Start was targeted at those families living in the poorest 300 counties of the country with children aged between 3 to 5 years old and based on early childhood

education centres offering a range of ancillary support services to families. These ancillary services included health (for example: nutritious meals, check-ups, immunisation and dental care), parenting programmes and English as a second language classes (Resnick, 2010). In 1995 under the reauthorisation of Head Start, Early Head Start expanded the programme to families with children under 3 years old. Early Head Start offered a variety of intervention models based either in homes or at early childhood centres or a mixture of both (Raikes, Chazan-Cohen, Love & Brooks-Gunn, 2010).

Other programmes in the United States of America that have provided interventions for disadvantaged children are Perry High/Scope (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997) the Carolina Abercedarian (Campbell & Ramey, 1994) and the Chicago Child-Parent Centre programme (Reynolds, 2000) born out of the aftermath of the civil rights movement and a commitment to equality. These programmes specifically targeted low-income African Americans, while both the Perry High/Scope and Carolina Abercedarian programmes provided intervention through a high quality early childhood education programme to a random selection of children of low-income families. The Carolina Abercedarian programme was designed for infants and their parents in an early childhood setting. Through the provision of nutritious meals, careful health monitoring and a specifically designed curriculum of activities and experiences to enhance perceptual-motor cognitive, language and social development, the programme hoped to show the effects of environment on infants' development (Campbell & Ramey, 1994). The Perry/HighScope programme provided a quality early childhood curriculum for 3 and 4 year olds and regular home visiting by the teacher to support parents in their parenting roles.

In contrast to the random selection of a targeted group of families such as the Carolina Abercedarian and Perry Preschool programmes, the Chicago Child-Parent Centre (CPC) programme was available to all 3 and 4 year old children in public school districts with high proportion of low-income families (Reynolds, Temple, White, Ou & Robertson, 2011). A significant difference in this programme was its continuation from preschool into the first 3 years of school. The CPC programme focussed on the development of reading/language skills, parental involvement and

comprehensive services. Support from a parent-support room run by a certified teacher provided opportunities for the facilitation of parents' own educational and personal development goals and meaningful engagement with children's learning.

The basis for 'success' of these interventions is measured by largely quantitative comparison studies of children participating in the programmes versus non-participatory children. Cognitive measures of school assessment scores and social-emotional development indicators are presented as long-term effects of the programmes with Head Start and Perry High/Scope analysing effects over 3 and 4 decades (Ludwig & Phillips, 2007; Schweinhart et al., 2005). The social impacts and cost effective benefits of less delinquency, greater employment opportunities and better health outcomes from such programmes are seen by economists as a worthwhile investment for governments (Heckman, 2006).

However the outcomes from research studies of programmes such as Head Start and Perry/High Scope that are privileged and most widely used to support similar programmes are the cost benefit analyses and the long-term effects on cognitive and social-emotional development. The reliance and emphasis on Randomised Control Trials (RCT) to legitimise the 'evidence-base' for such programmes is as Vandebroek, Roets and Roose (2012) argue, limiting and stems from a medical or scientific research paradigm. The demand for and status given to evidence from RCT and statistically validated results leaves little room for the unique stories, complexities and contexts of individuals. Neither does the quest for scientific evidence of what works take account of the voices of the individuals who may tell a very different story of success. As Biesta (2007) so poignantly asserts "the focus on 'what works' makes it difficult if not impossible to ask the questions of what it should work *for* and who should have a say in determining the latter" (emphasis in original, p. 5).

The success and reported beneficial outcomes of programmes from the USA have had a significant influence on policy development for similar programmes around the world. The largest and most significant investment by another government in early intervention has been in the United Kingdom's Sure Start programme.

Similar to Head Start in the USA, the United Kingdom's Sure Start programme was also an anti-poverty measure. The recognition by politicians and policy makers of the far-reaching effects of poverty on children's development and life outcomes prompted the intervention of Sure Start in 1998. Based on evidence from evaluations and research from Head Start and Perry High/Scope, Sure Start was developed using the principles of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model of human development. Sure Start was implemented in target areas of high deprivation. It was offered universally in those localities and seen as an opportunity to lift whole communities out of the cycle of poverty, social exclusion and deprivation (Belsky, Barnes & Melhuish, 2007).

Sure Start was about more than offering children a quality early childhood education, it endeavoured to address the contextual factors of families' mesosystems: the interrelations between settings within which individuals actively participate (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25), through the structure of 'joined up' services. Sure Start services were "required to provide five core services: outreach and home visiting, support for families and parents, good-quality play/early learning/childcare; health care for children and parents; support for children with additional needs and/or disabilities" (Anning & Ball, 2008, p.12). Another requisite of Sure Start centres was that they should be in 'pram-pushing' distance for ease of accessibility and to mitigate social isolation (Belsky et al., 2007, p. 5). Vulnerability was not a word used in the development of Sure Start except to refer to the programme and to recognise that "early development was much more vulnerable to adverse environmental influences than had previously been realised" (Glass, 1999, p. 261). The beliefs of the government, in initiating significant reforms in public services, which resulted in Sure Start, were about the ability of government to provide more responsive public services to better meet the needs of communities and to break the cycle of poverty.

These interventions in both the USA and the UK have endeavoured to mitigate risk factors for those children and families designated 'vulnerable'. These interventions have all included some form of early childhood education by either, increasing parents/care-givers knowledge and skills in engaging with early learning opportunities or through some institutional provision of early childhood

education. In most instances there is also a range of other social and health services to address other issues associated with vulnerability. I would argue that these interventions were designed to provide opportunities or affordances for children and their families to change the odds and provide an alternative trajectory. The positive long-term outcomes of the interventions somewhat reinforces this argument but the relatively narrow focus on children's cognitive and social-emotional development does not account for the complexities of context and individual stories.

An example of the relative invisibility of individual stories amongst statistical and quantitative analyses of effectiveness is a case study appended to Volume III of the *Final Report of the Impacts of Early Head Start*. This case study is of interest to this thesis as it takes account of the context of the individual and provides an insight into aspects that afforded the individual opportunities. The case study outlines the story of a teen parent's struggles in obtaining her high school diploma (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). The story attests to the role of Early Head Start and particularly the home visitor in supporting the young woman through a range of difficulties, helping her find the support she needed to realise her aspirations. This appears to be the only case study that describes outcomes for adults yet it is powerful in showing the wider societal and economic pressures on families as well as the long-term benefits from supporting a mother to have educational success from community organisations outside the family

To bring the focus of vulnerability and interventions into the context of this thesis, the remainder of the chapter discusses the response of Aotearoa New Zealand to vulnerable children and their families.

Approaches to provision for 'vulnerable' children in Aotearoa New Zealand

Early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In contrast to many of the countries discussed above early childhood education provision in New Zealand has not been specifically established in response to

national issues of poverty or disadvantage. There has been no national ‘war against poverty’, or programmes with nomenclatures such as Sure Start, Head Start or Best Start designed for disadvantaged and vulnerable children and their families. A locally designed programme to prepare disadvantaged children with the necessary skills for school was developed and implemented in the 1970s under the auspices of the Centre for Māori Studies at the University of Waikato (Ritchie, 1975). Kindergartens, New Zealand’s earliest form of recognised early childhood education, were established by philanthropists rather than national initiatives to provide a place for young children of poor and disadvantaged families to play safely and be exposed to positive role modelling and influences (May, 2013). The Reverend Dr Waddell, founder of the first kindergarten in Dunedin in 1889 writes:

[W]hen I was passing up and down Walker St daily, I was often impressed with the number of little, ragged unkempt, barefooted children spilt about the street. The sight of these little ones, especially in the cold wet days of winter, crowding about the corners and doorsteps, made me ask myself: Could nothing be done for them? Their homes were poor, and there was little room for them inside the house so they were turned out on the street. It thus occurred to me that we might gather them into our Church Hall, provide a fire and get some of our young ladies who were unemployed to entertain them. In this way they should find - the children, I mean, housing accommodation and good influences... (Downer, 1964, p.5)

This was the beginning of the Free Kindergarten movement across New Zealand where in 2010, 33 Kindergarten associations are responsible for 632 kindergartens and early childhood centres. The term ‘free’ is from the philanthropic ideology of no cost and offering welfare to those in need. However kindergarten has over the last five decades become part of New Zealand culture and is accessed by children from every socio-economic strata. Traditionally for 3 to 5 year olds many kindergartens now cater for children from birth to 5 years offering both sessional and full day services. Early on during the establishment of the kindergarten movement, the government committed to subsidising the funding of kindergartens

and the training of teachers. This strong state involvement has meant for many years kindergartens have retained the status of free, only asking families for small voluntary donations. When first established the emphasis of kindergartens was education based on Friedrich Froebel's (May, 2013) idea of kindergarten as a place for children to have access to 'gardens' for playing and exploring in an uninterrupted manner.

Other early childhood education provision in Aotearoa New Zealand has been in the form of crèches and daycare centres established to meet the needs of parents in paid employment. Two unique provisions of early childhood education in New Zealand are Playcentre and Kōhanga reo. Playcentre is a parent-led community cooperative for children and parents to 'work, play, learn and grow together' (<http://www.playcentre.org.nz/>). Ngā Kōhanga reo were established as total immersion language nests to revitalise the language (te Reo) of Māori (Reedy, 2003). There are also language nests for children and families of each Pacific nation using home languages (May, 2009; Mitchell, Royal Tangaere, Mara & Wylie, 2006a).

Although there have not been any major early childhood education interventions in Aotearoa New Zealand to 'solve' problems of disadvantage there have, in the last five years, been government initiatives to increase the participation of children in early childhood education from 'priority families' including Targeted Assistance for Participation funding and the Engaging Priority Families programme (Mitchell et al., 2013).

Parent Support and Development pilot project: supporting vulnerable children and their families.

A significant and unique initiative targeting vulnerable children and their families was announced to the early childhood sector in 2005: the Parent Support and Development (PS&D) pilot project. This initiative was a cross-sectorial early intervention programme for vulnerable children developed by government ministers and officials during 2003-04. The main aim of the programme was to "ensure all vulnerable children receive the best support they need from before birth to their transition to school to provide them with the best possible start in life

and enable them to maximise their potential” (Office of the Minister for Social Development and Employment, 2004, p. 4). The four key elements to the programme included improving health, education, and parent support services for vulnerable children and their families through building on existing universal and targeted services as well as improved coordinating, identifying and needs assessing by different agencies.

Vulnerable children in this context were defined as:

- children who experience risk factors (at individual, family and/or community level) significant enough to make them at risk of later poor outcomes, for example children with parents with mental illness, low income and family dysfunction
- children with revealed unmet needs, for example, hearing difficulties, poor parent-child bonds, which make them at risk of poor outcomes both in childhood and later life. (Office of the Minister for Social Development and Employment, 2004, p. 4)

It is interesting to note that ethnicity per se is not mentioned as a risk factor. However as the project progressed through the various government channels it was decided that in order to have a selection process for centres to join the pilot, centres needed to be in areas of deprivation. As has been discussed in Chapter 1, Māori and Pasifika feature poorly in all education, health, economic and social statistics. Communities categorised as most deprived by the Ministry of Social Development index included a high percentage of Māori and Pasifika.

The Parent Support and Development (PS&D) pilot was built on a rationale of research-based evidence of the value of two-generation programmes that combine parent education and support and early childhood education rather than solely parent-focused or child-focused programmes alone. Further research suggested that vulnerable parents will access early childhood services even when they are reluctant to access other agency services and the PS&D initiative sought to capitalise on this phenomenon. The briefing paper to government seeking budget approval for the project stated that the parent support and development services

provided at the centres would be available to all families attending the centre while focussing on parents of vulnerable children aged 0-3. Each participant centre could design their own programmes based on outputs of: improving health, education and social outcomes for vulnerable children through effective parenting, building on parents' skills and knowledge, participation and engagement in early childhood education by vulnerable children and their families, development of connections and consistency between the child's learning at home and the early childhood education environment, and more effective connections between parents and broader social support and informal networks (Office of the Minister for Social Development and Employment, 2004).

The PS&D project emerged as one of the actions of a ten-year strategic plan, *Pathways to the future- Ngā Huarahi Arataki* developed during 2000-2002 (Ministry of Education, 2002). A working group was established to consult widely with the early childhood sector and develop a ten-year strategic plan that would address issues of quality including teacher qualifications, funding and regulations. This plan had three goals focussing on quality, participation and collaborative relationships, from which policies were shaped and implemented around funding, qualifications and research. Developing the strategic plan and subsequent policies was a definite move away from the individual choice, minimal state involvement practices in place in other disciplines giving the government a central role in the provision of early childhood education (Mitchell, 2005). The policies developed from *Pathways to the Future* showed a recognition by government of the importance of quality early childhood education and the cost of ensuring quality. The strategic plan demonstrated a changing ideology towards children and their place in society. As May (2009) points out these years were a time of intense debate about the rights of children and the place of the state in providing early childhood education. The growing evidence from reports such as the OECD's Starting Strong I and II reports (OECD, 2001; 2006) and Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) research could no longer ignore the long-term benefits of quality early childhood education to society.

The strategic plan introduced a review of funding and in April 2005 a new system of funding was introduced. This system was based on operational and staffing

costs of an early childhood centre and incorporated an earlier (2001) funding initiative which provided additional ‘equity funding’ for those early childhood centres in low decile areas. Equity funding recognised the need to ‘even’ out the ‘odds’ for some communities. To receive equity funding a centre needed to meet criteria for one or more of four components: low socioeconomic community, special needs and non-English speaking background, language and culture other than English and isolation (Mitchell, Royal Tangaere, Mara & Wylie, 2006b).

The strategic plan’s goal of collaborative relationships included the importance of supporting and assisting families to realise their aspirations and was based on the Family and Community principle of the curriculum. This goal encompassed concepts of joined up or integrated services involving health and other social services. The plan states that: “building stronger links between early childhood education services, antenatal programmes, parents and whānau⁸, parenting programmes, schools, and health and social services can also improve a child’s educational achievement” (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 9).

The announcement of the Parent Support and Development pilot project recognised that there were some families who faced difficulties accessing the support they needed to adequately care for their children. The ‘soft’ approach of the initiative in allowing early childhood centres to design their own programmes rather than government determining the sorts of interventions that should be provided, demonstrated the Ministry of Education’s deliberate attempt to be flexible. The background papers to the Parent Support and Development project state:

the shape and content of these services [PS&D] will be for ECE centres to determine in consultation with their local community, but informed by guidance and support from Government to ensure provision reflects the evidence base. This reflects that, local capacity and needs vary, the importance of community involvement in developing services, and that existing literature on

⁸ Māori word for family. The term encompasses a wide range of relatives including grandparents and cousins.

effectiveness of services does not provide a clear “model” of what services should look like. (Ministry of Education, n.d, no page number).

In 2006 the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development announced the pilot project of Parent Support and Development contracts for community or state-funded early childhood services located in areas meeting the vulnerability indicators of the Ministry of Social Development. These indicators, established through the New Zealand Deprivation Index included, low levels of income, high percentage of Māori and Pasifika families, high percentage of people over 15 with no formal qualification, high rate of unemployment and a higher proportion of single parent families. The project awarded contracts to eight early childhood centres in the pilot phase (2006-2009). Taitoko Kindergarten, the site of research for this thesis was one of the awardees. In 2008 another ten centres were subsequently awarded contracts before the pilot phase was completed but funding was removed for these centres in 2010 under a new government.

One of the issues highlighted in the evaluation of the PS&D project was that there was an unwillingness of teachers in the centres that had contracts to identify ‘vulnerable’ families. This reluctance was largely influenced by teachers beliefs that identifying ‘vulnerable’ families could further stigmatise them, and neither were teachers happy to make judgments about families’ ‘vulnerability’ (Ministry of Education, 2010). It is possible that teachers’ beliefs were influenced by the four principles and five strands of the national early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). The principles and strands are inextricably woven together to form a mat (*whāriki*). One of the principles of the curriculum is Family and Community, which states:

Children’s learning and development are fostered if the well-being of their family and community is supported; if their family, culture, knowledge and community are respected; and if there is a strong connection and consistency among all aspects of the child’s world. (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 42)

The curriculum is underpinned by Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development and includes a diagram showing the connections between the immediate learning environments of a child: home and early childhood centre (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 19). The influences and impacts of the wider context on families is made apparent prompting teachers to be mindful of the dynamic nature of context.

Children thriving, belonging and achieving: 'dealing' with negative statistics.

Another significant but somewhat contrasting development to the PS&D project in response to 'dealing' with vulnerable children and on-going negative statistics for child abuse was the publication in 2011 of the Green Paper for Vulnerable Children (Ministry of Social Development, 2011). This Green Paper focussed on ways in which government and communities could work together to ensure that 'every child thrives, belongs and achieves' and although not specifically defining vulnerable the paper uses statistics of abuse and neglect reporting, child accidents and hospitalisation, failure to achieve a school qualification and children experiencing or witnessing violence (p. 2).

There is a strong emphasis in the paper about the responsibilities of families to care for and provide for children. The repeated discourse throughout the paper about families' responsibilities to children implies that meeting this responsibility is a simple task. There is little acknowledgment given to the effects of wider impacts such as poverty, inadequate housing and transience. When these factors are considered there is a sense that it is families who are at fault for being in such tenuous situations and policy solutions are to intervene only when families are failing. Bronfenbrenner sums up this deficit discourse by suggesting: "the belief that our families need no national recognition or protection paradoxically leads to more families than ever needing support. When a family is finally inadequate enough, it can get some support" (2005, p. 267).

The White Paper for Vulnerable Children and accompanying Children's Action Plan defined vulnerable children thus:

Vulnerable children are children who are at significant risk of harm to their wellbeing now and into the future as a consequence of the

environment in which they are being raised and, in some cases, due to their own complex needs. Environmental factors that influence child vulnerability include not having their basic emotional, physical, social, developmental and/or cultural needs met at home or in their wider community. (Ministry of Social Development, 2013)

The paper focuses on issues of child abuse and neglect and how these issues can be rectified. The most significant initiative resulting from the Children's Action Plan and subsequent legislation is the development of Children's Teams. Children's teams comprise of multi-agency professionals working with 'at risk' children and their families to address needs. From the reading of the documentation it is implied that 'at risk' children are those who already have some involvement with child protection services. There is very little mention of the family so it is difficult to ascertain how the child is viewed within the context of their family.

A new approach: 'vulnerable to what?'

A recent publication from a longitudinal study in Aotearoa New Zealand, *Growing up in New Zealand*, explores the concept of vulnerability in the first 1000 days of a child's life (Morton et al, 2014). The report uses data from 7000 families involved in the study to determine what risk factors contribute to vulnerability and what additional supports might be needed to ensure positive outcomes for children and families. The risk factors are grouped according to proximal and distal family variables and measurements of the physical environment both antenatal and postnatal. They include factors such as: maternal depression, maternal smoking and drinking, maternal education, financial stress, deprivation area of residence and in receipt of a government benefit. The study concludes that risk factors are clustered and addressing this clustering through appropriate supports could reduce the effects of long-term exposure to vulnerability. The study is interested in gathering data that helps address the question of children being 'vulnerable to what?' which could interrupt the discourses associated with the classification of vulnerability according to 'state thinking' (Bourdieu, 2004).

Vulnerability and this thesis.

In summary, vulnerability is context specific and includes influences from a variety of ecological systems. Often an individual's vulnerability is a result of macro and exosystem impacts but is constructed by dominant discourses as a 'condition' that requires 'treatment'. 'Treatments' or interventions are implemented to mitigate conditions that have stacked the odds against individuals. In contrast to this pathologising discourse, a strengths-based or empowerment intervention of vulnerability recognises the wider impacts of dominant culture ideologies and social inequalities that contribute to an individual's perceived or actual vulnerability. Such interventions focus on assisting individuals or groups to use the resources at their disposal and exercise agency. Mitigating the odds against (decreasing vulnerability) early in life is well-evidenced hence early intervention programmes are seen as a worthwhile investment, particularly those that address the needs of both children and their families. The studies discussed in this chapter provide evidence that vulnerability is rarely an isolated condition due to a single factor, rather it is a collection or clustering of factors occurring across all system levels of an individual or group's ecology.

Returning to the vignette of Kirstie in Chapter 1, Kirstie was first an example of an 'at risk' child: living in a single parent household, mother with a gambling addiction, truanting from school; and later a vulnerable young adult: orphaned, no formal qualifications and a young single parent. Kirstie could be seen as a victim of her circumstances, a result of environmental factors over which she had little or no control. For individuals such as Kirstie who have the odds stacked against them how is it possible to change the odds or is it inevitable that Kirstie will perpetuate her vulnerable status and even reproduce it with her own children? The odds have changed for Kirstie and she would no longer be labelled as vulnerable so the questions remain: how have the odds been changed and what is the relationship between Kirstie as an individual and the environment?

The following chapter explores the intersection of individual and environment through Bourdieu's thinking tool of habitus and Bronfenbrenner's ecological

systems theory with particular attention to the attributes of the microsystem and the connections between the two theorists.

Chapter 3.

Reproducing or changing the odds? The transforming potential of habitus.

The previous chapters have discussed some of the structural and symbolic elements of society in Aotearoa New Zealand that can result in individuals and families having the odds stacked against them. The ideologies and discourses subscribed to by the dominant culture locate groups of people in either perceived or actual states of disadvantage. These environmental or societal elements impact on an individual's capacity to make changes to the odds and in many cases it seems that the odds get reproduced. This chapter uses Bourdieu's thinking tool of habitus to explore the potential for habitus to enable individuals to transform or change their trajectories. The chapter begins to connect Bourdieu and Bronfenbrenner by exploring a connection between habitus and the microsystem level of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory.

The interplay between the environment and the individual has long been a debate between philosophers and theorists (Grenfell, 2008). The epistemological perspectives of objectivism and subjectivism created a dichotomy between individual and environment: either the individual was the active agent in determining their path or it was the objective structures that dictated human behaviour (Bourdieu, 1972/1977). This separation of individual from environment is not helpful when trying to describe the complexity of human behaviour and their relationship with the wider social world.

The example of Kirstie, for instance, provided a dilemma in identifying what might be the influences that enabled her to change her trajectory: a determination to 'do things differently' or particular exo and mesosystem interventions? Unable to separate the innate attributes of individuals from their sociocultural contexts as

I sought to understand positive interventions or defining moments resulted in my unwillingness to subscribe to an either/or; a binary of one or the other, either psychological or sociocultural and led to a further exploration of the writings of Bourdieu (1930-2002) and Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005).

Reading and re-reading Bourdieu and Bronfenbrenner.

Both Bourdieu and Bronfenbrenner have provided some explanations and tools for mediating or bridging the space between individual and context, for making sense of how the odds get stacked, how individuals change the odds and what and who can help with this.

Having already introduced Bourdieu's main thinking tools of capital, field and habitus in chapter 1 with a particular emphasis on the concept of capital, this chapter expands the notion of habitus within Bourdieu's logic of practice equation. These explanations and descriptions of Bourdieu's concepts and theories are an amalgam of my repeated readings of his translated works, particularly *An outline of a theory of practice* (1972/1977a) and the *Logic of practice* (1980/1990) alongside other people's interpretations and explanations of his ideas. Bourdieu's writings are dense, circulatory and often devoid of clear definitions. As Harker, Mahar and Wilkes (1990) suggest, Bourdieu "writes and rewrites in a spiral between theory, empirical work and back to reformulating theory again but at a different level" (p.3). Nash (1999) reinforces the lack of clarity and definition in Bourdieu's concepts but exhorts those interested in educational equality to continue to make sense of the concepts and use these concepts as thinking tools in order to progress understanding of the sociology of education.

In the latter part of his life Bourdieu publicly advocated for educational reforms in light of neo-liberal ideologies and, as van Zanten (2005) recounts, he endeavoured to make his theories more accessible and understandable for a wider audience. Increasingly educational researchers have used Bourdieu's concepts or 'thinking tools' to explore issues in the sociology of education and educational policy (Maton, 2005; Taylor & Singh, 2005;). Other studies use Bourdieu's concepts to

explore inequalities in educational achievements and trajectories (Brooker, 2002; Jones, 1991; Nash, 2002; Reay, 1995, 1998, 2004). A number of these studies will be discussed in the following section that outlines Bourdieu's theory of practice in relation to this thesis. Engaging in the writings of Bourdieu has informed this thesis and provided some tools for interrogating data, giving a methodological and theoretical approach for the thesis. This thesis has also offered another context for the application of Bourdieu's theories to educational research: families for whom the odds have been stacked against, and their engagement with a kindergarten.

Bourdieu's theory of practice: Dealing with dualisms

Bourdieu's theory of practice is helpful in going some way to explain the space in between the individual and their environment. The research questions for this thesis seek to identify who and what can help improve the odds, which immediately highlights a possible dualism: is it who (subject) or what (object)? Reading the translations of Bourdieu's works it is clear that Bourdieu found dualisms unhelpful as he bemoans: "Of all the oppositions that artificially divide social sciences, the most fundamental, and the most ruinous, is the one that is set up between subjectivism and objectivism" (1980/1990, p. 25). Bourdieu sought to transcend these dualisms through his generative structuralism, which he uses as a method or way of thinking to describe, analyse and take account of the genesis of the person and of social structures and groups (Mahar, 1990). This generative structuralism provides a dialectical relationship between object and subject or structure and agency rather than one responding to the other. In positing a dialectical relationship Bourdieu endeavoured to overcome the limitations identified in structuralism that fail to take account of the relational nature of the individual with the meaning making symbols and systems of the environment.

Bourdieu found uses in both objectivism and subjectivism for understanding the social world. Objectivism allowed the decoding of the "the unwritten musical score according to which the actions of agents, each of whom believes she is improvising her own melody, are organised" (1992, p. 8) while subjectivism draws attention to the everyday negotiation of individuals with structures that attempt to tell them how to behave, think and be (Webb, Schirato & Danaher,

2002). Pahl (2008) suggests that the improvising nature of habitus provides for opportunities of rationality leading to change or transformation. Harking back to Kirstie, in response to encouragement from the educational environment, she began to decode the hitherto “unwritten musical score” that positioned her as ‘at risk’ and likely to have poor outcomes for herself and her children. She began to construct her adult life differently in an attempt to not perpetuate her past experiences.

The tendency to perpetuate past experiences or reproduce certain ways of being is explained by Bourdieu through his concept or thinking tool of habitus. For Bourdieu habitus is an integral component of social practice and features in his symbolic equation of a theory of practice: [(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice (1979/1984, p.101). It is the concept of habitus that is discussed next.

Habitus: Connecting the individual and the environment

Habitus is the concept in Bourdieu’s theory of practice that is the conduit between structure and agency, transcending the pervading dichotomies of “determinism and freedom, conditioning and creativity, consciousness and unconsciousness, or the individual and society” (1980/1990, p. 55) and was central to his question of “how can behaviour be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules?” (1972/1977a, p. 72). Bourdieu defines habitus as “durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to act as structuring structures” (1980/1990, p. 53).

Habitus includes the dispositions, rules, conditioning, social and cultural capital inherent in family structures and handed down via social transmission. The inclination or propensity to act in a certain way is influenced by the “structured structures” of the family and groups of our social world. Habitus, according to Bourdieu, is how we carry our history within us, how we bring that history into our current circumstance and how we make decisions to act in certain ways. He continues the “musical score” theme by suggesting that habitus is “collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of the conductor” (Bourdieu, 1972/1977a, p. 72).

However Bourdieu emphasises that habitus is “durable but not eternal” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 133). Therefore the influence of family on children and their development and habitus is highly significant but not definitive. There can be influences beyond the family that contribute to changing the habitus.

The concept of habitus is complex and slippery with no specific operationalisation of the concept, making a tendency, as Reay points out, for habitus to mean “whatever the data reveals” (2004, p. 438). Nevertheless there are aspects of habitus that do provide some operationalisation and give it ‘life’. Reay (2004) identifies these aspects as: embodiment, agency, interrelatedness of individual and collective histories/trajectories, and the interplay of past and present. Habitus and agency is particularly relevant for this thesis.

An illustration of the connection between habitus and agency is Reay’s 1998 study of mothers’ involvement in their children’s primary schooling. This study uses habitus to explain the different choices and actions taken by working and middle class mothers in relation to their children’s schooling. The mothers’ own educational experiences (capital) and personal histories (habitus) significantly affected their attitudes to being involved at school (field). Middle class mothers were generally reproducing habitus while working class mothers were engaged in trying to transform habitus. Mothers, in this case were playing in the field of education, using their knowledge of the rules of the game to ensure their children ‘succeeded’ at school.

Habitus and agency

Bourdieu uses the concept of habitus to mediate between structure and agency. Instead of the structuralist dichotomy of structure and agency, habitus provides a means by which the individual interacts with structures through their actions and strategies. The concept of field is inextricably linked to agency in that habitus predisposes an individual to act in certain ways according to norms and expectations of a field but the absence of explicit rules allows for variation, creativity and resistance. Individuals are not however free agents to act without

restraint. Habitus imposes constraints in that individuals will tend to reproduce ‘people like us’ but this reproduction is not a result of a predetermined, unchanging mechanism. This is where Bourdieu offers an alternative to the structure/agency dualism:

Because the habitus is an endless capacity to engender products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions, actions – whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production, the conditioned and unconditioned freedom it secures is as remote from a creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from a simple mechanical reproduction of the initial conditionings. (1972/1977a, p. 95)

Here there is a suggestion that although the habitus is structured through the engendering of particular ways of being according to social norms, the individual can exercise agency but any creative practice will still be within the bounds of the unwritten rules of the social field.

Critics of Bourdieu denounce what they see as the deterministic nature of habitus (di Maggio, 1979; Jenkins, 1982; van Zanten, 2005) and although Bourdieu argues for “the tendency of structures to reproduce themselves by producing agents endowed with the system of predispositions which is capable of engendering practices adapted to the structures and thereby contributing to the reproduction of the structures” (1977b, p. 487) he nevertheless attributes habitus with the ability to transform: “not only can habitus be practically transformed (always within definite boundaries) by the effect of social trajectory leading to conditions of living different ones...” (1987/1990, p. 116). This suggestion that the habitus can be transformed implies a relationship with individual agency and as discussed earlier albeit a durable but not an eternal quality.

Yang (2014) argues that Bourdieu’s writings contain various ‘sparks’, which moderate the determinism of habitus and provide mechanisms or conditions for transformation. These conditions include a mismatch between habitus and field, explicit pedagogy in the acquisition of a secondary habitus, reflexivity and the openness of fields. Yang’s outline of potential conditions for transforming habitus is interesting in light of the focus of this thesis and these conditions are explored

in relation to the families' stories in chapter 7, 8 and 9. Chapter 11 also discusses these conditions in terms of early childhood education as a transformational field.

The metaphor of a journey used by Maton to elaborate on Bourdieu's concepts, alludes to agency when he writes about choices.

How we make choices to act in certain ways and not others. This is an on-going and active process – we are engaged in a continuous process of making history, but not under conditions entirely of our own making. Where we are in life at any one moment is the result of numberless events in the past that have shaped our path. We are faced at any moment with a variety of possible forks in that path, or choices of actions and beliefs. (2008, p. 52)

The connection between habitus and agency is useful for this thesis in that it provides a tool for thinking about what people might do to change their circumstances and begin to interact in a new field. For instance Brooker's study of children transitioning from pre-school to school suggests that a child's habitus will be shaped by their family habitus but the experiences the child has within the family and other contexts such as school, will generate a unique habitus for that child (2002). This may mean that although the family habitus may be to 'accept their lot' and have low expectations for themselves, the individual child may respond differently to their experiences and use their agency to strategise a different trajectory for themselves. With respect to Kirstie, it is evident she has done things differently from what may have been perceived as 'her lot'. While there may have been very little encouragement to succeed at school, her encounter with the kindergarten added social capital that encouraged her to resist prescribed circumstances and become 'successful' in a field where she previously had little success.

Habitus in the field of education

Another metaphor used by Bourdieu in understanding the relationship between habitus and agency is field. He suggests that individuals interact in various fields of practice, where "fields are socially constituted areas of activity" (Taylor &

Singh, 2005, p. 729). Bourdieu likens a field to a 'game'. Individuals who get a "feel for the game" (the rules, norms, regularities and patterns of a particular field) can employ strategies to position themselves differently within the field (1987/1990, p. 63). The strategies that individuals use are contingent on their past experiences and practical dispositions allowing them to respond to the uncertainties and ambiguities of the game as it takes place over time.

Education is a field and it is this context that educationalist researchers have used the concept of habitus to explore the dilemma of educational inequality. Diane Reay had used habitus as an analytical tool in a variety of studies about families' experiences with education (1995, 1997, 1998, 2002, 2004) to explore issues of social class, gender and cultural reproduction while Liz Brooker (2002) discussed habitus in relation to what children may be taught at home to support their opportunities at school.

Both these studies from the United Kingdom expose the discontinuity between working class family expectations and approaches to supporting their children in a middle class construction of education. Reay's research (1998) explains the way in which mothers draw on their own educational experience to support their children's school experiences. The success of a mother's involvement is largely dependent on the match of cultural and social capital with the structures (expectations) of the school. In general middle class mothers were able to navigate the school structures to successfully support their children's education. However, similar to Brooker's (2002) study, Reay found that cultural background was a barrier to parental involvement and not a 'good' match of school and home expectations. Brooker's ethnographic study of a group of children starting school also found that ethnicity impacted significantly on children's and families transition to school. In the case of those families from the Bangladeshi community, the cultural and social capital possessed in their own communities was not recognised in the context of school. Not only did these families 'lose' their status in the school context but the pedagogy of the school was also in contrast to their own values about education. These studies are useful in highlighting how education produces inequalities and will in the most part reproduce the habitus of the dominant culture.

Another useful study, particularly in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand that explores habitus and educational achievement is research by Alison Jones of Pākehā and Pacific Island girls' experiences at secondary school (1991). Jones applies the concept of habitus to describe how the different groups of girls brought behaviours and actions into the classroom that impacted on the teachers' attempts to engage them in learning. Depending on ethnicity there were differences in habitus which led to resistance or engagement with the different pedagogical approaches of the teachers and the girls ended up contributing to a pedagogy of their ways of knowing and being as pupils. The cultural capital of the Pasifika students did not align with the cultural capital of the classroom resulting in a marginalisation of these students and impacted on their achievement. The Pacific Island girls were unable to access the success that the Pākehā girls experienced because of the capital mismatch.

One other relevant Aotearoa New Zealand study involved qualitative data from focus group interviews with a group of secondary school students (Nash, 2002). This data was drawn from a larger longitudinal study entitled New Zealand Progress at School Project. Through the focus group interviews Nash explores the consequences of those working class students who are not interested in the 'education' offered at school and as a consequence cannot construct a habitus that enables success. The study analyses the data to define the 'educated habitus' and concludes that working class students both exclude themselves and are excluded from it. Once again this study, as with those of Reay and Brooker, reveals the inequalities and discontinuity of educational experiences for various groups of society and how their habitus impacts on their participation, engagement and achievement in education.

Habitus is a key concept for this thesis. It provides a tool to explore some of the components of how, what and why of individuals and the choices they make. It provides a tool for thinking about the relationship between structure and agency; individual and environment. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model also contributes to an understanding of these relationships.

Connecting Bourdieu and Bronfenbrenner

The following section constructs some parallels between Bronfenbrenner's exposition of the micro and mesosystems and the Bourdieusian concept of habitus and field. Parallels between the other systems of the ecological model and the logic of practice components of field and capital have been discussed in Chapter 1.

The microsystem and the habitus.

The first system or layer of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is the microsystem. The microsystem is defined as the context in which the individual actively participates in "patterns of activities, roles and interpersonal relationships in a setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (1979, p. 22). Such settings include home, early childhood centre, school or workplace, with the mesosystem being the interrelations between two settings of active participation, for example, home and early childhood centre. In a later, extended definition of the microsystem Bronfenbrenner recognises the significance of other people in the microsystem and adds "containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality and systems of belief" to his definition. This extended definition is included to account for the influence of "other persons present and participating in the environment" (2005, p. 148).

For Bronfenbrenner, the individual's relationship with the environment was a dynamic interaction involving reciprocity with much of this reciprocity influenced by the roles and activities of the individual. It is Bronfenbrenner's definition of a role and his acknowledgement of the influence of the presence of others in the microsystem that has some alignment with habitus: "a *role* is a set of activities and relations expected of a person occupying a particular position in society, and of others in relation to that person" (1979, p.85). This definition infers that roles are learned in the microsystem interactions and these roles are assigned and defined by the norms and expectations of the cultural group. Therefore the role assumed by an individual is deeply embedded in the historical, social and cultural ideologies and structures, embodied through actions, and ways of being and

behaving. The embedding of the role ascribes status and describes relationships not unlike the structured and structuring nature of habitus.

In his book *The ecology of human development*, Bronfenbrenner cites an experiment carried out in 1971 by Stanley Milgram (1974) at Stanford University involving participants as ‘guards’ and ‘prisoners’ in a simulated prison. The behaviours adopted by both the prisoners and the guards illustrates the ease in which roles are perceived by members of society and what actions, activities, behaviours and expectations go with those roles (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The engagement of individuals in activities that “reveal the properties of, sustain, or restructure that environment” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 27) appears to have similarities to the characteristics of habitus involving the interplay of past and present, the compilation of collective and individual trajectories and individual agency. The properties of the environment are likely to be constructed over time by groups: for instance a family group or an early childhood community. These properties will be developed according to historical, social, cultural and political influences. Sustaining the environment fits with ideas about reproduction and perpetuation while restructuring the environment could be affiliated with agency and transforming habitus.

Mesosystems, exosystems and fields.

The mesosystem can be likened to Bourdieu’s concept of field. Just as Bourdieu uses field to describe the social spaces where individuals interact, Bronfenbrenner’s definition of the mesosystem includes similar social interrelations. According to Bronfenbrenner a mesosystem is a system of microsystems in that the “mesosystem comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates” (1979, p. 25). He goes on to explain that a mesosystem can link microsystems through social networks and communications and strengthen an individual’s participation in their microsystems if there are close connections, beliefs, knowledge of and similarities between the microsystems. Comparable to being a “fish in water” or “having a

feel for the game” individuals participate more effectively in fields where they know the ‘rules’ and expectations: their mesosystem connections are strong.

The exosystem, settings that do not involve the individual as an active participant but may still have some direct or indirect influence on the individual, also constitute fields. Such exosystem fields may include a tangible structure like a workplace or sports club or a broader concept such as the field of education or the field of art.

In order to position the relevance of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory to this thesis the following paragraphs outline two studies that make connections with my interest in families, early childhood education and social justice. The first study by Duncan, Bowden and Smith (2005) is located in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand while Swick and Williams’ (2006) research was carried out in the USA.

Early childhood teachers as mesosystem agents.

Duncan et al.’s (2005) study, examining early childhood centres as places for supporting family resilience, employed an ecological perspective as a conceptual framework for identifying influences on family resilience. The ecological perspective enabled the researchers to map the meso, exo and macro impacts on family resilience. The early childhood centre was identified as providing mesosystem connections between the microsystems of early childhood centre and family. These mesosystem connections enabled families to engage with exosystem agencies to access support. The study concluded that the macrosystem constructs that impacted on aspects such as employment, health and education posed either a risk or a buffer for families’ ability to function effectively and that early childhood centres could support family resilience by strengthening mesosystem connections to exosystem services. The structural and process variables of the early childhood centre were significant influences on the success and degree of support.

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model has also been used by Swick and Williams (2006) to help early childhood educators understand and support families

experiencing stress. The authors emphasise the complexity of the impacts that the exo and macrosystems have on families and that families experiencing stress need strong mesosystems in order to function as human beings. Swick and Williams draw on literature and research from the fields of education, social work and child protection to evidence the multi-layered impacts on children and families' lives.

Similar to Duncan et al. (2005), Swick and William (2006) suggest that early childhood educators can be mesosystem agents and the early childhood centre can provide a 'community' for families. Linked to Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective, the authors make five recommendations for supporting families experiencing stress: help families develop caring and loving microsystems; encourage families in becoming more empowered in their exosystem relationships; nurture families in the ways they can use mesosystems to help them better respond to the stressors they face; advocate for stronger family support strategies and policies in the macrosystem contexts in which young families live and; help families learn from their personal, family, societal and historical lives. This study also has significant implications for my thesis.

A conceptual framework

From these two theorists a conceptual framework encompassing the inter-relationship of individual and environment began to emerge for me, which included the overarching concept of habitus. Each level of the ecological model is influenced by its own habitus.

The discursive ideologies of the macrosystem produce a habitus, which constructs power, and hence capital while the exosystem embodies the macrosystem habitus through policies and laws: the 'rules of the game'. The adherence in the exosystem to the macrosystem ideologies and belief systems creates a distinctive habitus for each field or sub-field of the exosystem, which then influences the habitus that is generated within specific microsystems. The mesosystem habitus is shaped according to the individual and collective habitus of microsystems and exosystems as individuals interact in different fields.

There are also complementary aspects between both theorists. While Bourdieu, as a sociologist, is interested in how things happen in the world, the interactions between individual and environment, Bronfenbrenner's theories focus on human development and how humans create the environment that impacts on that development. The emphasis on the ecological nature of human development contrasts with the more deterministic nature of habitus and provides opportunities for individuals to influence "the multiple physical and cultural tiers of the ecology that shapes them and this makes humans – for better or worse – active producers of their own development" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. xxvii). Hence Bourdieu's theories provide tools for investigating how the here-and-now is like it is, while Bronfenbrenner complements this individual-environment interaction by offering tools to explore how things might be done differently.

If individuals are to transform their habitus and through this transforming open up new possibilities for shaping their development, acquire more social and cultural capital and engage in new fields, then what might provide an impetus for such a transformation? The previous chapters have outlined the historical, social and cultural context to ascertain how the odds get to be stacked against people and explored the relationship between individual and environment. The following chapter continues the discussion of the individual-environment relationship with consideration as to how the individual can step outside the framing of the structures that may have stacked the odds against them to increase the odds in their favour and transform their lives.

Chapter 4.

Affordances: Helping change the odds

The previous chapter explored Bourdieu and Bronfenbrenner's ideas about the interrelationship of individual and environment. Both theorists position individuals with agency; the ability to see possibilities for oneself and endeavour to realise these possibilities, albeit with limitations attached. Bourdieu's somewhat deterministic notion of habitus through the interplay of past and present reproducing structures places limitations on the individual to transform their habitus. However his writing certainly argues for the individual exercising agency over their destiny through the structuring of structures. Bronfenbrenner, on the other hand, emphasises that the conditions required for individuals to change their life course rely on interventions and/or conditions within the meso and exo-systems. What might enable this restructuring and transformation?

In both theories the role of affordances can be applied to explain how individuals can transform their trajectories. The first section of this chapter examines the notion of affordances and their role in strengthening individual agency. Furthermore the section discusses the provision of opportunities for increasing the odds in favour of the individual and helping them realise their aspirations. In the final section of the chapter the potential of early childhood education to afford opportunities for adults to transform their trajectories is discussed in relation to relevant research.

Affordances and effectivities as sets of capacities for action

The term affordance was first coined by Gibson (1979) to explain what the environment offers an animal: "what it [the environment] *provides* or *furnishes* either for good or ill" (p. 127, emphasis in original). Affordances can be positive or negative, depending on the perception of the individual and what they wish to

achieve. Gee's (2008) definition of affordances suggests they are the objects or features of an environment that might be perceived and used by an individual to achieve certain goals. Gee contends that the individual needs to "have the capacity to transform the affordance into an actual and effective action" (p. 81). This transformation is dependent on the effectivities or "sets of capacities for actions" (Gee, 2008, p.81). The pairing of affordance and effectivity challenges the dualism of individual or environment and instead establishes an interrelationship or reciprocity between the individual and the environment. This reciprocity is similar to the concept of habitus and the interrelationship of micro and mesosystems. The developing individual may have a variety of goals to achieve pertaining to the physical, social and cognitive aspects of their lives. Achieving these goals requires reciprocal interactions between the individual and the historically and socially constructed environment. According to the individual's habitus, cultural and social capital will determine their ability or effectivity in recognising and utilising affordances successfully.

An individual who engages in a series of interactions with a specific goal in mind; for instance to achieve educational success, requires certain conditions to achieve such a goal and these conditions need to be meaningful for the individual. Barab and Roth (2006) theorise that knowing must be ecologically viewed so that the individual can meaningfully utilise their experiences and knowledge to achieve their goals and that the environment supports and 'even specifies numerous possibilities for action for those individuals with the requisite experiences and intentions' (p. 3). Thus the environment *offers* affordances for the individuals through features, artefacts or objects; including material, social and cultural. However, the individual not only needs to *recognise* the affordances but must also *have the requisite skills, capital, motivation and experiences* to engage meaningfully and successfully with the particular affordance, effectivities or sets of capacities for action.

Increasing the strength of demand of an affordance.

Merely providing affordances will therefore not be enough to encourage and enable goal achievement. The complexity of human interactions suggests that the

level of strength of an affordance may be significant in enabling the individual's recognition of that affordance. Increasing the level of demand of affordance concurrent with opportunities for increasing skills and motivation will multiply the conditions for recognising affordances. In an education field the strength of the learning opportunities have been categorised according to level of demand. Gresalfi (2009) suggests that the environment or a resource can afford learner's engagement through the strength or *forcefulness* of the opportunity while Claxton and Carr (2004) categorise the level of demand of opportunity as affording, inviting and provoking. These categories have been further elaborated on by Carr et al. (2009) as affording, inviting, actively engaging and provoking. Earlier research about parent engagement at the same research site as this thesis analysed features of an affordance network in terms of the level of demand: availability, invitation, and personalising (Clarkin-Phillips & Carr, 2012). In all of these examples the opportunities for individuals to engage was strengthened or weakened by their interactions with others, the 'culture' of the environment and the individual's disposition to 'take up' an opportunity.

Affordance networks

Barab and Roth (2006) have extended the ideas of affordances to include a notion of affordance networks that go beyond the perceptual characteristic of affordances outlined by Gibson (1979). According to Barab and Roth (2006) affordance networks include 'sets of perceptual and cognitive affordances that come to form the network for particular goal sets' (p.4). For example: in order to embark on a pathway of further education in the face of previous failure the individual will require the presence of certain affordances and the encouragement to recognise and utilise these affordances. The affordances might include: advertisements about particular courses or educational institutions; friends or family offering various supports; an interest in a particular field; an encounter in a new situation. If the individual is attuned to these affordances as relevant to their situation then acting on them is likely.

Recognising affordances as relevant and meaningful is enhanced and extended through networks of material, social and cultural interactions that function

towards goal achievement. As Barab and Roth (2006) suggest these networks include “a collection of facts, concepts, tools, methods, practices, agendas, commitments, and even people, taken with respect to an individual, that are distributed across time and space and are viewed as necessary for the satisfaction of particular goal sets” (p. 5). Thus the individual who makes a decision to take up educational opportunities may have initially been motivated by the success of someone in their social field. They might then begin to line up the aspects of their material, social and cognitive world to enable their pursuit of their goal.

Integrated early childhood education services for developing new possibilities for adult life trajectories

Two-generational intervention programmes.

Providing multiple opportunities for individuals to develop sets of capacities for action and utilise affordances can be transformative and can occur at any stage in life. Although there was evidence in Chapter 2 that the field of early childhood education is a crucial time for intervention particularly in laying foundations for positive cognitive, social and physical outcomes for *children*, involvement in early childhood education also affords opportunities for transforming *adult* lives. It is well documented that early childhood is a key setting for offering support and development opportunities for parents and families (Belsky, Barnes & Melhuish, 2007; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) and that early intervention programmes can make a difference for children and families, particularly those experiencing challenges. St Pierre, Layzer and Barnes’ (1995) discussion of two-generational programmes points out the significance of seeking to address the needs of both children and parents. Such programmes generally provide a range of services including early childhood education, parenting programmes, vocational education and health programmes. Programmes such as Head Start and Sure Start, discussed in Chapter 2 recognised the benefits of providing some other services, such as health visitors, alongside the early childhood education service to help address some of the challenges facing families. Such programmes endeavour to tackle the exo and mesosystems.

Two-generational programmes have in recent times in countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia evolved into ‘joined-up’ or integrated services (Corter & Pelletier, 2010; Press, Sumsion & Wong, 2010; Belsky et al., 2007). Integrated services are seen as an effective way of meeting the growing, complex needs of families, particularly the disadvantaged, and mitigating social exclusion. The Sure Start initiative moved from Sure Start centres to Children’s Centres in 2006 under the Blair government, with the promise that by 2010 there would be a Children’s Centre in every community (Anning & Ball, 2008). These centres offered a range of co-located services for children and families. Early childhood education is an integral component of an integrated service and indeed the early childhood service is often regarded as a non-stigmatising, non-threatening and voluntary entry point for vulnerable families – a field that can readily provide an affordance network for extended capacities for action.

The complexity of literature about integrated early years services.

The literature discussing integrated services transverses the following topics: reasons for integrated services (Atwool, 2003; Powell & McLachlan, 2008; Woodruff & O’Brien, 2005), the extent of provision of integrated services (Eurydice, 2006; Moore, 2008; Press et al., 2010), models of integration (Armstrong & Hill, 2001; Atkinson, Doherty & Kinder, 2005; Horwath & Morrison, 2007), leadership and inter-professional issues (Nichols & Jurvansuu, 2008; Paton, 2007; Press, 2012; Sharp et al., 2012; Stöbe-Blossey, 2013) and, the enablers and constraints to effective integration (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998; Horwath & Morrison, 2007; Robinson, Atkinson & Downing, 2008; Siraj-Blatchford, Clarke, & Needham, 2007; Simpkins & Garrick, 2012). Literature about integrated early years services crosses a range of disciplines demonstrating a discourse of acceptance and support for such services. Although much of the cross-disciplinary discussion of integrated early years services highlights the tensions and issues in realising effective services there is generally an implicit acceptance that integrated early years services can provide powerful opportunities for reducing the vulnerability of families.

The theoretical framing determining the benefits of integrated services is predominantly from a sociocultural or ecological perspective. Bronfenbrenner’s

(1979) model, already described emphasising the wider context of the lives of children and families, has significantly influenced the development of integrated services (Anning & Ball, 2007; Beaty, 2011; Belsky et al., 2007; Broadhead et al., 2008). The holistic nature of development and the intersecting impacts of social, cultural and political influences in an integrated service provide the potential for early intervention to mitigate against negative outcomes. Such theoretical underpinning situates the mesosystem as the focus of the intervention and aims to offer support for those intimately involved in the child's life. Apparent in this discourse is the assumption that if the adults in a child's life are well supported then the child is more likely to experience positive outcomes. However, in comparison to the literature focussed on the practice and processes of integrated services, there is less focus on the understanding of the potential of integrated early years services for *adults'* trajectories. Beaty (2011), Broadhead et al. (2008), Whalley (2004), and Wigfall (2002) are exceptions who include a focus on adults.

A focus of this thesis is the possible affordances of integrated early years services in offering new possibilities for adult life trajectories. There is always an assumption that, in general, if the adults in a child's life are experiencing success in realising their aspirations then the child's microsystem is likely to be supportive and conducive to positive developmental outcomes; identifying and activating affordances for adults has benefits for children. For both these reasons it is worthwhile exploring how integrated early years services might afford opportunities for assisting families to change trajectories.

International and national literature about effective early years integrated services.

A range of literature outlines key components for an effective early intervention programme that will afford opportunities for adults with many similarities and agreement about the key components, for instance: Broadhead et al. (2008); Gasper (2010); Moore (2008); New Zealand Families Commission (2011); Sykora (2005). Much of the literature from the United Kingdom outlining components of effective integrated early years services draws on either the evaluations and 'lessons learned' from Sure Start and Head Start or is the analysis of single or

multiple site qualitative research (Belsky et al., 2007; Broadhead et al., 2008; Draper & Duffy, 2001; Gasper, 2010; Whalley, 2004).

Likewise Australian literature reviews of integrated services (Moore, 2008; Press, Sumsion & Wong 2010; Wong & Sumsion, 2013) gather their understandings from international research, particularly the United Kingdom, and from case studies of local examples of integrated services. Moore's (2008) literature review examines international literature to explore types and models of integration, best practice models both internationally and in Australia and the evidence of efficacy. The review also outlines barriers and enablers to establishing integrated services. Press, Sumsion and Wong's (2010) research of integrated early years provision in Australia used a national survey and ten case studies of integrated services across six of the Australian states/territories. This research was informed by Moore's (2008) review of literature and extended to include updated and previously excluded literature. Wong and Sumsion (2013) conducted a thematic review of integrated early years services to ascertain the need for further research and possible foci for research. These studies have all contributed to a deeper understanding of the complexity of collaboration, the effectiveness or otherwise of integrated services and policy implications.

There is very little accessible literature from the USA that discusses effective early years integrated services apart from the synthesis of research from programmes such as Head Start, Perry/High Scope and Chicago Child-Parent Centers. The concept of integrated services has been taken up in the USA under the nomenclature of 'full service' or community schools. In general the integration of services and cross agency collaboration occurs at elementary or high school level rather than in conjunction with early childhood education (Dryfoos, 2002). Community schools are largely state or county initiatives and have recently been part of a movement for family/school partnerships (American Federation of Teachers, 2009; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Numerous and varied programmes focussed on family/school partnerships and service integration including early childhood education abound across North America with a federally funded initiative based on a dual capacity building framework for

teachers and families being implemented under the Investing in Innovation project (U.S Department of Education, 2009).

Literature from an Aotearoa New Zealand context also draws from the international research to provide a basis for evidence of effectiveness. This literature discusses small-scale or single site studies (Biddulph, Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003; Duncan et al., 2005; Munford, Sanders, Maden & Maden, 2007; Levine, 2009; New Zealand Families Commission, 2011; Powell & McLachlan, 2008; Robilliard, 2005; Sykora, 2005). Biddulph et al. (2003) carried out a 'best evidence synthesis' about the complexity of community and family influences on children's educational achievement in New Zealand. The final section of the synthesis discusses integrated services in relation to addressing multiple aspects of children and family development. Key principles of effective partnerships including integrated services are outlined from the synthesised research of national and international studies.

The other Aotearoa New Zealand study that outlines key components of effective integrated early years services are the New Zealand Families Commission *Principles of 'what works' for early-intervention services* (2011), while Robilliard (2005) and Sykora (2005) both use international examples and literature to inform policy and practice in New Zealand. These three sources have used a variety of international and national studies and evaluations to construct key components. The New Zealand Families Commission draws predominantly from United Kingdom literature as well as a small number of New Zealand qualitative studies while Robilliard (2005) and Sykora (2005) both rely heavily on longitudinal and mixed method studies from the USA.

Integrated early years services as affordances for adults

In an attempt to understand what and how early years integrated services may provide affordances for adults, the ten most common components of effective early intervention programmes have been synthesised from the literature. Table 1 outlines the common components in ranked order according to the number of studies listing a specific component. After the synthesising and ranking of the

components they have then been explored through qualitative studies, which include comments and quotes from teachers and/or families that demonstrate a particular component. This exploration attempts to ascertain how integrated early years programmes have benefitted adults. As already stated, the findings from studies about two-generational and early intervention programmes have predominantly focussed on outcomes for children.

The decision to give priority to literature that included the voices of teachers and/or families was in part a response to the Vandenberg, Roets and Roose (2012) thesis with regards to the evidence-based paradigm of research discussed in Chapter 2 and in part because of a strong personal belief in the validity of the individual voice. Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart (2010) in their publication about effective pre-school education provision bemoan the fact that the generally large-scale and ‘objective’ nature of the research design rendered mostly silent the individual voices of thousands of children, teachers and parents. They contend that small scale or qualitative research has much to offer in “bringing alive the voices of children and their carers” (p. 232). Likewise Joanou, Holiday and Swadener (2012) argue for the perspectives of families as crucial in providing rich, in-depth insights to inform practice. These authors use qualitative data including interviews and focus groups to compensate for the anonymising and homogenising of a large longitudinal evaluation of a state-wide initiative and to more holistically portray the experiences of children and families (p.102). Qualitative research that includes the voices of participants enables the contextualisation of complex variables associated with families, children and their interactions with the social world. My own belief in the power of story and the subjectivity of individual experience aligns with these arguments.

Table 1. Synthesis of ten key components of effective integrated early years programmes from literature.

Most commonly cited components	Literature source
Significant parent and community involvement	Beaty (2011), Belsky et al. (2007), Bertrand (2009), Biddulph et al. (2003), Broadhead et al. (2008), Gasper (2010), New Zealand Families Commission [NZFC] (2011), Robinson et al. (2008), Sykora, (2005).
Comprehensive provision of services	Beaty (2011), Belsky et al. (2007), Bertrand (2009), Broadhead et al. (2008), Gasper (2010), Moore (2008), NZFC (2011), Robinson et al. (2008), Sykora, (2005).
Non-stigmatising, non-judgemental, strengths based accessibility, including entry and retention	Belsky et al. (2007), Bertrand (2009), Biddulph et al. (2003), Broadhead et al. (2008), Gasper (2010), NZCF (2011), Robilliard (2005), Sykora (2005).
Sound theoretical basis	Anning & Ball (2007), Beaty (2011), Moore (2008), NZFC (2011), Robilliard (2005), Sykora (2005).
Enduring and embedded in community	Biddulph et al. (2003), Broadhead et al. (2008), Gasper (2010), NZFC (2011), Robinson et al. (2008).
Strong, trusting relationships between professionals and families	Belsky et al. (2007), Biddulph et al. (2003), Broadhead et al. (2008), Robilliard (2005), Sykora, (2005).
Culturally responsive and sensitive staff	Belsky et al. (2007), Biddulph et al. (2003), NZFC, (2011), Robilliard (2005).
Qualified, professional staff	Beaty (2011), Bertrand (2009), Moore (2008), Sykora (2005).
Flexible, adaptable approach	Gasper (2010), NZFC (2011), Sykora (2005).
Robust, formative, evaluative processes	Moore (2008), NZFC (2011).

Evidence from families and teachers about effective integrated early years services

As noted earlier very few of the multitude of reports, books and papers written about integrated early year's services include the voices of families and/or teachers. A total of 13 studies from the examination of approximately 70 books, articles and research reports from 2003 to the present, revealed qualitative research including comments, quotes, vignettes and narratives from families

and/or teachers. Some of these studies also gathered data from questionnaires, surveys and case studies (Beaty, 2011; Duncan et al., 2006; Gasper, 2010). These studies are: Beaty, 2011; Broadhead et al., 2008; Campbell, 2003; Clarke & French, 2007; Cottle, 2011; Duncan et al., 2006; Gasper, 2010; Handley et al., 2009; Imtoul, Kameniar and Bradley, 2009; Medvedev, 2013; Paton, 2007; Whalley, 2004; and Wigfall, 2002. The following section reviews these studies to explore the components of Table 1 to ascertain if these components are relevant for providing affordances for adults.

In the first instance it must be noted that all of the 13 studies use the voices of parents and teachers to illustrate a positive aspect of the research: ‘how it worked’ or ‘what it looked like in practice’. Exceptions within this use of participant voice by researchers were Cottle (2011) and Campbell (2003). These two authors included negative comments from practitioners about the implementation of integrated initiatives, the issues of cross-agency understandings and expectations as well as the demands from funding agencies, legislation and compliance requirements.

Component 1. Significant parent and community involvement.

Effective integrated early years services are built on the premise that a ‘bottom up’ rather than a ‘top down’ model will sustain parent and community involvement (Bertrand, 2009; New Zealand Families Commission, 2011). This ‘bottom up’ approach works with parents and the community in shared decision making in the development, implementation and delivery of the programme. Governance and leadership structures include members of the community. (Broadhead et al., 2008; Gasper, 2010). The opportunities provided through decision-making and leadership roles is an affordance for adults to; use their skills, increase their confidence, develop new skills and build social networks. The following five studies exemplify this component through parent voices.

Beaty (2011) in her book entitled *Integrated Children’s Centres* uses examples from case studies, qualitative research studies and evaluations from a range of Sure Start Children’s centres. Beaty also draws from her own experiences and networks as a Programme Manager in a Children’s Centre. One of the examples is

a letter from a parent outlining the opportunities afforded her through initial involvement at the centre and subsequent role on the governing body, which led to further educational opportunities. For this parent the level of the demand of affordance increased from her initial engagement at the centre. As she built relationships with the staff they encouraged her to take on other roles and eventually she realised her aspiration to work in a school. Further examples include a parent on the governance board of a Children's Centre expounding the benefits of involvement to their confidence-building and sense of agency (p. 158) and a parent who was encouraged to set up a regular physical activity group for pre-schoolers. The parent in the former example went on to further education and training.

Whalley (2004) provides a range of examples of parents talking about their involvement in the decision-making of parent programmes at the Pen Green Centre. One chapter details the story of a parent who became a family worker through her involvement at the centre. She has co-lead research and led a parent group. The experiences of three parents as members of the group are included with accompanying biographies. The three parents have all found opportunities to use and increase their skills and participate in further education.

Examples from 23 children's centres in the United Kingdom are used in Michael Gasper's book *Multi-agency working in the early years* (2010) to illustrate partnership in practice include narratives from teachers about families. One such case study outlines the establishment of a centre and the input that the families had in decision-making about the types of activities they wanted.

Broadhead et al.'s (2008) account of the evolution of Sheffield Children's Centre includes a range of family vignettes that provide narratives of families' experiences of involvement with the children's centre. The centre was established with significant input from the community and on-going decision-making involves staff and centre users including adults and children. The family vignettes speak of the affordances that have enabled adults to access the support to meet their needs, the opportunities to learn different skills and realise new possibilities.

An Aotearoa New Zealand example of an early years integrated service that includes parent and teacher voice in its research and has a basis of significant family and community involvement is Te Aroha Noa Community Service (Handley et al., 2009). This research about developing a theory of change for a community includes a narrative from a parent about their involvement in decision-making and shared projects. For this parent the affordances offered through her involvement increased her networks, gave her greater confidence, enabled her to be an advocate for the community and provided opportunities for positive development.

In four of these examples (Beaty, 2011; Gasper, 2010; Handley et al., 2009; Whalley, 2004) the initial contact and engagement by families was with services focussed on children's learning such as a playgroup, nursery or early childhood centre. Whalley's (2004) book focuses on involving families in children's learning so it is expected that there will be a strong link between families and early childhood education while Beaty (2011) has drawn her examples from her connections as a teacher and programme manager at a children's centre. Broadhead et al. (2008) have varied backgrounds, experiences and connections with the Sheffield Children's Centre, which could account for examples of families accessing services other than through the early childhood education service provision.

Nevertheless becoming involved in their children's learning appears to be the impetus for a number of families in these examples to think about their own learning and futures. A number of studies demonstrate the positive effects on child outcomes when families are involved in the child's learning (Bishop, Berryman, Richardson & Tiakiwai, 2003; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Hands & Hubbard, 2011; Harris, Andrew-Power & Goodall, 2009; Hattie 2009). Swick and Williams (2006), writing about families experiencing stress, emphasise the role of early childhood professionals in engaging families. Often some form of early childhood education is the first encounter families may have with professionals outside of the health sector and becoming involved can open up possibilities for developing or extending sets of capacities for action.

The examples described illustrate that when families are involved in decision-making and have opportunities to express their opinions about how to meet their needs and these views are acted on, then the range and variety of services are likely to be appropriate and comprehensive as is discussed in relation to the second component.

Component 2. Comprehensive provision of services.

This component takes account of the complexity of individuals' and families' lives and addresses the holistic nature of development. Integrated early years services that include a comprehensive range of services can hope to meet multiple needs and provide multiple affordances.

Wigfall's study of the Thomas Coram Community Campus outlines the services available for families (2002). These services include: a nursery offering education and care; after school and holiday club; support for children with special needs; drop-in centre for parents; access to education and training; child and women health facilities; a child psychologist; social worker; creative arts centre; homeless families centre, and early years training. An analysis of the use of services or activities within services showed over half the families had engaged in three or more activities since coming to the campus. The study includes a case study of a family and their use of the services demonstrating a comprehensive range of activities that benefitted the family and provided for multiple needs. Other examples of families using the services and being involved in activities are wide ranging and attest to the positive affordances provided for families. The parents comment about the convenience of having multiple services on the one campus.

The Pen Green Centre for under fives and their families has, over 32 years, developed and extended the range of services it offers families (Whalley, 2004). This 'one-stop' shop in Northamptonshire, United Kingdom, provides: early childhood education facilities; services for children with special educational needs; health services, social welfare services and; adult education. The book entitled *Involving parents in their children's learning* written by members of the Pen Green team includes five case studies of parents. Four out of five of the families in the case studies accessed a range of services at the centre (particularly

those services and activities that involved their children) with quotes about the usefulness of the services and the benefits afforded through their involvement. All of the reported case study families commented on the way in which they had been able to address physical, emotional, social and educational needs by accessing services.

The Sheffield Family Centre discussed by Broadhead et al. (2008) outlines the services provided at the centre. The following is not an exhaustive list of services: early childhood education; family support services; advocacy support, welfare services; health, including mental health services; support services for socially excluded groups; translation services; adult education; immigration and legal support services; grief counselling; and respite care. The numerous vignettes recorded in the study provide graphic illustrations of the types of, and in a number of cases, life saving support, provided through the centre's services.

A comprehensive range of services is only helpful to families if they are easily accessed and families feel welcomed and empowered to engage. The third ranked component of effective integrated early years services is about accessibility.

Component 3. Non-stigmatising, non-judgmental, strengths based accessibility, including entry and retention.

This component is highlighted in a range of literature as seen in Table 1 and in many respects complements the first key component in that involving family and community in decision-making and governance roles requires an acceptance of diversity. It could be argued however that the 'involvement' of families and community members may still privilege those individuals that are 'most like us'.

Families, particularly those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable (whether perceived or actual) need 'soft' entry points where they are welcomed with warmth and acceptance regardless of their situation. Early childhood education is generally regarded as a soft entry point: there is no compulsion for children to attend early childhood education. This is the case internationally and with the exception of families in receipt of a social security benefit the same applies in Aotearoa New Zealand. There is in some jurisdictions (UK, Australia), a system

of referral for children as a condition of state protection or intervention. Recent legislative changes to the Social Welfare Act in Aotearoa New Zealand require single parents receiving a state benefit to enrol their youngest child in early childhood education at 3 years of age or face sanctions (Ministry of Social Development, 2012). However, for the majority of parents, accessing early childhood education is a choice, which carries no stigma. In many instances accessing the services of an early childhood centre is for families to meet the needs of their employment commitments. Research has found that integrating services with an early childhood centre are more effective than those where another service is the entry point (Belsky et al., 2007; Freiberg et al., 2005).

In Chapter 2 strengths-based or an empowerment theory was discussed. Effective integrated early years services operate on such a premise where families are viewed as “people with promise” rather than “families at risk” (Biddulph et al., 2003, p. 171). Laursen (2000) contends that operating from a strengths-based approach enables families to engage and seek help through the affirmation and recognition of their strengths and efficacy. Families who encounter professionals who believe in the families’ ability to build on their own expertise and realise their aspirations given the appropriate support are more likely to begin to recognise and utilise affordances.

Literature about ‘hard to reach’ families (Boag-Munroe & Evangelou, 2012) suggests that it is services that need to consider the ways in which they respond to families particularly on first encounter in order to establish engagement rather than categorising families as ‘hard to reach’. It is the non-stigmatising and non-judgmental opportunities for families such as playgroups (Press et al., 2010; Whalley, 2004) school cafés or coffee mornings (Clarke & French, 2007; Medvedev, 2013) or a drop-in centre (Press et al., 2010; Wigfall, 2002) to engage families on their own terms that are likely to afford opportunities over time.

Informal opportunities such as listed above are particularly significant in addressing social exclusion (Edwards, 2004). As highlighted in Chapter 2 social exclusion is regarded as a major contributor to vulnerability, hence one of the tenets of integrated service provision is to provide opportunities for alleviating

social exclusion (Paton, 2007; Wong & Sumsion, 2013). Early childhood centres can provide informal opportunities and for families whose previous experience of education has been negative, early childhood education appears less threatening than the compulsory sector of education (Peters, 2004).

Some literature uses the terms ‘no wrong door’ (Moore, 2008) or ‘back-door’ entry (New Zealand Families Commission, 2011) to describe the accessibility discourse of integrated early years services. This discourse alludes to both the physical and metaphorical entry points. The physical entry needs to be welcoming, easily accessed and services well signposted and described (Moore, 2008). Wigfall (2002) in her study of the Thomas Coram one-stop shop found that some families found accessing the right service amongst many related services was sometimes difficult. The metaphor of ‘no wrong’ door or ‘back door’ entry reinforces the non-stigmatising of families’ needs and the responsiveness of the service no matter where, how or why a family has decided to make contact with a service.

Alongside the entry point for families is the accessibility of distance: Sure Start centres were to be within ‘pram-pushing’ distance for families (Belsky et al., 2007). In localities where there is little or no public transport and families do not have access to a vehicle, distance and transport can be a significant barrier (Joanou et al., 2012).

Seven studies include family and teacher voices that indicated the importance of non-judgemental, non-stigmatising, strengths-based accessibility (Broadhead et al., 2008; Clarke & French, 2007; Duncan et al., 2006; Imtoul et al., 2009; Medvedev, 2013; Paton, 2007; Wigfall, 2002).

The vignettes from families at the Sheffield Children’s centre highlight the equal opportunities policy of the centre. The families experienced this policy in action through the non-stigmatising, multiple access to services and commitment of staff to assist families to solve problems and build expertise (Broadhead et al., 2008). The fact that the centre employs a diverse range of personnel reflecting the

ethnicities, cultures and experiences of the community, strengthens the accessibility of the centre.

Research carried out in 2003 for the New Zealand Ministry of Social Development in three early childhood centres located in marginalised areas interviewed 28 families and nine teachers to identify ways in which the centres supported the development of resilience in families (Duncan et al., 2006). The early childhood centres accessed a range of services and personnel to support parents but these services were not co-located at the early childhood centre. These interviews revealed the importance for families of the initial welcome, and the commitment of staff to families. The families also talked about not feeling judged about their life circumstances or parenting. Being involved at the early childhood centre enabled families to widen their networks and make friends.

Similarly the case study family from The Thomas Coram Community Campus commented on how not feeling judged about their child's behaviour was significant in their willingness to access services and return to the campus (Wigfall, 2002). This study also reports that other case study families "spoke very positively and warmly" of their interactions with the services at the campus (p.120).

A kindergarten in Australia involved in research (Imtoul et al., 2009) has become a significant mediator for families accessing services. The friendly, welcoming staff who subscribe to an empowerment model comment that it is this strengths-based and non-judgmental approach to engaging families that has enabled them to experience success. A practice of '*yarnin*' (an Aboriginal-English term that indicates informal but meaningful conversation) was crucial for building relationships, being culturally responsive and sensitive and breaking down barriers. Examples of '*yarnin*' demonstrate the range and complexity of issues traversed through this practice and how it affirmed families and approached difficulties matter-of-factly without apportioning blame or causing shame.

Medvedev's (2013) study of school cafés in Germany included comments from parents and teachers about the usefulness of the cafés for informal opportunities to

find support. The cafés are organised largely by parents, which encourages other families to be involved. Opportunities for using skills, extending skills and being involved in advocacy were some of the benefits talked about by parents and teachers: the author described it as “a place of emancipation” (p. 65). Similarly a case study cited by Clarke and French (2007) demonstrated the affordance of a coffee group for families. The families in the case study commented on the informality, the opportunity to chat and how their involvement increased their confidence and led to employment opportunities.

Teachers’ perspectives about their views of parents indicate a discourse of equality in a study of eight Sure Start centres in Scotland (Paton, 2007). A commitment to empowering parents to have agency in decisions about the services they access is demonstrated in this teacher comment “...and again trying to break down barriers and seeing them as equals, allowing us to support their need, whatever that may be” (p. 447).

The accessibility of services and the discursive views of professionals about accessibility are largely dependent on the theoretical underpinning of the service. Component 4 outlines the significance of a sound theoretical basis for effective integrated early years services.

Component 4. Sound theoretical basis.

Integrated early years services have traditionally been founded on sociocultural theories that recognise the significance of the social, cultural, historical and political contexts of individuals and families. A shift in paradigm from the child as the focus of the intervention to situating the child in the context of the family has encouraged the development of integrated service provision in parallel to policy foci on eliminating poverty (Belsky et al., 2007). The other contributors to theoretical framings for integration are Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979) and social capital theory (Coleman, 1988; Jack & Jordan, 1999). Bourdieu’s theories did not feature in any of the reviewed literature.

The majority of literature reviewed were underpinned by dominant policies such as *‘Every Child Matters’* and associated theories (most commonly

Bronfenbrenner), particularly those involving Sure Start and Children's Centres (Beaty, 2011; Campbell, 2003; Duncan et al., 2006; Freiberg et al., 2005; Medvedev, 2013; Paton, 2007; Wigfall, 2002). Three studies employing alternative theoretical approaches were Broadhead et al. (2008), Handley et al. (2009) and Imtoul et al. (2009). Broadhead et al. (2008) use the work of Castells (2004) and Calhoun (1994) to frame the construct of a project identity in describing their community co-operative while Handley et al. (2009) apply a metaphor based on a New Zealand coastal perennial grass: the spinafex, to encapsulate the theoretical base for their integrated service practice. Imtoul et al. (2009) theorise their work under three themes of structure, curriculum and relationships.

The theorising of integrated early years services is also complicated in some jurisdictions by a state, federal or national curriculum for early childhood education (Australia, UK, NZ). Such curricula may complement the wider policy theory, for example, *Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand early childhood curriculum is underpinned by sociocultural theory and explicitly outlines Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Ministry of Education, 1996). For teachers in integrated early years settings it is likely to be the influence of a specific curriculum and teacher beliefs and values that are articulated.

The perspectives of teachers and/or parents implicitly alluding to a theoretical basis for effective integrated practice were evident in three studies: Broadhead et al. (2008), Duncan et al. (2006), and Imtoul et al. (2009). Comments included reference to staff having the same philosophy about families: "our job isn't just about being with kids. It's about being with families" (Duncan et al., 2006, p. 7); "when you enrol a child, you actually enrol a family" (Imtoul et al., 2009, p. 26) and "I've been working [with them [the centre] for ten years. I heard about their co-operative principles" (Broadhead et al., 2008, p. 16).

Integrated early years services that have a strong theoretical basis will use this theory to justify decisions that can influence the sustainability of engagement. This sustained engagement can further assist opportunities or affordances for

transforming lives. The fifth component of effective integrated early years services focuses on the temporal nature of provision.

Component 5. Enduring and embedded in community.

Many Sure Start or Children's Centres such as Pen Green (Whalley, 2004), The Thomas Coram Community Centre (Wigfall, 2002) and the Sheffield Children's Centre (Broadhead et al., 2008) have been in operation for several years. They have over the years navigated through a plethora of policy initiatives and political discourses affecting funding, resourcing, accountability and delivery of services. Likewise Te Aroha Noa Community Centre (Handley et al., 2009) in Aotearoa New Zealand has grown and developed over two decades. These centres have all become essential to the community and families know they can rely on them. The complexity of families' lives requires stable and long-term opportunities for engagement.

Integrated early years services need to be sustained so that families come to know that this is a service that can be relied on. Opportunities for changing lives and the change process does not happen quickly and the greater the change required the longer the process. Integrated services that are entrenched in legislation and policy are more likely to survive political whims however they are still at the mercy of funding decisions and legislative changes (Belsky et al., 2007). The longevity of effective integrated early years services requires passionate and committed governance and leadership who will advocate, lobby and fight for the survival and growth of the service (Beaty, 2011; Broadhead et al., 2008).

In the account of the kindergarten and associated services by Imtoul et al. (2009), a teacher commented on how families continue to contact staff long after their child has gone to school. The constancy and stability of having a service that families trust was imperative in effectively supporting the community.

The many examples from Broadhead et al. (2008) include families recounting how long they have been accessing services or been involved with the centre, ranging from 1 to 10 years. Some families had very complex situations to unravel

and obviously the on-going and comprehensive support from the centre enabled sustained change to occur.

The parents in Whalley's (2004) book had all been involved for some years with the centre, in most cases initially as parents accessing services then later as workers or educators. They spoke of the benefits of being able to readily access a variety of services at different times according to different circumstances.

The case study in Wigfall (2002) documented the family's involvement with the centre over three years. The family was still accessing services and benefitting from their involvement and "could not imagine how they would have managed without the campus" (p. 120).

Integrated early years services have the benefit of time for affording families opportunities through the provision of early childhood education. A family attending an early childhood centre or playgroup may have between 1-5 years of involvement depending on the age of their children. If they feel welcomed and valued their involvement is likely to be sustained and opportunities for new possibilities taken up. An integrated early years service that has been central to a community for some time will have developed the strong, trusting relationships that sustain engagement and lead to more permanent change. Component 6 of effective integrated early years services is about the importance of relationships.

Component 6. Strong, trusting relationships between professionals and families.

Relationships are key to human interactions and having strong, trusting relationships builds resilience and social and cultural capital. In integrated early years services respectful and responsive relationships between professionals and families contribute to the well-being of the organisation (Broadhead et al., 2008; Gasper, 2010). Particularly important is the opportunity for staff to build strong trusting relationships with families. It is these relationships that keep families engaged and enable persistent attempts to support needs. It is through respectful relationships that families reveal aspects of their lives that require support and

enable staff to recognise families' strengths and funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Strong, trusting relationships lead to affordances for new possibilities.

Although only one study (Duncan et al., 2006) included comments that referred explicitly to relationships, I have made the assumption that many of the other illustrations of family involvement are indicative of the strong, trusting relationships between families and staff. In Duncan et al. (2006) two different teachers talked about building relationships with families: "you've got to build up a relationship with them, don't you? And building up a relationship is talking to them..." (p.7); "So it's important to have that relationship and communication" (p.8).

The research by Imtoul et al. (2009) is framed around the concept of relationships, with teacher comments as illustrations. Relationships in this study signify negotiations between individuals and individuals and groups as well as the "interpersonal feelings of warmth and acceptance" (p. 25) including values around caring and respect. The teachers commented about supporting families with difficult and complex situations, accepting families without judgement and spending time '*yarnin*' to build relationships and address issues.

In both Whalley (2004) and Broadhead et al. (2008), the narratives and vignettes from families and staff indicated trust and warmth and strong relationships. In all sixteen family vignettes in Broadhead et al. (2008), families all commented about how different their lives would be, in a negative sense, if they had not been involved with the Children's Centre. Comments such as "I don't know where I would be without the centre" (p. 35); "without them [the centre] I would be drunk in some gutter without my children" (p. 34) and "It [the centre] changed my life forever" (p. 35) were common. Transformative changes such as experienced by these families does not happen without strong, trusting relationships.

There is also evidence in two studies of relationships between families, which have helped ameliorate social isolation and provided affordances or helped families recognise affordances. Duncan et al. (2006) recorded parents talking about the friendships they had made through their involvement at the centre,

which had widened their social networks and involved them in other projects and community events. Whalley (2004) also included parents talking about relationships they have formed with other families through their involvement with the centre.

Three other studies include teacher perspectives about relationships. Cottle's (2011) research about issues of quality in Sure Start centres involved staff from 11 centres. Comments about building relationships with families and the challenges of building cross-disciplinary relationships are made by the teachers. Gasper (2010) included case studies of teachers talking about building and maintaining relationships with other service providers in the integrated early years centres. These examples illustrate partnership, trust and shared understandings. The case studies have been included to exemplify how partnerships can work positively. Paton's (2007) study of policy and practice in Scottish Sure Start early childhood centres used data from interviews with heads of 47 centres. The interviews revealed comments about trust and shared expectations between service providers. Hand in hand with strong, trusting relationships is the cultural responsiveness and sensitivity of staff.

Component 7. Culturally responsive and sensitive staff.

The concept of hospitality as espoused by Derrida (2000) highlights approaches to cultural responsiveness to inure prejudice and judgement. Unconditional hospitality according to Derrida “does not consist in..... an invitation (‘I invited you, I welcome you into my home, on the condition that you adapt to the laws and norms of my territory according to my language, tradition, memory and so on’)” (2003, p.128) which Derrida defines as a hospitality of invitation. Rather he goes on to describe pure and unconditional hospitality as a hospitality of visitation and is one that

opens or is in advance open to someone who is neither expected nor invited, to whomever arrives as an absolute foreign visitor, as a new arrival, non-identifiable and unforeseeable, in short wholly other. I would call this a hospitality of visitation rather than invitation. (2003, p. 129)

A hospitality of visitation is particularly pertinent amongst diverse communities where the services may be staffed by professionals of the dominant culture. The responsiveness of staff to cultural expectations will determine the strength of relationships and families' willingness to engage. Recognising and valuing families' cultures is an affordance that can be utilised to realise aspirations. Five of the ten studies reporting families' and teachers' perspectives made reference to cultural responsiveness.

The commitment of the teachers in the service outlined by Imtoul et al. (2009) to adopt a cultural practice of '*yarnin*' was successful in engaging aboriginal families where other services had failed. Families in this study attested to the cultural sensitivity of staff in encouraging families to remain engaged. The employing of Aboriginal teachers also added to families' level of comfort with accessing services.

Research about a developmental prevention project in Australia (Freiberg et al., 2005) includes a family case study. The informal engagement of the family through the early childhood centre and playgroup enabled the mother to access a range of services to address pressing needs. The acceptance by the staff of the families' cultural expectations helped the family to engage through quiet, sensitive and persistent contact.

At Sheffield Children's Centre (Broadhead et al., 2008) the commitment to employing a diverse range of people reflecting the diversity of the community enabled families to feel valued, understood and included. The commitment of the centre staff to combat racism meant advocating and supporting families in a range of negative situations. In one vignette a family member commented about the support they received when their baby was stillborn "they [the centre staff] had a strong sense of our culture and helped the hospital understand" (p. 32).

In the study of three early childhood centres in Aotearoa New Zealand, parents commented about staff using the indigenous language and encouraging children and parents to value each other's culture. The recognition by staff of cultural

values and expectations was appreciated by parents and made families feel welcomed (Duncan et al., 2006).

These examples demonstrate the significance of cultural sensitivity and responsiveness for family involvement. Integrated early years services practising a hospitality of visitation will be able to afford a range of opportunities for families.

Component 8. Qualified, professional staff.

The issue of qualified staff involved in integrated early years services is vexed due to two particular issues: different services have varying requirements about qualifications; and many services engage families through volunteer work (Beaty, 2011; Bertrand, 2009; Moore, 2008; Sykora, 2005). However there is agreement that specialised training and appropriate qualifications are needed for effective integrated early years services. The involvement of volunteers in services often requires some basic training (Broadhead et al., 2008; Whalley, 2004). A growing body of literature about integrated early years leadership and qualifications highlights the changing role of teachers in integrated centres (Beaty, 2011; Duffy & Marshall, 2007; Gasper, 2010; Sharp et al., 2012; Stanley, 2007) with a call for a specific qualification for leaders. The Pen Green centre has developed the National Professional Qualification in Integrated Care Leadership (Beaty, 2011; Gasper, 2010). Moore (2008) cites an Australian training survey which outlined the following training requirements for those professionals working with children: communication and counselling skills, family-centred practice, cross-cultural competence, interdisciplinary teamwork, inter-agency collaboration and inclusive practices and use of the natural environment (p. 29).

One study contained a teacher comment that explicitly mentioned qualifications (Cottle, 2011) while Beaty (2011), Broadhead et al. (2008), Clarke and French (2007) and Whalley (2004) all include family commentary about the various qualifications individuals have obtained or are in the process of obtaining since becoming involved in their respective integrated early years services.

Component 9. Flexible, adaptable approach.

Effective integrated early years services are flexible and adaptable in their approach to meeting the needs and aspirations of families (Gasper, 2010; NZFC, 2011; Sykora, 2005). Gasper (2010) suggests that good partnership and collaboration requires flexibility amongst services and a willingness to step outside of rigid structures to create different ways of working.

Although none of the studies presenting family and teacher voices made any explicit reference to flexibility, the authors in four studies conceptualised some of the comments as demonstrating flexibility or adaptability. Cottle (2011) categorised a teacher's remarks about meeting and being responsive to children and families needs as an indication of quality while Broadhead et al. (2008) felt the vignettes of families' use of services demonstrated flexibility and responsiveness.

Clarke and French (2007) described the teachers' practice as flexible in response to a request of providing for a drop-in facility at the families' requests. Teachers writing about their experiences with engaging families in Whalley (2004) talked about adaptability in methods of engagement.

Component 10. Robust, formative, evaluative processes.

The literature suggests that integrated early years services can be supported by robust, formative, evaluative processes for effectiveness (Moore, 2008; New Zealand Families Commission, 2011). However despite the need for robust evaluative processes this component appears to be the most contentious (Wong & Sumsion, 2013). Evaluating outcomes and effectiveness assists providers of integrated early years services to judge 'what works' and 'what doesn't work'. Nevertheless as Vandebroek et al. (2012) and Biesta (2007) point out what counts as evidence is entirely contestable and debatable.

The studies cited thus far which include the voices of teachers and families are all constructed around different aspects of effectiveness, generally to do with practice and its impacts on families. Although none of the teacher or family comments in the studies explicitly referred to evaluation or 'measuring outcomes' a number of

teacher comments alluded to perspectives of effectiveness. The choices of narrative and quotes focussing on the impacts of the services on individual families can be taken as the authors' acceptance of positive impact. Cottle's (2011) research focussed on teacher perspectives of quality which yielded ideas about service provision, relationships and supporting families while Campbell's study about the national evaluation of Early Excellence Centres in the United Kingdom reports on teachers' experiences of the evaluation process (2003). In this study teachers commented on professional learning opportunities from the evaluation observations and interviews.

Issues for integrated services.

There is much literature about integrated early years services highlighting issues in implementation, processes of organisational structure, leadership and policy demands (Beaty, 2011; Campbell, 2003; Gasper, 2010; Levine, 2009; Press, 2012; Robinson et al., 2008). The most common issues and challenges appear to be those concerning inter-professional relationships (Campbell, 2003; Gasper, 2010; Stanley, 2007) collaboration and partnership (Horwath & Morrison, 2007; Nichols & Jurvansuu, 2008; Robinson et al., 2008) and leadership (Campbell, 2003; Duffy & Marshall, 2007; Press, 2012; Sharp et al., 2012). These issues will all impact on the service's ability to provide affordances for families. It is not the purpose of this study to review these issues, rather this study is concerned with how early years integrated services can provide affordances for adults to realise their aspirations.

Implications from the literature in relation to this study

This chapter has explored the concept of affordances in relation to providing opportunities for an individual to change their life trajectories. The relationship between affordances for adults and early childhood education has been explained with particular reference to integrated early years services. The literature about effective integrated early years services has been synthesised to identify ten key components for effectiveness. A review of literature to find studies including the 'voices' of parents and teachers was conducted and used to illustrate if and how the components of effectiveness provided affordances for families. The review

concluded that there are very few studies which include voices of parents and teachers but nevertheless these illustrations enabled some understanding of affordances for families.

These studies foreground children and/or families as their units of analysis and many are only weakly theorised. In the majority of examples the effectiveness of the service for families is to do with *equity for children*. This study foregrounds the adult as the unit of analysis and argues that although the entry ticket to an integrated service is having a child, this gateway can also provide powerful affordances for the *well-being of an adult per se*.

Chapter 3 ended with a conceptual framework that included components of the individual and environment and how these might interconnect to help individuals transform their trajectories. It concluded that each level of the ecological model is influenced by its own habitus. This chapter has added to this framework through the notion of affordances for providing opportunities for transformation to occur particularly in relation to integrated early years services. The framework encapsulating the ecological nature of habitus is now overlaid with affordances: where and how are affordances manifested?

This study will explore this question through the application of this framework as it recounts the stories of the transformation of Taitoko Kindergarten and the 7 family participants to map the affordance ecosystem of the kindergarten community using Bourdieu's thinking tools of habitus, field and capital and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model. The following chapter discusses the case study methodology and research methods used in this study.

Chapter 5.

Research methodology: A case study approach

This chapter describes the research methodology. It highlights and theorises the history of the affordance network of an integrated early childhood service and analyses how it provided sets of capacities for actions that interrupted the perceived lack of opportunities for equity of the case study adults engaged in the service. The previous chapter synthesised a range of literature to ascertain commonly cited components of effective early years integrated services. It also reviewed a range of literature that included the ‘voices’ of parents and teachers to illustrate if and how the components of effectiveness provided affordances for families. It discussed the concept of affordances and how affordances might be available for families through effective integrated early years service provision. The research approach will enable an exploration of the early childhood teacher as a mesosystem agent and early childhood education as a potentially transformational field.

Exploring the relationship between affordances, habitus, capital and field offer a methodological approach to exploring the unique context of Taitoko Kindergarten while Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems model strengthens the theoretical analysis of the relationship between structures, affordances and the individual through the proximal and distal contexts surrounding the individual.

Theory of practice as methodology and this thesis

Bourdieu’s theory of practice as methodology provides an epistemology that conflates the dualisms of objectivism and subjectivism and helps make sense of how people operate in the world. This theory of practice enables an investigation of the intersection of the object and subject, taking into account a particular field and the individual and collective habitus which impact on the interactions of the individual. The thinking tools of Bourdieu’s theory of practice can be applied to a

task or problem, particularly those highlighted through empirical research exploring the relationships between individuals and society. Bourdieu explains the analytical properties of habitus, field and capital as thus:

These tools are only visible through the results they yield, and they are not built as such. The ground for these tools... lies in research, in the practical problems and puzzles encountered and generated in an effort to construct a phenomenally diverse set of objects in such a way that they can be treated, thought of, comparatively. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.160)

Hence the tools of habitus, field and capital assisted me to understand the construction of the research object and to think relationally about the practice that was revealed. Bourdieu also contends that the researcher is obliged to look at each specific case because each case will work differently and have a unique relationship between habitus and field (Mahar, 1990, p. 36).

The theory of practice equation outlined by Bourdieu demonstrates the relationship between the three thinking tools: [(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice. An individual's habitus is both sociological and experiential (Maton, 2008) in that an individual acts according to the unwritten rules, expectations, assumptions and inclinations of his/her family and social group (the field). Capital (either symbolic or concrete) determines an individual's position in a particular field so the resulting practices of an individual are influenced by both habitus (the dispositions or tendencies to act in a certain way) and capital. The interconnectedness of these thinking tools provides some keys to the puzzle of how and why adults may recognise and take up affordances on offer in order to realise their aspirations.

This thesis therefore provides an opportunity to explore the unique relationship between habitus and field in a case involving a specific kindergarten with a specific group of families. The intention of the research was to identify how an early childhood centre has provided affordances that are recognised and taken up

by families as opportunities to change the odds for themselves and develop sets of capacities for action. The field of study was early childhood education with a specific kindergarten as a sub-field.

Research questions

The questions guiding the research were:

- What has shaped the transformation of the kindergarten as a mesosystem in the field of early childhood education?
- How did this history construct affordances for families and what encouraged the families to recognise and take them up?
- How might the constructs of habitus and affordance assist our understanding of families' abilities to take up these opportunities?
- What implications are there for policies that construct 'vulnerable' communities?

A specific case: Taitoko Kindergarten

In order to answer these questions I examined the practices of a specific case: Taitoko Kindergarten. Certain characteristics and conditions of this specific case have already been established in previous chapters. An understanding of the positioning of particular groups of people in relation to their economic, social and cultural capital has been discussed in Chapter 1, identifying the community of Taitoko Kindergarten as vulnerable according to the constructs of state statistics and dominant culture ideologies. Chapter 2 has outlined the discourses associated with vulnerability and some of the key aspects of the field of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. A brief history of kindergartens as well as the Parent Support and Development project funding of which Taitoko Kindergarten was a recipient was discussed. Chapter 3 introduced and discussed the thinking tool of habitus and how it might apply in understanding the ability of families to take up opportunities. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory was also discussed in relation to the dynamic nature of the relationship between environment and individual. Chapter 4 argued that effective integrated early years

services can provide affordances for families to realise their aspirations. There are other considerations that need to be accounted for in the study that apply to this particular case and its applicability to other cases.

Case study as the research method

Case studies have been employed as a research method in a variety of disciplines: medicine, law, counselling, anthropology and education and within these disciplines a range of ways of gathering data for the case study have been used (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). There have been many ideas over the years about what constitutes a case study and how this type of research may be carried out (Merriam, 1988, 1998; Smith, 1978; Stake, 1995, 2005; Yin, 1994, 2003, 2014).

In the first instance, ascertaining why a particular case is worthy of investigation and what is it about the case that warrants studying, is significant. As Stake (2005) points out, a case is a functioning specific; it has working parts and we choose to study the case for a variety of reasons. For example the doctor may study the child because of the particular disability or disease the child has, the social worker or psychologist may study the child's behaviour, while the educationalist may study the child's interactions in the mainstream classroom (Stake, 1995). In each situation the child is the bounded system or case but the purpose of the study varies. A case may be studied because it is of particular concern, presents an issue or hypothesis or it may have intrinsic interest (Merriam, 2001). Research may involve a single case (a child, a classroom, a community) or multiple cases (several children, a cluster of schools), in each instance the case/s need to be bounded by some defining parameters (Creswell, 2013).

Yin (2014) defines a parameter as "the unit of analysis" to help the researcher differentiate between context and phenomenon, particularly when the boundaries between the two are blurred. The unit of analysis can be delineated by the initial questions or what is it you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study? Yin (2014) expounds the importance of the context of a particular case,

suggesting that the context can blur the boundary between the phenomenon being studied and the specific context of the case; the context may have provided the phenomenon in the first place. Hebert and Beardsley (2002) studied a gifted black child living in rural poverty, the child being the unit of analysis and the rural environment providing the context through which to look at educational achievement. Reay's research about parental involvement in primary schooling uses the case study of one of the mothers to explore notions of class. The unit of analysis in this instance was the mother while the context was the mother's historical and current experiences (1997).

The units of analysis in this research are the adults while the kindergarten provides the context. The case in this research is a kindergarten located in a community that is classified as 'vulnerable' according to a western construct of deprivation. In many respects the context provides the phenomenon because the early childhood centre had been part of a political attempt to address issues of vulnerability. Therefore it is unique in relation to other early childhood centres in communities of similar deprivation.

Trustworthiness and credibility of case study research

The case study usually reports reality in an accessible format and highlights the complexities of the social context (Merriam, 1998). At its best a case study can illuminate the ways in which aspects of the social context influenced or afforded desirable and undesirable outcomes. Researchers using qualitative methods are likely to use triangulation to strengthen the trustworthiness and credibility of the case (Stake, 2005). Triangulation involves using multiple sources of data or methods of collection to confirm the emerging findings. As will be discussed below, this case study has used multiple sources of data to capture the dynamic nature of the case and to theorise the findings.

Another criticism or debate about validity of case study research is the notion of generalisation. Can and should we generalise from a single case? There appear to be three particular discourses pertaining to generalisation. The first is sceptical of the ability of a single case to influence general applicability and confirm grand

narratives. Platt (2006) cautions against generalising from a single case as the contextual features of a specific case are not necessarily represented or duplicated in other cases, indeed, in the case of Taitoko Kindergarten specific features of affordances and individual and field habitus will be unique to the context influencing the generalisability to other contexts. However another discourse argues that generalisation is possible where case study findings are aligned to a theory rather than a population (Firestone, 1993). It is the importance of the relationship between the data and the theory or concepts that can strengthen the theoretical tenets. As Firestone suggests “When one generalises to a theory, one uses a theory to make predictions and then confirm [*or refine, or disrupt, or refute*] those predictions” (1993, p.17; italicised words added). Swanborn (2010) concurs with this by arguing that case study research is about theoretical generalisation involving hypothetical results due to the specific nature of a case. In the case study of Taitoko Kindergarten the research is seeking insights into how agency in an educational setting has changed, testing out the explanatory power of the key theoretical constructs to question the ‘vulnerable’ label in ways that will inform policy assumptions.

The third discourse about case study contributing to generalising is in the case-to-case analogy as often used in law (Jardine, 1992). The reader makes their own judgments from a specific case and applies the generalisation or applicability to another case. The case provides new meaning and understanding for the reader and some transferability of the concepts are made, thus increasing the generalisation.

In conclusion, case study as a research method can provide rich narrative data gathered by a variety of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Bounding or defining the case strengthens the methodology, design and validity. Inherent in the characteristics of case study is the researcher’s depth of interest and focus on the specificity or uniqueness of the case. Case study research may provide greater generalisation or it may serve to increase the reader’s understanding of a particular case. As Stake (1995) summarises:

... the study is an opportunity to see what others have not yet seen, to reflect the uniqueness of our own lives, to engage the best of our

interpretive powers, and to make, even by its integrity alone, an advocacy for the things we cherish. (p.136)

Returning to my social justice epistemology and my belief in the importance of family in children's lives, the things I cherish and want to advocate for are opportunities for all families to realise their aspirations and be supported to be the best parents they can be. Therefore the case study of Taitoko Kindergarten enables me to identify those things, both structural and relational, that are afforded by the kindergarten to support adults' aspirations and the ways that these affordances work to reproduce a dominant habitus or enable transformation.

Therefore if a case study is useful for investigating a specific phenomena the question that arises is: what are the particular characteristics of a case study that make it a worthwhile research method? The following section outlines characteristics of a case study and situates Taitoko Kindergarten as a case to illustrate these characteristics.

Characteristics of a case study

Merriam (1998) suggests three characteristics of a case study which provide further insights into this research method, the characteristics are: *particularistic*, *descriptive and naturalistic*, *heuristic and inductive*. A case study is *particularistic* in that it focuses on a particular or specific situation, individual, event or programme. As Stake (1995) points out it "draws attention to what specifically can be learned from a single case" (p 86). It may be helpful in suggesting what to do or not to do in a similar situation and can provide insights for generalisations through the specific case. Taitoko Kindergarten is particularistic in that the case focuses on the affordances provided by the kindergarten. Through this particular focus some conclusions may be drawn that are helpful for other early childhood centres and wider policy development.

The *descriptive and naturalistic* nature of a case study provides a rich, thick description of the case, including a sense of time and place, the 'reality' of the situation/event giving a holistic, complete picture of the case. The description

strives to portray a close up of the case, including thoughts and feelings of the participants and is less likely to have these narratives judged or evaluated by the researcher (Cohen et al., 2011). Description allows the complexities of a situation to be reported, the influence of personalities and history using a wide variety of sources of information. Thus in the case of this study, outlining the wider context of historical, political, social and cultural ideologies and events helps in understanding the specifics of the kindergarten, giving a more complete picture.

The *heuristic* characteristic of a case study enables the reader to have a greater understanding of the case. This may include new meaning or confirm what the reader already knows, it may explain the reasons for a problem, why something worked or not and it may provide further generalisation or applicability (Merriam, 1998). The case study can allow insights into the why and how of phenomenon and illuminate new relationships between variables, perhaps adding to the theory. In the case study of Taitoko Kindergarten it is possible that some theories will be confirmed as well as providing new theories about a phenomenon. Further insights into Bourdieu's methodological tools may emerge in addition to a greater understanding of the affordances of adult's engagement with early childhood education.

The characteristics of a case study tend to lend themselves to different types of case studies. These have been defined in a variety of ways. Stake (1995) uses the categories of intrinsic, instrumental and collective, while Merriam (1998) describes case studies as descriptive, interpretive and evaluative. Yin (2003) employs the terms exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. The similarities of the terms may be grouped thus: intrinsic and descriptive, instrumental and exploratory, interpretive and explanatory, and evaluative.

Types of case study

Descriptive and intrinsic case studies describe in detail a particular case without forming hypotheses, making judgments or pitting against a theory. As Stake (1995) states “ ... the study is undertaken because one wants better understanding of this particular case... not because the case represents other cases... but

because, in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of interest” (p.88). The descriptive case can provide a basis for future comparison and theory building but it is not the primary reason for the study, the narrative account is. An example of this is *Cases in Early Childhood Education* (Driscoll, 1995)). Driscoll studied a variety of different early childhood programmes over a period of time describing in detail the context and interactions, providing rich narrative data. Her purpose was to present examples of practice for the reader to reflect on in order to challenge their own thinking and philosophy. Each case had its own intrinsic value and interest as defined by Driscoll and she presented each case in its own right, her only “boundedness” being that she judged them as “out of the ordinary” (p.7). In the case of Taitoko Kindergarten, the description of the case provides insights for reflection and highlights certain characteristics that may be meaningful for other contexts, however there is more to this case than description.

Interpretive or explanatory case studies are more about interpreting or theorising about the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). Bassey (1999) uses the term theory-testing which he equates with interpretive or explanatory. The interpretive or explanatory case study is more likely to look at the ‘why’ question and contain a far greater level of analysis and conceptualisation than a descriptive case study. Hancock and Algozzine (2011) suggest explanatory case studies are concerned with establishing cause and effect relationships such as how home environments may impact on student achievement. Taitoko Kindergarten as a case study is explanatory in that it attempts to identify why, how and what have provided opportunities for families to realise their aspirations.

Exploratory case studies according to Yin (2014) are studies that explore questions and issues that can be used in subsequent studies, the exploration tends to be theory-building or as Bassey (1999) coins “theory-seeking” (p. 62). Stake’s definition of instrumental case studies emphasises the purpose of the case to re-examine an issue to pursue an external interest (2005, p. 445) while Hancock and Algozzine (2011) describe exploratory cases as those which help design research questions for further investigation. The case study of this thesis has aspects of exploration as it builds on a theory about adult’s engagement in early childhood

education and the role of habitus in the taking up of opportunities. It also explores the role of teachers as mesosystems agents.

Evaluative case studies according to Merriam (1998) involve ‘description, explanation and judgment’ (p. 28) while Bassey suggests evaluation assists in determining ‘worthwhileness’ (1999, p. 63). Although Yin (1994) does not subscribe evaluation as a specific type of case study he does state the value and place of case study in evaluative research because case studies can explain, describe, illustrate and explore to form judgments about a programme, event or intervention. The case study of Taitoko Kindergarten has a minor element of evaluation in that it looks to draw some conclusions about the long-term impacts of the involvement of the kindergarten in a specific project.

Case studies use a variety of data collection tools in order to gather as much information about the case as possible and provide a rich picture of the phenomenon being studied. The following section describes ethical issues in undertaking case study research and the data collection methods used for this study.

Case study and ethics

There were several ways in which this study was designed and carried out to protect the participants from harm and at the same time add validity and robustness. Many texts about educational and qualitative research deal with ethics (Johnson & Christensen, 2000; Merriam, 1988, 1998; Cohen et al, 2011; Punch, 1998) and I wish to highlight the ethical considerations most likely to confront the case study researcher in this instance.

Because of the intense nature of involvement and participatory observation by the researcher in a case study over a prolonged period of time there is the possibility of revealing or encountering issues that could be harmful to participants (Ball, 1984; Stake, 1995). The risk of exposure and embarrassment to the participants can be high and it remains the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the participants are comfortable with all stages of reporting, be it interview

transcripts, anecdotal evidence, initial interpretations or the final public document. Ball (1981) in his case study of Beachside Comprehensive found himself being seen by the teachers as accusatory and critical. On the publication of his research the media took a strong interest in the findings, wanting to identify the school and interview the researcher. His response was to only engage in discussions about the educational issues raised in the research.

Merriam (1998) in her summary of ethical considerations concludes

...the burden of producing a study that has been conducted and disseminated in an ethical manner lies with the individual investigator... the best that an individual researcher can do is be conscious of the ethical issues that pervade the research process, from conceptualizing the problem to disseminating the findings. (p. 219)

Identifying ethical issues.

The ethical issues I have been aware of from the conceptualisation of my research to the dissemination of my findings are mostly to do with my preconceptions and relationships. From my previous visits to the kindergarten and encountering Kirstie I became interested in what affordances the kindergarten might be offering to families to realise their aspirations. In designing this study, I realised that exploring the provision of affordances might reveal negative aspects that could impact on both teachers and families. Although I was prepared to discover things that could be done better for families, my adherence to researching the strengths-based approach persuaded me to explore what had been instrumental in creating positive opportunities for families and how these opportunities were taken up.

Another ethical concern was the power relations between the participants and myself. I was less concerned about the balance of power between myself and the teachers that I was interviewing as I had established a professional relationship with them over the previous four years. I was confident that our relationship was built on genuine respect, trust and openness within the bounds of our shared interest in teaching and learning.

My attempts to mitigate against the real and/or perceived power imbalance was by spending time at the kindergarten to establish and build relationships with families. In approaching the family participants I was confident that they would not feel coerced or that I had manipulated our relationship for the purposes of my research. This confidence was built on the grounds that in all my conversations with these families they were aware that I was interested in researching the usefulness of the kindergarten in supporting families and that our relationship had moved beyond superficial or cursory interactions. All of these aspects of relationship building and becoming part of the furniture did not however stop me from feeling anxious when I approached these people formally about being participants.

This anxiety was more a result of me feeling like an imposter and a white middle class academic from ‘up the line’ – what right did I have to presume that these people would be interested in talking to me? I worried, too, that they might just say yes because I represented the dominant culture and therefore had ‘authority’ over them. However, in the end I had to trust that the way I had conducted myself. The acceptance I had with the teachers in whom the participants had significant trust and respect was enough to actually enable the participants to accept or refuse my request within the constructs of unconscious and implicit acceptance of prevailing discourses. Appendices H, I and J provide examples of the information given to participants and informed consent forms.

A further ethical dilemma that arose for me during the initial analysis of data was the realisation that I was going to theorise my participants’ stories into something that was full of educational and research terminology, shaped by the constraints of doctoral theses requirements and on the large part inaccessible to those who had provided me with a considerable amount of data. As I thought this dilemma through I made two decisions: to apply a reflexive model to the analysis by involving the participants in the analysis not just to check for accuracy but to provide an explanation of habitus in particular, and to explore this idea together. Then, after the completion of my Ph.D I would write up each participant’s story in as accessible a form as possible to give to individual participants.

Pseudonyms.

In terms of confidentiality and anonymity, the teachers and family participants all refused to use a pseudonym and asked that the kindergarten be named. The reason for this was that they all believed they had a good story to tell and they were very proud that the kindergarten was a site of ongoing research. They also hoped that their story would be useful for others. After the analysis of my findings and deciding which parts of interview transcripts I would be using in my thesis I showed these to the participants to ensure they did not want to use a pseudonym. On a final visit to the kindergarten I met with each participant, including the General Manager, and went over the data from their transcripts that I had used in the writing of the thesis in order to ascertain any potential harm or unintended consequences in identifying individuals, the kindergarten and the kindergarten management. All the participants agreed and insisted that pseudonyms not be used.

An unanticipated outcome was the reaction of the participants during the final checking and the reading of a draft of their 'story' within the thesis. I had not anticipated that the participants would have such strong emotions and feel so positive about what had been written. My absorption in the writing of the thesis had kept the participants stories alive and foremost in my thoughts for some time, however the interviews and reading of the raw transcripts was a distant memory for the participants. It was confronting for the participants to have the interviews crafted into a story and it was a strong reminder of their changed trajectories. For me these reactions provided trustworthiness and credibility for the research.

Data collection methods

Generally case studies will use qualitative methods of data collection and analysis such as interviews (unstructured and/or structured), observations, use of documents and written material. Questionnaires and surveys producing quantitative data may be useful in certain cases to ascertain some background information about quantity, gender, age, particularly if the case study is of an institution or programme. The researcher will provide the rich description of the

context in order to try and capture as much of a holistic picture as possible, identifying any number of variables.

The researcher is often a participant observer and plays a part in the data collection as they establish relationships and become part of the ‘furniture’. The researcher brings her or his own subjectivity and interpretations of reality that can enable the readers to create their own reality or interpretation of the case. Merriam (1998) states, “because the primary instrument in qualitative case study research is human, all observations and analyses are filtered through one’s worldview, one’s values, one’s perspectives” (p.22). Bourdieu’s development of reflexivity as an integral component of sociological research has some similarities with the nature of the ‘participant observer’. For Bourdieu it was important that the researcher engaged in reflexivity in order

to control and reduce the influence of an important source of discrepancy with regard to knowledge, namely the unconscious failure by most to recognise and control the effects and influence of their own relation to the object of their research. (Deer, 2008, p.201)

An ecology of the participants.

Case study research requires a rich description of the context that is often elicited from historical documents and talking to people who have ‘been around a while’ or are involved in decision-making (Yin, 2003). Individual interviews with the General Manager of the Kindergarten Association and the three teachers who had been at the kindergarten the longest (Appendices A, B, C, D, E, F) alongside the analysis of historical documents provided some insights into the macro and exosystem levels of the kindergarten. The interviews also enabled an exploration of the mesosystem and the teachers’ roles as brokers for families. This data gathering also presented me with opportunities to think about how the habitus and capital of these individuals in the field of early childhood education influenced their practice and decision-making regarding Taitoko Kindergarten. In analysing these interviews, I was able to link factual information with what the family participants had identified. The kaimahi was interviewed to provide another perspective of the history of the kindergarten as someone who had had a long

involvement with the kindergarten in a variety of roles: mother, grandmother and kaimahi (Appendices L, M, N). Researcher observations and field notes also provided data.

The following table outlines the data collection methods and generation of data for analysis.

Table 2. Data collection and generation methods.

	Data collection methods	Data generated
	Researcher field notes, observations and conversations	<p>Adult attendance at kindergarten.</p> <p>Head teacher activities in supporting families.</p> <p>The ‘culture’ of the kindergarten.</p>
	<p>Interviews with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kindergarten Association General manager (x 2 interviews) Kindergarten teachers (x 2 interviews) Kindergarten kaimahi (x 1 interview) 	<p>Historical perspective of kindergarten and transformation over time.</p> <p>Understanding of individual habitus.</p> <p>Identification of affordances.</p>
	<p>Document gathering (Government briefing papers for Parent Support and Development project, policy & funding documents, Kindergarten association policies, PS&D project application)</p> <p>Local library research</p>	<p>Analysis of underlying beliefs and ideologies about vulnerable communities.</p> <p>Identification of macro and exo level affordances.</p> <p>History of town.</p>
	<p>Interviews with families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First interview Second interview 	<p>Initial identification of affordances, some history of kindergarten transformation and impacts on community.</p> <p>Initial understanding of individual habitus.</p> <p>Confirmation of identified affordances. Further clarification of individual habitus.</p>

Becoming part of the furniture.

This section outlines how the family participants were chosen. It also includes some exploration of the influence and biases of the researcher.

In order to have a deep sense of the context of the case study site and to develop relationships with potential participants I spent seven weeks over the period of a year interacting with adults and children at the kindergarten. I had previously been involved in a research project with the kindergarten so relationships had already been established between myself, the teachers and, some of the families. The establishment of these relationships was a significant consideration as it meant I did not have to go into a research site as a ‘stranger’ and start from scratch in building trust and becoming familiar with ‘the place’. In the time lapse between finishing the earlier research and beginning the research, I had kept alive the possibility of returning to the kindergarten through on-going discussions and conversations with the teachers and management of the kindergarten association.

Conversations with the teachers confirmed their willingness to have me continue with further research and that they actually enjoyed having me be part of their community. The fact that I had previously been a kindergarten teacher and that during my time as a researcher I was willing to ‘muck in’ with teaching and learning responsibilities seemed to take away any perceptions they may have had of me as an ‘ivory tower’ academic. Another significant reason for choosing Taitoko Kindergarten as a research site was my knowledge of Kirstie and her story. I was intrigued to find out what role the kindergarten had played in her trajectory. Her story provided a particular phenomena: what opportunities had the kindergarten provided for her, did these opportunities still exist and had they impacted on other families?

Initially I spent two weeks at the kindergarten. The purpose of these two weeks was threefold: to become a familiar face in the kindergarten; to get a feel for ‘how this place works’ and; to further develop my relationships with some of the families as well as teachers: in a sense to become part of the furniture. During these two weeks I spent time interacting with children, teachers and families in the

daily programme. Because I still hold a teaching practising certificate and have current teacher registration I was, on the odd occasion able to be part of the teaching ratio. I was quickly accepted by the other teachers, six out of ten whom I had not met before and by the end of the two weeks we had had numerous conversations about teaching and learning. I was also invited to join staff meetings where I was regularly encouraged to contribute my thoughts and ideas.

Taking the role of a teacher I was able to chat to families, although this was limited. I was very aware that I was a pākehā/palangi (white, non-Māori, non-Pasifika) stranger to most of the families attending the kindergarten so was very cautious in my approach to parents. I found that I was most comfortable striking up conversations with parents who tended to stay at the kindergarten on a regular basis rather than approaching parents as they brought their child/ren to kindergarten and then went off to do other things. The Head Teacher introduced me to parents who stayed regularly or had specific responsibilities at the kindergarten such as the administrator, the Education Support Workers (ESW) supporting children with special needs, and the cook. My conversations were of a relatively general nature including topics such as where I was from, why I was here, my teaching background, conversations about their children, the activities happening at the kindergarten etc. Attending the weekly playgroup was another opportunity to establish relationships and immerse myself in the environment.

My data gathering occurred over eighteen months. During the initial two weeks at the kindergarten I gathered data about the 'daily life' of the kindergarten, particularly the activities of the adults. This involved recording the activities of the Head Teacher to get a good understanding of the types of interactions she had with families and other agencies. This information was generally gathered around lunchtime when the Head Teacher and I would chat about the morning and then again at the end of the day. She would inform me of the types of things she had been doing and what commitments she had in her diary. These conversations were extremely valuable in enabling me to get a real sense of what happened behind the scenes, in that the core function of the kindergarten was to provide a quality early childhood education programme for children but supporting families was also a priority.

Along with documenting the activities of the Head Teacher I observed and recorded on a daily basis the number of non-teaching adults at the kindergarten and the roles they played. The purpose for gathering this data was to give a sense of what adults were involved at the kindergarten and why they were spending time at the kindergarten in order to understand the nature of possible affordances offered by the kindergarten. I also spent time in the local library researching the history of the town.

Choosing family participants.

In immersing myself in the life of the kindergarten for seven weeks during the year in consultation with the Head Teacher and Assistant Head Teacher, I developed a plan for recruiting participants for the research. In my selection of participants I was keen to try to have a representative sample of the community. I had initially thought I would send out a general letter asking for any families interested in participating to come to an information meeting. The staff felt that a more personal approach was likely to work better and the Head Teacher offered to act as broker if necessary, as I sought to approach families who would provide a representative sample.

From the relationships I had already established, I felt confident in approaching adults from six families. Three of these were women I had known since my involvement in the earlier research project thus there had been an on-going relationship based on genuine interactions. If I had to define my relationship with these women it would be that of a friendly professional. They were all aware that I had been a teacher and was now an academic and I am sure this maintained some distance between us with which I was comfortable. Just as in my relationships with families when I was a teacher, it was important that as the researcher I was at arm's length from the participants. This distance protected both the participants and myself, lessening the opportunity for unethical behaviour. As Lichtman (2013) suggests there must be a reasonable expectation that the researcher will behave ethically and not blur the boundaries between researcher and participant. There is always the potential in case study research

when the researcher is immersing themselves in the case that friendships form and relationships intensify. Thus maintaining a professional distance is imperative.

Three other adults provided additional perspectives. These were adults with whom I had had multiple conversations during my six weeks at the kindergarten. One was the kindergarten administrator who I usually sat next to when I worked on my laptop in the office. This proximity provided opportunities for many informal conversations and general social banter. Another participant was employed by a local trust as part of a council initiative to support Pasifika families with education. This initiative was based at the kindergarten, which meant this participant was regularly in and out of the kindergarten and also spent time in the office. Another participant whom I approached was an Education Support Worker who was at the kindergarten most mornings supporting a child with special needs. During my participation in the kindergarten programme I had the opportunity to chat with this participant on a daily basis and had had a number of sustained conversations about their role, my presence at the kindergarten, and children's learning.

Conducting interviews with family participants.

It was not until after my third prolonged visit to the kindergarten in November 2012 that I formally approached the six participants, presenting them with my information letter (Appendix I) and consent form (Appendix J). I chatted with them about the content of the letter and the consent form, leaving both with them to read and sign in their own time stating that I would be returning in the new year to carry out the interviews.

After discussions with the Head Teacher I had made a decision that the first interviews would be conducted as a group. This decision was to help alleviate shyness for both parties: participants and myself, and hopefully provide more of a balance of power. I returned to the kindergarten for a week in March 2013 and during this time held the group interview in a room at the new council community/library facility in town at a prearranged time.

At the appointed time of the group interview the four women arrived, some with children in tow because child-minding arrangements had fallen through. After waiting for the two men we decided they were not coming so we settled in with afternoon tea. After a brief introduction I asked if the participants would illustrate in some way their hopes and dreams for themselves and their families. I had provided A3 sheets of paper and a variety of coloured pencils, pastels and felts. These resources also came in very handy in helping entertain the children after the other events at the community centre (a puppet show) and reading library books had worn thin. The food was a bonus too!

The remainder of the interview session was taken up with each participant talking about their illustration (these were not used as data) interspersed with my questions and then towards the end I put some general questions to the group about their impressions of the activities at the kindergarten and the perception of the kindergarten amongst the community (Appendix K).

I ended up interviewing the two men individually on a return visit to the kindergarten some months later. They had not managed to get to the group interview due to changes in child-minding arrangements and other family commitments. In hindsight it would have changed the dynamics of the group because of a gender mix and it would have increased the length of time of the session, which had been compromised a little due to the presence of the children. In the time between the group interview and interviewing the men I decided to try and recruit one more participant who might have a further perspective, was slightly younger than the other participants and at a different stage of parenting. When I discussed this prospect with the Head Teacher she made a suggestion and said she would approach this person and ask her in the first instance. This participant agreed to be interviewed at the kindergarten prior to a coffee morning session.

Data analysis and follow-up interviews

All the participants were sent their transcripts for checking. I then organised another visit to the kindergarten to conduct follow-up interviews. I had completed

an initial analysis of the transcripts using a framework consisting loosely of structure, culture and agency. I defined structure as concrete organisational or operational aspects, culture as more abstract aspects to do with feelings and impressions while agency included things such as participant decision-making and learning.

The interviews with the management and teacher participants were individually analysed to identify what they regarded as significant features and affordances that had contributed to the transformation of the kindergarten and assisted relationship building and greater involvement of families. The family participant interviews were analysed by identifying the structural and cultural and/or relational affordances they spoke about as significant for their growing involvement with the kindergarten and the impact of these affordances on their wider lives.

It quickly became evident that there were overlaps between structural and relational affordances, with some having features of both categories. Structural affordances were generally material features such as policies, funding and, structures and roles within the kindergarten and management while relational affordances were those features that included social and cultural relationships.

The thinking tools of habitus, field and capital were also applied to individual transcripts. Individual habitus was identified through recurring ideas provided by participants about why and how they made decisions and the influence of their families and culture. As mentioned previously returning to the participants and providing an explanation of habitus enabled some confirmation of my interpretations.

The transcript analysis also included identifying ecological systems levels: were the events and features talked about an impact of macro, exo, meso or micro level beliefs and decisions? This analysis enabled the highlighting of parallels between ideas and concepts from Bourdieu and Bronfenbrenner.

The initial analysis provided questions for the second interviews. In most cases the questions were to clarify and obtain more information about certain events, thoughts, interpretations and explanations offered in the first interviews. The second interviews also gave me an opportunity to validate my identification of examples of habitus by explaining and defining habitus for the individual participants then checking my interpretation with the participants. The participants were also able to confirm or dispute my identification of affordances. As I have described in the section about ethics I also met with each participant after I had written the first draft of my thesis to discuss the use of pseudonyms and enable them to read their 'story'.

Summary

Although this case study is of one kindergarten it nevertheless offers the perspectives of a range of people involved with the kindergarten and tells the stories of families as evidence of the impact of equity for adults through early childhood education. The experiences of the participants need to be regarded as valid accounts of 'what worked' for them: how and what affordances assisted them to realise their aspirations. The processes involved in the data collection and analysis attempt to validate the authenticity of the participants stories while taking account of the unavoidable subjectivity of the researcher.

This chapter has outlined the methodology and methods of the investigation of a case with the odds stacked against it: Taitoko Kindergarten. The chapter has discussed the data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations of this particular case. In the following chapter the transformation of Taitoko Kindergarten is mapped and the key players and events in this transformation are identified in relation to the provision of affordances to assist families to fight the odds against them. The chapter also explores the habitus of those involved in decision-making about the kindergarten and outlines the role and impact of habitus on decision-making.

Chapter 6.

Transforming a kindergarten's social, material and cultural capital: “to make the world a better place”

Well I think that there was a general sense of hopelessness about the place and we couldn't pin-point exactly why. It was a depressed area, people's attitudes, previous managers' attitudes to the area – was actually that it was more of a hindrance than a help to have the kindergarten. Attendance was really low and it was bleeding financially from every orifice. It had been identified by the previous two general managers as being a kindergarten that was likely to close and that was the opinion of the staff at the time as well – they were just waiting around for it to close, to get redundancy, anyway.

This comment from Mandy, the General Manager of the Kindergarten Association, about Taitoko Kindergarten in 2003, paints a picture of a kindergarten in crisis: the odds very much against its very survival. This chapter describes how these odds were fought and the kindergarten transformed. The chapter draws on the interviews with Mandy, the General Manager of the Kindergarten Association, Caryll, the Head Teacher and two teachers at Taitoko Kindergarten: Tania and Michelle, to provide multiple perspectives of the kindergarten's transformation. The chapter also examines the effects of habitus on decision-making regarding the kindergarten and the teachers' perceptions of the affordances provided by the kindergarten's transformation. These affordances included material, social and cultural aspects of capital that encouraged families to engage with the kindergarten.

Taitoko Kindergarten: Some history

Taitoko Kindergarten was opened in the early 1980s under the auspices of the Wellington Region Free Kindergarten Association (WRFKA). During the writing of this thesis the WRFKA amalgamated with another association and is now

called He Whānau Manaaki o Tararua⁹ Free Kindergarten Association Incorporated, abbreviated as Whānau Manaaki Kindertartens. Kindergarten Associations provide services such as: central administrative support, leadership and mentoring by an itinerant ‘senior teacher’, professional development opportunities, association wide policy development, and capital works and maintenance projects. Whānau Manaaki Kindertartens is responsible for 85 kindertartens across the lower North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Initially Taitoko Kindergarten operated a sessional licence for two groups of 30 children with two teachers. The kindergarten session times were 8.45-11.45am and 12.45-2.45pm and mirrored the compulsory school sector calendar. As was required by the Education Act, the kindergarten was staffed by qualified teachers, the qualification held by the two teachers was a 2 year New Zealand Kindergarten Diploma.

An ecology of the odds

In Chapter 1 a brief history of Levin, the town in which Taitoko Kindergarten is located, was presented. The demographic profile of the community of Taitoko Kindergarten was also outlined. The history and demographics illustrated a town that has both prospered and suffered from the macro-level ideologies and economic fluctuations of the country. From a manufacturing boom town to competing with cheap overseas imports, and an agricultural downturn during the last two decades, had reduced a once thriving centre to its classification as economically and socially deprived. This deprivation was mirrored in the kindergarten’s fortunes resulting in the 2003 status: the odds stacked against the kindergarten. At this time a new General Manager, Mandy, was appointed to the Wellington Region Free Kindergarten Association. She was faced with making a decision about the fate of Taitoko Kindergarten.

The following diagram illustrates the ecology of the odds of Taitoko Kindergarten in 2003.

⁹ Loosely translated to mean ‘the caring family of the Tararua region’

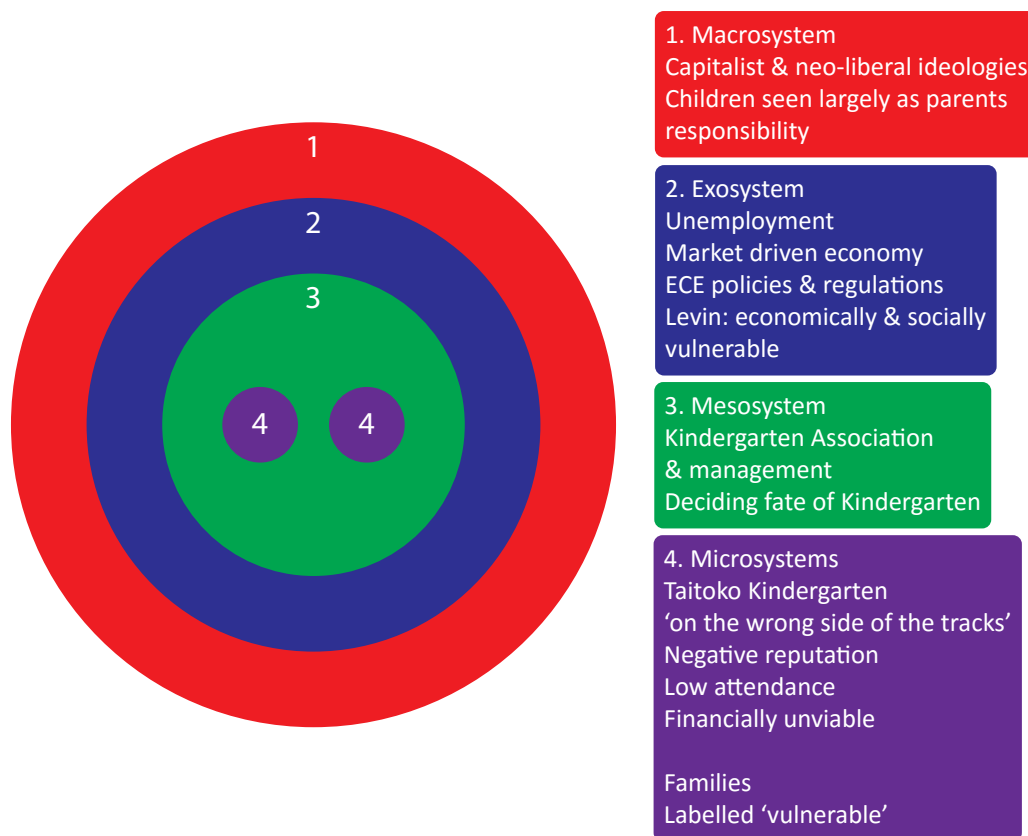


Figure 8. The ecology of the odds of Taitoko Kindergarten

Prior to her appointment as the General Manager, Mandy's employment background had been in the field of education; first as a primary classroom teacher and then the principal of a primary school in a working class suburb of the city where she had grown up. Her most recent position had been the elected head of the country's largest union representing the majority of teachers and workers in the education sector. Applying for the position of General Manager was incongruous with Mandy's beliefs and values about workers and bosses, particularly after her position in the union. Her decision to take on the General Manager's role was, in many respects, Mandy doing the 'unthinkable' in relation to this habitus. Reconciling this 'unthinkable' act against the possibilities of making a difference in a field where she had some capital was important to Mandy and she found a fit.

I think that when I came to work for the association, I'd come from the union movement and so when [] initially talked to me

*about applying for the general managers job, I said “b***** off, I’m not going to be an employer”, you know. But then when I explored the underlying values, the core values of the kindergarten movement and in particular the Wellington Association, they were really consistent with my own. Which is that classic belief that our role is actually to make life a, to make the world a better place. And that, the role of kindergarten, the role of early childhood education is really to enhance communities. (Interview 1).*

Although the sub-field of early childhood education and kindergartens within the wider field of education was somewhat unfamiliar to Mandy, she had enough knowledge about early childhood education through her involvement with the union to feel she could take on the General Manager’s role. The capital she had accrued throughout her career as a teacher, principal and union president enabled Mandy to feel confident in successfully navigating the bureaucracy and politics embedded in the structures of education policy and practice.

Mandy’s social and cultural capital within the field of education was not necessarily recognised or appreciated by the kindergarten teachers in the Wellington Association. She commented that some teachers were suspicious of Mandy and her primary teaching background fearing that she would not know about early childhood education and may try to impose her ‘primary’ ways on the teachers. Mandy recalled how the habitus of the kindergarten teachers – a visible passion for kindergarten as a philosophy and structure – was unfamiliar to her and this impacted on her credibility with the teachers; they did not recognise her capital as legitimate in their field.

Habitus as stories we live by

Bourdieu argued that the habitus is formed over time through the collective practices, rules and expectations of certain groups. This concept implies that habitus is an evolution of both the individual and the collective family and class history from which the individual belongs: “in short, the habitus, the product of

history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history” (1972/1977a, p. 82). In short, habitus is the story we live by. The collective practices, beliefs and values constitutive of the working class environment, which Mandy grew up in, helped structure her habitus. She recounted this story about early influences.

I think my grandmother, my parents were very strong, not just believers and talkers, of, you help, and that people are good, and that you're good to them, but in reality doing it. I was saying the other day, my sister and I, both have the portrait of Michael Joseph Savage ¹⁰ in our houses, and that's because my grandmother had that photo framed and it was above the bed that we would sleep in when we would go to stay with her. We would say, "who's that man, nana?" and she would go "Oh he was a great man, he did great things for the working people". And we joked that up until we were about six, I think, we thought that he was our grandfather because our grandfather had died before we were born. But I think it is those experiences and the stories that my grandmother and my parents told of the hardship of the depression and the degradation of being unemployed and not being able to look after the family properly that influence you, like teachers and people. (Interview 1).

This description of Mandy's early memories demonstrates the intergenerational construction of habitus – the stories that were important and became part of the fabric of life. The concept of 'doing great things for working people' and having an understanding of hardship was formed early in Mandy's life and reinforced through other practices and beliefs about 'working people' as she grew up. The compilation of collective and individual trajectories led Mandy to be an active member of workers' unions both as a student and a teacher. The history of workers securing better conditions through the collective efforts and commitment to a union were deeply embedded in the stories from Mandy's early years.

¹⁰ Michael Joseph Savage was the first Labour Prime Minister of Aotearoa New Zealand from 1935-1940 and is generally regarded as the architect of the welfare state.

Mandy's description of family practices revealed aspects of the formation of her habitus and its social justice principles.

There was an expectation of doing good works. My parents had and have heaps of friends and whānau, and there was always someone they were helping – whether having different cousins live with us over the years, or lending the neighbours money, or building them fences, giving them clothes etc if they were struggling. My mother was the person everyone went to if they were in trouble. We grew up with a strong philosophy around the importance of people having dignity and self-respect. My father often told us tales of his grandmother doing things like making pies during the Depression and leaving them out on the front fence for people to take, so they didn't have to suffer the indignity of having to ask or of facing someone who they might think was giving them charity. (Interview 2).

These principles were further reinforced as a young adult and the actions of others provided a legacy that became a dispositional tendency that reproduced similar actions as evidenced in this recollection from Mandy.

And I think now that I'm in a position where I'm middle-aged and earn a decent income and now I think with these young men and women that are in my life, I think back to when I was at Teachers College and I flatted with [two women] and the second year I was going to quit Teachers College and just go and work because I couldn't afford it at that time. And so they just kept me going and they let me stay with them and I didn't have to pay board and all that sort of stuff. And I said, when I graduated, "I will pay you back". And [one of them] said to me "just remember, you do the same thing for [someone else]". So that's what I say to these guys [who are living with us now], just, that's what it's about really. (Interview 1).

In his explanations about the relationship between habitus and practice Bourdieu emphasises the generative nature of habitus in conditioning and organising actions:

If agents are possessed by their habitus more than they possess it, this is because it acts within them as the organising principle of their actions and because this *modus operandi* informing all thought and action (including thought of action) reveals itself only in the *opus operatum*. (Bourdieu, 1972/1977, p. 18)

Mandy's *modus operandi* (her actions) was revealed in her approach to the fate of Taitoko Kindergarten at the time of her appointment as General Manager.

Keeping the kindergarten open: A social justice story

Mandy made a decision not to close the kindergarten because she felt it was serving a purpose for a number of young mothers in the area. She chose to take affirmative action in dealing with the issues at the kindergarten by exerting her exosystem level influence to support the microsystems of young women. A well-respected and experienced teacher was appointed in a relieving capacity to work alongside the current staff.

We never, I never wanted it to close or, even when it got really low [attendance] in the afternoons. It was still a really important place for the mothers to go, lots of them, were younger mothers, you know by themselves [sole parents], with children. We then made a decision to ask Caryll to go in and work with the Head Teacher. (Interview 1).

The actions of the General Manager reveal her dispositions, tendencies to act in certain ways: her habitus or aspects of the structuring nature of habitus. Rather than act in what would be deemed a fiscally responsible manner and close the kindergarten Mandy chose to keep it open for the small number of young single mothers ('vulnerable' in the state's eyes) who attended regularly with their children. Mandy's decision implied a commitment to social justice and her *modus*

operandi is revealed in the *opus operatum* (the efficacy of the actions): keeping the kindergarten open, against the odds, to support ‘vulnerable’ parents.

Again, powerful earlier experiences were at play in the structuring and structure of Mandy’s habitus in relation to decision-making about the resourcing of the kindergarten, as evidenced by the following comment: another story influencing habitus.

I remember years ago when [B] worked for a women’s support group in the 90s and I went to a budgeting course that they did for the mothers who were on the DPB [Domestic Purposes Benefit for sole parents]. The woman said: “what is the thing that you need to keep you going each day? What is the thing that you need” and some of them said coffee, some said cigarettes – she said “put that at the top of your list”. You always have money for those things and then ok, what are the other things that you need, where are your bills etcetera. And I think that that was really powerful, what are the essential elements that you need to enable you to function. Ok, so what are the essential elements required to provide a quality service. That’s what we resource and everything else falls into place. (Interview 1).

Mandy’s strong commitment to social justice also influenced the way in which she viewed the financial viability of kindergartens and how she could use structures to fight the odds:

There are actually bigger principles that underpin the kindergarten movement than that [whether a kindergarten is financially viable or not]. It’s that philanthropic belief that actually every child deserves a warm and welcoming environment where learning is fun and where you can actually strengthen communities through those relationships.

So what stems from that [kindergartens enhancing communities] then is that, that money, that regulations etcetera are tools to enable that to happen. So you factor in the financial realities but

you don't use that as the lens that determines whether a kindergarten opens or closes. (Interview 1).

This quote illustrates the layered or levelled concepts of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory within the field of kindergarten. The macrosystem level principles underpinning the kindergarten movement influences the exosystem level operations and functioning of individual kindergarten associations. The mesosystem level connections between the practices and policies of the association and individual kindergartens impact on what happens in the kindergarten microsystem of families and children.

Disrupting a reputation

So the kindergarten remained open and Caryll, an experienced Head Teacher was employed as a reliever to support the current Head Teacher, initially for two weeks. However she was quickly asked to remain until the end of the term. Caryll was chosen because of her steady nature and wide experience of diverse communities. These characteristics had been observed by the senior teachers who each had responsibility for providing professional support to a group of kindergartens within the Association. Caryll recalled her early impressions of the kindergarten.

I came in as an outsider to the position. I didn't really know about the history of Levin. But from what I gathered, people would say "It's the worst kindergarten in town" or "It's over the south side of town so you wouldn't want to go there" and I've heard from parents who'd said, there's almost a little feeling of shame about coming over to this side of Levin. Sort of the wrong side of the railway tracks, and everything bad happens in Taitoko area.

I first came for two weeks relieving and then that was extended into a term. Attendance was not too bad in the morning. It was probably about eighteen to twenty children most mornings on average. Afternoon sessions were not so well attended – maybe ten to twelve children. The longer I spent here I noticed particularly things that influenced that were the cold weather so over winter

there could be very few children here. The ethnicity of the children was mainly Māori, with very few Pacific Island children. So I would say it was mainly Māori with a small amount of Pākehā children and a few Pasifika. I think maybe, if I remember, about one Tongan family and a couple of Samoan families. (Interview 1).

Michelle a teacher who was employed as the third teacher at the end of 2003 (the year Caryll came to Taitoko Kindergarten) reiterated the negative impression of the kindergarten: low attendance, ‘bad’ reputation and a lack of trust.

We were doing afternoon and morning kindergarten but we were finding that we weren’t having enough children in the afternoon – parents weren’t bringing their children so we were probably ending up with 3 children. I think we had a bad, well not a bad name, but we’re sort of the wrong side of town, and you know how townships give a certain area a bad name. I think sometimes parents take a long time to trust new teachers coming in. (Interview 1).

Tania (a teacher employed at the kindergarten in 2005) was aware of the negative reputation of the kindergarten because she lived in the town and had young children.

There was a lot of negativity about the kindergarten and what sort of happened here and things. People didn’t have a positive look at it at all. So it was a quite negative connotation on the kindergarten. People’s attitudes and views were just really negative about it, they said, “oh no, don’t send a child there, it’s not the place to go”. (Interview 1).

In 2003 despite a poor reputation and staffing issues, mothers continued to come to the kindergarten, bringing their babies and staying for the afternoon which both the General Manager and Caryll were determined to encourage. The General Manager recounted this story that was for her, significant.

So they would come [mothers and their babies], and Caryll would be really flexible with having the mothers bring their babies. The afternoon sessions – although technically were low, they also had a lot of babies that came along. Caryll tells the story of a young mother that had a child in the afternoon session and would come with her baby. She would just sit there and draw and just make things and draw. She gave Caryll a picture that she had drawn, and Caryll put it up on the wall and it's still up in the kindergarten today and it's just... the kindergarten still played a really important role in terms of providing connection to young women who were socially isolated. (Interview 1).

Caryll recalled this story about her decision to stay on at the kindergarten and apply for a permanent teaching position.

A parent who did not like to leave her child at the kindergarten would stay through the session. When she encountered Caryll she said to her "So you're the new teacher?"

Caryll: "Yes, I'm relieving here until the end of term"

Parent: "You won't stay".

When Caryll was appointed to a permanent position she told this parent, the parent's response was "Why, what would make you apply for this job?"

Caryll: "Well actually, you did because what you said to me [that you wouldn't stay] I thought about it and you know it's not ok that you have that feeling about this place and the people. I was here because I wanted to teach the children, that's why I'm in this job but that [what you said] was the thing that made me apply for this job". (Interview 1).

The comment from Mandy about the importance of the kindergarten for young women who were socially isolated and Caryll's determination to stay and make a success of the kindergarten both demonstrate the significant effects of habitus on the decision-making surrounding the kindergarten and efforts to fight the odds.

The evolution of Mandy's habitus has been described but what of Caryll and the influences on the structure and structuring of her habitus?

Different habitus, different field, same principles, similar stories

Caryll grew up on a family farm in rural, coastal Aotearoa New Zealand. Her parents had an expectation that their children would have educational opportunities that had not been available to them. Having very limited secondary schooling themselves, Caryll's parents made sacrifices, such as taking on extra employment, to send their children to boarding school for a 'good education'. Although Caryll remained unsure that the education was any better than that offered at a state funded secondary school she is convinced that her experiences at boarding school opened her eyes to *"a wider world waiting to be explored and an exposure to things outside of the small rural village back home"*.

Caryll's habitus was structured by early experiences in a small rural community that 'looked out for one another'. She recalled the two very large neighbouring families and how it was expected that *"anything we didn't need or had grown out of would go to either family because there was only five of us and 13 and 17, [respectively] of them"*. The stories recounted by her parents about their early lives and upbringing gave Caryll an appreciation for the impact of circumstances on successive generations and that not everyone had the same opportunities. Caryll felt her early experiences had a significant bearing on the structuring of her values and beliefs.

Maybe understanding, maybe working in this community I can relate to and understand where people are, you know, why people are in the situation they find themselves sometimes. It's what's happened for them generationally. All people are people so whatever happens in their lives is because of a set of circumstances like we've talked about before, different things have shaped different people, they've had stuff happen to them for all sorts of reasons. So I think for me it's about that there is a fair and equal chance for every child. And that's, no matter

where I've taught that has been the thing that's driven me.
(Interview 2).

Caryll also articulated beliefs that had stemmed from experiencing practices valued as part of the collective family habitus of her husband. These beliefs were in conflict with her own and it required a struggle to uphold her expectations for 'people like me' in the face of different cultural practices.

Because when I was newly married, I lived in Africa for seven or eight years. And I became acutely aware that even though it was a culture that was white, middle-class if you like, and settled from some immigrants, I felt a very long way from my home in terms of people understanding what my background and philosophy were. You know, I was a kiwi¹¹ and the people I was mixing with were either born in England or born in Africa and their lens and view of childrearing and all of those things, just values if you like, were totally different. So I used to struggle – particularly when I had my own children. Because the norm there was to either put your children into care or to have them looked after by domestic servants or nannies.

And that wasn't what I wanted for my own children so I had to fight for that from my mother-in-law, because that's how their children were reared. My husband went to boarding school when he was four and earlier he was presented to his parents in the evening after he'd had his tea and bath and so they probably hadn't seen much of him all day. (Interview 1).

Caryll's struggle to practice according to the rules, expectations and norms of her habitus gave her empathy for others in similar situations and influenced her practice as an early childhood teacher.

So I wanted something really different for our children - and that understanding that when you're out of your culture you can feel

¹¹ Colloquial name for New Zealand citizens. The kiwi is a small, native flightless bird recognised as a national icon.

pretty uncomfortable. So somebody that understands where you're coming from, that probably drives me as well. And I think perhaps the later training (as a teacher) and perhaps having some not so positive experiences with my own children's early childhood – you know going to a kindergarten where teachers weren't open or understanding...(Interview 1).

Hence against the odds established by economic and personal circumstances and reputation Taitoko Kindergarten's transformation began and by the end of 2003 staffing issues had been resolved and three new teachers, including Caryll as the permanent Head Teacher were employed at the kindergarten. Mandy's commitment to social justice and a belief in supporting communities through early childhood education enabled the on-going financial and human resources investment in the kindergarten. Caryll's belief in everyone having a fair and equal chance led her to commit herself to the community and invest her energy into making Taitoko Kindergarten a great place for children and adults. The effects of the aspects of habitus of these two women that had been structured from early experiences of 'looking out for others' continued its structuring in the field of early childhood education to fight the odds.

Shifting the odds: Establishing a collective habitus

There were other significant changes and events that contributed to the transformation of the kindergarten and although relatively minor, one of these changes helped to shape a different perspective of the kindergarten within the community: a new fence.

Caryll recalled how a large wooden fence had enclosed the kindergarten, prohibiting any view of the 'outside world'. This visual impediment attracted unwanted 'after hours' activities in the kindergarten grounds, which contributed to the negative and unsafe perception about the kindergarten. Fundraising for and erecting a new fence to match the one of the adjacent school was, according to Caryll very positive for the kindergarten: "*suddenly we looked a lot fresher,*

brighter, more appealing and it made us look a lot more open, so that was a good, positive move”.

Another significant but less tangible and immediate development was the approach of the new teaching team to the kindergarten programme and philosophy. In her initial interview Caryll articulated how making changes to the programme and initiating a relationship with the school were key drivers in beginning to change the community perception about the kindergarten.

Probably at that stage [early 2004] the significant things were the three [of us new] teachers and we felt like a team. We looked really closely at our philosophy and our programme to see how that was meeting the needs of the children and we tried very hard to make some engagement with the school. So that was probably at that point, the first level of community engagement, and the relationship with the school prior to that really hadn't been a very happy one. And I think the principal was quite pleased to see some of the changes that were happening and he could see that they were going to impact on transition to school for children and that that would be a more positive thing as well. So we just worked away, probably at that point it was about developing our relationships with our families and making sure that people felt at home here and that the session was operating in a way that the best things were happening for children. (Interview 1).

A hospitality of visitation

Making people feel at home and building relationships are key aspects of successful engagement with communities. As Gasper (2010) contends, trusting relationships are at the heart of effective interactions and creating opportunities for new possibilities. Derrida's ideas in relation to a 'hospitality of visitation' (2003) connects with Caryll's comment about "making sure that people felt at home" at the kindergarten. Being willing to accept whomever might 'visit' without expectations of conforming to the norms and rules of 'this place' is central to individuals feeling welcomed without prejudice (Derrida, 2003). Caryll

was mindful that the three teachers were all Pākehā women from middle class backgrounds, which was likely to be a barrier for some families. The increasing Pasifika population in Levin and in the Taitoko Kindergarten community in particular were largely invisible at the kindergarten. Caryll suggested a reason for this: *“as far as the Pasifika community were concerned – we were not that easy to engage with and I mean some families came our way but we were palangi people and that didn’t make access to us that easy”*. This awareness of cultural differences by the teachers indicated that a ‘hospitality of visitation’ was in progress and that “making people feel at home” is complex and requires time.

This sense of hospitality and visitation is captured in Caryll’s comment about ensuring that the kindergarten is regarded by the community as a welcoming place.

Because you’re not going to take a family somewhere that you as a visitor you don’t feel, doesn’t get a very good vibe about. So our policy, one of things we’ve done is that we try and find a place for everybody. We work really hard at making people feel at home. (Interview 1).

Curriculum that troubles the odds: Reifying the ‘rules of the game’

Incentives for the teachers to theorise their practice were the expectations of the Kindergarten Association and the mandated early childhood regulations (New Zealand Government, 2008). Having a philosophy statement has become one of the unwritten “rules of the game” in the field of early childhood education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1977). Although the mandated curriculum regulations do not insist on a philosophy statement there is an expectation that centres will have a philosophy statement visible for families. This expectation is reinforced by the Education Review Office (ERO) responsible for reviewing the performance of schools and early childhood centres in Aotearoa New Zealand (<http://ero.govt.nz/>). One of the overarching evaluative questions used in an ERO review is “how effectively do the service’s philosophy, visions, goals and processes promote positive outcomes for all children?” (Education Review Office, 2013, p. 21).

Philosophy statements enable teachers to articulate how their programme takes account of the aspirations, values and beliefs of the community they serve. There is also an opportunity to outline in a philosophy statement any special characteristics of the early childhood centre in relation to adherence to specific cultural, religious or philosophical approaches to teaching and learning. The Kindergarten Association also reinforced the importance of each kindergarten having a philosophy statement that reflected the aspirations of the community and the particular strengths of the kindergarten. Hence this tool provided a starting place for the new teaching team at Taitoko Kindergarten to think about what was important for their practice in this community and make changes.

The teachers' commitment to examining their philosophy links to the research that emphasises the importance of effective integrated services having a sound theoretical basis (Anning & Ball, 2007; Beaty, 2011; Moore, 2008). Although Taitoko Kindergarten was operating solely as an early childhood service they were nevertheless endeavouring to reach out to the community and engage their immediate neighbours: the school. A number of factors incentivised a theoretical basis for their practice. The most significant of these was the national early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) which is underpinned by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and built on four principles including relationships/ngā hononga and family and community/whānau tangata. These principles encourage teachers to theorise their philosophy and programme according to the tenets expressed in the principles and supporting strands: belonging, communication, contribution, exploration and wellbeing. The other two principles: holistic development/kotahitanga and empowerment/whakamana contribute to a philosophy that values children and families' opportunities for learning and growing.

Some funding policy changes in 2004 enabled the kindergarten to extend its session hours and consequently receive extra funding. Coupled with increasing the morning session roll, which attracted more funding, the kindergarten began to make some minor financial gains. The table below illustrates the early transformation of Taitoko Kindergarten both structurally and relationally.

Table 3. Taitoko Kindergarten 2003-2005. Material, social and cultural changes

The Odds Against		Fighting the Odds	
Structure	Relationships	Structure	Relationships
Staffing 2 qualified teachers	*Low attendance, particularly in afternoons *Staffing issues *Waiting to be closed * Minimal engagement with families *Reputation of being on the 'wrong side' of town' *Poor relationship with school next door *Poor relationship with Pasifika	Staffing 3 new teachers	*Some improvement in family engagement *Small increase in attendance *Beginning to re-establish relationship with school
Licence: 30:30		Licence: 40:30	
Hours of operation: 5 morning sessions from 8.45-11.45am and 3 afternoon sessions from 12.45-3.15pm		Hours of operation: 5 morning sessions from 8.30-12.30am and 3 afternoon sessions from 1.30-3.30pm	
Ethnicity: Predominately Māori		Ethnicity: 31 Māori, 7 Pasifika, 19 European or other	
Demographic: Predominately single mothers with one or more children		Demographic: Predominately single mothers with one or more children	
Financial health: Losing money		Financial health: slightly improved	
		Physical enhancements: New fence	

The most significant tangible impact on the transformation of Taitoko Kindergarten was being awarded a Parent Support and Development (PS&D) contract. This contract enabled a range of physical and structural changes that supported the teachers' aspirations for the kindergarten and community. The remainder of this chapter outlines the provisions of the Parent Support and Development contract, the teachers' impressions of the impacts of these

provisions and other affordances that contributed to the transformation of the kindergarten and its fight against the odds.

New opportunities for shifting the odds: A policy intervention

In August 2005 Caryll saw a notice about the launch of a new Parent Support and Development pilot in the Ministry of Education Early Childhood Education Update publication. On reading it she thought, *“it seemed to me that we may have fitted some of that criteria [aimed at families at risk of poor outcomes, with children aged 0-3 years.]. So I had a talk to Mandy about that and she thought it would be a really good idea to put in an application at least”*.

Mandy recalled being approached by the Senior Teacher responsible for Taitoko Kindergarten to ask for support in assisting the Head Teacher to submit a proposal.

Caryll at some stage really wanted their outdoor covered area made into another room for families and stuff but we were struggling to resource such a project. And so the Parent Support and Development registration of interest came and M, who was the Senior Teacher at the time, brought it to me and said “Caryll really wants to do this, can we support her?” And so we did. We helped with writing a proposal and that was successful. (Interview 1).

The willingness of the Association management to put aside time to assist with the application, a significant undertaking, was another demonstration of the effects of a collective habitus committed to supporting people’s aspirations. The interplay of habitus and field is evident in the Association using their social and cultural capital (expertise in understanding the jargon and requirements of governmental contracts) to assist in the application process. The official evaluation of the PS&D project discussed the issue of the standard of applications (Ministry of Education, 2010). Although some centres (those whom had no umbrella organisation and were relying solely on the teaching team, centre managers or volunteer’s experience and competence) had a sound vision about

engaging families, they struggled to fill in the proposal, provide sufficient information and answer questions fully.

The vision of the Association and Head Teacher for the kindergarten in applying for the PS&D was to adopt a multi-service approach to meet “community need by providing an environment for community members to become empowered and to strengthen the capacity at a local level” (Wellington Region Free Kindergarten Association, December, 2005, p. 2). Through the incorporation of a parent and whānau space at the kindergarten, a hub would be provided for the Taitoko community. Amongst the Association management and kindergarten teaching team there were lots of ideas about buildings, renovations and new spaces and a dream to create an effective integrated early years service. During her involvement with the teachers’ union, and her subsequent role as General Manager Mandy had had opportunities to hear about various integrated service models and child-centred policies, which influenced the decision-making about the vision for Taitoko Kindergarten.

It started with learning from M [an academic who had visited and written about integrated services in the UK and Europe] actually, and L, but particularly M about the concept of Pen Green [an integrated early years service in the UK] and the idea of the child being the centre. And I remember L had been, when she was with NZEI [the teachers’ union], she got a scholarship or something and went over to Sweden, and she came back and wrote a paper about child-centred policies, which really changed my perception of how things operate. If we had, instead of social impact reports or financial impact reports or environmental impacts report – actually child impact reports! Imagine how different things would be! And so the idea that the child is the centre shaped how we developed Taitoko. (Interview 1).

In January 2006 the kindergarten was informed they had been awarded a 3 year Parent Support and Development contract from the Ministry of Education in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Development. This contract provided

\$60,000 for each of the 3 years along with a \$10,000 start-up grant. As outlined in Chapter 2, the PS&D project was a cross-sectorial early intervention programme for vulnerable children developed by government ministers and officials during 2003-04. The main aim of the programme was to “ensure all vulnerable children receive the best support they need before birth to their transition to school to provide them with the best possible start in life and enable them to maximise their potential” (Office of the Minister for Social Development and Employment, 2005, p. 3).

The funding from the Parent Support and Development project was both enabling and constraining. It contributed significantly to the transformation of the kindergarten but it did not provide the opportunity to fully realise the dreams of the kindergarten leadership. The funding was also time bound, which meant insecurity for the project. After the awarding of funding to ten centres for the pilot another eight early childhood centres were given contracts in 2008 as phase 2 of the project. Phase 2 was implemented before the pilot had finished and then a change of government in 2009 led to the removal of this funding to the phase 2 centres and no further availability of funding for the pilot centres. However in 2006 Taitoko Kindergarten began to implement their ideas based around the concept of a *Whānau Tangata* (a place for all to belong) centre.

Disrupting discourses of vulnerability

In the first instance of applying for the PS&D both the Association management and teachers were determined to dispel the discourse of vulnerability that was evident in the PS&D documentation. Taitoko Kindergarten’s application stated:

We want to move away from the risks and results of social isolation and towards quality early childhood education provision that forms the core of a multitude of services that enhances the parenting, social and work skills of all families in that wider community. (Wellington Region Free Kindergarten Association, December, 2005, p. 2)

There were deliberate efforts to play down the ‘targeting of vulnerable families’ through the project and support all families in the community. The teachers all spoke of their determination to dispel the notion of ‘vulnerability’. For Caryll her belief about vulnerability as something that can be attributed to anyone at various times and for various reasons influenced how she viewed the community: possessing strength.

Well I don't think that this community is any more vulnerable than any other community in any other place in New Zealand because everybody can be vulnerable at different stages of their lives so if you're talking about decile ratings or you wanted to classify people, then I think that vulnerable is the wrong word to use. To me it's not a term that I think that fits with this community in Taitoko. Because actually the longer you're here, and the more you get to know the people, there is a very strong community feeling in this area. And everyone brings what they can and you only have to hark back to your own experiences. I was at home with four little children – you're out of the workforce and you're out of... you're in a different place for quite a long time. Perhaps your own feeling of self-worth, you wonder if you're ever actually going to lift your head up again. It just sort of seems a round of daily routine that, and I sort of had reasonable support around that but it's a time where you can feel as though you wonder what the rest of your life is going to be like. (Interview 1).

Michelle inferred that there was a stigma attached to the label of vulnerability, which had a negative impact on families and she was keen to avoid the terminology.

You don't say that [talk about vulnerability] in this community because once you say that it makes the parents uptight, not uptight, but it gets their backs up if you say that sort of thing. With something new in the kindergarten you have to ease them into new things. And once you say they're vulnerable that they will think they're no good, I just think that's a horrible label. And the parents already know that they've got issues, they don't need to be reminded I think. I suppose that they're like any other community but they might have needs, needs might be, no I don't

want to label them. They're a community that might need supporting maybe – with resources maybe, that they could tap into if they needed to. I don't want to label. (Interview 1).

Similarly Tania's perception of the deficit notion portrayed by a label of vulnerability detracted from the individual experiences of families and the importance of respecting and supporting their aspirations.

I don't know that they're vulnerable – I just think that they're people needing some extra support and some aroha [love], some love and just caring for them – that they are individual people that should be respected and helped and things. I've had experiences in my life that are similar to some of these families and when you've got someone who is trying to empower you and supporting you, you can go a long way and I think that's something everyone should have.

Some families are quite confident families but then you can see there's a lot of families that struggle with their confidence and their self-esteem and that's from all kind of experiences and life and things. And for me, I feel it's important to, and like I said from experiences I've had in the past, if you have someone here that can support you and empower you it can move you forward. So I think if we can offer that to families and parents, even if you're making a difference in a couple of people's lives then it's going to affect their families and their wider families. (Interview 1)

Caryll and Tania's reference to early life experiences providing a platform for practice based on empathy and compassion further reflects the effects of habitus and its relationship with field. Tania had lived in largely rural locations as her father found what work was available with an eye out for the 'next successful' business venture. The insecurity of her father's employment prospects resulted in Tania understanding the feeling of vulnerability. Spending a great deal of her growing up years in a community that had a negative reputation throughout the wider region enabled Tania to sympathise with the Taitoko Kindergarten community. Her successful teaching career and the support she experienced in getting a qualification and establishing her career influenced her approach to those

that came across her path. Support and empowerment were key features of Tania's philosophy.

Both Caryll and Tania now had the social and cultural capital to influence the field of early childhood education within the confines of their own centre and the community accessing the service. They were determined to use this capital to make a difference for others and provide the necessary support to enable families to realise their aspirations: in short be mesosystem agents. Caryll's desire to see the physical environment enhanced to encourage community engagement required her to use her social capital in the wider community to access funding for renovations. Caryll's growing knowledge of influential organisations, local government processes and a wider network of contacts enabled her to have some influence in these fields outside of early childhood education.

Further transforming social, material and cultural capital

(i) New and changed spaces.

The kindergarten underwent some major renovations during 2006. The verandah area was enclosed to provide permanent space to hold workshops while the kitchen was enlarged and a whānau room incorporated into the renovations. Caryll regarded the renovations to the building and an official launch of the PS&D project as a turning point for the kindergarten while Tania endorsed the impact of the renovations.

Caryll: That first lot of building [closing in the verandah and a whānau room extension], our first sort of powhiri¹² that we had to launch the project and people really stepped up to the fact that we really weren't such a horrible place at all. And it's just really gone from strength to strength. (Interview 1).

Tania: I think definitely the funding got us up and going with the building changes that we had as well – changing the outlook of the kindergarten got us moving. (Interview 1).

¹² Formal Māori welcoming ceremony

Enlarging the teacher's office space was another physical enhancement and this meant there was room to house an administrator and provide spaces for the teachers to meet with families in private, if necessary. As Moore (2008) contends the physical environment of a service plays an integral part in families' ability to access the amenities. An environment that looks inviting and people feel comfortable to enter the facility and find assistance easily is more likely to attract and encourage people to engage. The physical enhancements to the kindergarten provided a range of different spaces for families to engage for different purposes.

(ii) The enhancement of social and cultural capital: Employing cultural support workers.

An early decision of the Head Teacher, Senior Teacher and General Manager was to use some of the funding provided by the project to employ cultural kaimahi (workers) to help support the teachers. The three Pākehā teachers felt that the presence of respected members of the Māori and Pasifika communities at the kindergarten would assist with communication and hospitality. The kaimahi were employed on a part-time basis. Caryll recounted how providing opportunities for families through involvement and employment was integral to her thinking about the project. She was also cognisant of not making any public declaration about the project targeting 'vulnerable families' and a 'top down' approach to solutions.

*We looked within the community for people that would be able to support us [to establish relationships] because I think the driving philosophy for me was I didn't want people to feel, I didn't want them to notice huge changes and think that we were coming in to do what **we** wanted to do to make things better. So initially we didn't say a great deal about the project we just said the Ministry of Education have given some money and we were able to use it the way we wanted to, within reason, and we'd like to involve the community in that so we could employ some people to do some things with us. So we wanted it to be strength-based rather than 'we're coming down'... (Interview 1).*

Initially a Māori and a Samoan kaimahi were employed. The Māori kaimahi, Daveida was a respected member of the community who had her own children

and grandchildren attend the kindergarten. She talked about her perception of what her presence at the kindergarten meant and the value of intergenerational links.

My children they were brought up around here. They still have their friends that have their children, they're still very close from back in the day when they all played around here and sometimes I'll be in here and I'll hear "Nan!" and it's some of the girls that went to school with my children and they're bringing their children in here. It is nice [for them to see someone familiar]. "How are you Nan?" and it's really good. And they're mums, and that way we're still close, we've kept in contact, like I'd never probably move from this area. (Interview 1).

Michelle viewed Daveida's experiences of being a mother and grandmother as significantly contributing to her kaimahi role. The links that she had with the kindergarten and community coupled with the informal opportunities for conversations and relationship building that accompanied the duties of 'being in the kitchen' were instrumental to her role.

We had Daveida, who's a grandmother and she's had her grandchildren through [the kindergarten] and I think her children did come through this kindergarten. And she had the opportunity to work in the kitchen and have these conversations with parents, so parents would hang around and talk to her. (Interview 1).

Tania viewed the kaimahi as an integral part of the kindergarten culture and how they had been instrumental in helping build relationships with the kindergarten community.

Absolutely the kaimahi have helped build our relationships with families... because they're direct links to the community here too... with Daveida [living] just down the street, absolutely they are key. (Interview 1).

For Caryll having kaimahi not only helped strengthen the teachers' connections with the community and break down some of the cultural barriers, the kaimahi

were able to convey to the teachers the communities' wishes and aspirations for the project.

It's the listening to the community that has been one of the key things that has driven our decision-making and the kaimahi helped us to find out what the community wanted and having the kaimahi also offer[ed] a little employment to people who otherwise wouldn't have that opportunity. (Interview 1).

(iii) Employing a Samoan teacher.

The change in kindergarten hours of operation required more teachers to meet different child: adult ratios. One of the new teachers employed was a Samoan woman. Having a Samoan teacher who was part of the local Samoan community encouraged the involvement of families from Samoa and as Michelle one of the teachers attested, assisted in making these families feel welcomed.

It's been really good [having a Samoan teacher], because some of the parents, we tell them something and I think that they see this palangi and they think what is she trying to tell me? And we've got that back-up to say "Hey R [Samoan teacher] can you just make sure that the parent understands me?" and I suppose that we do look a bit, not fierce, but they could be a bit uneasy with someone not from their culture I reckon. So, she can get the word through to them if we need something clarified or we can find things about the child at home – she's got that, she's got the hand in the community, she knows the families as well, because they might go to church together or something. They come in sometimes and say "Oh, is R here?" So you can see that they feel comfortable approaching R. (Interview 1).

The employment of a Samoan teacher was significant in the recognition of the importance of culture at the kindergarten. Coupled with the kaimahi, having a Samoan teacher enabled more culturally responsive practices and just as Duncan et al (2006) found, families were appreciative of the value placed on their cultural values and beliefs. Derrida's 'hospitality of visitation' is reinforced through the

presence of culturally diverse staff in a place that is largely constructed by the dominant culture (2003).

(iv) Kindergarten-based teacher education students.

Another initiative of the Kindergarten Association in response to a growing lack of qualified teachers was to place students who were completing field-based teacher qualifications in kindergartens to fulfil their required hours of field practice. This initiative was not to replace positions that could be filled with a qualified teacher rather it was to open up support for field-based students with the aim of securing them employment at the completion of their qualification. The policy of requiring 100% qualified teachers in early childhood centres by 2012 was putting welcome pressure on the sector but required some innovative responses. Taking on kindergarten-based teacher education students meant that for some families re-training or working towards a qualification became a possibility.

(v) Early childhood teacher as a mesosystem agent: The Head Teacher as Project co-ordinator.

An original intent of the PS&D proposal was to employ a project co-ordinator who would work closely with the teaching team and liaise with the local community. Subsequent to winning the contract, discussions amongst Association management and the kindergarten teachers led to the Head Teacher being released for .6 of her teaching commitments to fulfil the co-ordinator role. This decision was based on the premise that the Head Teacher had well-established relationships with families and was best placed to inform other agencies about the role that kindergarten could play in supporting the work of other agencies.

Mandy: We had talked about applying for funding to have a community worker attached [as part of the PS&D project], and working with the community. But then, Caryll suggested that perhaps to maintain the integrity of the kindergarten, and its relationships and philosophy, that she be released and that she play that role. (Interview 1).

Making the decision to have Caryll as the project co-ordinator was influenced by the belief that early childhood education is a soft entry point that enables families to engage with other adults and build trusting relationships. Kindergarten as a soft entry point has the child at the centre of the relationship and is a place for children to ‘play and have fun’ rather than judgements about ‘parenting’ providing the impetus for contact. Mandy articulated this belief thus:

And I think that's what's been really pivotal [having Caryll as the project co-ordinator] – in that you can't lose sight of the importance of the child as the central factor because that's what everyone has in common. So instead of some social worker knocking on some young parent's door and saying "You're doing a bad job with your child" it's the young parent coming to the kindergarten and engaging with the teacher about how they can work together to make things better for that child. So it's the conversations that occur because of the shared belief or love or care for the child that's the strength. And when I look at other models, of where you have an integrated service but you have an early childhood centre attached as yet another service, I don't think that that's the sort of model that we want to have. Because I think that the most important thing is the early childhood service, because that's where the child feels most comfortable, that's the child's place where they are nurtured and viewed as confident, competent learners with a contribution to make. So therefore, everything else that wraps around that is based on the fundamental competence of the child – that shared belief.
(Interview 1).

Mandy's habitus continued to be structured in her new role as the General Manager and hearing ideas such as the notion of child-centred policies influenced her beliefs and the structuring of decisions about the kindergarten. This was also evident in how the funding was used to best achieve their vision. The funding from the PS&D project covered some of the cost of the part-time teacher (Tania) to cover Caryll's release time. The General Manager articulated her philosophy about Association funding

decisions for the project and the reality of what the extra funding meant for the kindergarten.

I think that it [the PS&D funding] provided some [of the cost of Caryll's release] and it provided the ability to employ Kaimahi. But again, one of the really important things, it's what I try to do, I know it's what Caryll does – it's focusing on what do we need and then how can we pay for it? So we'll take some equity funding or we'll tutū [play, fiddle] around here but we'll... that's the way Caryll operates and that's the way I operate. What is it that's needed and how can we do it? So we used the funding to supplement the vision that we had for this space. (Interview 1).

For Caryll the funding from the PS&D project afforded a financially 'poor' kindergarten some extras to make some positive changes for the community.

So for me, the main change has been the little bit of money that we received for the project, we were able to make some big changes and that's the thing that I would feel was in a way, the turning point. Even though we were going along okay, and things were improving, that little bit of flexibility gave us a lot more opportunity. (Interview 1).

In taking on the role of the project co-ordinator Caryll felt that things more or less stayed the same for the kindergarten families: she was still the Head Teacher and was usually the first point of contact for families. The continuing stability of the staff was also important after the changes that occurred over the past years.

My role [as coordinator] as far as the community were concerned, didn't change. I just carried on doing what I always do. And Michelle's always been here, Tania's always been here [since the start of the project]. So there's those other familiar people. (Interview 1).

Both Tania and Michelle, the other teachers, saw distinct advantages having Caryll released to be the project co-ordinator, in particular being able to build strong community relationships, and network with other agencies.

Tania: Yeah, definitely that's been a component of it [the success of the project] as well, Caryll now having the full-time release from teaching duties. You need to go out and do that networking and develop those relationships. Because quite often, kindergarten teachers, they don't have the time to go out and do that. Bring them [other agencies] back into here so that then they can benefit their families.

What you've seen today is an example of how it's working with families feeling connected and knowing that they can be supported through all sorts of issues. It doesn't necessarily have to be issues that relate directly to their child – it can be a bit further out.

Interviewer: And do you think that the wider community and maybe some of those agencies and things have a sense of Taitoko kindergarten being a place that supports families?

Tania: They do. Because quite often they will refer families to us as well, because they know the support that they'll get – that it sort of follows through. (Interview 1).

Michelle: Well Caryll is not in the teaching ratio so, and when we started the project Caryll had the time to do the networking out in the community like she's networked within the [Early Years Service] hub¹³ and Barnardos [non-government agency offering a range of social services including early childhood education] and all those sorts of those things. And now because she belongs to the [Early Years Service] hub they've found out that Horowhenua [local territorial district] has bad issues with children's teeth so from out of that we do teeth brushing. So

¹³ An initiative launched in 2006 in areas of high needs to bring Early Years services together.

with all this networking that she did do out in the community, good things have come back to us. (Interview 1).

For Caryll having the time to network and build relationships has been crucial in enhancing the reputation of the kindergarten in the wider community as well other agencies seeing the kindergarten as an integral community support for families. The co-ordinator's role also offered Caryll opportunities to increase her social and cultural capital. As key people in other agencies developed a relationship with Caryll she became further respected while the reputation of the kindergarten as being a good place for families also grew.

Initially with the project we went out and told the community about it, and that gave me a chance to find out, because every area operates slightly differently and every place holds different contracts, so getting your head around where everybody is and what they do is quite a complex task. And that changes within a period of time too. So it's just for me, able to go to community network meetings, and I don't go to lots of them but there's a local management group that meets once a month and there's an early years group that meet, the council meet. A lot of these things I've been invited onto because of what's happened at Taitoko and I think probably with the school principal and myself it's really good that we do go to those things because it brings our particular area into focus when it comes to decisions that are being made. Because the Principal has the same issues that I have – that her school is sometimes viewed negatively. So, if we're able to provide a united team, go off to these things together, we can advocate for our community together. And there's sort of strength in that as well. (Interview 1).

Opening up the field to maximise engagement

(i) Establishing a coffee/play group.

At the suggestion of the newly appointed administrator a coffee/play group was established. The administrator was a parent who had lived in the community for

some time and felt that having a coffee group that other parents could come and bring their babies and toddlers would provide informal opportunities for building relationships with families and for families to connect with one another. Similar to the concepts of coffee groups, school cafés and playgroups discussed by Press Sumsion and Wong (2010), Whalley (2004), Clarke and French (2007), and Medvedev (2013) these informal non-stigmatising soft entry opportunities enable families to engage on their own terms. Just too, as Bertrand (2009), Broadhead et al. (2008) and Gasper (2010) argue, allowing the community to be involved in the decision-making about the types of activities and services that are provided ensures more effective engagement and service delivery. Shared decision-making reinforces the ‘bottom up’ model and encourages agency and empowerment of individuals.

(ii) Changing hours of operation.

Several other changes outside of the Parent Support and Development project contributed to the transformation of the kindergarten. One of these changes was the extension of the hours of operation at the kindergarten. This change became possible through the introduction of a new funding model which provided additional funding for extended sessions (Ministry of Education, 2005b). In October 2008 the kindergarten moved from having two separate sessions (morning session being 4 hours and afternoon session 2.5 hours) to having the option of children staying at kindergarten for 3 or 6 hours. The teachers realised through their communication with families that the current hours of operation were not meeting community needs. Tania recalled the decision to change session times.

What we had wasn't suiting people, we had the younger children coming in the afternoons and at that point lots of families thought "well my child usually just sleeps at that time". So definitely having all the age groups that can start off in the mornings and choose whether they want to come for a short day or the longer day has suited those families. I think our rolls say now, with being pretty full, that it suits a lot of families. (Interview 1).

(iii) Providing lunches at kindergarten.

Listening to the desires of the community and supporting aspirations continued as unintended or unforeseen dilemmas arose from the continuing transformation of the kindergarten. One of these unforeseen changes was a result of the extended operating hours of the kindergarten. Many children were now staying at kindergarten over the lunchtime and the parents who were most involved at the kindergarten decided they would like to provide lunches for children. So a cook was employed to initially provide affordable, healthy lunches 2 days a week but the popularity of the service quickly turned into lunches being available every day of the week. In summary from 2006-2009 Taitoko Kindergarten underwent a significant transformation both structurally and relationally.

Evening some of the odds: “it’s a good place to be”

These changes were a result of the decision of the General Manager to maintain and resource the kindergarten as a community service while the transformation was boosted by a Parent Support and Development contract, and other legislative and policy changes in early childhood education. It is unlikely that the transformation of the kindergarten would have occurred without the particular structures and structuring of the habitus of both Mandy, the General Manager and the appointment of Caryll to the Head Teacher position. The changes that occurred at the kindergarten began to shift the odds for families through the transformation of the material, social and cultural capital of the kindergarten. In addition, the establishment of a collective kindergarten habitus began to engender a positive outlook about the kindergarten and the field of early childhood education began to open up as a possibility for families. The table below contrasts the state of the kindergarten in 2003 to the end of 2009 when the funding for the Parent Support and Development ceased.

Table 4. Taitoko Kindergarten transformation 2003-2009

The Odds Against		Evening the Odds	
2003 Structure	Relationships	2009 Structure	Relationships
Staffing 2 qualified teachers	*Low attendance, particularly in afternoons *Staffing issues *Waiting to be closed *Minimal engagement with families *Reputation as the being on the 'wrong side of town' *Poor relationship with school next door *Poor relationship with Pasifika	Staffing *6 qualified teachers including one Samoan teacher *Head teacher released to build relationships with community agencies and services *2 x12 hours per week paid Kaimahi (Māori and Tongan) *1 x 12 hours per week paid administrator	*Rolls beginning to be consistently full *More parents staying for longer during session *Kindergarten's reputation growing in wider community *Growing relationships with community agencies and services
		Buildings and provisions *Major structural renovations to building. *Coffee group established *Lunches being provided to children *2 parents commenced a teaching qualification and fulfilling field-based hours at the kindergarten	
Licence: 30:30		Licence: 40	
Hours of operation: 5 morning sessions from 8.45-11.45am and 3 afternoon sessions from 12.45-3.15pm		Hours of operation: 8.30am-2.30pm	
Ethnicity: Predominately Māori		Ethnicity: Maori: 42 Pasifika: 20 European:12	
Demographic: Predominately single mothers with one or more children		Demographic: Range of single and two parent families.	
Financial health: Losing money		Financial health: Holding its own. Extra funding from PS&D project covers some costs of extra staffing	

The following perspectives of the kindergarten reputation provided by Tania and Michelle paint a very different picture to the one described at the beginning of the chapter. Taitoko Kindergarten is now a place to which people are keen to come, it is regarded as welcoming and there are positive relationships with the wider community

Tania: I think now you just hear people walk in the door or in the community – they're saying "Send your child here" now. I think it's just what we've evolved to become, we're so welcoming, the door is always open, there's always someone to come in and talk to and sort of help through any issues you might have. I don't think we've ever sent anyone away – so yeah, everyone just knows that they can come here and get what they need. When I first started when people were saying "oh no, don't send your child there" to what it is now, where you've got people actually walking in the door saying "others said to come here, that it's the best kindergarten in Levin". So yeah it's a good feeling, you know you're working on the right track and helping everybody out. (Interview 1).

Michelle: I think that they think it's a good place to be. I think they hear good things about us and they are wanting to spend time here, with us and learn from us and take part in our coffee mornings and they bring other people to join. So I think out in the community if you're talking to someone and they say "Where do you work?" and you say "Oh, Taitoko" they say "oh we've heard good things about you!" so that's really quite impressive I think. (Interview 1).

Despite considerable lobbying from the Kindergarten Association leadership to have the Parent Support and Development project extended because of their belief that sustained change for communities takes time, a newly elected conservative government disestablished the initiative and ceased funding to the 18 centres involved. But the commitment to community and giving all children a fair chance remained a strong motivator and dispositional tendency amongst the Kindergarten Association management and teaching team so efforts were made to continue to

resource the aspects of the project that were making a difference. The General Manager and teachers too, felt that the kindergarten had undergone a change during the PS&D project. This change was evidenced by full rolls and families engaging in the life of the kindergarten. Mandy's comment identifies the shift that had occurred within the kindergarten community over seven years or so and indicates the significant place of the kindergarten in the community.

They'd improved [attendance figures] by 2006. There was, the nature of the community and stuff was such that they still weren't up there with, like other kindergartens but they'd improved. And I had a very strong sense whenever I went up there, of the really strong connections that the community had with the kindergarten. So by that stage, initially it was "these young mothers need that social connection, we can't close the kindergarten". But then it became, actually, "the rolls may not be full but it plays a really important role in the community, so we can't close the kindergarten". And now [2012], the rolls are bulging and it plays a really important role in the community so we actually need to replicate the kindergarten. (Interview 1).

Over the following 2 years, the Kindergarten Association found opportunities to have further influence in the provision of early childhood education in Levin. One of the other kindergartens in the area that served a strong Pasifika community was renamed and reconstituted to better reflect the aspirations of the community. The Samoan teacher who had been at Taitoko, along with a Tongan teacher were employed at this kindergarten. A community education and care centre that was struggling to be viable came under the auspices of the Association while a long awaited Teen Parent Unit at a local high school was opened and the Association won the contract for the early childhood centre attached to this unit.

This chapter has discussed the transformation of Taitoko Kindergarten over a period of 7 years and explored the effects of habitus in the decision-making surrounding the kindergarten. In the first instance the kindergarten had the odds stacked against it but Mandy's decision to keep the kindergarten open and begin to fight the odds resulted in the odds beginning to shift and then change for the

families. However to have an understanding of the impacts of this transformation on families the next three chapters focus on the family participants and their experiences.

Chapter 7 will introduce the individual participants and describe a framework for analysing levels of strength of affordance. The chapter then uses the participants' stories to illustrate the first two levels of strength while Chapter 8 will discuss and illustrate levels 3 and 4 of the framework. Chapter 9 then outlines individual participants' trajectories and maps their affordance networks.

Chapter 7.

Recognising and utilising an affordance: families developing sets of capacities for action

This chapter introduces the seven family participants and outlines how families recognised early childhood education as an affordance when they entered a new field. It also introduces the notion of the level of strength of an affordance and explores the first two of four levels of a framework in relation to families' experiences and how the odds have become more even. The first two levels of the framework are: recognising an affordance; and encountering different perspectives and developing sets of capacities for action. The next chapter will explore levels 3 and 4 of the framework: increasing affordance networks over time; and replicating affordances. Chapter 9 will outline individual trajectories and map the affordance networks for all of the family participants.

When Mandy made the decision to keep Taitoko Kindergarten open and endeavour to find solutions to the problems it was experiencing she did so because of her impression of how the kindergarten was serving a purpose for a small group of mothers. She was aware of the odds stacked against the kindergarten but was willing to fight these odds. As the kindergarten started to transform, more families started coming to the kindergarten and their involvement provided opportunities for their own development: the odds began to shift.

Introducing the family participants

The following descriptions of the family participants outline some biographical facts as at the time of their first interview in March 2012. Included is information about Daveida, the kaimahi whose children and grandchildren had attended the kindergarten and who was interviewed to provide historical and current perceptions of the kindergarten.

Makeleta is a 30+ year-old Tongan woman with six children aged between 4 and 13 years old. Makeleta's husband was a minister at the local Tongan church but is currently enrolled in a secondary teaching qualification. The family have been involved at kindergarten since 2007 and four of their children have attended Taitoko Kindergarten. Makeleta and her family came to New Zealand in 2004 and moved to Levin in 2007.

Carmella is a 30+ year-old Māori mother of four children aged between 6 years to 14 years. All of Carmella's children attended Taitoko Kindergarten. Carmella's husband is of Tongan descent and is a builder. Carmella grew up in Levin but has had some periods living in other regions of Aotearoa New Zealand during her early adult life.

Kirstie, who was introduced in chapter 1, is a 30+ year-old Pākehā mother of five children aged between 2 and 10 years old and has spent all her life in Levin. All Kirstie's children have been to Taitoko with one still attending in 2014, she is married to a Māori man who is employed as a shift worker at the local meat processing factory.

Joh is 25+ years old and Tongan. She and her part Samoan partner have one child who has attended Taitoko Kindergarten. Joh was born and raised in Levin. Joh works as a carer for the elderly and people with disabilities who qualify for home help while her partner is a manager at a local supermarket.

Maselino, known as Mase, is a 30+ year-old Samoan and a father of two children aged 2 years and 10 years old. Maselino's youngest child was attending Taitoko. He is married to a Samoan farm worker. Mase is employed as the kindergarten administrator for 15 hours a week. He also works night shifts at an aged care facility as a carer. Mase and his family have lived in Levin for 3 years since emigrating from Samoa.

Ricky has six children aged between 8 months and 13 years. Ricky is a 25+ year-old Samoan and his partner is Samoan. Two of his children attended Taitoko.

Ricky came from Samoa as a teenager and has lived in Levin for most of his adult life.

Jashana is a 20+ year-old Māori mother of three children aged between 3 and 8 years old. She has lived in Levin for most of her life and all of her children have attended or are attending Taitoko Kindergarten.

Daveida has lived in same house in the Taitoko community for over 3 decades. Two of her four children attended the kindergarten and now all of her grandchildren have attended or are attending the kindergarten. Daveida was employed as a kaimahi for 12 hours a week through funding from the Parent Support and Development project. The role of kaimahi is to support the teachers to be culturally responsive in their practices and to assist in building relationships. Daveida spends much of her time in the renovated kindergarten kitchen preparing morning tea, chatting to parents and making cups of coffee and tea for them.

All seven family participants commented that their involvement with the kindergarten has offered opportunities that have afforded new possibilities for their lives. The following section builds on Chapter 4's discussion about affordances and their structural and/or relational nature. It introduces the first two levels of strength of affordances identified from the data. These affordances contributed to shifting the odds and levelling the playing field for these seven families.

Revisiting affordances and affordance networks

Returning to the notion of affordances introduced in Chapter 4, Gibson's original coining of the term defined affordances as either positive or negative: "what it [the environment] *provides* or *furnishes* either for good or ill" (1979, p. 127, Emphasis in original) while Gee's more recent (2008) definition suggests affordances help individuals achieve certain goals. Affordances need to be perceived or recognised by individuals as useful for contributing to achieving goals. The perception and utilisation of affordances is dependant on "sets of capacities for action" (Gee, 2008, p. 81). These "sets of capacities for action" or

effectivities come about through the individual's relationship with the historically and socially constructed environment where their habitus, cultural and social capital, will determine their ability to recognise and utilise affordances successfully. The individual needs to recognise the material, social and cultural features, artefacts or objects available in their micro, meso and exosystems as affordances and to have the prerequisite skills, dispositions, knowledge, capital and motivation to utilise and engage with the affordance.

Gibson's (1979) theory of affordances was founded in ecological science and concerned with what the material environment offered the animal whereas Gee's use of affordance focussed on knowledge and learning and classifies *people* as a possible 'object' of the environment (2008). Hence together these two definitions can provide for affordances which are either structural, relational or both. By structural I define affordances that are concrete and material, more easily classifiable as objects of the environment. Relational affordances are more abstract and intangible, they include social 'climate', 'the culture' of a place. In both categories of affordance, studying the relationship between the individual and the environment helps identify what, how and why certain features are regarded and utilised as affordances and what capacities for actions they provide and encourage.

Barab and Roth's (2006) extension of the concept of affordances to encompass a *network* of affordances recognises the complexity of human development and learning. According to Barab and Roth, the material, social and cultural world consists of "numerous networks that each have functional significance for individuals who hold particular goals, have particular histories and are knowledgeably skilful (have suitable effectivity sets), or simply have the requisite scaffolding" (2006, pp. 4-5). For example a teacher may see a child perform a task and can draw on a network of tools, resources, knowledge and practices that are not available to a lay person to assess the child's competence. Barab and Roth go on to suggest that through participation in activities an individual can be exposed to a greater variety of affordance networks and will utilise these according to their intended goals.

The analysis of the data to identify affordances provided by the kindergarten for families to realise and extend their aspirations has not only highlighted the interrelationship of capacities for action and affordance networks it has also provided some further insights into the effects of habitus on individuals' abilities to recognise and utilise affordances. Similar to the levels of strength or forcefulness of affordance explored by Gresalfi (2009), Claxton and Carr (2004) and Carr et al. (2009), families' experiences revealed a cumulative effect of levels of strength of affordance as they saw new possibilities and expanded their goals. The following section characterises the first two levels of strength of affordances identified from the family interviews: recognising the affordance and, encountering different perspectives and developing sets of capacities for action. Included are examples from the interviews with the seven family participants as illustrations of these levels and the development of affordance networks.

Level 1. Recognising the affordance: early childhood education and kindergarten for “people like us”

As affordance theories argue, individuals need to recognise or perceive affordances as useful for achieving goals or possibilities for action (Barab & Roth, 2006; Gee, 2008; Gibson, 1979). Hence if early childhood education is to be an affordance then the individual needs to have a knowledge of this field and some understanding of how being involved may help achieve their goals. Kindergarten in Aotearoa New Zealand is an exosystem level structure that provides universal 'free' early childhood education generally for 3 to 5-year-olds predominantly within pram-pushing distance of local residences. However for the universal accessibility of kindergarten to be taken up and afford opportunities for engagement in children's education, parents need to know that kindergartens exist as early childhood education services and that they are for 'people like us'. Early childhood education can become a microsystem with strong mesosystem links to the microsystem of home.

Parents for whom early childhood education is not valued either because the educational institution holds no cultural significance for them or they are unaware of what the benefits for children might be, will make seeking out an early

childhood centre a low priority. Taitoko Kindergarten offered this affordance for the community but it was not instinctively or immediately recognised as a place where adults could belong and might find opportunities for their children and their own development. The family participants in this study had experienced different structurings of their habitus in relation to their perceptions and recognition of early childhood education as an affordance for children or adults.

Carmella. “Kindergarten- what is that?”

Formal early childhood education was not part of Carmella’s family habitus therefore she did not see kindergarten as an affordance to help her realise her goals either for herself or her children. Carmella described her early beliefs about formal early childhood education:

I was actually raised in a family that didn’t take their children to early childhood. I never went, you stayed home with your family and got educated in that sort of environment. I pretty much got raised by my grandparents or aunties and uncles, I got raised in quite an extended family. (Interview 1).

Soon after having her second child Carmella encountered for the first time, a friend whose young children were attending Taitoko kindergarten:

I had to learn once I became a mother, what early childhood education was all about and I think that was just from peers, yeah, one of my friends. She was going to a kindergarten and I thought ‘what is that?’ I really was so naïve as an adult that I hadn’t any idea. I think as a young mum I thought it was drop off - a baby sitting service – no one told you any different really. [Then] I started going with my friend to drop her sons off at kindy. (Interview 1).

Kirstie. Kindergarten: “getting ready for school”.

Similarly Kirstie was unfamiliar with kindergarten as an institution. When I asked Kirstie about her knowledge of early childhood education and kindergarten she elaborated:

I guess I didn't know about kindergarten even though I was aware of it being down the road and I never went to kindergarten as a pre-schooler, [my] kids had always been in daycare fulltime because I had worked about 60 hours a week. (Interview 1).

Kirstie therefore had some knowledge of early childhood education but in her mind early childhood education was a service that 'babysat' or cared for her children while she worked. When she was on maternity leave and her child was no longer going to 'daycare', Kirstie was unaware that she could take her oldest child to kindergarten. For Kirstie at that time early childhood education was an affordance to help her achieve her goal of paying the bills and making a better life for her children. Her early years had been difficult and she was determined to provide a different life for her children, which she saw as achievable through being employed and working hard. In order to do this Kirstie required someone else to look after her children while she worked. With respect to kindergarten as a service Kirstie had minimal awareness of its functions and within the ecology of her interactions had not encountered anyone that had experienced kindergarten: it was not part of her wider habitus. She explained:

I suppose I never actually knew anyone who was involved with kindergarten so I just didn't realise. I thought that kindergarten was kind of where you send your kids a little bit before they go off to school – you know to get them ready for the routines and all that kind of stuff. (Interview 2).

Makeleta. "Education as a doorway for improving your life".

In contrast to Kirstie, the structuring of Makeleta's educational habitus provided specific values about schooling and education, particularly the importance of children receiving an education. Makeleta sought out early childhood education opportunities for her children. She recognised early childhood education as important for her children's development and perceived kindergarten as an affordance to achieve her goals for her children:

We just felt that it's education, it is education to us. When you say kindy [colloquial term for kindergarten], when you talking to a Tongan it is school. We don't say kindy, it's not kindy, it's a name

for pre-school but in our mind it's schooling. So for us to take them to daycare, kindergarten, whatever, it's schooling them. Education it's like a doorway for improving your life, and raising family standards so education is really, really important to us.

(Interview 2).

Joh. "Choosing a good kindergarten".

Joh had been to Taitoko Kindergarten as a young child so she knew that kindergarten was available for her own child and she had an expectation that her child would go to kindergarten. However, ensuring that her daughter went to a 'good' kindergarten was important to Joh. Because Joh had lived in the community she was aware of the negative reputation of Taitoko Kindergarten that had existed and still carried some residue in certain circles of the community. This residual perception made her unsure about enrolling her daughter. She recalled what helped her decide:

Then I had my daughter and I had to pick and I said "oh what about Taitoko Kindergarten?" and I heard some good and some bad and then I seen you there [referring to Kirstie] and my sister went there and I saw what they did for her and I thought "I want that for my daughter" and so she [sister] has a disability and the way they handled her disability and so that was good enough for me. (Interview 1).

Ricky. "Kindergarten is babysitting".

Unlike Joh's family habitus that included some experience of kindergarten and expectation of early childhood education, Ricky had a perception of kindergarten as a place for children to be 'babysat': *"I was one of those parents who thought they just go to babysit"*. He did not recognise kindergarten as an affordance for children's education and had no expectations for his children's early childhood education. The concept of children going to a centre to be 'babysat', predominantly by strangers was foreign to Ricky's habitus. In Ricky's experience, family was the structure where children were cared for and the extended family group could usually be relied upon to fulfil this role hence there was no need for a 'babysitting' service. Although his daughter was enrolled at the kindergarten, his

perception of kindergarten as a babysitting service did not motivate him to have her attend regularly.

Mase. “Education important for development”.

On the other hand education was very important to Mase. This belief influenced his decision to bring his child to kindergarten at an early age. Mase commented *“he growing up and I decided to bring him here”*. The collective habitus of Mase’s family involved valuing education for two purposes: achieving the goal of being whatever you choose to be, and to be financially independent. Hence Mase recognised early childhood education as a fundamental affordance for achieving those goals.

Jashana. “Mum made me go”.

Jashana had lived across the road from the kindergarten but attending kindergarten or having a knowledge of early childhood education was not in her set of experiences. However her mother had a sense of the kindergarten affording Jashana some positive experiences as a young expectant mother so determined that Jashana would get involved at kindergarten. Jashana was taken to the kindergarten coffee group by her mother and strongly encouraged to attend.

Summary comments.

Amongst the family participants some recognised early childhood education as an affordance for children while others’ social and historical environments had not constructed a knowledge of early childhood education as an affordance. Consistent with Gibson’s (1979) explanation of the environment as positively or negatively affording an organism opportunities suggests individual’s interactions with their exo and mesosystems can provide interventions that open up alternative possibilities. These interventions can enable individuals to recognise affordances that were otherwise outside their frame of reference.

The interrelationship between individual and environment provides opportunities for development and the continued structuring of the habitus. As individuals encounter new fields different affordances may be revealed or new goals

developed. Carmella, Kirstie, Ricky and Jashana experienced encounters with people that led them to become involved with the kindergarten and recognise it, in the first instance, as an affordance for their children. Their children provided the impetus or ‘ticket’ to become involved and the soft entry to kindergarten assisted them in negotiating this new field. Once the families were ‘in the door’ (Level 1) and began engaging with the material and social world of the kindergarten, they began to encounter different perspectives and develop sets of capacities for action. This heightened intensity of engagement enabled opportunities for a greater level of forcefulness or strengthen of affordance.

Level 2. A new field: Encountering different perspectives and developing sets of capacities for action

Encountering a new field or meeting people who have a different habitus creates dissonance while also providing an opportunity for new possibilities and as Yang (2013) would contend, the conditions for developing a secondary habitus. The dynamic relationship between habitus and field means ever-changing interactions and participation so that an individual’s perceptions of their everyday world can be disrupted. As the family participants began to get a “feel for the game” of kindergarten some of them found that their perceptions and practices were challenged. The dissonance created through a field/habitus mismatch “raised their consciousness” (Yang, 2013, p.1531), alerting them to new practices in a new field, which were in contrast to their primary habitus. Being open to considering different perspectives and adopting new practices was significant for the development of a secondary habitus.

Carmella. Trusting a friend’s judgement: “I was quite surprised”.

Carmella’s encounter with her friend whose children were attending kindergarten provided a new perspective that hitherto had been almost unthinkable with regards her family practices. She was prepared to trust her friend’s judgment that kindergarten was a safe and positive place for her children. However her own lack of exposure to the institution of kindergarten and its ‘way of being’ did not initially enable her to recognise it as an affordance except for providing her with some time-out from parenting responsibilities. Carmella found taking her children

to kindergarten and leaving them in the care of ‘strangers’ was not within the realm of her experiences.

I started going along, so I had a little bit of an insight into watching how they [the teachers] worked together and collaborated with each other and I think at that young age I trusted my best friend. I trusted her judgment “if her kids are there, it will be alright”.

Those teachers that I went to drop them off with, I didn’t know them from a bar of soap and that they didn’t live in the community, I thought [this] was strange. I was quite surprised.

(Interview 1)

Kirstie. Acting on the Head Teacher’s suggestion: “I just became part of the kindergarten”.

Likewise, it was not until Caryll stopped Kirstie as she walked down the street that she began to think about kindergarten as an opportunity for herself and her children to have somewhere else to go during the day. Kirstie recalled “*Caryll stopped me on the side of the road one day and said “I see your son playing on the road, you should bring him to kindy some time, yeah, so I was like, ‘alright’”.*

(Interview 1)

Initially Kirstie took her children for a few visits to the kindergarten and then, when she returned to work, staff at the early childhood service that her oldest child attended would take him to kindergarten for the afternoon sessions. Although her son attended kindergarten because the other early childhood service dropped him off and picked him up, Kirstie was too busy to pay much attention to her son’s engagement at kindergarten. After the birth of her third baby Kirstie decided to give up work and it was then that she started visiting the kindergarten after Caryll’s invitation.

I just started visiting the kindy, just going over and I stopped the kids going to [their current early childhood centre], I couldn’t really afford it anymore and then K went to school and N started full time kindy, that’s when the playgroups were starting and I started going to those. (Interview 2).

Despite attending kindergarten not featuring as a practice, it became a structuring structure that provided Kirstie with opportunities to interact with others and learn about parenting. As she began to feel comfortable about the new field of kindergarten Kirstie saw it as an affordance for her children and herself.

I just became part of the kindergarten, literally, when I would go in the mornings to drop my kids off I wouldn't go home I just stayed there and I just hung out, kind of learnt things [about being a parent], met people, and was just supported by Caryll. Being at kindergarten helped me to be confident, getting involved in the kids education, like knowing it was ok to ask questions. (Interview 2)

As various studies have shown when parents become aware of and involved in their child's learning it has positive effects on children and parents (Beaty, 2011; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Harris et al., 2009; Whalley, 2004). Similar to Kirstie's experiences, Whalley's examples of parents being involved in their children's learning demonstrates how parents felt more confident in their parenting and as contributors to their child's learning and development thus strengthening their home microsystem. For Ricky, Jashana and Joh being supported in parenting and beginning to understand about their children's learning were initial opportunities for opening up new perceptions of affordances.

Ricky. Coming to kindergarten: "I started to realise the reality of it".

As outlined earlier, Ricky's daughter was enrolled at kindergarten but not attending regularly. When Ricky's sister was employed as a teacher at Taitoko Kindergarten she said to Ricky "what are you doing?" and I say "nothing", so she is "you are coming with me", "ok, I'll come". Ricky was used to 'obeying' his sister, it was a significant part of his habitus to do what his older sister said. Within his cultural norms the younger siblings must do the bidding of the older siblings. Ricky expressed this notion by saying "I'm the youngest of nine children, I always wait to be told [what to do]". Attending kindergarten regularly changed Ricky's view of early childhood education and he saw the benefits it afforded his child: "I had my son there and that was when I started to realise the reality of it, it's not babysitting, there is a lot of learning going on".

Joh. “That was the first time I actually thought about her learning”.

Joh’s motivation for enrolling her daughter at kindergarten was to help Joh achieve her goal of having some time to herself. In her interview Joh explained “*I put her in kindy cos she was annoying me and I just wanted – like I am a young mum like I had her when I was 18 – um and I just wanted to put her in there so I could have some time to myself*”. What transpired for Joh was that her increased involvement enabled her to begin to develop capacities for action to meet other goals. Being invited by Caryll to coffee group provided Joh with new insights.

I wasn’t doing anything, just a ‘stay-home’ mum, wasn’t thinking of doing anything [with my life] um just trying to get by, that’s it, but then Caryll invited me to coffee morning and so I think that was the first time I actually thought about what my future could look like. That was the first time I actually thought about [daughter] and her learning and school [future education].
(Interview 1).

Jashana. “Oh, this place is really good”.

Likewise as Jashana began to attend the kindergarten coffee group she found it afforded her opportunities to learn about parenting and feel supported as a young mother. Jashana commented about her initial involvement at kindergarten:

Yeah, it helped me a lot, especially with me being so young and then coming to coffee morning group there was older mums that had had their children and like I would have a question and the older mums would answer it and it helped me and I didn’t have to go anywhere asking for help, like it was right there and the help was there, so it was really good”. (Interview 1).

So although Jashana had been aware of the existence of kindergarten, it was her mother’s actions that contributed to Jashana becoming involved. As her mother had hoped, being amongst other mothers and interacting with them informally afforded Jashana with opportunities that were not available to her in other spheres of her micro and mesosystems. Jashana found being involved at kindergarten

afforded her opportunities to overcome her acute shyness and to feel valued as an individual.

I get really shy but it's really good at coffee group because I know them all. I open up and can talk with these people and have 'mum' time – talk with other mums about children and things like that. I thought that because I was so young, you know, coming to coffee morning group I thought to myself that people wouldn't want to listen to a young mum and stuff like that. That because they were more older and more experienced they wouldn't want to take like advice or something like that, that's what I personally felt when I first came here then I realised that people you know were taking that advice off me and I was like "omg" and that's when I was like "oh, this place is really good". (Interview 1).

Makeleta. "I learned to see things from a different perspective".

Makeleta encountered cultural dissonance as she engaged with the kindergarten environment. Kindergarten offered a different perspective that was incongruent with her previous experiences, nevertheless Makeleta was prepared to modify her perceptions and see affordances for meaningful participation.

When I went [to kindergarten] I see them putting babies on the grass and I thought "I would never [do that]", for us it would never [be something to do] and I remember when I saw Kirstie when T was still a baby and putting him outside on the concrete and [me thinking] "Oh my gosh, don't do this, that would never [happen in Tonga]– but like that's where I learned to see things from a different perspective – it's ok. My husband is a minister so I have to keep the house clean all the time, tidy, you have visitors all the time. But when I went to Taitoko Kindergarten, it really, really helped me to see that it's ok to make mess... it's ok to make mess and it's helped me to see, you know, see more of a child – no not like the way I see from, maybe I might see like from a Pasifika eyes, like the house needs to be neat and tidy because you have visitors. But when I went there [kindergarten] it really opened up my eyes we need to give a space for the children to make mess, to

make theirs- so that they do have a place at home, not just a place for visitors. (Interview 1).

Mase. “Now I’m noticing and I develop some strategies in here”.

Similar to Makeleta, Mase was confronted with practices that were foreign to him in relation to children’s learning. Despite these differences Mase took on new perspectives and was comfortable in adapting to alternative practices.

It’s far different, it might be the culture or the language or something like that but in terms of teaching, yeah, it little bit different. Like in Samoa, like for picking up the sand, or the children eat the sand, they wouldn’t allow it but what I notice here that is a good development for the child. Teachers let them do it whether they like it or dislike it – if they don’t like it, just leave it. That’s what I’m noticing. They noticing what they learn something – that is really good... I’m ok about everything doing here because now I’m noticing and I develop some strategies in here, it’s far different but life is going on. (Interview 1).

Summary.

In the first instance families needed to encounter the field of early childhood education and then recognise it as an affordance that could be useful for helping them to achieve their goals. As the families became involved with the life of the kindergarten they began to understand about their children’s learning and to see opportunities for their own development through their encounters with the teachers and other families. Encountering new perspectives and becoming more ‘at home’ in the field enabled new goals to emerge and priorities to shift. Entering a new field and finding a mismatch between their habitus and the habitus of the field provided opportunities for consideration of the development of a secondary habitus.

This chapter has demonstrated how two levels of strength of affordance were important for families to begin to take up opportunities and develop sets of capacities for action. Through taking up opportunities and shifting the focus from their children to themselves, the participants began to recognise and draw on a network of affordances for realising their goals. An ecological view of the development of affordance networks emphasised the significance of time and space

(Barab & Roth, 2006). The transformation of the kindergarten over a decade as described in the previous chapter outlines a number of affordances that developed during this time. The provision of affordances, both structural and relational, over a sustained period, served to increase the affordance networks of the families. The following chapter will identify two further levels of strength of affordance and provide evidence from the family participants' interviews of the cumulative effect of these levels.

Chapter 8.

Increasing and replicating affordance networks over time

In the first instance, having recognised an affordance and utilised it to help achieve a goal, individuals may begin to recognise other affordances or be further encouraged to recognise and take up opportunities. The multiplicity of affordances and increasing sets of capacity for action constructs a network of resources and tools that enable individuals to progress their goals and, in the case of the families at Taitoko Kindergarten, contributes to changing the odds. The previous chapter outlined how the family participants had each recognised early childhood education as an affordance and had taken up some of the opportunities it offered, identifying two levels of strength of affordance. This chapter continues the exploration of levels of strength and characterises a further two levels. Level 3 highlights examples of the family participants increasing their affordance networks over time then Level 4 discusses the replication of affordances in sustaining community empowerment. Chapter 9 will provide a culmination of Chapters 7 and 8 by outlining individual participants' trajectories and mapping their affordance networks. It also discusses aspects of habitus that have influenced the accumulation of social and cultural capital over time.

Level 3: Increasing affordance networks over time

There were a variety of ways in which arrangements and relationships at the kindergarten provided extended capacities for action thus increasing the affordance networks of the participants over time. As Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorises about human development, the reciprocal and dynamic relationship between the individual and their environment enables opportunities for developing skills, taking on new perspectives and interacting with the people, places and things in the environment to realise goals. Realising goals and participating in increasingly complex and widening affordance networks can require appropriate scaffolding from others who have the knowledge, history and skills in

relation to particular affordances. Yang (2013) suggests that scaffolding or explicit pedagogy is an integral condition for developing a secondary habitus. She also contends that for the acquisition of a secondary habitus that is “significantly different from the primary habitus unconsciously produced during the earliest phase of upbringing can be acquired” through practical familiarisation with a new field and “intentional and strategic learning” (p. 1533). Caryll was a mediator who provided scaffolding and intentional learning for the family participants and increased their affordance network and possibilities for action. She was able to use her knowledge and experience in the sub-field of kindergarten to assist families to increase their capital in this sub-field and begin to change the odds.

Joh, during the group interview, led a discussion about the significance of the encouragement they received from Caryll and how her mediation and scaffolding had given them new opportunities, capacities for action and begun to level the playing field for them.

I feel like if that person, that one person which – you know, Caryll – didn’t come to us and say encourage us like heaps (Kirstie: believe in us) yeah not even knowing us, believed in us right there on the spot, like you know “you could be a teacher” or something like that or “why don’t you come to coffee group” and stuff like that I don’t think any of this... like we wouldn’t be sitting here or we even thought about our future or something like that...”(Interview 1).

Scaffolding sets of capacities for action through exosystem arrangements.

A variety of affordances that have their roots in the wider ecology of early childhood education were available for families but it required Caryll’s mediation to enable families to recognise and take up these opportunities. These affordances were to do with the administration and operation of the kindergarten including fundraising committees, support for children with special education needs and cultural support. It was these exosystem arrangements that provided opportunities for families and Caryll’s knowledge of these arrangements and their requirements that enabled her to mediate for various families. Caryll recognised certain skills and dispositions in individuals and had a knowledge of arrangements within the

field of kindergarten that could provide opportunities to use those skills and dispositions. Taking up these opportunities increased or extended the development of capacities for action.

Ricky: Education Support Worker.

Education Support Workers are employed by Group Special Education, the arm of the Ministry of Education responsible for the education of children with disabilities and additional learning needs. The discourses apparent in the approach to children with disabilities are reflected in the acceptance that an Education Support Worker is not required to have any specific educational qualifications. This non-requirement enables adults from a wide range of backgrounds and interests to take on this role and although the wisdom of this policy continues to be debated, it nevertheless opened up opportunities for individuals in the community to increase their knowledge and skills in the field of early childhood education.

For example Caryll quickly realised Ricky had particular skills in interacting with children and a curiosity about children's learning so she asked him to take on the role of Education Support Worker (ESW) for a Samoan child with a disability. This role increased Ricky's participation in the educational community and extended his capacities for action by becoming deeply interested in teaching and learning. Ricky's experiences as an ESW and being exposed to the life of the kindergarten widened and strengthened his affordance networks through meeting other people and learning about his children's learning. Ricky commented:

I feel very involved with Taitoko Kindergarten and I learn a lot from the teachers there and the community. That's the first time I actually meet other people from that community, you know, parents that go everyday that go to take their kids. Like I was the one like I said in the beginning I was the one that just drop because they being babysit and go and do a part-time job somewhere, get the money for the kids but I totally understand everything [about children learning] and it's amazing. (Interview 1).

Over time Ricky's interest in teaching and learning and his growing experiences as an ESW opened up further possibilities, which are outlined later on in this chapter.

Carmella: Kindergarten treasurer.

Likewise the kindergarten committee is an exosystem arrangement that stems from the philosophy of not-for-profit, community based early childhood education provision. This philosophy values shared decision-making between professionals and families using the service and recognises the collective efforts of a community to establish and develop the service. The not-for-profit status of the service also recognises that families need to be assured and have a say in the financial decisions of the service. Thus this arrangement provides opportunities for families to use and/or develop new skills through their involvement in the committee.

The kindergarten parent committee was something that Caryll recognised could provide families with opportunities for engagement and empowerment. The purpose of the parent committee is largely to fund raise and to support teachers with administrative and financial tasks. Traditionally kindergarten committees have played an important role in bringing a local flavour to the kindergarten community. Although the umbrella association oversaw and administered funding and professional support (and still undertakes this role), parent committees were responsible for meeting the shortfall of the government funding allocation that accounted for resources, equipment, maintenance and improvements to the environment. Teachers were responsible for consulting with the committee about their aspirations for the kindergarten and jointly making decisions about how to raise and spend the money.

Carmella was asked by Caryll to be the kindergarten treasurer. Caryll had recognised some of Carmella's dispositions and skills, which Caryll felt, could be employed for Carmella's benefit. Caryll recalled her memories of Carmella:

Well Carm came in and I think she had come from Porirua with her second child and come back to home again – you know this very young woman came in, mother of two and I could see by

teaching her child T, that there had been a lot of input into him and as I got to know Carm and she had more children I could see that she was actually a very hard working woman with strong whānau around her, you know cos the family used to come in with the children. (Interview 2)

In the first instance entering the field of early childhood education and Taitoko Kindergarten, in particular, required Carmella, a Māori, to engage with Pākehā teachers in an institution where she was unfamiliar with the ‘rules of engagement’. Carmella indicated her initial uncertainty at knowing how to respond to Caryll’s advances.

It was new to me [coming to kindergarten] and it was a bit intimidating and uncomfortable but she [Caryll] had a nice aura about her, she was very nice and approachable, but I think I tried to avoid her for a few times, I thought I don’t know how to deal with this lady, I don’t know what she’s asking of me really but she was nice enough. (Interview 1).

Carmella decided that becoming the kindergarten committee treasurer offered her opportunities to be close to her children which helped her reconcile her usual practice of not leaving children in the care of strangers with her changing attitudes about early childhood education.

[Caryll] asked if I wanted to be on the committee and I felt a bit more confident and comfortable around her and then finally I thought yeah, that’s a good idea [to be the treasurer] and I can stay at the kindy and see my children. (Interview 1).

Kirstie: Kindergarten chairperson.

Kirstie was another person for whom Caryll recognised abilities and dispositions that could be further developed by greater involvement with the kindergarten. Caryll commented on her impression of Kirstie and how she felt compelled to mediate by providing opportunities for Kirstie.

When I met Kirstie she was a young solo mother with one child and then her four other children were born. But with her I

picked up something different, a tenacity, because she sort of shared her story [and] a lot of people in her circumstance would have given up a long time ago but there is something in her, there's that innate, um wanting to make and do things differently for her children that I actually really strongly admire and the fact that she can fight through that and remain so positive and cheerful, you know there is a spirit in her that kind of refuses to be broken really. I feel that sort of thing needs – when you see that in another human being, it's a privilege to be able to support it really, give her that self-belief. (Interview 2).

At Caryll's suggestion Kirstie took on the role of chairperson, which was a significant step for Kirstie. She recognised that Caryll could be a support for her and this support gave her the capacity to transform the affordance of the committee into an action. Kirstie recalled:

There was a chairperson at the time, of the committee, I think that her child may have gone off to school and there was nobody [to take on the job]. Caryll said "you could do this" and I told her "oh, if you help me" cos I didn't know what it entailed or anything about it all. I think it gave me a lot of confidence [being on the committee], I was never a really confident type of person and it was being part of the kindergarten and what evolved from that that helped me to be confident. (Interview 1).

As Barab and Roth (2006) argue, an individual not only needs to recognise an affordance but they need requisite skills, motivation, capital and experiences to engage meaningfully with the affordance. Kirstie may have been unsure about her skill set in tackling the chairperson's job but realised that with Caryll's support she would be successful. Being the chairperson of the committee provided Kirstie with an opportunity to develop new skills and interests, it also increased her social capital amongst the other parents while giving her the motivation to engage more deeply in other fields. Fundraising, which Kirstie found she enjoyed, took her into various fields that she had engaged with previously but the position of chairperson increased her status, legitimatising her interactions with a range of individuals

within these fields and that it was a vehicle “*to help me to encourage get the other mums on board*”. Taking on the role of chairperson also inspired Kirstie to continue to look for other opportunities and take on different roles both within the kindergarten and the wider community such as; kaimahi, a member of the local school governance board, accompanying Caryll to local authority meetings to advocate for various initiatives and eventually enrolling in a teacher education qualification.

Carmella and Mase: Kindergarten administrators.

The part-time employment of a kindergarten administrator provided new opportunities for participation and the increasing of affordance networks. This role was a direct result of the Parent Support and Development project: an exosystem initiative based on macrosystem beliefs about vulnerable families. In the first instance, after the awarding of the PS&D contract, Carmella was the obvious choice for the administrator position. By this stage Caryll had developed a strong relationship with Carmella and was well aware of Carmella’s Information Communication Technology skills while recognising Carmella was looking for new possibilities. Caryll recounted:

When the Parent Support & Development project happened Carmella was somebody I thought was really great to be able to offer her a bit work and I knew that she had computer skills and I also had kind of identified that she was somebody that was looking for other opportunities – that for her this was going to be quite a big thing. (Interview 1).

Once again it was Caryll’s mediation that strengthened the level of affordance and provided Carmella with new sets of capacities for action. Carmella recognised and was motivated to take on the administrator role because despite having a very young baby she could accommodate caring for him with her employment. Carmella commented “*when I had my son who was two weeks old I could bring him to kindy to work [as the administrator] and breastfeed, that’s empowering*”.

Mase, too was the recipient of Caryll’s willingness to involve families in the life of the kindergarten. When the kindergarten administrator position became vacant

Caryll took the advice of the Samoan teacher and employed Mase in this capacity. Having this position supported Mase to achieve his goals of providing for his family and ensuring they had a good education.

Makeleta: Kindergarten kaimahi.

When Makeleta's husband enrolled their children at Taitoko he asked about any teaching positions for his wife who was a trained secondary teacher from Tonga. On meeting Makeleta, Caryll realised that she had valuable skills that could benefit the community while supporting Makeleta's transition into a new field.

Caryll: [Makeleta's] husband came along to book the children in and he said to me that his wife was a teacher from Tonga and would there be any teaching jobs and that was back in the PS&D days and we were able to say there was some paid kaimahi work, so she came on as Tongan support person.
(Interview 2).

This opportunity strengthened Makeleta's affordance networks as a recent immigrant and enabled her to gain work experience while being able to support families from her culture.

In addition to the exosystem arrangements of ESWs, fundraising committees and cultural support, and as has been identified in Chapter 2, early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand has a national curriculum which can act as an affordance for families.

The national early childhood curriculum in action: Parents expand their understanding of early childhood education and affordances extend to the next generation.

Although the mandating of the national early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) occurred at the exosystem level, in response to macrosystem level values and beliefs, its implementation has the strongest impact at the microsystem level and provides affordances across mesosystems. The curriculum is an affordance in that it is a framework that guides the practice of early childhood teachers. The enactment of the curriculum principles, strands and

goals will be different in each early childhood community, however there are some fundamental philosophical underpinnings about children and play that are common in the majority of early childhood centres. It was the practice and articulation of the teachers about children's learning that helped parents learn about their child's learning.

In coming to understand more about their children's learning, stronger connections were made between the two microsystems of home and kindergarten. For those participants who had viewed kindergarten as a place to drop their children off to be babysat, their perception altered as they spent more time at the kindergarten. The realisation that their children were learning while they were playing and interacting with others, was significant to these parents. Conversations, mostly informal, with teachers helped parents understand more about their child's learning and competence. The quotes below reinforce this shift in parents' thinking. They began to value kindergarten as a place that provided important learning opportunities for their children and assisted their development.

Joh: Yeah, I didn't really understand about the learning thing there. I thought that for me it was to just get her out of the house so that I could have time to myself and not really thinking about what she would learn there – she was just playing so to me that wasn't actually learning, playing, making friends, talking to other children that's all I saw. The teachers would come up to me and say "she's done that and done this" and I would go "oh ok" and I didn't really notice that she couldn't do it, so then I took it home to my partner and say "she did this". (Interview 1).

Learning about children's learning has had a significant impact on Carmella and she stated *"this was one of the most significant things that I think that I've learnt from being part of the kindergarten as a parent, is the learning, knowing that your child is actually learning"*. (Interview 1).

Mase was able to see his child's learning transfer to the home environment.

It's very helpful [bringing child to kindergarten] because I know, especially my child, he knows what is not, what he

supposed to do, what he not suppose to do. It's very nice to see that – especially in the sand – like the first time in the sand he love to eat the sand but now I realise he didn't – Oh that's another good one. He loves mopping the floor, because I saw him here, he touched the mop-broom and brushing it up and he doing it at home. (Interview 1).

Ricky articulated the benefits of early childhood education in relation to his children and the difference it had made for his children who attended in comparison to his eldest daughter who had no early childhood experience.

[Kindergarten has made] a big difference. Like I see a huge difference between my oldest daughter and my son, it's the confidence – Like my son C he knows how to deal with kids his age where my older daughter she can't really.

[As I spent] more time in the kindergarten and that's where the understanding actually come from, I never – well I see it [children doing things] but I don't know what it is that they are learning. I don't know if you remember J [his daughter]? – she is definitely my witness of how kindergarten helps. Because we couldn't get a word out of her and she was really slow out of hospital and 1 year, especially when we came here – 1 year at Taitoko Kindergarten and starting here you can have a conversation with her – she came from not talking straight to conversations, not 1 word, not 2 words. (Interview 2).

For Pasifika families some of the practices in response to theories within the kindergarten were in direct contrast to their own beliefs and practices and provided opportunities to explore different perspectives which impacted on their home-life. Joh spoke of what she had learned about children's learning at kindergarten and how she wanted that learning to be more widely known and accepted amongst the Pasifika community. Joh felt that the marrying of these perspectives and Pasifika cultural values was possible.

[T]hat's what I meant about when I said in future Pasifika ways and thinking, I hoped that they shift a little about education so

that they can understand their children a bit more like you know like what Makeleta just said like putting a child [on the ground]—that’s how I grew up when you see a child in dirt you go “no don’t do that” but I didn’t realise that that’s learning and yeah if our Pasifika people knew that then that’s them [children] just learning (Carm: they’d be all for it, you mean eh?), yeah they’d be all for it. We don’t want them to lose their cultural background or anything like that – never, but you can put the two together and that’s what I meant if the Pasifika people had just a slight knowledge of how they [children] learn when they are younger, things could be a little bit different for our children when they grow up. (Interview 1).

Mase found the different approaches to learning to be helpful for seeing another perspective.

It’s far different, it might be the culture or the language or something like that but in terms of teaching, here, it little bit different. Like in Samoa, like for picking [up] the sand, or eating the sand, they wouldn’t allow it but what I notice here that is a good development for the child. Let him decide if he like it or not like it. (Interview 1)

Another affordance of the curriculum is the ability of teachers to be culturally responsive. Inherent in the principles, strands and goals of *Te Whāriki* is the unique sociocultural context of the child and the importance of acknowledging that context, learning about that context and strengthening the microsystems of the child’s ecological environment. This emphasis on context encourages teachers to make connections with children and families to incorporate aspects of home cultures into the early childhood programme. At the kindergarten the teachers make it a priority to acknowledge and incorporate families’ cultural perspectives and home language.

Ricky talked about Samoan being incorporated in the programme while Jashana liked the exposure to things about Māori culture and the opportunity for learning.

Ricky: They encourage Samoan language, there was some – there was always waiata¹⁴, you know in the Māori language but most waiata there was always a Samoan version too, that we sing. To me there was a bit, a bit of both actually – Tongan and Samoan, plus with the influence of R [Samoan teacher] and Makeleta [Tongan student teacher]. (Interview 1).

The commitment to use te reo Māori in the kindergarten was helpful for encouraging Jashana to work towards her aspiration of being fluent in te reo Māori.

Yeah, for me [it's great that the teachers use te reo in the children's learning stories and have signs and pictures on the wall with Māori words] because I'm learning with my children, as they learn, I'm learning. I know all the basic stuff, I know them but I couldn't have a full conversation with somebody even though I'd love to one day. (Interview 1)

The documentation and assessment of children's learning carried out by the teachers was powerful for building relationships, engaging families in their child's learning and making links between the kindergarten and the child's wider life. Using photos to capture learning experiences and writing learning stories (Carr, 2001; Carr & Lee, 2012) were seen as pivotal in encouraging families to engage in their child's learning by both teachers and parent participants. Daveida, the kaimahi, witnessed the benefits of the collection of the documentation of children's learning in portfolios. She saw portfolios providing a bridge between kindergarten and home and an effective way of communicating with parents.

They have their little profile books and it's so good. I know with my grandchildren; "Look Nan!" they'd run up, grab their books and I'd sit down and read. And it's really good; it shows you what they're doing. If they're a bit arty, they put everything, anything about them. Things that they're doing out in the playground... And it keeps you informed of how they are. And

¹⁴ Song or chant

it's quite amazing because you don't – because at home I know oh this one's that way and the other one's this way and you know, but you read their books and it's like, oh she's good at art or, that's true, they're little things that you might not notice at home and then it's in their book and you think oh, she did something at home. Yes, that is good. The profile books are really good.

I see a lot [of families] come in, and they'll sit on that couch there and you see them reading the profile book. There's some that probably don't have the time to keep coming in but they get them back when the child finishes don't they? So if they didn't have the time to really study they'd see it at the end. You know, different parents are different. They can even take them home during that time that they're there and look through them. Because some of them are quite busy, and that's the good thing, they can always bring them back again. Yeah, it's really good displaying stories on the wall. I think they've [families] been quite happy with what they've been finding out [about children's learning]. I think it's good. (Interview 1).

Ricky liked having learning stories written about his son but he also appreciated being able to chat to the teachers.

Because I know he's a smarty boy but I don't know what he does, and through the learning stories it's good but actually talking to the teachers [too]. (Interview 1).

For Jashana, documenting her child's learning in learning stories was extremely helpful for her in finding out what her child could do.

Yeah I love that [teachers write stories about children's learning] because I never knew that myself that my son knew how to use scissors properly because every time he uses scissors at home I thought he was going to poke his eyes out so I always take them off him but a couple of months ago when I finally came in they showed me a story of him and he was cutting with scissors

properly so now at home I don't mind him having scissors so much because he knows what he's doing – so that was good.
(Interview 1).

Coffee-come-playgroup: Opportunities for increasing affordance networks.

One affordance that was unique to Taitoko Kindergarten and directly impacted on families in a variety of ways was coffee-come-playgroup. This initiative was at the instigation of Carmella after the teachers asked her for suggestions about engaging families in the life of the kindergarten as they embarked on establishing a *Whānau Tangata* Centre. Carmella thought a weekly coffee-come-playgroup would be an opportunity “*to get all the mothers together...to meet them and ... draw in the community, I thought*” and this idea was implemented. Initially coffee group was held every fortnight but the confusion that occurred over which week it was being held resulted in a decision to have it every week. A sign advertising coffee group was made to put on the footpath outside the kindergarten gate. All the family participants spoke of coffee group and its influence on their lives. Coffee group began in 2007 and is still a strong feature of the kindergarten programme. Coffee group has provided multiple opportunities for families including; a safe place to share and learn about parenting, a place to access multi-agency support and information and, a place to build social networks.

For Jashana, in particular, coffee group has been significant. Her participation at coffee group began to increase her affordance network and provide further capacities for action. Attending coffee group over a sustained period enabled Jashana to get to know other families and to increase her social capital by being a respected member of the group.

It was, like every day we come and new parents turn up and they all feel like they're at home here because everyone's like just you can come in, have a coffee, sit around and have a chat – there's nothing scary like about coming like everyone's “no it's too scary” but when they finally come and realise it's not even that scary and how opening the kindy is, it's good. I still come to coffee morning, I know every child's name here, and every parent just about, I've been coming for so long. (Interview 1).

Caryll and Tania both spoke about how shy Jashana was and that for the first 2 years or so of coming to coffee group she hardly said a word. However over time Jashana gained the confidence to make suggestions about the coffee group programme, particularly things that would help her realise her goals and aspirations. Coffee group had become for her an affordance that she recognised and made use of. In the following quote she talked about a workshop she had initiated.

I missed it myself because my baby wasn't well but they had this adult literacy [person] and apparently it was really, really good. I had asked Tania earlier in the year if we could have something like that because I can't read or write properly and then when Tania got her in I couldn't make it in so I was really gutted. (Interview 1).

Jashana also recognised that coffee group was a resource for others and provided opportunities that may not be available or readily accessible in the wider community.

Like last week there were a couple of extra people came and I think because it was about asthma – lots of people's children have asthma and they wanted to know more about it and what happens and stuff like that so they all came like last week which was good.

I think that some people come just for time out and some people come because they really want to learn about asthma, say like last week but yeah I think that people come so they can really learn and it's free information as well and not many things are free and when you want to go to the doctor and ask all those questions you gotta chuck money at them before they'll give you that kind of stuff. (Interview 1).

For Mase, coffee group was good for meeting other parents and generally being involved in the kindergarten enabled him to widen his affordance networks.

Hmm, it's very positive because you meet other parents, because we have a coffee group [I] meet other different people, it's really pretty nice atmosphere, nice environment, especially because my family just a little family, if you stay home and do by yourself, you not expose yourself to other people, you not knowing other people, know their lives and their children you can you meet many families, many children, you get to know them so you understand what they want – stuff like that, it's very fantastic. (Interview 1).

Coffee group widened Carmella's affordance network to provide her with support and advice as a mother.

Coffee group mornings when I had my two young children to help me get myself out there cos, I didn't have much help or support... Sometimes we'd have a guest speaker say for health and then we'd end up talking about babies – not about the subject... we'd be talking for ages about our babies and those sorts of things help a lot of parents through, I think. (Interview 1).

Kirstie also found the support for her parenting invaluable and the non-judgmental environment was significant for her wellbeing.

Probably coming together with other mums, like the coffee morning was good, like I never knew Carm before coffee morning...being able to share ideas. Like obviously I never had a mum and what I thought I was doing as a parent was what I thought was right whether it was right or wrong but when you are in an environment you could share your ideas with other mums and they might have other ways and they might say "Oh I do this and I do that" and I then I was able to share things I did well and we could – I think the coffee mornings were the biggest influence. Yeah and it's in an environment where you are not being judged, or you know it's safe. (Interview 2).

The other significant affordance of coffee group for Kirstie was having other agencies share information and give practical help. Kirstie recalled how a visitor from the local adult literacy trust came to coffee group and talked to the group about how she could support them to get their driving license or move from a restricted license to a full license. An outcome of this discussion was that a tutoring session was held at the kindergarten and then participants were supported through the process of sitting the theory test and going to the adjacent city to take the required practical test. To have this opportunity was enormously significant for Kirstie and highlights the importance of parents having easy and friendly access to supports.

Kirstie: yeah like my license – I drove a car for years without a license then Caryll organised a lady, she come, I paid the money and I got my license in 2 hours – it gave me so much confidence, it was amazing. (Interview 1).

Kirstie and Carmella, in the same conversation outlined their perceptions of having different agencies come and talk at coffee group.

But not just that [getting my license], like we've had speakers at playgroup, like people from Children, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) – people from some of those places that people don't like to talk about, they don't want to know about those people

Carmella: like we're breaking those barriers

Kirstie: yeah so we had CYFS in and this CYFS lady basically told quite a lot of the parents "We don't want to take your children off you" so she literally broke it down and some of those parents were parents who have had stuff to do with CYFS, I really think it broke down barriers and it really strengthened connections between those agencies and our community. (Interview 1).

Likewise Carmella recognised that coffee group offered a range of affordances for parents by introducing them to other agencies that could support their aspirations.

It's worked in lots of different ways [coffee group], it's about drawing in the families and the community and once you can get the social services, networks and they can come to us and having all those opportunities, it's still happening, and again, it's all educational learning from these experiences and learning from each other. (Interview 1).

As one of the kaimahi, Daveida regularly attended coffee group and viewed it as a very positive experience for meeting people and learning about other aspects of life to increase their sets of capacities for action.

Especially even the parent groups, they bring people closer. They get to meet other people. That's done a lot of people a lot of good [the coffee group], because we've had things like budgeting. There have been a lot of young parents who have even said to me "I didn't know we could do it that way. We never thought". You know, they've had so many people in that it's been good. Even for me it's educated me, because I'm from the old school, you know, and things are different now. And I've learnt a lot of things from those different parenting [coffee] groups. And they had the mental health last week – I've never had anything to do with mental health, I've never had a problem with the families or anything but it was really interesting to know that that sort of thing is out there. And it's quite sad, but good to know that there's people there that can help you. Yeah, there's been a lot of positive things with the parent group. A lot of them do work though – a lot of the mothers work. But the ones that don't, you'll find they come in on a... it fluctuates, you'll have, one week you'll have a lot, then the next week you'll have a few. But there's always somebody there. And if it's something – because we'll always let them know who's coming, and it might be something that they want to know about and they'll come in. It's a good thing; I think it's a positive thing. (Interview 1).

The arrangements described in this section have provided affordances for families but are not on their own sufficient enough to provide the intensity of affordance required for many families to realise their goals and aspirations. Without the mediation of relationships and scaffolding from others with the skills, knowledge and capital within the particular field, the structures remain available and in some cases inviting but seldom powerful enough to be recognised and taken up by individuals. It was evident from the families that the relationships they established with the teachers, in the first instance, were crucial for their development and growing ability to recognise and utilise affordances.

The kindergarten habitus: Creating relational affordances and increasing social capital.

Teachers play a significant part in shaping the culture and habitus of a kindergarten and it is this culture that enables and/or constrains families from taking up opportunities. As much of the literature about effective integrated early years services suggests relationships between professionals and families are one of the most important features in engaging and sustaining involvement. (Broadhead et al., 2008; Duncan et al., 2006; Gasper, 2010; Imtoul et al., 2009).

In 2004 there had been a complete staff change at Taitoko kindergarten, this provided an opportunity to establish a different culture. The three teachers were all middle class Pākehā women. This fact had the potential to create a culture built on the norms, habitus and memories of these women and be prohibiting, in many ways, for affording opportunities for a community of predominately Māori and Pasifika, further stacking the odds against. But as Derrida contends in his notion of “a hospitality of visitation” (2003, p.128), ‘strangers’ are welcomed regardless of their different beliefs and values and not required to adapt to the norms and values constructed by the ‘host’. This welcoming hospitality was quickly apparent at the kindergarten and the teachers accepted whoever came in the gate, building a relationship with them based on a ‘you are who you are’ attitude.

Kirstie found this culture of acceptance from the teachers to be supportive and empowering.

Kirstie: I think Caryll was that one person who, like she seen my son playing on the side of the road [Kirstie implied that this could be seen as being a neglectful parent], she was that one person who would take you for what you are and never judge you and you could tell her anything. Relationships, like the relationships that we've built together, it's not just Caryll but I suppose sometimes it feels like it was just Caryll – she has invested so much time and energy in every one of us...(Interview 2).

Carmella's experience of being welcomed and encouraged to keep coming back was significant for her. She appreciated the subtle and personalised approach that Caryll adopted based on individual's personalities and practices.

[I have] lived in the community all my life and she [Caryll] was pretty much the first person made me feel welcome, had that aura about her that engaged on different levels with different parents and I was one of those shy parents that just wanted to go through the gate, drop them off and go away and she sort of made it more inviting and welcoming and encouraged me to come back and back. (Interview 1).

For Makeleta being made to feel welcome and the warmth of the welcome was in contrast to previous experiences. She was deeply grateful and to this day considers Taitoko Kindergarten “my family, since then [when I first went] and even still now after I graduate [and work at another kindergarten], I still refer to Taitoko Kindergarten as my home. I really felt the warmth and the loving atmosphere at Taitoko Kindergarten and the teachers. I did take my children to daycares before but this is the first time for me to feel that [warm atmosphere] at Taitoko. I also think that when I go there, the welcoming environment, it made me want to go there all the time. I think that the team too was very great, I mean not just Caryll but I think there was a great team there at Taitoko that was always supporting me – you know allowing us to come and stay there for a little while with our children at any time but parents are allowed to be there and be part of the learning”. (Interview 1).

Daveida talked about the difference having a teacher like Caryll has meant for the kindergarten community and the commitment of the teachers to the community. She recalled:

With Caryll I always feel at home and people that know her, she never judges people, she just seems to get things right, she's lovely. She's never judgemental about anybody – she treats people, probably the way she would like to be treated, that type of person. And most people I know – the parents, they all think she's lovely. A lot of the teachers do come from a long way, and they don't have to, they could probably have a place in their own town, I don't know. But the fact that they travel all that way every day is really good – that's my way of looking at it. Probably the friendliness here [has helped bring people]. The whole way it's run. It's hard to explain. It's the teachers, the system, the way they run everything here. I think people come in and they realise “Gosh, it's really good”. I've had a few people actually, that have come back and said “It's so good, the people are so friendly, the children are learning”. It's that caring, nurturing thing they have – especially with the pepe (baby) area they've got a really nurturing, good way about it. So yeah, it's probably all that... (Interview 1).

Relationships between teachers and families were key to assisting families to feel confident in taking up opportunities and sustaining their engagement with the kindergarten over time, which enabled further possibilities.

Level 4: To empower others and establish a new habitus.

The fourth level of strength is about the development of a secondary habitus that is “significantly distinctive from the primary habitus” (Yang, 2013, p. 1533). While the first three levels required mediation from more experienced others or those people who had greater social capital in the field of early childhood education, the fourth level emanates from those who have been empowered by

their utilisation of the affordances. This fourth level is about replicating affordances and demonstrates a new or secondary habitus amongst the family participants, reflective of the changed habitus of the kindergarten. As Bourdieu suggested from his research with Algerian peasants, the “durable dispositions” entwined with individual habitus can take time to adapt to a transformed world (1977a). In the case of Taitoko Kindergarten, the kindergarten transformed from a kindergarten in crisis to one that radiated a culture of hospitality and acceptance and provided a range of affordances for families. As families took up the opportunities offered and increased their affordance networks they began to take on the habitus of the kindergarten and apply it to their practices and interactions with others.

Sharing what we’ve experienced.

The recognition of affordances in helping families realise their aspirations has become embedded in the consciousness of the family participants and their habitus has adapted to accommodate new practices. The learning that occurred for them and the opportunities they had through their involvement at the kindergarten slowly transformed their thinking and ways of being that enabled them to think about empowering others. Kirstie and Carmella both talked about replicating what they had learned from their time at Taitoko and ensuring positive messages and practices were shared amongst their own networks.

Kirstie: Share what we’ve experienced and let other people feel that. Like they [people in the community] used to say that we’re ‘the hood’ but now you get people from this side of town [referring to other side of railway tracks from the kindergarten] wanting to enrol at our kindergarten and we’ve got waiting lists because like they see this, they see us, they see other people come through our kindy and experience the things that we’ve been able to experience. (Interview 1).

Kirstie was thrilled too, that other parents being afforded opportunities similar to her own and were taking on responsibilities which contributed to the sustainability of affordances. She exclaimed:

It’s amazing now that I’ve moved on and M who was a mum at the kindergarten, she’s taken it on [making the lunches at the kindergarten even though her child had started school] and I

really love that it's still going – other parents are taking over.
(Interview 2).

The importance of relationships.

Carmella talked about how she realised the benefits of her experiences and that certain practices had become embedded in her way of being. She took into her employment situations the same philosophy about building relationships that she encountered at Taitoko. She replicated the habitus of the kindergarten. The values and beliefs she encountered at Taitoko guided her practice as a teacher at a different early childhood centre. She reflected on what her experiences at Taitoko Kindergarten had taught her about relationships.

Where I am [working] now it's not like Taitoko so I'm having to see what I remember years ago like the parents coming in and dropping off and then quickly out and I think "god, now I know that relationships are important", it's always making that first point of contact as soon as they walk in the door – I'm pretty much up there. I spend the first half an hour when I should be doing other things, or even if I'm on non-contact time I'll just meet and greet cos I feel it's important. It's just embedded in me now – relationships are really important. (Interview 1).

Carmella's habitus had transformed from being a 'drop and run' parent to wanting to inspire others to take up opportunities. She identified her role and responsibility in replicating affordances to sustain and support others.

We were empowering the community and that's how we all got to know one another and we probably wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for those sorts of connections and links and recognising that family is part of community. It inspires me to do that to others and say "hey look you can be a mother and be a teacher and all sorts and be whatever you want to be and it's ok and we're here to help you" and that's why I think we can be a help because we had the support, it was normal, it was natural. (Interview 1).

Spreading the message.

Makeleta was convinced that the community was benefitting from the experiences of families at Taitoko Kindergarten. With Caryll's new position as Head Teacher and Makeleta's employment as a teacher at the renovated Pasifika centre, a culture of warmth and acceptance was being replicated.

I personally believe that taking what they have [practices from Taitoko Kindergarten] out into the community, Caryll moving to Fanau Pasifika and Carm has gone to [another early childhood centre] and some of us will spread the message and I will never forget coming in the morning and seeing Caryll's smiling face, the warmth and that's what she is doing at Fanau Pasifika – it was good for me, so it's going to be good for others. (Interview 1).

Makeleta was also using knowledge she had gained from her involvement at Taitoko Kindergarten to empower her Tongan community.

Kirstie was talking about the license, the driving license, now my husband knows that, cos we [Kirstie and I] took the same license on the same day so now my husband is doing that with our peoples because he know that from us – from Taitoko Kindergarten. Now he is doing that with our Tongan community and he has taken two groups so far, so that's more people taking them to [the nearby city], to the lady, and they are getting their license. (Interview 1).

Carmella also recognised that replicating affordances had wide reaching effects and the importance of empowering the community through relationships and networks so that others have opportunities to recognise and avail themselves of affordances: *"I heard that in listening to you Joh, talking about the Pacific Islanders and how you want to inspire them and you've got those little bits of knowledge that you've learnt from your time here and you're passing on already so it's already moving". (Interview 1).*

Starting a coffee/playgroup.

Joh is employed the Tongan co-ordinator for the Horowhenua Pasifika Education Initiative (HPEI) funded by a national charitable trust. Her experience with coffee group at Taitoko Kindergarten prompted her and her co-worker to replicate this affordance and start a coffee group for Pasifika families.

We have our own coffee group now, that happens every Friday and so we always text and let everyone know like almost every day that we've got coffee group on Friday you can tell by the look on their faces that they were "oh, I don't really want to go" but when they come they enjoy themselves and they say "Oh that was really good, I'm glad I got out of the house", sort of thing. We hold it at Plunket¹⁵ and the mums from here [Fanau Pasifika Kindergarten] come down, some of them got littlies, some of them are aunties or grandmas of the littlies here.

We just started last week again after the holidays so we are catching up on what people have been doing in the holidays. We have guest speakers, we have some one coming to talk about sexual health so that will be interesting. (Interview 2).

Encouraging others to get involved.

Coffee group had been transformative for Jashana in terms of her confidence and she was keen to make others aware of the benefits of being part of the group and of having their children at kindergarten. Jashana was endeavouring to provide opportunities for others by replicating the encouragement and support she received at coffee group.

At the start I was a really shy person and it helped me open up and become the person I am today, otherwise I'd still be stuck in my shell. I have encouraged three of my family members to come here already – one was my mate who was in here earlier. I had my sister because she's got 4 children and I encouraged her because her first child she didn't want to let go of her – because

¹⁵ A national support service for the development, health and well-being of children under 5.

she was her baby and her first but I said “she will be ok, [my child] is here” and now her daughter loves it, she did cry at the start, she didn’t want to leave her mum but now she’s away. [My sister has] got all of her children here and I said “even if it’s only for half a day, it still gives you time to do your housework, washing and whatever you have to do”. I’ve got this other friend and she’s really, really shy, she won’t come. I’m trying to make her to come to coffee group just to get her started but she won’t – she’s really shy and I said “but I’m going to be there with you the whole step of way” but she won’t but I’m slowly working on her. I said “you remind me of me because that’s how I was when I first started here I was like really shy but now I’m not so bad”. (Interview 2).

Ricky spoke about being keen to go back to Samoa one day and share some of his knowledge about children’s learning and empower parents.

So for me if there is a kindergarten centre because they [children in Samoa] play, they play every day, they make their own resources, it’s just that there’s nobody to ahh scaffold, there’s nobody to build on, to point out to say “oh do you know that you’re actually doing, you know that by doing that you’re actually practicing?” – oh yeah I’ll do that [go back to Samoa]. (Interview 2).

Mase was determined to encourage other Samoan families to come to the kindergarten to learn about their child’s learning and develop new ideas for helping their children.

Even people they come and enrol their children one day they didn’t come so I just have to pick up the phone and ring – “bring your child in, oh you just come and if you have to do anything you have to go just go and leave your child here”. That’s the passion because my own need is to develop my own children and that’s the need they need to do but I have to put

myself in their own shoes, that's their life. Everyone needs to develop their own family. (Interview 2).

The development of a new habitus is also evident through the embedded practices of the teaching team. It could be argued that much of the success of the transformation of the kindergarten and the empowerment of families is attributable to Caryll and that removing her from the kindergarten would put this success at risk. This is not the case. In 2012 Caryll decided to accept Mandy's proposal to lead the team at the kindergarten down the road to adapt their centre to be a Pasifika focussed kindergarten. Accepting this position meant that Caryll essentially left Taitoko Kindergarten over night due to time frame imperatives and Tania took over the leadership. Taitoko Kindergarten has continued to operate in the same manner and Caryll's absence has made very little difference to the practice of the centre. During my last three visits to the kindergarten I experienced the same culture of acceptance and family involvement. Affordances continued to be provided and mediated by the teachers and families.

The empowering of these families and their subsequent reach into the wider community has been a significant factor in developing a new habitus and engendering a pride in the community. As Kirstie attested Taitoko Kindergarten is no longer seen as being a place to avoid or perceived as being on the wrong side of the tracks. Demographically the community is similar to that of 2005 and statistically the odds are still stacked against families, however families are being empowered to realise their aspirations and transform their habitus through their involvement at the kindergarten: the odds have changed. Mandy neatly summarises the impact of the kindergarten on the community and reinforces the need to replicate the affordances of the kindergarten.

What the kindergarten has provided in terms of the story that it tells, the journey that it's taken, and now what it's achieving – you can't measure that in money. And that's to the benefit of everybody. Now the rolls are bulging and it plays a really important role in the community so we actually need to replicate the kindergarten. (General Manager, interview 1).

The provision of affordances at the kindergarten and the mediation through relationships that enabled families to recognise and utilise the affordances enhanced their opportunities for realising their hopes and dreams and in some cases exceeded all expectations. The next chapter will outline the trajectories of the family participants since their initial contact with the kindergarten and will map their affordance networks in relation to the levels of strength of affordances.

Chapter 9.

An ecology of affordances

The previous two chapters have introduced a framework of levels of strength of affordance and illustrated how each family participant experienced each level of strength in a unique manner. Level 1 was recognising the affordance and then, once the affordance was recognised and taken up, Level 2 provided opportunities for encountering different perspectives and developing sets of capacities for actions. Level 3 was about opportunities for families to increase their affordance networks which helped change the odds in favour while Level 4 demonstrated participants engaging in new practices and a commitment to continue to even the odds for others through the replication of affordances.

The cumulative effect of the levels of strength of affordances provided opportunities for families to develop a network of affordances encompassing social, material and cultural aspects, which functioned to support capacities for action and assist in realising goals. Some of the affordances were inherent in the operational and organisational arrangements of the field of early childhood education and kindergarten, in particular, and other affordances revealed themselves through the relationships and social climate of the kindergarten. Each family participant recognised and utilised affordances differently to develop affordance networks for achieving their goals. This chapter brings together the affordance networks of each participant in relation to the levels of strength. The chapter also describes participants' individual trajectories and discusses aspects of habitus that have influenced the accumulation of social and cultural capital over time.

Carmella's trajectory and affordance network

As has been described in the previous chapter Carmella came to be involved in the kindergarten through a friend who had children attending the kindergarten. Carmella was a young parent who came from a family that had high educational

expectations for their children. Her parents were both educated and worked in the health sector. Although Carmella did not attend an early childhood education service, education was important to her family and Carmella was left in the care of her grandmother while her parents went to work. Her grandmother had been a teacher and so spent time doing ‘educational’ activities with Carmella such as singing nursery rhymes. Another significant aspect of Carmella’s education was spending time on the family *marae*¹⁶ learning the *kawa*¹⁷ and *tikanga*¹⁸ of the *whānau* and *iwi*.

Carmella’s parents expected her to do some kind of tertiary study after leaving high school. Carmella recounted:

I had very high expectations put on me, I had two very educated parents who worked hard and they were workers, my parents worked that much for me and my brother to give us opportunities. (Interview 2).

Carmella left home after completing high school to do a one-year qualification in travel and tourism at a Polytechnic. She then returned home and it was at this time she became pregnant and expectations about education changed for Carmella. Her parents articulated to Carmella that she had stepped outside of the realms of acceptable behaviour therefore she had to ‘suffer the consequences’ and give up all ideas of further education.

When I became a young mum, pregnant, that pretty much [the opportunities to continue to study] went out the window and the expectations sort of dropped. It was kind of that old cliché [because I wanted to go back to study, my baby she was 6 months old] but they said “no you made your bed, you lay in it, you have to stay home”. (Interview 2).

¹⁶ Collective meeting and living place for a Māori tribe

¹⁷ Specific protocols attached to a tribe’s interactions on the marae

¹⁸ General rituals and practices associated with everyday living

Thus initially Carmella gave up ideas about ‘doing something with her life’ and for some time, her perceived affordance network was reduced. However, although Carmella’s habitus included a strong respect for her elders and the importance of upholding family values and beliefs, she nevertheless made a decision to determine her pathway outside of the ‘norms’ of her family habitus. Carmella realised she could have greater agency but in order to do this needed to look ‘beyond her family’.

And for years I believed that [I had to “lay in the bed I had made”] and you get that bit of resilience in you and you start noticing the wider world. And all my friends were in the same situation [young parents] but they were getting different support from their families and I thought “you’ve got to be a bit strong” and the resilience kicked in and I had to make some real strong choices away from my parents, to think about what was right for me. Not keeping them happy. (Interview 2).

Carmella’s story demonstrates the influence of the collective and individual habitus as well as the interplay of past and present. Carmella recognised the collective expectations and dispositions of her family but was responsive to her circumstances in that she exercised agency to transform those circumstances. She resisted the inevitability of what was expected of her in stepping outside of the accepted social norms of her family and through the extension of an affordance network, transformed her situation. Encounters with friends and different opportunities, such as going to kindergarten (a new field), opened up new possibilities for Carmella while enabling the reproduction of some of the collective dispositions of her *whānau*, for example, educational expectations, work ethic and importance of family.

The collision, in a sense, of Carmella’s and Caryll’s habitus was also a significant factor in Carmella’s trajectory. Caryll’s habitus enabled her to recognise strengths and abilities in others and her belief in the importance of relationships provided a determination and tenacity to build relationships and trust with *whānau* coming to the kindergarten. Carmella’s on-going encounters with Caryll and Caryll’s insistent pursuing of Carmella resulted in Carmella becoming more comfortable

in the field of kindergarten and early childhood education and enlarged her affordance network so that she could fulfil her aspirations. Taking on the role of the kindergarten committee treasurer, then administrator and initiating the coffee-come-playgroup all indicate Carmella recognising and utilising a growing affordance network.

The beginning of the kindergarten based student scheme was a further affordance for Carmella as she contemplated her future. Carmella was not content to give up her dreams of ‘becoming something’ even though she had gone outside the boundaries of behaviours for ‘people like us’ when she became pregnant as a teenager: “*Oh do I?*”, Carmella thought in response to being told she had to accept and deal with the consequences of her actions.

Carmella’s initial dreams for her future were influenced by her parents and wider *whānau*, but her involvement at the kindergarten increased her confidence and empowered her to continue to look outside the traditional occupational pathway of her family and become a teacher. She talked about her hopes and dreams for herself as she grew up: “*A teacher, lawyer, a nurse – my parents are both nurses. I sort of went to nursing at the end, I thought it would probably be the best thing for me, I have a lot of support with aunties and cousins that are nurses*”. In the end however her interest in young children and growing interest in their education led her to enrol for a teaching qualification.

So I enrolled myself [to do a teaching qualification] and got my mum to come on board, my dad wasn’t very um, yeah, we didn’t see eye to eye at the start. She helped babysit, changed her shifts and stuff and I supported myself. And that’s where my... I think the growth for me to learning. (Interview 2).

With encouragement from the teachers and her *whānau* Carmella enrolled in a three-year undergraduate teaching qualification using the kindergarten as her home centre to fulfil her field-based hours. At the same time Makeleta was embarking on the same qualification so they were able to support one another in their studies and travel to classes together. When the Kindergarten Association

took over a failing community-based centre in Levin, Carmella had completed her qualification and was employed at this centre.

Carmella had often expressed her desire to see a Teen Parent Unit established at one of the local high schools. This desire had come from her experience and the experiences of her friends. In 2014 a Teen Parent Unit (TPU) was opened at the secondary school where Carmella’s oldest children attend and the Kindergarten Association won the contract to be responsible for the early childhood centre attached to the TPU. Because Carmella had been such an advocate for the TPU Mandy and her team felt it was fitting to give Carmella the opportunity to be a part of the leadership of the early childhood centre at the TPU. Under the mentorship of Caryll and the Association Senior Teacher Carmella took on the Head Teacher role at this centre.

It is clear that the kindergarten has played a prominent role in opening up new possibilities for Carmella and she has transformed from describing herself as a ‘drop and run parent’: uncomfortable and unfamiliar with the field of kindergarten, to having significant amounts of social and cultural capital in the field. Ultimately Carmella fulfilled the expectations of her family and her father told her at her graduation “*I’m proud of you*”. Being involved with the kindergarten afforded Carmella opportunities that enabled her to ‘get back on track’ in terms of the expectations of her family and continue to reproduce and replicate the collective habitus of her family. Figure 9 illustrates Carmella’s trajectory from 2004-2014.

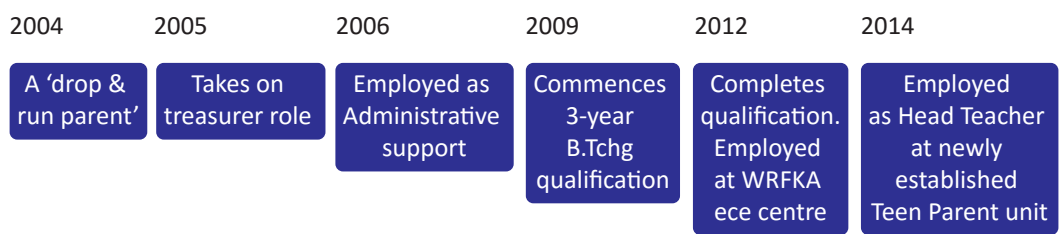


Figure 9. Carmella's trajectory.

The diagram below outlines Carmella’s affordance network in relation to the four levels of strength of affordance.

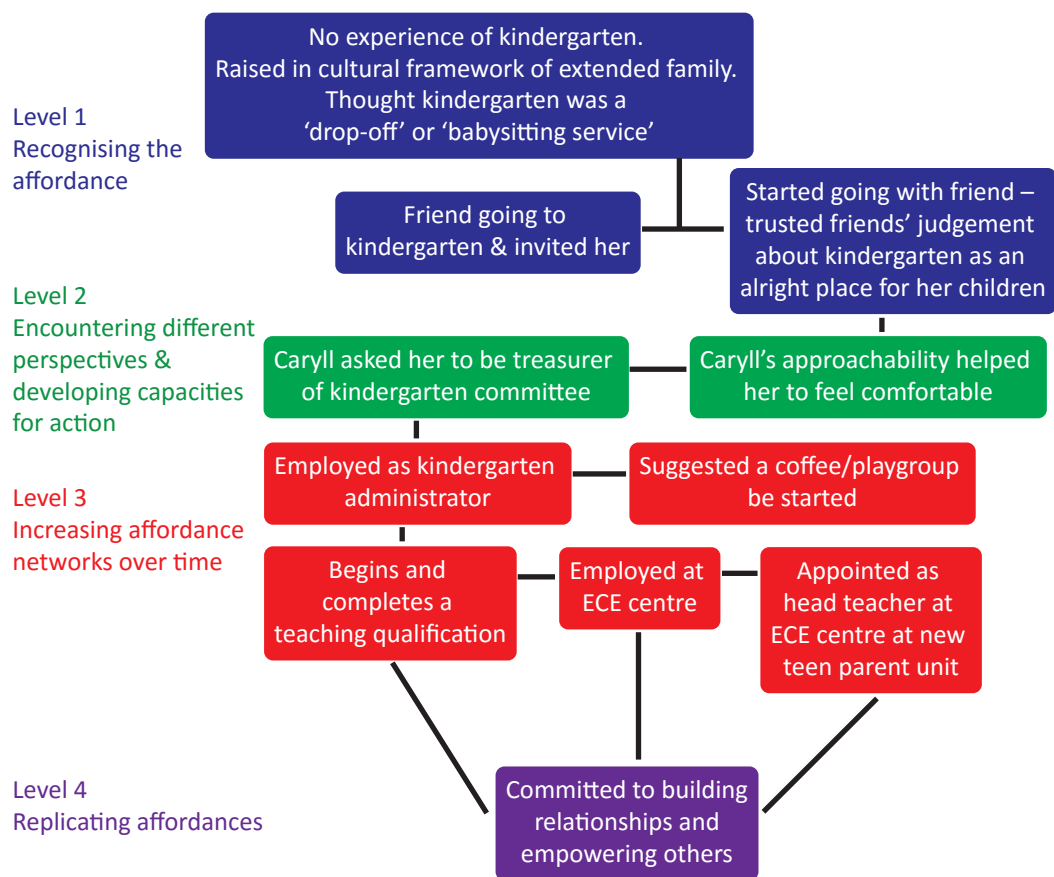


Figure 10. Carmella's affordance network.

Kirstie's trajectory and affordance network.

Kirstie's involvement with the kindergarten has enabled a transformation of her habitus where the inconceivable has become conceivable, the impossible, possible. If anyone had the odds stacked against them, it was Kirstie. As was outlined in Kirstie's brief biography in Chapter 1, Kirstie grew up in a single parent family beset by a gambling addiction, where Kirstie, by default became the major caregiver for her younger sister. Leaving school at 15 after the death of her mother Kirstie found employment wherever she could, usually in low paid, unskilled jobs in fast food outlets. She had her first child when she was 21 whom she parented on her own for about 3 years.

Losing her mother at a young age impacted on Kirstie, transforming her dispositions and expectations, resolving that she would do things differently when she had her own children. Kirstie's example of doing things differently and not having the patterns of her familial habitus determine her future exposes the shortcomings of the properties of habitus. As Yang (2014) argues Bourdieu's explanations of the relationship between habitus and change allude to rational choice and an individual's ability to be rational but does not specify under what conditions rationality might win out over the reproductive nature of habitus. It appears that the loss of her mother and then becoming a mother herself were the catalysts for Kirstie to enact rational choice and do things differently. She recalled:

Now being a mum it's very different and [losing my mum] has affected me in many ways. It's made me very strong willed, kind of not to give up. I just always knew that when I had kids I wanted them to have everything that they needed but I didn't want it to be a struggle. I wanted... my mum she never had a job, she kinda just stayed home and that was lovely and she was a good mum but I just wanted my kids to see something different I wanted them to see the other things you could have by having a good job and things not being so much of a struggle. (Interview 2).

However Kirstie's lack of education and complex childhood restricted her options to 'do things differently' despite a determination and strong will. In many respects Kirstie's expectations for her life reflected her earlier experiences: the future constitutive of the past. Kirstie explained:

[My hopes and dreams were] to go out on the weekends, buy my kids things and keep my man at home [laughs] because that's just kind of how I thought. If you had asked me then what were my hopes and dreams for my kids I would be "just to have what they need" – I was just completely oblivious to the fact that actually I was parenting from over here and my kids were over here. Like I was being a parent but I thought the way I grew up my mum was on [a single parent benefit] and my dad was never around and she never had a job so I thought that what I had to

do for my children was to work all the time and show them “this is what you do” because I didn’t want my kids to grow up thinking that I had just sat around at home, done nothing all the time so I just worked myself literally [all the time to pay the bills and have stuff]. (Interview 2).

Becoming involved in the kindergarten afforded Kirstie with multiple opportunities. As has been described in the previous chapter Kirstie began attending kindergarten with her children at Caryll’s suggestion and quickly found it to be a place that offered her a range of possibilities. Kindergarten was initially for Kirstie a great place for ‘hanging out’, particularly as her partner was a shift worker and needed to sleep during the day. Having the opportunity to be at kindergarten and leave her partner to sleep in peace was important for Kirstie and her children. Encouraged by Caryll, Kirstie took on the role of committee chairperson and was soon playing an integral part in the life of the kindergarten.

Over the period of six years Kirstie held a variety of roles at the kindergarten. Soon after the kindergarten changed its hours of operations and children were attending kindergarten for six hours Kirstie suggested that affordable, healthy lunches should be provided. Kirstie recalled how this happened and the opportunity it afforded her.

*I think that was one of my brilliant ideas [to have lunches at the kindergarten – (laughs)]. You know I said to Caryll “we could, oh you know, I could cook lunch a couple of days a week” and I offered to volunteer my time at that stage and the kindy would just buy the groceries and we did a little bit of a menu. First it was just a couple of days a week and then we’d sell the lunches for \$2 to the parents and it just got SO busy that we decided we would offer it 5 days a week – so yeah, it was just an idea and from that Caryll just took it – it was amazing. You know if Monday is the day before payday, there’s no bread, meant kids **not** coming to kindy... however with that option [providing lunches] we weren’t having those issues.*

Interviewer: And you had a bit of a background in cooking?

Kirstie: I've always cooked, like when I left school I worked at McDonalds, I've done KFC, Pizza Hut and worked in cafes and restaurants a lot – so I love food, I love to work with food.
(Interview 2).

In 2010 Kirstie took on a kaimahi role and then when an Education Support Worker role was vacant, she decided to tackle this role to complement her kaimahi role.

During her time at the kindergarten Kirstie saw her friends Carmella and Makeleta commence studying for their teaching qualifications. Although her experiences in the role of kaimahi and ESW had provided new learning opportunities Kirstie's educational habitus led her to believe that studying was not for the 'likes of her'. Caryll recalled an encounter between Kirstie and Mandy, the General Manager. Mandy made some suggestion about Kirstie and study but this suggestion was quickly dispelled by Kirstie: *"And I always remember Kirstie, Mandy came in for a visit and Kirstie said 'Oh I could never study' and Mandy said 'Oh why not?' Kirstie's reply was 'Oh, I just couldn't'".*

Educational expectations were not a feature of Kirstie's family habitus, which was reflected in erratic attendance at high school and her quitting school as soon as she was able. Hence the idea that she was capable of tertiary study seemed like an impossibility to Kirstie although she demonstrated a growing interest in her own and children's learning. However within a short time Kirstie had been persuaded to apply to do her Bachelor of Teaching despite the inconceivability of the prospect for someone from her background and experience. Kirstie commented:

[There were no expectations about education] and I had no expectations, only one other of my cousins from my whole entire family has gone off to university – that's it, all the other cousins either work or have kids so I'm the second person out of our whole family to actually do tertiary study. (Interview 2)

Kirstie is now halfway through her qualification and is a kindergarten-based student at the early childhood centre at the new Teen Parent Unit. The odds that

were stacked firmly against Kirstie have now become more even and over 10 years her habitus has been transformed resulting in new hopes and dreams for herself and her family.

They [hopes and dreams] definitely have changed. Hopes and dreams for our whole family is to strengthen our family connections. We have very few, not much family support around us, um, and basically I just really want to bring my kids up to be able rely on each other, to go to each other or go to our other family and just really be able to stick together. I also want my children and my partner especially to have strong links with their culture. And one big thing for me is I want is my children to be confident contributors to the community, not just be a part of the community but actually contribute – umm and I want to be the best parent I can be and I just want love trust, honesty and respect. (Interview 1).

It is likely that Kirstie's children will have different expectations for themselves as a result of Kirstie's changed trajectory through her involvement with the kindergarten. Although Kirstie was determined to do things differently from her own childhood experiences, it required the intervention of relationships and structures at the exo, meso and microsystems levels to not only provide affordances but to enable the recognition and utilisation of affordances to facilitate Kirstie's desired transformation. Figure 11 illustrates Kirstie's trajectory from 2004-2013



Figure 11. Kirstie's trajectory from 2004-2013.

Kirstie's affordance network in relation to the levels of strength of affordance is illustrated below.

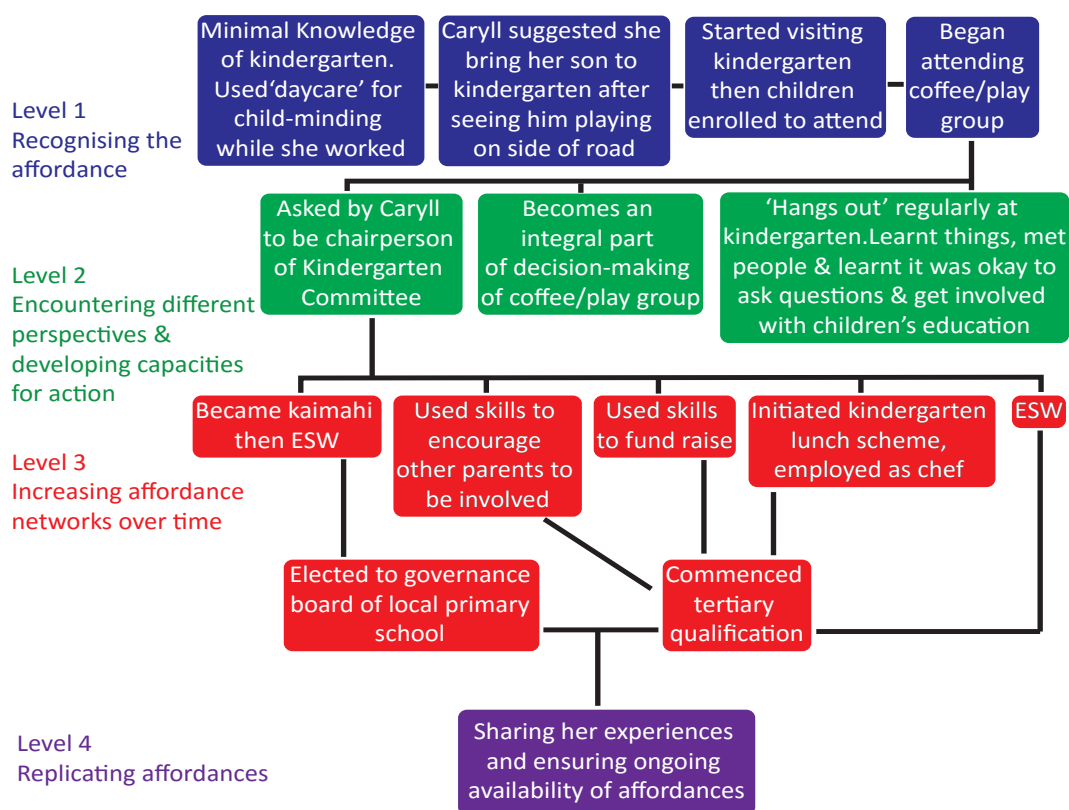


Figure 12. Kirstie's affordance network.

Makeleta's trajectory and affordance network

Makeleta has had the odds stacked against her by choosing to seek different educational opportunities in a land espoused to Pacific Nations peoples as a “*land flowing with milk and honey*”. While in Tonga, Makeleta and her family had significant social and cultural capital, however in the education field of New Zealand her secondary school teaching qualifications and experience were not recognised, language was a barrier and Makeleta was very likely viewed through a stereotypical cultural lens by the dominant culture.

Makeleta's pathway to deciding to do further study was in many ways a reproduction of her educational habitus. The strong expectations of her family to get a good education and her experiences of being a secondary teacher in Tonga enabled her to realise she was capable of reaching this new goal.

Caryll asked if I want to go for further study and then I say just “yes” without thinking. I want to be a good teacher but I wasn't

really thinking about the study and then right now I'm finish with the degree I feel so much – I don't know how you say that... (Kirstie: accomplished?) yeah so happy – after completing now with the degree I'm trying to think how did I survive all those years with my 6 children and living on only a couple dollars but today I really thank God for Taitoko Kindergarten because it's given me the opportunity to learn and then to get where I am now and be more secure. (Interview 1).

For Makeleta the support and encouragement from the kindergarten teachers was significant. She has been supported by the kindergarten community to obtain social capital within the dominant culture while maintaining her cultural and social capital amongst the Tongan community. Makeleta's hopes her children will be able to realise their dreams and be contributing citizens in their new country while upholding their cultural heritage.

I just hope and dreams to them to have good education. [To be] kind and helpful – and also to value their identity as Tongan, to learn the language so that's another thing that I'm dreaming and I'm um helping them to learn not to lose the language, to have that, to value other family members as well, have respect, to know how to be a Tongan when they are within a Tongan community and they know where they place themselves, they know when to speak, when not to (chuckling) and where to place themselves in a setting. (Interview 1).

For Makeleta some cultural norms and expectations remain paramount.

One of my hopes and dreams is for my children to get married, it is very important for me – like for me and my husband we would love them to have a family...get married, that's one of the important things. (Interview 1).

She has taken on different perspectives in respect to cultural expectations.

I think it [my hopes and dreams] does change a little bit for me to see things more because like for me I would like my children

to obey the parents- it's very important in Pasifika but like when I come here I see things from a different perspective like sometimes us Pasifika parents we want us children to do what we like not they want but when I come here I see it's better to let them to choose what they want and not want I want. I think it's – no – I think it's not really [in conflict with my culture], it's having both because you're nurturing that culture in a different community, in a different place, like you still have it but you also open up to the things that... how people live in this community. You still have your house tidy and you still have your visitors coming but you also have a little space for your children to be who they are so in those enlightenment is from being in early childhood in Taitoko Kindergarten they sort of give you "This is how we live" – this is how we still have it, you are not losing cultural values. (Interview 1).

Makeleta's trajectory from 2007- 2012 is illustrated in Figure 13 below.



Figure 13. Makeleta's trajectory.

The diagram below illustrates Makeleta's affordance network in relation to the levels of strength of affordance.

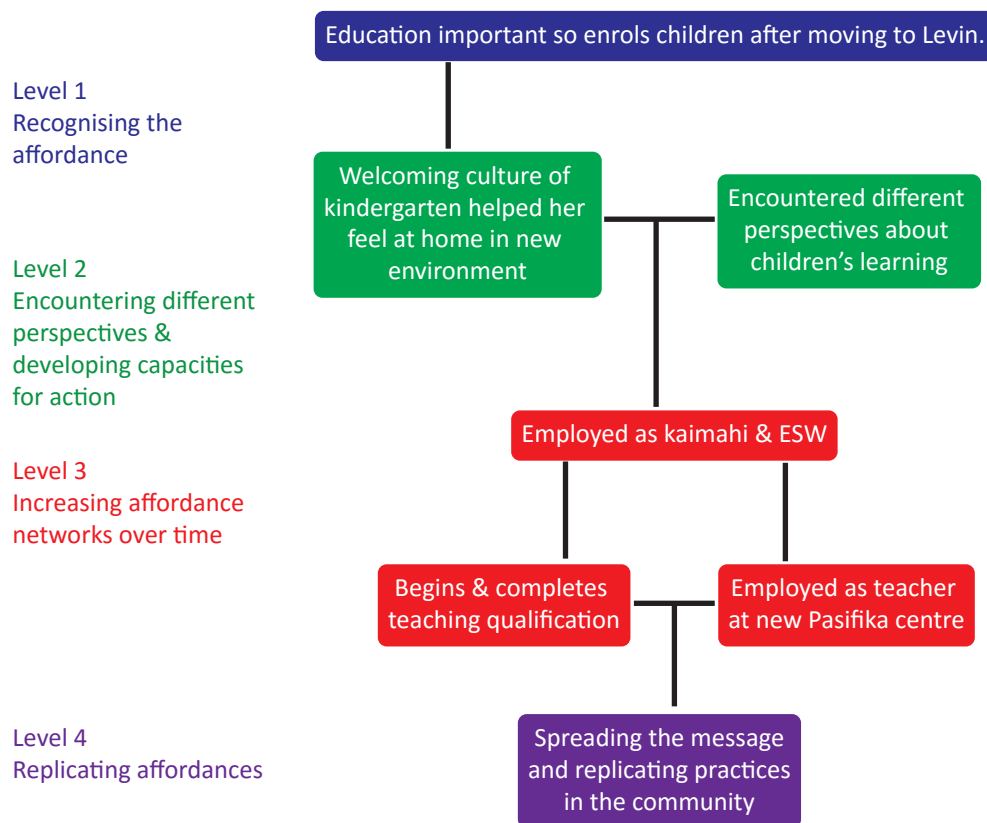


Figure 14. Makeleta's affordance network.

Jashana's trajectory and affordance network

Jashana too has had the odds stacked against her: a young Māori woman growing up in a single parent household, having her first child at age 15. Dropping out of school with minimal literacy skills Jashana has felt the impact of these disadvantages. Jashana's embodied habitus conveyed her uncertainty about her place in the world through acute shyness and a realisation that she had reduced options for the future. As has already been reported, Jashana's mother brought her to coffee group when she was expecting her first child. The teachers said she hardly spoke a word for about two years. Jashana told me *"I'm a really like a shy person, like it was hard when Tania said to come and meet you, I thought 'ohhh'"*. However she recognised this as a response to new situations and revealed this about her disposition. *"Oh, um I'm only a little bit shy if I don't know the people, like if I know you, everybody knows – "Oh here comes J, the*

loud mouth". I'm always real loud". During my time at the kindergarten I observed Jashana exerting her social capital amongst her circle of friends and with her sister: people she felt very comfortable with.

Jashana's early dreams were of joining the army. This seemed a strong possibility after a recruiting officer visited the high school when Jashana was 15.

Well yeah, I think from when I was about 12 I wanted to join the army and then they come to our college and I was a year too young so I had to wait one more year and then in that one more year I met my partner and it was too late. (Interview 2).

In my first interview with Jashana, she talked about her dream of being a cook and thought that the army was a place she could achieve this dream.

When I was younger my dream was always to be a cook, I always wanted to be a cook, I said I didn't never even mind being a cook in the army – so my dream's never too late to do. (Interview 2).

Despite the odds being stacked against her Jashana saw herself as having agency and that one day she might achieve her dream. However for Jashana her lack of literacy skills were a significant barrier and she wished she could go back to school.

Well for me, I really want to like start from college again. Because I never got the chance because I gotten pregnant with my first child at 15 so I never ever got the chance to have the education I wanted. And it holds me back a little bit now because there are jobs out there that are really easy but I can't do them. (Interview 1).

She bemoaned the lack of support for teen parents and saw the benefits of the new Teen Parent Unit at the local secondary school.

And like there's nothing like they do have now. Like [the local secondary school] has a building that starting up, [referring to TPU under construction] so I wish there was something like that

because I still could have gone to school, and my baby could have been there and I still would have gotten an education.
(Interview 1).

Jashana's experiences have impacted on her aspirations for her children and she wanted a different pathway for them.

I hope that they never ever come like me – a young mum. So they can live their lives a bit more before coming a mum or dad. At least graduate from school then get jobs, no unemployment, not being on benefits and stuff, try and change the circle.

Interviewer: So why do you think in particular that you want to try and change the circle?

Jashana: Well I feel like financially we're not stable enough, we're just like managing, that's why I would prefer them to live their lives and at least do something with their future and then maybe settle down and have their children or something like that. (Interview 2).

Although Jashana wanted things to be different for her children it appeared that she was uncertain how to ensure this happened, or what place she might play.

Interviewer: So for you it [being a teen parent] changed some things and you would prefer that your kids took a different road.

Jashana: Yeah, well I'm hoping.

Jashana identified her agency in determining her future when I asked her about significant people in her life. *"But I learn from my mistakes, you know if I did a mistake, I learned not to do that again, stuff like that"* and acknowledged her mother's influence *"like mum has been a support for me"*

A recent policy impacting on single parent beneficiaries is the requirement that once the youngest child is 3 years old the parent must be actively preparing for employment (Ministry of Social Development, 2012). In accordance with the requirements of this policy Jashana had just completed a 20-week 'Get into work' course through Work and Income NZ. Jashana found the course to be useful in

terms of helping her increase her literacy skills and getting recognised educational 'credits'.

It [the 'Get into work' course] was actually [helpful], it did help a lot more [with my reading and writing]. It helped my confidence a lot going to the course and it helped me get a lot more credits [towards national educational levels of attainment]. I think I gained 22 credits or something from that course. (Interview 2).

However being on the course highlighted Jashana's literacy gaps and the barrier this is to achieving her dreams.

That's why not so confident about doing that catering course cos I know it's got lots of writing and that's where I'm not confident. (Interview 2).

Jashana was given some employment while undertaking the course.

They were trying to find me a job and they got me into [a national department store] but just on call so whenever they ring me I get to work. They can like ring you first thing in the morning, then they can ring me, not now at night-time because they close at 8 [referring to the longer Christmas opening hours when she could get called in up until 10pm] but yeah, it's just like without any warning they can ring you. (Interview 2).

Jashana found this arrangement very unsatisfactory with regards childcare:

No it's not [that great with my children], that's why I was wanting something that's 9-3 so it's good in time with my kids. The hours [at the local store] aren't really suitable – like at Christmas I might have to work from 11am til late, like I think it was 11.30 at night, I had to work a 10-hour shift and then I didn't get home until about midnight. One night I didn't finish until midnight, that was through Christmas hours and that was really hard on me because then I had to get back and look after

the kids in the morning, which was a lot harder for me.

(Interview 2).

This policy seems to be misguided in its implementation and derived from an ideology that is punitive towards beneficiaries, favouring economic outputs rather than empowering individuals to realise their dreams. Jashana has dreams but faces significant barriers to achieving her dreams. However helping her overcome these barriers by providing opportunities while supporting her parenting commitments will surely have greater long-term benefits than finding her casual, low paid employment that increases pressure on her parenting. Jashana's comment about her future employment exposes the flaws of this policy in not accounting for the conditions of the local context.

Interviewer: You don't know of any other possibilities of work around?

J: Not at the moment, Work and Income been helping me a lot like with jobs and stuff but there's nothing that my case manager will let me go on because it's not suitable for the kids.

(Interview 2).

The kindergarten was supporting Jashana's sense of agency and by offering access to literacy programmes at coffee group was more likely to assist Jashana in achieving her dreams. The quiet encouragement and interest in Jashana's aspirations by the teachers will in time strengthen Jashana's affordance networks further and move her positively forward in the direction of her dreams.

Another dream Jashana had was to be able to speak fluent te reo Māori. Her early childhood experiences had included attending a *kōhanga reo*, but she could not remember any of her language learning. The incorporation of te reo Māori in the kindergarten programme was going some way in helping Jashana realise her dream.

Interviewer: Do you speak any te reo at all?

Jashana: No, I can't do it, I've never been able to do it. My granddad does – I did go to kōhanga when I was my children's age but I don't remember it.

My granddad and my uncle – they speak and I sit there and say “I do not know what you are talking about”

I think maybe myself I would’ve probably actually known how to speak Māori if I knew how to read them, because the trouble I have with reading and writing I think because if you gave me a piece of paper I wouldn’t know how to read it if it had Māori on it. See how they got the pictures on the wall with the Māori words, now I know what they’re talking about. [It’s helpful] for me because I’m learning with my children, as they learn, I’m learning. I know all the basic stuff, I know them [words] but I couldn’t have a full conversation with somebody even though I’d love to one day. (Interview 1).

Jashana is starting to find ways to fight the odds. She continues to be impacted on by macro and exosystem structures. These structures constrain her from working towards her goals, however her involvement with the kindergarten affords her opportunities and increases her networks. The cultural and structural affordances of the kindergarten coupled with the teacher’s social capital are likely to continue to support Jashana to realise her aspirations.

Jashana’s story emphasises the importance of time. Her educational habitus has not supported a positive trajectory nor have the prior experiences in her life-world enabled her to make use of the available material world, therefore time is required for her to increase her sets of capacities for action and recognise how to mediate these for her success. Jashana’s trajectory from 2006-2014 is illustrated below.



Figure 15. Jashana's trajectory.

Jashana's affordance network in relation to the four levels of strength of affordance is mapped in the diagram below.

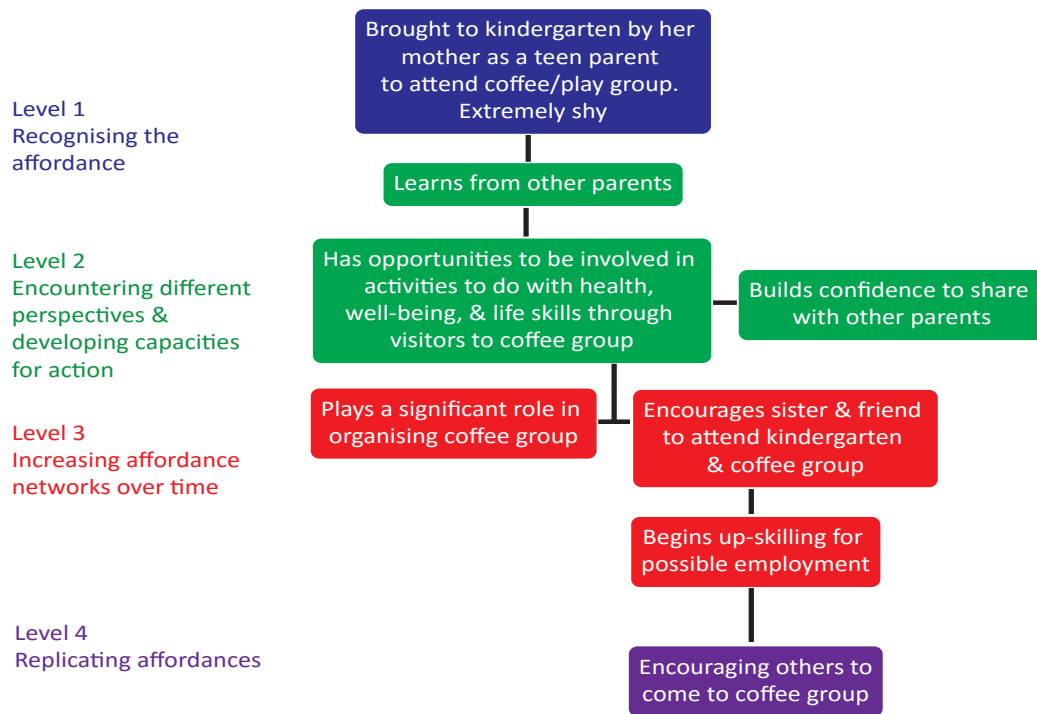


Figure 16. Jashana's affordance network.

Joh's trajectory and affordance network.

Joh's trajectory has some similarities to Carmella's in that Joh, too, deviated from the expected replication of family habitus. Her parents had educational expectations for Joh although she feels their lack of educational experience in New Zealand prevented them from having agency in helping Joh fulfil these expectations. Joh's mother had come from Tonga to New Zealand to attend secondary school with a view to becoming a nurse, however those dreams were never realised because she met Joh's father and began a family. Their dream of an occupation and 'having a better life' was transferred to their children and there was a sense of having these educational hopes and dreams realised through their offspring.

My mum came here when she was in her teens and she came here to go to school and do nursing but that didn't work out

because they met each other and like had all of us. I think they had a really high expectation, like they wanted me to go to uni and be a nurse but there wasn't really a push. There was probably a push every now and then but not kinda like sit down and talk to me about where they want me to be and things like that. But there was an expectation for me to do well at school and keep going through to uni and things like that. They would say education is important and they would tell me to do my homework and I would say I need some help but they didn't know how to help me so they would just growl me. (Interview 2).

Coming to kindergarten, being involved in coffee group, seeing other mums take on study and leadership roles provided Joh with opportunities to restructure her habitus.

Joh was a teen parent and this prevented her from pursuing any further study although she had enrolled in a hairdressing course prior to finishing school. Her mother has had a significant influence on her through their conversations about choices and dreams reminding Joh that things can be different.

I'd say my mum [has been a significant person in my life] because she tells me a lot about her background and the choices she has made so I take her negative and try and make it my positive, sort of thing. Yeah, she talks about my dad's life as well and how I want the opposite of what they both had. (Interview 2).

Kindergarten offered Joh alternative views of the world and ways in which to realise her dreams. In the past Joh had been focussed on survival: pay the bills, provide food and other necessities of life for her family while still wanting to have what 'everyone else wants': *"My dreams is everybody else's dreams – own my own house, have a career, have more children, get married"*. However after her time at kindergarten and being employed as a worker for the Horowhenua Pasifika Education Initiative, Joh began to think differently about a number of aspects of her life.

Working at this job has changed the way I thought about education and that stuff. I think for me like the survival thing is still there, the difference is I'm thinking about my future and I'm doing things properly at home now... Like if I want to get there, make life – I'm realistic, so now I'm thinking ok you want all this 'ding' [car, house, nice things] how are you gonna plan to get there because that's what you have to do instead I would be like "oh I just want it instead of thinking plan what you want". And umm for my job to speak fluent Tongan, I really want to be able to have a conversation with my mum and my granddad and anybody in my life. (Interview 1).

She began to think for the first time about her daughter and future educational and cultural possibilities for her.

My hopes are that in the future my hopes are that my daughter still has freedom to do what we're doing now that me and my partner are a great role model to her.

I hope that I've raised my child to be respectful and confident and to be a good friend. ...like being and having a good friend in life is important. Umm that my child is respectful and understands her dad and my background, and culture, our family history – it says a lot there and I hope that one day she will understand all that. I'm hoping in future I don't want her to grow up not knowing the language so hopefully some day like she will learn bits of it so I always make my mum talk to her in Tongan. (Interview 1).

Joh had also encountered some disconnects between her cultural field and the field of early childhood education. It appears Joh saw opportunities for the cultural habitus of Pasifika peoples in relation to education to be transformed over time.

I hope that in future Pasifika people have a different way of thinking about education – if only they had the knowledge of like what Makeleta said before [children getting messy or babies

playing in the dirt], *if only they had that, then the ways that Pasifika people live or do would be a little bit different.* (Interview 1).

Once again Caryll's habitus mediated opportunities for Joh. It was Caryll's persistence in encouraging Joh to come to coffee group and by showing a continuing interest in her that kept Joh engaged.

Caryll would just keep encouraging me to come to coffee group, I think she even rung me up one time because I forgot about coming to it. (Interview 2).

Caryll suggested to Joh that she should put in an application for the Horowhenua Pasifika Education Initiative co-ordinator position. Joh took Caryll's advice and was successful in securing the three-year position.

Joh's agency has increased and she realises that there are many possibilities for her in the future. Her affordance networks have widened, as have her sets of capacities for action. She is respected amongst her Tongan community and has high educational expectations for her daughter. The diagram below illustrates Joh's trajectory from 2009-2012.



Figure 17. Joh's trajectory.

Illustrated below is Joh's affordance network in relation to the four levels of the strength of affordance.

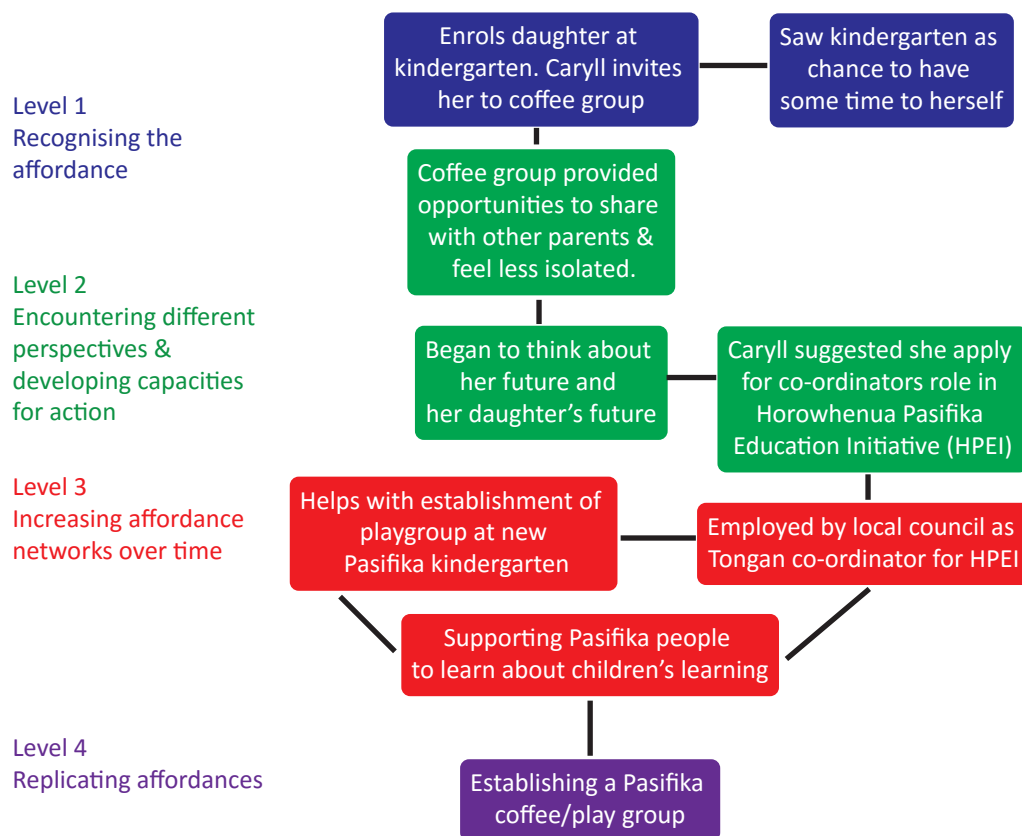


Figure 18. Joh's affordance network.

Ricky's trajectory and affordance network.

Ricky comes from an educated, highly regarded Samoan family whose father was the principal of a Samoan school for many years. Ricky's father's regard for and strong belief in the power of education provided some conflict for Ricky.

I believe that my parents, especially my father, that it's always about the education system – so his expectations of all of us is to make it in further studies, like to actually finish school and have a good job like in teaching or anything like that, and like I say that never fit in with me and how I thought because I was good at other things rather than the education side of things which my dad was totally the opposite of that – he wasn't really a sporty person so that is the main difference between me and him.

It never crossed my mind [to be a teacher]- I know my whole family are teachers, Mum and Dad. Dad was the principal, Mum was the teacher, the other two sisters. It never, ever crossed my mind, it was cooking and sports that was my plan, cooking and sports. (Interview 2).

Although Ricky had a strong educational habitus from his family other circumstances transpired to negate this. Emigrating from Samoa to New Zealand at the age of 15, Ricky found the language barrier quickly put him at a disadvantage.

I took 5th form, my last class there was 5th form in Samoa, so when I came here I asked to repeat my 5th form because you know I thought it be too much of a gap to jump up because, which it was still a big gap at 5th form even though I repeat because of the huge language barrier, because I can understand some things, it's just the speed of English, you know, the continuous talking, I just managed to clip the end of every sentence to try and make sense of what I could hear. And you know I was ashamed to tell anyone and that was my guilt. (Interview 2).

Hence his educational experiences in New Zealand did not give him any confidence in his abilities to pursue further opportunities. It was the affordances of coffee group, working as an ESW, seeing Carmella and Makeleta studying and having his 'natural teaching' abilities recognised by Caryll that enabled Ricky to think about making the impossible, possible. In the past Ricky had not ever contemplated becoming a teacher or getting a degree. However, as he recalled:

I really enjoy the satisfaction of seeing the ESW kids manage to do something, it's just a satisfaction from there and a push from the staff at Taitoko Kindergarten. I had a lot of mums there so there so that actually [encouraged me]. It wasn't that I didn't want to do it, I just didn't think I could crack it. The word degree and me don't go together. (Interview 2).

His affordance networks had increased to an extent that he felt confident in taking on tertiary study knowing he had the support of the teaching team, his wider Samoan community and the opportunity to be based at the kindergarten for the required field-based component of his teacher education qualification. For Ricky embarking on tertiary study to complete a teaching qualification, having other parents who had been down that particular road was motivating.

That's another thing that motivates me, Carmella and Makeleta, they were parents at the time but they came and went through the training. (Interview 2).

Ricky has continued to face barriers to gaining a qualification and was not successful the first time he applied to do his teaching qualification. His disposition of determination that had served him well in his sporting endeavours and been modelled to him by his father afforded Ricky the perseverance to increase his literacy skills and be accepted for a teaching degree. Caryll recalled Ricky's pathway to teaching.

He was an Educational Support Worker for a Samoan boy – that child wasn't with us for very long but because Ricky had did such a great job with that child he took on two other children – he was ESW for two other children and then he wanted to do his training and [tertiary institution] turned him down the first time with his literacy- they wanted him to strengthen his literacy, he did do a year at [a private tertiary institution offering bridging skills] and picked his literacy up and now he is in his second year of training. He is a very natural teacher – well he comes from a very strong teaching background – mum and dad and he is the youngest of the 9 children. (Interview 2).

Regardless of the fact that Ricky had resisted the thought of being a teacher, it appeared to be part of his embodied habitus, which Caryll characterised as “a natural teacher”. Ricky's strong respect for his father has helped motivate him in his study and although Ricky sometimes thinks it would be easier to go back to being a chef, his father does not view that as an acceptable occupation for his son.

I don't know I explain it very well, but it really motivates a little bit more into this learning cos my dad is always into the wellbeing of me and my kids when he's passed [died] and that's why I'm determined to do this because I know that is my gift to him when he leaves, you know when he's gone he's settled because I'm settled and happy.

So now he sees his grandchildren and he worries more about his grand children so he says you keep at that [study] – it doesn't matter and I go back and say "I got my cooking, I can get paid well doing my cooking" but he sees cooking not a career, to him it doesn't really involve education. So more I try to bring my point out the more he says "no, no, not a chef" – so I say "ok".
(Interview 2).

Ricky's experiences have resulted in mixed expectations for his children. He has gained an increasing amount of knowledge about learning since his involvement at the kindergarten and subsequent tertiary study however he realises that schooling does not meet everyone's needs. Ricky recalled how standardised, decontextualized teaching and curriculum caused him to struggle to make sense of things during his schooling coupled with the attitude of his father that Ricky should automatically do well at school because of his family background.

And in Samoa you go from one family one day, you start from your house and you end up on the other side of the village with the other kids and you hang with the kids all day. If those kids and their families are getting coconuts for the pigs and chickens that day then I'll go, and I happy to just tag along and I bring my coconuts home and then I go back you know so my learning was involved a lot around the kids and my mates. So all of that was my learning, my learning was all about that, [it] wasn't about this writing, sitting down so my dad's expectations because he was very educational person he automatically, I can't help but feel that he thinks I should automatically get it and that's the thing I see now with my kids, they don't just get it. Just because I'm good at rugby doesn't mean my son will grow

up and be good at rugby, at the moment he loves soccer, so yes.
(Interview 2).

Ricky feels education is very important for his children but has different expectations for his sons and daughters. It is likely that Ricky's cultural habitus has impacted on his ideas about gender roles and his experiences of living in a different culture has changed some of his views about traditional Samoan gender roles.

Yes, education is very important especially for my girls – my boy, maybe because I'm a boy I don't really think educational wise but my girls...There's no real difference [for boys and girls] but it's just the way I see it myself that for my boys there is always lots of physical work that if they fail education they can always do building, labouring work, so for me that's your choice whether you want to sit down and do that or you don't want to do that. I don't want to see my girls do too much physical work, I want to see them well established in education system and work as what we say, 'ladies work' but I do have other lady friends that don't want this, they rather do "what exactly I want to do", you know get out there and do physical work sort of thing. So that's the way I see it there's more opportunities for my boys to get out and if the worst gets the worst there is always fruit picking or something.

I worry about my girls' future to make them stronger women when they have their own strong their own men they can stand up for themselves – not be needy. (Interview 2).

Ricky's experiences at the kindergarten and his growing understanding about learning has provided him with a desire to go back to Samoa one day and help implement some provision of early childhood education. Ricky sees many opportunities to provide different experiences for children within the context of their culture.

[Children] they do have a great time [before they go to school] but it's just like I said about the dice thing, just pointing out that that's

learning. Like I said if you put a big numbers on them [the dice], like you put a 100 or something then I learn from the dice but at school I still find it hard to learn those numbers. So for me if there is a kindergarten centre because they play every day, they make their own resources, it's just that there's nobody to ahh scaffold, there's nobody to build on, to point out to say 'oh do you know that you're actually doing, you know that by doing that you're actually practicing...' oh yeah I'll do that if I had the opportunity I would definitely do that and I feel strong about it because I grew up with strong culture and my culture is very important. (Interview 2).

The affordances of the kindergarten for Ricky had shifted his aspirations to be more in line with the expectations of his collective habitus. The tensions seemed to remain between following his passion for cooking and being a teacher which met his father's expectations, but the habitus of respect for elders and bowing to the wishes of his father won out and Ricky was fulfilling his embodied habitus of 'being a natural teacher'. Ricky's trajectory from 2008-2013 is outlined below.

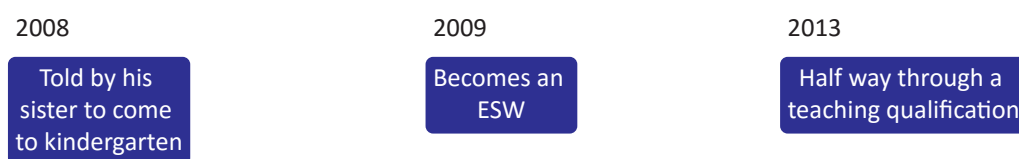


Figure 19. Ricky's trajectory.

Illustrated below is Ricky's affordance network in relation to the four levels of strength of affordance.

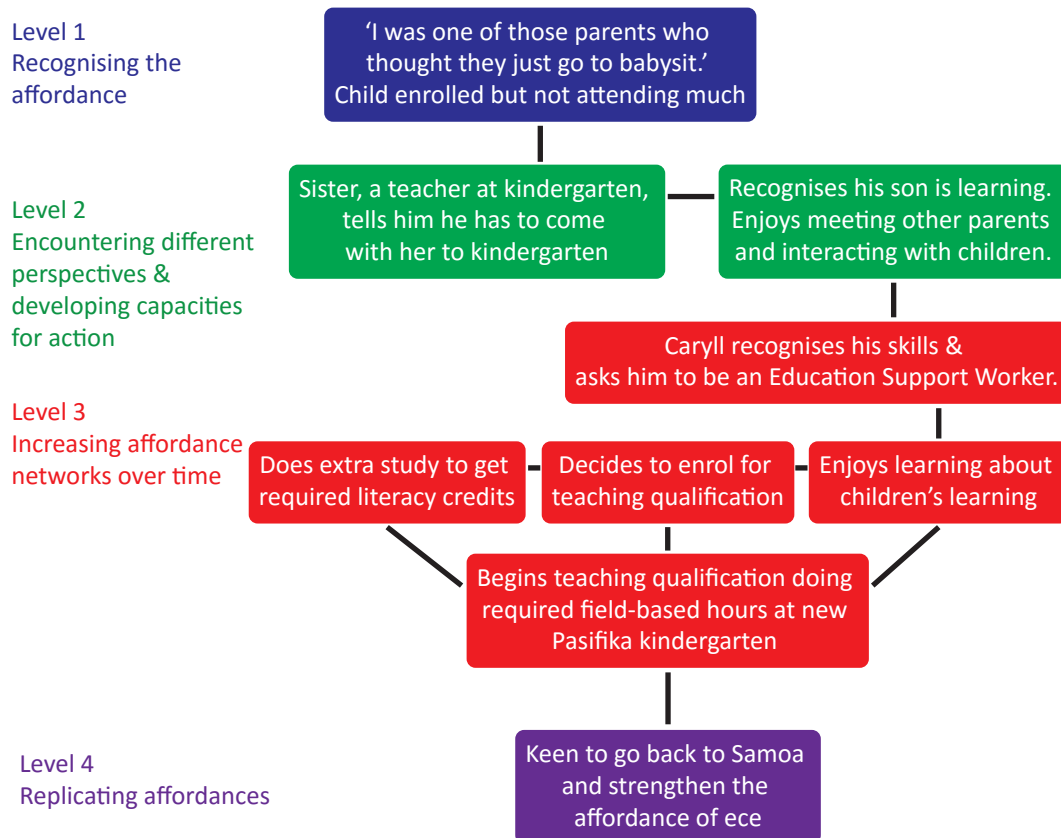


Figure 20. Ricky's affordance network.

Mase's trajectory and affordance network.

Mase is a professionally qualified Samoan man who immigrated to New Zealand in 2009 under the quota system¹⁹ for Pacific Islanders. Mase comes from a family that valued education as a means to independence and a better life. Mase's parents were business owners and encouraged their children to do well at school and to get further qualifications.

We went to school at day time, then we come home and especially my father, he the one that always teach us how to read, how to write, what you supposed to do when you growing up – it's a good idea for you to working hard at your studies to

¹⁹ A system introduced to regulate the immigration of people from some Pacific Islands such as Tonga and Samoa.

get a good future but he's the one, and also my mother she support my dad about what we supposed to do in life – especially our education.

They had a restaurant in our big market that sells things – that's how we support our life is our restaurant and when they decide to move to my father's land [island] they work on a farm. From that they know exactly how hard the life is to find the sources, especially the income to survive, they push our education, especially, that's the main thing. In their point of view it is very important to us, so we try our best to do our education and from that we got some little, nice scholarship to support our education from their support, without their support we won't be in that situation. (Interview 2).

These expectations and family habitus of working hard and taking responsibility for yourself and your family were core values in Mase's approach to life and his children. In immigrating to Aotearoa New Zealand: the land of milk and honey, Mase had relinquished a highly respected and well-paid job in Samoa. His qualifications from the University of South Pacific were not recognised in Aotearoa New Zealand and the language barrier prevented him from finding employment in his field of expertise. His cultural and social capital was greatly diminished in this country that was touted as the place to have a better life. However, Mase continued to hold onto his values of being independent and responsible and told me that:

Every parent needs to develop their children, needs to encourage education for their children, that's my own hope, that's my own aim at the moment is to fight for the good things for my children, yeah especially their education. I know it's we are getting expensive and difficult sometimes in terms of money but that's not the issue, the issue is to get a good future for their life. We never know what will happen to us as a parent but we need to find a good way for them. That's my only aim, to make their education better. (Interview 1).

In order to fulfil these hopes and expectations Mase was working at nights (40-42 hours a week) as a community support worker for a mental health organisation as well as 15 hours a week as the kindergarten administrator while his wife worked on a farm. Mase had completed some courses in mental health to enable him to get out of a low paid seasonal market gardening job after they first moved to Levin. He also worked as a teacher aide at the school next door to the kindergarten.

Mase had completed some university papers and in 2013 was enrolled in a Certificate of Management. Mase's hopes and dreams have fuelled his determination to see these dreams realised and motivated him to have a better life. He talked about this motivation and how the kindergarten supported his aspirations by enabling him to have flexibility in his hours of work.

The challenge to myself is "why are some people working in an office, a better job than me and I'm not?" That's a big challenge to me – so I left the farm and went to do some studies because without study you have no upgrading your skills and get a good job. Now I will go back [to university] – will try and have flexible hours sometimes [at kindergarten], I know it's hard but I need manage it, no pain, no gain (laughs). (Interview 2).

Mase's habitus of independence and not relying on others has impacted on his decision about where he lives. For Mase, owning his own home is very important.

Everyone needs to develop, no one needs to stay in a rented house, you need to stay in your own house, that's my own aim and that's the investment that I'm looking for. (Interview 1).

In the space between my interviews with Mase (June 2013- June 2014), he had been approved a first home loan and the family had moved into their own home.

It is very important to Mase that his children have a good education and the decisions he makes about working and owning his own home are to help give his children the support and opportunities he values.

Education, that's my own first priority to my children, their health and their education. Yeah that's the only priority I have at the moment: to push up my children's to their education. Doesn't matter if they not good at education, there are other circumstances you can go through in order to make them a good education. (Interview 2).

Mase values maintaining their culture and home language, and he and his wife ensure their children are being exposed to Samoan culture and language. Mase has high cultural capital amongst the Samoan community and he exercises this in encouraging cultural customs and the maintenance of language.

I speak Samoan because I have to encourage the home language, our own culture – but sometimes I think like “ohh we are in foreign country”. Sometimes I speak English to my daughter, especially my daughter, but places with some Samoan people then I never ever speak English, never ever – even if I be in the community I was trying to encourage people to speak in Samoan because that's our first language and we have to encourage, we have to appreciate it – where you are from, your own values and your own customs. That's my own belief. Some people speak in English but I think “oh that's not very good” I don't want people to speak to me in English- if I speak I want them to speak to me in Samoan, not English. (Interview 1).

However Mase also appreciates the opportunities his son has to learn English at kindergarten, as he knows this is important for success in Aotearoa New Zealand. Mase's daughter attends a local school that has ESOL (English as an additional Language classes), which Mase feels is beneficial for her educational opportunities and success.

I don't care whether he is speaking in Samoan [at kindergarten] but it is very helpful for him to mingle with other foreign people, while now he is speaking English – just a small word (come, go, thanks, thank you) and that's pretty good. I'm very appreciated of that one, it's very helpful for him because not only us at home

because I understand we develop his own language at home sometimes but once he comes here he learns something different for his life- that is pretty good- and the Māori language too – that is pretty good, very nice. (Interview 1).

Being the kindergarten administrator has afforded Mase the opportunity to use some of his skills and expertise. It also enables him to connect with the Samoan community in an educational setting and to help them to understand the benefits of early childhood education.

I love to do my job and connect with other people. Sometimes I feel sorry for the people like who just came and stay but not legally stay here – but I still encourage there is a way you can still do it for that one – don't hide yourself away, I have to encourage you, there is a way because that is your future and you have to develop your children here. (Interview 1).

For Mase, his involvement at the kindergarten enabled him to reproduce his habitus, a process that threatened to be undermined because of the positioning of Pasifika peoples in New Zealand. The barrier of language, the assumption about intelligence, work ethic and ability initially placed Mase in the vulnerability category: Pasifika ethnicity, low paid employment, renting a house on the 'wrong side of the tracks'.

On the New Zealand Immigration website it gives details of the quota scheme: 1,100 Samoan citizens chosen by ballot every year and granted NZ residency. It is prefaced by the statement "Work opportunities, education and family are some of the reasons people choose to leave the Pacific Islands and start a new life in New Zealand, and many have found New Zealand a great place to live, work and raise families" (<http://www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/stream/live/samoanquota/>).

Although Mase may confirm some of these claims, it certainly has not been as straightforward as portrayed by NZ Immigration. Neither do the statistics for Samoan or Pasifika households in NZ evidence these claims.

Mase's trajectory from 2011-2014 is illustrated in the diagram below.



Figure 21. Mase's trajectory.

The diagram below outlines Mase's affordance network in relation to the four levels of strength of affordance.

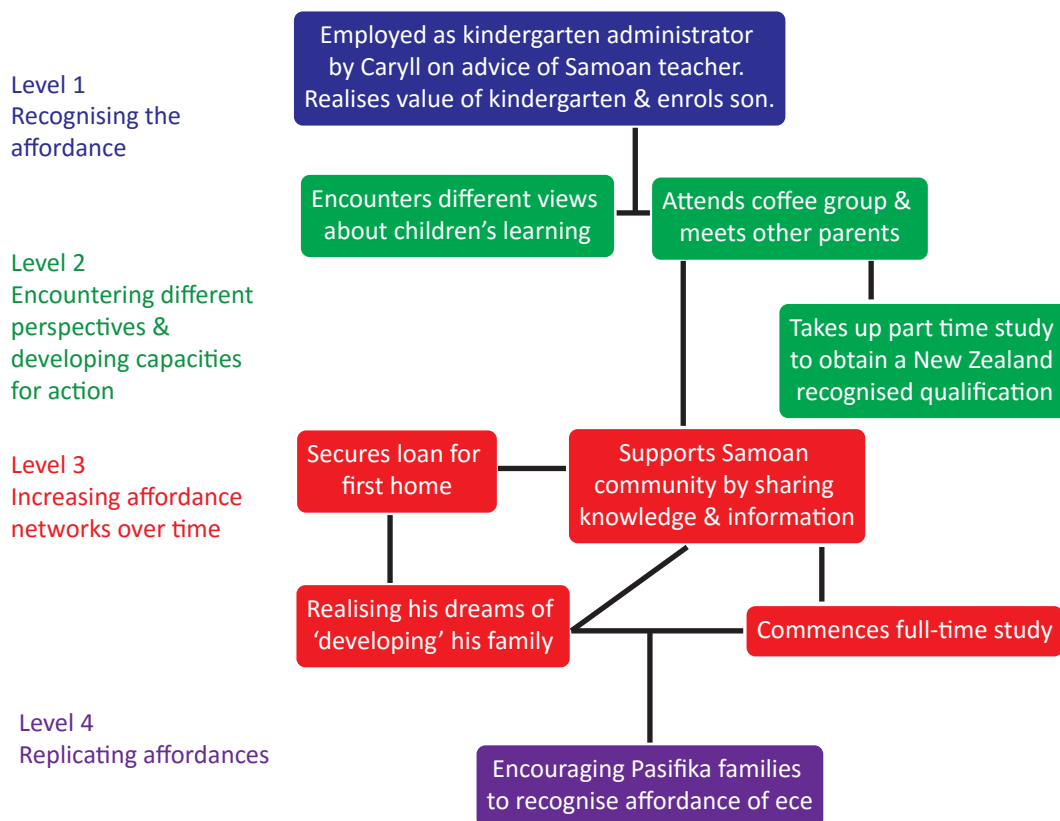


Figure 22. Mase's affordance networks.

An ecology of affordances

This chapter has illustrated each participant's trajectory and affordance network against the framework of levels of strength of affordance. In conjunction with chapters 7 & 8 these three chapters (7, 8 & 9) have illustrated the unique

trajectories and taking up of affordances for each participant. The provision of multiple affordances has helped meet the individual circumstances and experiences of the family participants, enabling them to respond to the strength of the affordance in a unique manner. Figure 9, below, illustrates an ecology of affordances that were provided through exo and mesosystem changes that strengthened families microsystems and changed the odds over the ensuing decade. This ecology of affordances is in contrast to the diagram in Chapter 6 of an ecology of odds that faced Mandy in 2003 when she needed to decide the fate of the kindergarten.



Figure 23. An ecology of affordances

From vulnerability to empowerment

The discourses of vulnerability discussed in Chapter 2 and the positioning of groups of people in Aotearoa New Zealand place the family participants from Taitoko Kindergarten in the category of vulnerable according to the criteria of policymakers. The Parent Support and Development project, of which Taitoko Kindergarten was a recipient was targeted at vulnerable children and their families. There was a perception and acceptance by those both inside and outside the community that families in this area had the odds stacked against them. The deficit view of vulnerability that positions those individuals who have a low socio-economic status and poor educational achievement are at risk of being a social and economic burden on society (Furedi, 2008), hence the need for ‘interventions’.

Regardless of the family participants’ own perceptions or acceptance of their ‘vulnerability’ they all had hopes and dreams for themselves and their children. The teachers at Taitoko Kindergarten and the Kindergarten Association applied a strengths-based approach to the ‘vulnerability’ label, preferring to see the community as one that was poorly provided for rather than the ‘problem’ residing with individual families. The teachers recognised the inherent right of these families to have their hopes and dreams realised so endeavoured to fight the odds against them and level the playing field in order that families might feel empowered to further fulfil their aspirations.

Although these seven families may not have ascribed to the label of vulnerable they had nevertheless experienced diminished opportunities and aspirations due to impacts of the macro and exosystem levels. Being involved with the kindergarten over time has enabled families to overcome many of the odds that were stacked against them and to realise their dreams through mesosystem affordances that have strengthened their microsystems. The kindergarten has impacted positively on the trajectories of all seven family participants and assisted them to feel empowered about their futures. The level of strength was important in assisting families to recognise and take up opportunities to increase their affordance networks over time.

Mandy's quote at the end of Chapter 8 about replicating the kindergarten implies that a similar model of support and affordance provision as experienced by Taitoko Kindergarten should be adopted for other early childhood education services. The story of the transformation of Taitoko Kindergarten and the experiences of the seven family participants are unique. However, as argued in Chapter 5 even a single case study can offer insights by 'bottling' or preserving key ingredients that might be used in other contexts. The experiences of the family participants and the perspectives of the Association and kindergarten leadership present a range of possibilities for replicating the Taitoko Kindergarten story in a manner that sustains community empowerment over time and perpetuates 'the good stuff' through the strengthening of the affordance networks. There are a number of key aspects of the Taitoko story that have implications for policymakers and early childhood education with respect to integrated early years services. These implications are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 10.

Replicating affordances through a *Whānau Tangata* centre: Policy and practice implications.

That it [the concept of a Whānau Tangata centre] continues to grow and continues to be the hub that it's become and growing opportunities for people within our community to grow and develop themselves and just keeping our eye out for ways that we can empower people. (Caryll, Head Teacher, Interview 1).

The story of the transformation of Taitoko Kindergarten and the experiences of the seven family participants provides insights into the potential of early childhood education for building families' sets of capacities for actions and assisting them to realise their hopes and aspirations. The seven families have to some degree all been empowered to change their life trajectories. The kindergarten management engaged in a fight against the odds to even the playing field for the community and provide affordances for families to enable them to realise their aspirations.

While the previous three chapters have discussed the affordances provided by the kindergarten, the levels of strength of affordances, the mapping of the trajectories and the affordance networks of the seven family participants, this chapter outlines ways in which the kindergarten has developed as an integrated early years service. The chapter analyses this service provision against the components of effective integrated early years services discussed in Chapter 4. The analysis ascertains the potential for the replication of affordances and highlights implications for policy and practice.

Policy as an exosystem influence

This thesis has examined the various discourses and responses by policy makers with particular regard to vulnerable children and families. Different constructs of vulnerability and the role and purpose of early childhood education lend themselves to different political solutions. When early childhood education is regarded as a critical point of intervention then programmes such as Head Start and Sure Start become priorities for funding and implementation. A discourse of ‘providing treatment’ for vulnerability will concentrate on programmes based on cost benefit analyses and designed to mitigate conditions of vulnerability. In contrast a discourse of social justice will assist individuals and communities to recognise and to draw on their own resources and find solutions to suit their context.

Because of its designation of vulnerable by the state, Levin has become a target for any initiatives designed to provide solutions for those who ‘make up’ negative statistics. Taitoko Kindergarten and its community meet all the criteria for vulnerability and have been the recipients of an initiative designed to support children and families. The story of Taitoko Kindergarten and the experiences of the seven families provides an argument for early childhood education as a vehicle for affording *adults* opportunities for realising their aspirations. Therefore the generalisability and possible replication of the affordances provided by the kindergarten to do that need to be explored to inform future policies and initiatives for supporting families who are poorly provided for.

In Chapter 4 I drew on literature that provided first hand experiences and comments from families and teachers to argue that effective integrated early years services can provide affordances for adults to realise their aspirations. In the case of Taitoko Kindergarten the establishment of a *Whānau Tangata* (a place for all to belong) centre, conceptualised through the Parent Support and Development project, attempted to build relationships with other agencies and services to support community aspirations. Building relationships and involving other agencies was achieved through a two-pronged approach. In the first instance Caryll was released from her teaching duties to focus on sharing the vision of the

Whānau Tangata centre with relevant agencies in the wider community. These formal and informal opportunities enabled Caryll to get to know key people in both government and non-government organisations and provided organisations with opportunities to establish a regular presence at the kindergarten. Over time, strong relationships were built and Caryll was able to mediate meetings between agencies and families. She was also invited to join a number of advisory groups covering health, early years, education and community support.

Taitoko Kindergarten: An effective integrated early years service?

The seven family participants and the teachers and management of Taitoko Kindergarten would no doubt render the story of the kindergarten's transformation, and the positive impact on families, a success. The criticism of self-interest and subjective bias could be directed at such an interpretation. However there are some other possible measures of success such as the components of effective integrated early years services synthesised and outlined in Chapter 4 that could usefully be applied to Taitoko Kindergarten.

Returning to these components of effective integrated early years service and their potential to offer affordances for families to realise their aspirations it is worthwhile mapping the example of Taitoko Kindergarten onto these components to ascertain similarities and/or differences. This mapping will contribute to either reinforcing or questioning these components as necessary for effective integrated early years services and provide recommendations for policy and practice.

Component 1: Significant parent and community involvement.

The transformation of Taitoko Kindergarten and the establishment of a *Whānau Tangata* centre were built on the ideas and aspirations of the community. Families were decision-makers and involved in the planning and implementation of initiatives. The involvement of families at various levels of decision-making provided families with affordances as they grew in confidence, utilised their skills and gained new skills. The affordances identified in this study that are part of the traditional state-funded, community-based kindergarten model were a parent committee and a variety of employment opportunities. These affordances are

present in the majority of early childhood centres but not necessarily available to parents as affordances.

1. Parent committees.

The parent committee was a significant affordance for parents, particularly Carmella and Kirstie. Being on the committee involved them in decision-making, increasing their confidence and social and cultural capital. The parent committee is historically part of the exosystem level of kindergarten that is available for families to be involved in decision-making or have opportunities to develop new skills. Regrettably the privatisation and for-profit domination, particularly by corporations, of early childhood provision in New Zealand has impacted on the availability of the affordances of a parent committee. Parents have minimal input into the decision-making of the majority of for-profit centres and the fee-paying structure of such centres negates the need for fundraising. In contrast to community, not-for-profit centres whose management and/or governance comprises members of the parent community, for-profit centres are generally managed and governed by the owners or corporation chief executive officer. A business model of early childhood education is less likely to involve parents in decision-making and although the licensing regulations for early childhood centres require management to “regularly collaborate with parents and family or whānau”, services are only required to provide information to parents about how to access information about their child and how they can be involved with the service (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 24). Since being involved in a parent body can be a significant affordance for helping individuals realise their aspirations then consideration must be given to the on-going provision of this affordance through genuine involvement of families in decision-making.

2. Opportunities for employment within the early childhood setting.

There were a number of employment opportunities available to families through the kindergarten. These included: Education Support Worker, administrator, kaimahi, field-based teacher education students and kindergarten cook. These employment opportunities are possibilities within each community-based early childhood education service where the leadership is open to parents filling such positions and actively seeks to recruit parents.

Education Support Workers.

The affordance provided through parents' involvement in early childhood education as an Education Support Worker (ESW) for children who require extra support remains a potential affordance. ESWs are employed by Special Education or other providers to support children at whichever early childhood service the child attends. A 2012 national report by the Aotearoa New Zealand Education Review Office found that kindergartens were over-represented in the enrolment of children with moderate to severe special needs (Education Review Office, 2012, p.10). No analysis or reason for this is provided in the report but this over-representation indicates that there is more likelihood of ESWs being employed to work in kindergartens. As was pointed out in Chapter 7, ESWs are often recommended by teachers or the family of the child requiring the support. In the case of Ricky, Makeleta and Kirstie, it was a result of Caryll's recommendation that they became ESWs. This aspect of supporting children with special needs in early childhood centres is another affordance available to individuals that can help them realise their aspirations. Whether or not utilising the services of untrained or unqualified members of the public to carry out this role is the most effective form of support for these children has yet to be ascertained. Regardless of the outcome of this debate, the role provides opportunities for adults to gain knowledge and skills and build their confidence.

Administrator.

The majority of early childhood services employ administrators. Whereas in many private, for-profit services the administrator will be recruited through traditional employment processes of advertisements or the administrator is the owner/manager of the service, kindergartens will often employ a parent whom they know to have the requisite skills. The practice of kindergartens employing a parent or someone who has been closely involved with the service appears to be a residue effect of the long-standing expectation of a strong interface between parents, community and kindergarten.

Kindergartens are generally regarded as a community service and cater for families from all socioeconomic groups including those not in paid employment. The family participants in this study were not in paid employment and found that

coming to kindergarten provided opportunities to interact with other adults and opportunities for employment. The part-time hours of an administrator suited the family commitments of Carmella and Mase who both took on this role at different times.

Kaimahi or cultural resource workers.

The employment of kaimahi provided opportunities for individuals to take on a role at the kindergarten that recognised and utilised their social and cultural capital. This recognition of capital enabled individuals to feel valued and helped build their confidence as well as offering new possibilities. It was not only the kaimahi that personally benefitted from being in the role, families felt supported in their cultural aspirations for their children through their relationships with the kaimahi. The kaimahi acted as brokers or mediators for families with teachers, helping build relationships between teachers and families and enhancing teachers' understanding of cultural values.

Replicating this potential affordance of employing kaimahi across the wider early childhood sector could be encouraged through a funding mechanism such as the current Equity funding, discussed in Chapter 2. One of the criteria for Equity funding accounts for non-English speaking backgrounds while the language component of Equity funding is designed for immersion language centres. These criteria are included in the low socioeconomic component of Equity funding, however a more accurate calculation for families from non-English speaking backgrounds could be established by identifying centres where there are large numbers of such families.

Extending Equity funding to meet the needs of centres in areas with a high proportion of Māori and/or Pasifika or any particular ethnicity that may be dominant in a community would be useful. Early childhood participation statistics show that the majority of Māori and Pasifika children attend services that are not language immersion centres hence encouraging services to be more culturally responsive could address social inequities. Any funding model should incentivise centres to employ people from the local community who are respected and have established relationships with families in the community. Kaimahi who have

established relationships with other community bodies and agencies would add significant value to the role.

Coffee/Playgroup.

The other initiative used for establishing and building relationships with other services was through coffee group. Coffee group activities were determined by the participants and invitations issued to appropriate services to attend coffee group to share information. In the family participant stories there has been evidence of the types of activities that coffee group participants engaged with and the opportunities these activities afforded families. Jashana was interested in acquiring literacy skills so suggested having a local adult literacy agency visit. Jashana also spoke of families coming to hear a health professional talk about asthma prevention as this was an issue that affected many families. As has been mentioned previously a number of families were able to successfully complete their driver's license tests through the assistance of a service visiting coffee group. Cooking and sewing lessons, quit smoking initiatives and healthy eating on a budget were just some of the activities that occurred at coffee group and provided affordances for families as well as building relationships with services and breaking down barriers so families felt more comfortable about accessing services.

The coffee/playgroup initiated by the families at Taitoko Kindergarten was a significant affordance that provided a vehicle for developing relationships amongst families and the wider community. Coffee/playgroup also offered different levels of strength of affordance. The adaptation of space to accommodate activities such as coffee group occurred through the funding from local grants and did not rely on any other funding to operate. Initiatives such as coffee groups are easily replicated as has been evidenced by Joh and the Horowhenua Pasifika Education Initiative.

Coffee groups are a soft entry point for families and can quickly be utilised to provide affordances and offer informal opportunities for support. Enabling families to make decisions about the nature of coffee groups will contribute to their success in empowering families and building capacity amongst the

community. This initiative is a no-to-low cost activity that should be encouraged and supported through local policy level decisions and structures.

Implications for policy and practice of Component 1: Provision of community-based early childhood services.

As with all of these affordances there are wider macrosystem level debates and assumptions attached to each role. Beliefs and values about the care and education of children in their early years coupled with the support, resourcing and provision for families of young children opens up spaces for dialogue about issues such as: the place and value of volunteers; the importance of parent engagement in their child's education; and employment possibilities for parents with young children. The provision of affordances is at the mercy of such a complex and dynamic macrosystem level environment. However, I would argue that the most effective provision of these affordances occurs in a not-for-profit early childhood service and that strong consideration needs to be given to ensuring the continuation of robust provision of community-based early childhood centres. May and Mitchell's (2009) report of the Quality Public Early Childhood Education project group about strengthening community-based early childhood education recommended that there be a national plan for community-based early childhood education provision throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

Component 2. Comprehensive provision of services.

Over the years and with the provision of extra funding from the Parent Support and Development project, strong collaborative relationships were built with a range of government and non-government agencies. These relationships meant that families could access services more readily and that the kindergarten became a place for other agencies to provide services for families.

A great deal of Caryll's time was spent liaising with agencies to broker support for families, attending meetings with families, hosting personnel from other agencies at the kindergarten, advocating for the kindergarten as a soft entry point for families. During my three extended stays at the kindergarten I witnessed the amount of time Caryll spent supporting families either in an advisory or

counselling role as well as advocating and brokering support from other agencies. Her daily log shows the majority of her non-teaching time committed to wider family support. Regular visits from personnel such as the Public Health nurse and the Runanga²⁰ co-ordinator attested to the strong relationships between the kindergarten and other social service, health and education organisations.

Involving other services to support aspirations.

As relationships with community agencies were established and strengthened, the physical spaces of the kindergarten were considered as appropriate meeting places for multi-agency discussions and family conferences. In many instances families felt comfortable being at the kindergarten, regarding it as their place where they had social and cultural capital so they chose to have meetings there rather than in offices 'downtown'.

Caryll: Just people seeing things and, like the Runanga who've held the contract for increasing participation and then they come up and they build a relationship with you and they recognise that this is a nice place that can recommend to people to come. Because you're not going to take a family somewhere that you, as a visitor doesn't feel, doesn't get a very good vibe about. One of things we've done is that we try and find a place for everybody. We work really hard at making people feel at home, like the Strengthening Families²¹ meetings that we have here, we work with a wide variety of agencies in different ways, Strengthening Families, like Group Special Education, ACC²²...

JCP: WINZ²³ people? Are they in with that too?

Caryll: Most definitely, I mean I can phone the WINZ childcare co-ordinator and talk through situations, which I've been doing this

²⁰ A local tribal health provider

²¹ An arm of Child, Youth and Family that brings together all agencies involved with a child and their family to find solutions to issues that have brought the child or family to the attention of the authorities.

²² Accident Compensation Corporation. A no-fault personal injury cover for all NZ citizens.

²³ Work and Income NZ. Government department responsible for individuals receiving unemployment benefits. This department also administers childcare subsidies for employed parents.

week to support another family, so I can pick up the phone and she can immediately go onto her computer and give some information. Rather than have to go through a case-worker at WINZ who put you into a phone queue and that sort of thing. (Interview 1).

Implications for policy and practice of Component 2: integrated early years services.

The story of Taitoko Kindergarten and the involvement of seven specific families has demonstrated the effectiveness of the kindergarten as an integrated early years service in a fight against an ecology of odds. This effectiveness needs to be recognised by policy makers. Policy development should involve a thorough investigation of what is already happening in communities and identifying what can be replicated or adapted for wider implementation. The ecological nature of the ‘odds against’ points to a justification for collaboration across disciplines to provide an integrated approach to policy development.

Given the significant participation rate of children in early childhood education it is imperative to recognise the potential of early childhood services for developing strong partnerships with families and other support services. Over the last decade various political parties have mooted the concept of inter-agency community hubs located at schools, but to date this concept has not been taken up at a policy level. The establishment of Early Years hubs (see Chapter 6) is the nearest initiative to this inter-agency concept however these hubs were not located in early childhood services.

The funding provided by the Parent Support and Development project made some difference to the transformation of Taitoko kindergarten. Although many of the affordances outlined are replicable without extra funding, it is important that the on-going resourcing of early childhood education is a priority and that opportunities for additional and in some cases targeted funding for equity and evening the odds is considered in specific cases.

Component 3. Non-stigmatising, non-judgmental, strengths based accessibility, including entry and retention.

This component has been evident in the stories from the family participants. They all attested to the warmth with which they were welcomed and that the teachers did not make judgements about their parenting skills and life circumstances. The teachers operated from a clearly articulated strengths-based approach and the relationships they built with the family participants enabled sustained engagement by the families.

Implications for policy and practice of Component 3: Teachers as mesosystem agents.

This thesis has explored the role of the teachers in supporting families to realise their aspirations and to assist families to recognise and utilise affordances. The teachers were active mesosystem agents whose beliefs and attitudes were pivotal in providing an environment where families felt welcomed and experienced a “hospitality of visitation” (Derrida, 2003). Building the capacity of teachers to have an empowerment or strengths based approach to supporting families is essential for establishing affordance networks through involvement with early childhood education. Systems and processes at state and local level that prioritise capacity building of teacher and family partnerships will enhance the possibilities for changes in teacher beliefs and attitudes and the development of strong affordance networks. Governments committed to resourcing teachers’ on-going professional learning can contribute to a range of opportunities for the exploration of new perspectives and a challenging of ideological beliefs based on deficit theorising. The explicit pedagogy that Bourdieu suggests is essential for transforming habitus can be provided through focussed professional learning.

Component 4. Sound theoretical basis.

As has been discussed previously, *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum provides teachers with a strong theoretical base for their practice and engagement with families (Ministry of Education, 1996). The teachers came to their teaching with their own theories about supporting families, established through their habitus. These personal theories were reinforced or challenged by the curriculum

framework and the teacher's habitus contributed to developing a new collective habitus for the kindergarten.

The early childhood curriculum is a material component that provides impetus for relational affordances. The principles and strands of the curriculum are applicable to adult's learning as well providing a framework for outcomes for children. The four principles of family and community/whānau tangata, responsive and reciprocal relationships/kotahitanga, holistic development/ngā hononga and empowerment/whakamana give strong leverage for teachers to take account of the aspirations of families.

Implications for policy and practice of Component 4: Curriculum knowledge and implementation.

Opportunities for teachers to further develop their understanding of the curriculum in relation to supporting and empowering families' aspirations through collaboration with other agencies needs to be given priority in policies related to initial teacher education and professional learning for teachers. The development of a qualification focussing on integrated service provision such as offered by the Pen Green leadership centre would enhance the knowledge and confidence of professionals interested in multi-discipline collaboration.

Component 5. Enduring and embedded in community.

The story of Taitoko Kindergarten's transformation spans a decade and this study was conducted over a period of 3.5 years demonstrating that the changes and impacts on families have been sustained and are well embedded in practice. The on-going provision of affordances and the succession of family involvement in the life of the kindergarten have contributed to the strength of the kindergarten as a place of empowerment for families. Despite the cessation of funding of the Parent Support and Development project and Caryll, the Head Teacher, accepting a secondment to another kindergarten, the kindergarten has remained a pivotal part of the community and continues to provide a range of supports for families to realise their aspirations.

Implications for policy and practice of Component 5: Location of early childhood services.

Another affordance that is less evident from the data presented from teachers and families but relates to being embedded in the community, is the location of the kindergarten. The history of the kindergarten movement has been to establish kindergartens within ‘pram-pushing’ distance of family residences responding to the premise of traditional views of mothers as housewives and caregivers of young children, and the one-vehicle households of the 1950-60s. In the 21st century this kindergarten establishment policy still has a direct impact on the accessibility of early childhood education for those families in communities where there is no public transport and access to private vehicles is restricted. As the census statistics show, Taitoko Kindergarten is such a community and it was the location of the kindergarten in the community, adjacent to the school, that was a positive accessibility affordance.

A further implicit implication of early childhood services located in communities is the potential for the service to develop a sense of community and become a hub for families. The use of Taitoko Kindergarten by other services and the sense of ‘ownership’ by families of the kindergarten provided opportunities for strong affordance networks and reduced social isolation. The market approach to the provision of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand has led to services being built in all manner of places and often in areas of commercial or industrial activities. Families can find it difficult to access services in such areas and there is a sense of dislocation from their community giving less opportunities for families to build strong networks. To capitalise on the potential of early childhood services to provide multiple affordances for families, the location of the service is significant.

One of the risk factors associated with ‘vulnerability’ is social isolation. Locating an early childhood centre in a neighbourhood that is within ‘pram-pushing’ distance can provide opportunities for social isolation to be reduced. For new families moving into a neighbourhood, easy access to an early childhood centre could be a key affordance for establishing friendships and social networks.

Combining the early childhood centre with a range of other services would also provide opportunities for ensuring the wellbeing of families.

Component 6. Strong, trusting relationships.

Relationships have been a significant feature of the affordance provision at Taitoko Kindergarten. The relationships built between teachers and families have had a strong element of trust and respect while families have strengthened relationships with one another to form robust affordance networks. It was clear from the families' stories that relationships were a key to the realisation of their aspirations.

Implications for policy and practice of Component 6: On-going professional learning opportunities.

As highlighted under the policy and practice implications for Component 3, teachers need to be well supported with opportunities to reflect on their practice. The resourcing of teachers' working conditions that support opportunities for professional conversations and adequate child: adult ratios to enable teachers and families to build strong relationships is imperative for successful integrated early years services. The concept of '*yarnin*' (Imtoul et al., 2009) or '*yacking*' (Duncan et al., 2006) can only be encouraged and facilitated with conducive working conditions.

Component 7. Culturally responsive and sensitive staff.

The interviews with the family participants (Chapters 7, 8 & 9) provided clear evidence of the culturally responsive and sensitive staff at Taitoko Kindergarten. The most significant factor is the fact that the teaching staff, over the past 10 years have been predominately Pākehā middle class women. It is unlikely that the kindergarten would have experienced the success it did if the teachers had insisted on reproducing the norms, rituals and expectations of the dominant culture in a community where that culture was a minority.

Implications for policy and practice of Component 7: Reflecting the diversity of communities.

As with Components 3 and 6, developing culturally responsive and sensitive staff requires opportunities for on-going learning. The employment of a diverse range of staff is another key factor in building the capacity of a culturally responsive teaching team. Employing kaimahi can also contribute to the provision of culturally responsive centres. This issue of culturally responsive early childhood centres can be a barrier to participation by Māori and Pasifika children and families. An evaluation of the government's Participation strategy (Mitchell et al, 2014) and research about the requirement by recipients of the unemployment benefit or sole parent benefit (Randall, 2015) to enrol children in early childhood centres both identified a lack of culturally appropriate centres as a significant barrier for Māori and Pasifika families. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Sheffield Children's Centre (Broadhead et al., 2008) demonstrates the benefits of employing a diverse range of people to reflect the community demographics.

Policies that encourage multiple and well-supported pathways for individuals from a range of ethnicities to obtain teaching qualifications or qualifications that could support integrated early years services need to be implemented. The fact that Taitoko Kindergarten has supported Tongan, Samoan and Māori parents to gain a teaching qualification validates the importance of supporting diverse employment pathways.

Component 8. Qualified, professional staff.

A significant feature of the kindergarten environment that impacts on the 'success' of families being involved in the life of the kindergarten and encouraged to take on roles or be supported in the realisation of their aspirations is the commitment to employing qualified teachers. The professional skills, knowledge and attitudes of qualified teachers enables them to recognise and respond to the learning and teaching of children in relation to the place of families in children's lives. Qualified teachers have social capital in the field of education and can use this capital to mediate for families. Teachers are more likely to recognise

affordances within the field and provide opportunities for strengthening the level of the affordance.

The teachers in this study played a critical role in the transformation of the kindergarten and the empowering of the community thus giving weight to the argument that early childhood services benefit from having 100% qualified staff. The long history of the structure of kindergartens and qualifications of teachers has been significant in shaping the early childhood education landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand with many families attesting to the role kindergarten has played in strengthening their affordance networks. The commitment of the kindergarten association to continue to only employ qualified teachers regardless of regulations (that only funds up to 80% qualified and only requires 50% of teachers in an early childhood centre to be qualified) has positive benefits.

Implications for policy and practice of Component 8: The significance of qualified teachers.

The vexed question about evidence to support the requirement for 100% qualified teachers in early childhood services rests in macrosystem level values about young children and their families. Again this issue is complex and multi-faceted with regards to levels and quality of qualification; inherent, resistant beliefs and attitudes of individual teachers; and the status of early childhood education. The ignoring or dodging of the issue of teacher qualifications by governments because of this complexity reveals the extent of the commitment of macrosystem level ideologies with regards to young children and families.

Component 9. Flexible, adaptable approach.

This component is possibly the least evident in this study, or if evident, is certainly not highlighted in any of the data analysis. However it is hard to imagine that rigidity or strict adherence to rules, regulations and processes would have enabled the successful provision of affordances for families to the degree that is evidenced. During my visits to the kindergarten there were a number of occasions when new families were given spaces for their children to attend through a flexible and open approach to enrolment. Establishing and maintaining a culture

of shared decision-making requires flexibility and adaptability. The response of the teachers to ideas from families about initiatives such as coffee/playgroup demonstrates a willingness to be adaptable.

Implications for policy and practice of Component 9: Opportunities to be responsive.

For teachers to have the ability to be responsive to supporting families, funding regulations that are linked to enrolment and child: adult ratios need to be flexible. Being constrained by prescriptive and restrictive rules and regulations hinders the implementation of practices that involve shared decision-making and supporting both immediate and long-term needs of families.

Component 10. Robust, formative, evaluative processes.

The expectations of the teaching profession and the Kindergarten Association leadership for teachers to regularly engage in professional discussions about their practice, the self-review and appraisal structures of early childhood education and the mentoring by the Senior Teacher all contributed to on-going reflective, reflexive and evaluative teaching practices at Taitoko Kindergarten. Regular staff and community agency meetings enabled the teachers to discuss processes and practices and their many informal conversations with families provided opportunities to find out what was working or what needed attention and resourcing. The Kindergarten committee was another avenue for receiving feedback and ideas in relation to initiatives.

Implications for policy and practice of Component 10: Supporting evaluative practices.

This component also requires working conditions that enable teachers and other professionals involved with families to engage in reflective discussions, self-review and researching practice. The unique context of local communities necessitates professionals to be able to gather evidence and information to evaluate their policies and practices to ensure services provide the appropriate range of affordances for families. This evaluating can only be done with support and conditions that promote opportunities for such processes.

Summary of the ten components.

The ten components of effective early years services introduced in Chapter 4, correlate with many aspects of the provision of services at Taitoko Kindergarten and the accessibility of the kindergarten to families. Therefore it can be concluded that the kindergarten is well along a continuum of effective integrated early years service provision. In conjunction with these components and the evidence from Taitoko Kindergarten, implications for policy and practice have been outlined to reinforce the significance of effective integrated services as sites for adult transformation. The final chapter discusses the role of habitus in this transformation.

Chapter 11.

Early childhood education as a transformational field

This thesis has offered an exploration of Bourdieu's thinking tools and his logic of practice with a particular emphasis on the transformative characteristics of habitus. Parallels have been drawn between Bourdieu's logic of practice components and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to explain how the odds get stacked against individuals and groups and what can contribute to the odds being changed and improved.

Early childhood education as a transformational field: The role of habitus

Leadership habitus: Committed to fighting the odds.

Habitus has been a feature in this thesis. It has been used as a tool to examine the interactions between the individual and the social world and to develop an understanding about an individual's responses to events and circumstances. In many respects habitus is the most illusive and intangible of the factors that have contributed to the story of Taitoko Kindergarten and yet it is also a fundamental factor in understanding how the odds were evened for the kindergarten. It is the relationship between habitus, capital and field that illuminates the why and how of people's actions and decisions.

Exploring the habitus of the leadership involved in the transformation of Taitoko Kindergarten has provided some insight into the decision-making about and vision for the kindergarten community. It cannot be denied that in the first instance Mandy's commitment to social justice and her collective and individual habitus structured over time and circumstance ensured that Taitoko Kindergarten was given a 'second chance'. Coupled with Mandy's social justice commitment and her view that the kindergarten was serving the needs of a group of mothers

were the core values of the kindergarten movement in general and this Kindergarten Association more specifically. Both of these factors – a habitus steeped in social justice and the altruistic values of an organisation based on improving lives – provided a vehicle for supporting a failing kindergarten rather than follow the practices of capitalist ideology of closing the loss-making components of an organisation.

A strong belief in empowering others and providing individuals with opportunities has been evident in the *modus operandi* of both Mandy and Caryll. Caryll's leadership of the kindergarten demonstrated dispositions and ways of being that valued the contributions of others and ensured families had opportunities to engage in the life of the kindergarten. Caryll's leadership included mentoring of both families and teachers. This mentoring culminated in the replicating of affordances in other contexts by the family participants and Tania's confidence in taking over the leadership of the kindergarten.

Mandy, Caryll and Tania all possessed substantial amounts of social capital within the field of early childhood education and more specifically the kindergarten. This capital was used to manipulate and strategise in favour of Taitoko Kindergarten and the fight against the odds so that families could increase their social capital and have the opportunity to be successful in their chosen fields. Bourdieu ascertained that interactions between individuals in a field were generally about domination and tussles for positions with regard to social, cultural and economic capital (1972/1977). I would assert that individuals with a commitment to social justice are less concerned with 'bettering' their position in a field and more concerned with giving others opportunities by levelling the playing field. There is little evidence in the accounts of Mandy, Caryll and Tania that their primary focus was to enhance their standing or position in the field of early childhood education.

Identifying the characteristics of the habitus of those responsible for decision-making at Taitoko Kindergarten has implications for future initiatives aimed at addressing issues to do with 'vulnerability'. Having leadership that is: committed

to social justice; has a high degree of social capital in a field; has an ability to recognise an individuals' strengths; and is able to support and sustain change, are all key attributes that have been evident in the practices of the leadership associated with Taitoko Kindergarten. These attributes have enabled the utilisation and provision of affordances that have contributed to, in some instances, transforming habitus and in other instances, assisted the reproduction of aspects of individual habitus.

The kindergarten as a habitus 'interrupter': Entering a new field.

Habitus has also been a useful thinking tool for developing an understanding of the 'family participants' actions' and engagement with the kindergarten. The stories of the seven family participants have demonstrated the impact of habitus on practice in relation to awareness of early childhood education as an affordance. Further exploring the families' habitus has revealed ways in which affordances can be offered and taken up by individuals and how affordances might be recognised and utilised by individuals. The seven family participants and their stories also provide a further test against the deterministic shortcomings of Bourdieu's notion of habitus.

Using a framework suggested by Yang (2014), outlining Bourdieusian concepts that provide conditions enabling the transformation of habitus, the following section analyses the participants' trajectories to further explore these conditions for transformation. Yang suggests the presence of four conditions to enable habitus to transform and individuals to take on new trajectories. These conditions are: a mismatch between habitus and field; explicit pedagogy; reflexivity; and an open system. The final chapter of this thesis uses these four conditions as a summarising framework.

A mismatch between habitus and field: Encountering different ways.

Bourdieu viewed the movement of individuals from a social field outside their class trajectory to another as an "interrupted trajectory". According to Bourdieu this interruption generally occurs when habitus and field are mismatched and an individual's consciousness to a new situation is raised. Yang (2014) theorises that

this mismatch between habitus and field provides a condition for change. When an individual moves into a field that is outside of their social trajectory then a habitus mismatch occurs between the primary habitus of the individual and the habitus of the field. An individual becomes aware of their implicit primary habitus in relation to the new habitus and begins to take on the habitus of the new field. This transformation can take time, dependent on the degree of mismatch between habitus and field and the ability of the individual to process and reflect on their experiences of the differences in practices and expectations. If the individual is supported to understand the norms and appropriate behaviours of the new field then they will adapt more quickly.

All of the seven family participants experienced, to some degree, a mismatch between their habitus and the field of early childhood education. The mismatch occurred either through lack of encounter with or knowledge about the field of early childhood or there was a mismatch between the families' experience or expectations of early childhood and then what they encountered when they began attending kindergarten. In Chapter 7 I outlined the families' initial understanding, experience and expectations of early childhood education. Carmella and Jashana had no expectations or experience of early childhood education while Joh, Ricky and Kirstie all saw kindergarten as providing a child-minding/babysitting role. Furthermore Makeleta and Mase's expectations of early childhood education were different to what they encountered at kindergarten.

I would argue that it was the "hospitality of visitation" (Derrida, 2003, p. 129), the unconditional acceptance of families by the teachers and the provision of affordances that minimised the mismatch between habitus and field for these families, enabling a smoother transition into the new field of early childhood education. Families quickly adapted and found it to be a place where their contribution was valued. The minimisation of the habitus/field mismatch assisted the individual's transformation, interrupted their trajectories and enabled them to find new possibilities for the future. The ability of individuals to strengthen their affordance networks also contributed to their adaption to a new field, as did the 'nudging' and encouragement by Caryll.

Developing a secondary habitus.

The second condition that Yang suggests needs to be present for change is “explicit pedagogy” or “methodical inculcation” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1977, p.47). Bourdieu suggests that in certain circumstances habitus can be acquired through “methodical inculcation” or “explicit pedagogy” rather than an individual being stuck with his/her implicitly structured habitus from early familial socialisation (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1977, p. 47). However, Bourdieu regards this method of acquisition as less durable than habitus acquired ‘legitimately’ through early socialisation and familiarisation. Nevertheless, Yang (2014) contends that explicit pedagogy is necessary for transformation through the acquisition of skills, knowledge and dispositions required by a new habitus in a new field. Explicit pedagogy can assist individuals’ awareness of the resources available to them as they learn the ‘ropes’ of a new field and provide opportunities for reflection. Taking on a new habitus requires the individual to reflect on the rituals, dispositions and expectations of their primary habitus in relation to the secondary habitus: explicit pedagogy can provide opportunities for that reflection.

In the case of the family participants at Taitoko Kindergarten, the teachers provided explicit pedagogy by encouraging families to take on roles and raising their awareness of and ability to utilise resources to strengthen their affordance networks. The teachers also helped families develop an understanding of the field of early childhood education. ‘Hanging about’ at kindergarten provided less formal opportunities for implicit pedagogy as families observed the teachers and their interactions with one another and other families. These informal opportunities acted as more ‘traditional modes’ of the development of habitus and strengthened its acquisition (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1977, p.47).

Reflexivity and an open system

Yang’s third condition for change in relation to the relatively deterministic nature of habitus is reflexivity (2014). Bourdieu spent a great deal of time discussing reflexivity in relation to social scientists and sociological researchers and their

ability to maintain distance from their subjects to provide objectivity (Bourdieu, 2004). However Yang maintains that individuals exercise reflexivity as they contemplate their place in the social world and when encountering a new field rationalise their desire or non-desire to engage with that field. Yang (2014) also argues that an individual's reflexivity is closely related to the fourth condition contributing to change: an open system. This open system is a product of the modern world where cultures and traditions are being redefined and people are more easily moving between fields. She suggests:

... the inherent social fields in which we are involved with today have changed. The defining capital and rules arising from the same given field may be radically different from those of a decade ago and, as a result those who used to be inherently disadvantaged in a particular field may be able to enter it and succeed (2014, p. 1535).

This open system encourages reflexivity as, thanks to technology, people are exposed to copious amounts of information about the world and how other people live. Theoretically individuals can make and evaluate their decisions about any number of issues or possibilities while changing their perspectives as they become aware of different ways of thinking.

However, it could be argued that the families at Taitoko Kindergarten experienced little of the advantages of an open system. The labelling of the community as vulnerable and the evident, inherent stereotypic and even racist constructions of Māori and Pasifika populations suggests that a limited number of possibilities were achievable for families in such a community. It may be that there were a range of possibilities available to the families but as the discussion about recognising and having the ability to utilise affordances, the primary habitus of the families restricted the take-up of these possibilities. Recognising and utilising affordances required mediation from persons with greater social capital in a field where families entered either through chance or design. The presence of a person such as Caryll, in the community, assisted families to navigate the 'system' of early childhood education. For Carmella, Kirstie, Ricky and Joh, receiving 'invitations' to attend kindergarten required them to exercise some reflexivity as

they contemplated accepting those ‘invitations’ and the impact of this on their social world.

Yang (2014) suggests that modern technology enables people to easily access information from across the globe, which opens up possibilities for people. Both the 2006 and 2013 national Aotearoa New Zealand census statistics indicate that the community of Taitoko Kindergarten had significantly less access to the internet and cell phones than other communities in the district and in Aotearoa New Zealand in general. In 2013 only 47.5% of the Levin South area had access to the internet in comparison to 64.7% for the Horowhenua District and 76.8% across the country. Another factor for communities in being able to take advantage of possibilities and enter new fields is the availability of transport. The lack of public transport in Levin and the fact that only 4.5% of families in Levin South have access to three or more vehicles in comparison to 12.3% in the wider region points to another disadvantage for the Taitoko Kindergarten community.

Despite these disadvantages the seven families in this study have had success in realising their aspirations and they have modified or transformed their primary habitus. Five of the family participants have succeeded in the field of higher education; this was a field where they had previously had little success and could be argued were inherently disadvantaged due to the education system catering largely for those of the dominant culture. The seven family participants all engaged in reflexive dialogue about their lives, and considered their interactions in relation to their social worlds.

This reflexivity was provided not by an open system but a kindergarten that afforded opportunities to develop a secondary habitus and although the macro and exosystem level values, ideologies, conditions and practices may have remained similar over the 10 year period of Taitoko Kindergarten’s transformation, the mesosystem affordances provided by the kindergarten have strengthened their microsystems. It enabled them to raise their consciousness and begin to see new possibilities. For some of the participants the residue of the primary habitus or what Bourdieu defines as the ‘inertia’ of a habitus hindered the transformation

(1987/1990) as in the case of Kirstie. Kirstie said ‘I could never study’ but then went on to successfully engage in tertiary education. Her previous experiences with education and a familial habitus that had no educational expectations continued to impact on her ability to see different possibilities despite seeing others around her succeed in their new endeavours.

Conclusion: Community-based early childhood services as great places for adults.

This story of the transformation of Taitoko Kindergarten has highlighted the potential of community based and located early childhood centres to provide multiple affordances for families to realise their aspirations. The leadership, committed to social justice, transformed the odds for the families, and the key aspects of this transformation at the mesosystem (kindergarten and community) level were analysed and illustrated in ten components developed for this thesis from the literature. The thesis has argued that this shift in the odds at this level enabled a shift in *habitus* (a key construct in Bourdieu’s analysis of aspirations over time) for the seven case study family participants. Their trajectories of change were documented in interviews and illustrated in diagram form.

Four levels of strength of affordance for the seven families provided an analytical framework that attested to and evaluated the significance of early childhood education in providing opportunities for transforming trajectories for adults. The levels of strength of affordance are particularly pertinent for communities where society’s ideologies have worked to disadvantage specific groups. Policy decisions that support the provision and replication of the multiple affordances identified in this study were exemplified in the stories of the participants, and the findings questioned definitions of vulnerability at policy level.

The benefits of involvement with the kindergarten for the family participants have been immeasurable, and their stories emphasise the importance of a strengths-based approach to assisting individuals to develop sets of capacities for action and enhance their social and cultural capital. At the outset, this thesis, suggested that

being involved in early childhood education was empowering for adults. The participants' stories and the theoretical framing presented throughout the remainder of the thesis have supported and illustrated the argument that early childhood services are not just good for children. They are great places for adults as well.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Information letter for General Manager of Kindergarten Association

Amanda Coulston
General Manager
Wellington Region Free Kindergarten Association
P.O. Box 51-143
TAWA

Tena koe Mandy,

As you know I am embarking on my Ph.D and I am very fortunate to have two of our esteemed friends as my supervisors, Margaret Carr and Linda Mitchell.

You and I have had many informal conversations about further research at Taitoko Kindergarten and so you are aware that I am wanting to involve you as a participant and Taitoko Kindergarten as a research site.

The title of my research is “*Fighting the odds to make it even: mapping an affordance ecosystem in a kindergarten community*” and my research question is ‘In what ways over time can structure, culture and agency become aligned and interconnected in order to construct an empowering educational community?’ I am interested in exploring what have been the turn-around moments for Taitoko Kindergarten in the past ten years and to identify any affordances that have empowered families attending the kindergarten. You as General Manager of the Association play an integral part in the policy setting and decision making for Taitoko Kindergarten hence I would like you to be a research participant.

In accordance with the University of Waikato Ethical Guidelines for Research with Human Subjects I am seeking your consent for two aspects of my research:

- 1) To interview (audio-taped) you on two occasions, first at the beginning of my research (early 2012) and then again nearer the end of the study

(approx mid 2013). I envisage these interviews taking around 1.5 hours each. The interview can take place at a venue and time suitable to you. I would also be asking you to check the transcript of the interview and make any necessary amendments. This is likely to take approximately half an hour per interview. There may also be some documentation such as policy statements that you and I decide need to be viewed and/or copied.

- 2) To use Taitoko Kindergarten as a research site. This would involve interviewing Caryll Resink, Michelle Anderson, Tania Jack and Daveida Putu on two separate occasions. As you are also aware I have maintained contact with these teachers since our TLRI finished and have had conversations with them about doing further research. They have indicated their willingness to be involved and to have me spend time at the kindergarten. I would like to know I have your support to be able to spend time at Taitoko Kindergarten in term 1 of 2012 to establish myself as a familiar presence.
- 3) I would also be working with the teaching team, including kaimahi, to recruit up to five families as research participants. The families would be interviewed up to 3 occasions during the study.

If you are willing to be involved in my research and for me to work at Taitoko Kindergarten can you please sign the attached consent form.

This study has, of course, been approved by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you want any further information or clarification.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Ngā mihi,

Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips.

Appendix B: General Manager Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

General Manager Wellington Region Free Kindergarten Association

Title of research: *Fighting the odds to make it even: mapping an affordance ecosystem in a kindergarten community.*

I.....(General Manager Wellington Region Free Kindergarten Association) give consent for the following:

- 1) To be interviewed (audio-recorded) by Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips for approximately 1.5 hours on two occasions at a time and place suitable to me. One interview will be some time in early 2012 and the other around mid 2013.
- 2) I give permission for Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips to approach the teachers, families and children at Taitoko Kindergarten with a view to having them participate in her Ph.D study knowing that Jeanette will conduct this research ethically and collaboratively with the Taitoko Kindergarten community.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the research after the transcript checking of the first interview. To withdraw I need to contact Jeanette.

I understand that I will receive a copy of interview transcripts for checking and amending.

I understand that all data gathered will be securely stored at the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato and destroyed after 5 years.

I understand that the research may be used for the writing of Jeanette's Ph.D and other related academic articles and presentations and that the thesis will be widely

available as a digital copy is permanently lodged in the University of Waikato’s digital repository: Research Commons.

I understand that I can request to meet with Jeanette at any time to be informed about the progress of the research and that I will receive a copy of the final research report.

I understand that if I have any concerns, issues or complaints about the research I can contact Jeanette’s supervisors, Professor Margaret Carr (margcarr@waikato.ac.nz ph 07 8384466 extn 7854) and Associate Professor Linda Mitchell (linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz ph 07 8384466 extn7734).

Signed.....

Pseudonym.....

Appendix C: Information letter for Head teacher and teachers at Taitoko Kindergarten

Caryll Resink

Michelle Anderson

Tania Jack

Taitoko Kindergarten

36 Kinross St

LEVIN

Tena koutou,

As you know from the conversations we have had over the past year, I am embarking on my Ph.D and would like you to be involved in the research. The title of my Ph.D is “*Fighting the odds to make it even: mapping an affordance ecosystem in a kindergarten community*”.” and my research question is ‘In what ways over time can structure, culture and agency become aligned and interconnected in order to construct an empowering educational community?’ My supervisors are Margaret Carr and Linda Mitchell and the study has been approved by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee.

I am interested in exploring what have been the turn-around moments for Taitoko Kindergarten in the past ten years and to identify any affordances that have empowered families attending the kindergarten. You, as teachers, have been integral to many of the initiatives that have occurred at the kindergarten and have a first hand knowledge of the impact of these initiatives. I have been in correspondence with Mandy and she is happy for me to involve Taitoko Kindergarten in my research.

I would like to interview (audio-record) you about some of the changes that have occurred at Taitoko Kindergarten while you have been teaching there. I would envisage interviewing you at least twice during the study: at the beginning (early 2012) and again approximately a year later and then towards the middle of 2013. The interviews would take about 1.5 hours each time and then I would need

you to check the transcript and make any necessary amendments- this would take approximately half an hour per interview. The interviews would be conducted at a time and place suitable to you.

I am also interested in recruiting approximately five families to be involved in the study and need your willingness to help me in the recruitment process. In order to build relationships with the families and community I am hoping to be able to spend time at the kindergarten in the first term of 2012 establishing myself as a familiar presence, if this is acceptable to you. I would like to work with you to decide how to best organise the time I have available to me to do this. In recruiting the families I would need to discuss the best way of sharing information about the study with them and would need your help in facilitating this. I realise that this is a call on your busy time but also acknowledge the strong relationships you have with families and that they are likely to feel comfortable asking you questions of clarification etc than me. I would envisage that we would also be involving Daveida and Rasella in this initial recruitment process.

If you are happy to be involved in my study can you please sign the attached consent form.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Ngā mihi,

Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips

Appendix D: Head teacher consent form

CONSENT FORM

Head Teacher

Taitoko Kindergarten

Title of research: *Fighting the odds to make it even: mapping an affordance ecosystem in a kindergarten community.*

I.....(Head Teacher, Taitoko Kindergarten) give consent for the following:

- 1) To be interviewed (audio-recorded) by Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips for approximately 1.5 hours on three occasions at a time and place suitable to me. One interview will be some time in early 2012 and the other near the end of 2012 and the third around mid 2013.
- 2) To have Jeanette as a frequent visitor to the kindergarten in order to build relationships with the family and community.
- 3) To assist Jeanette in recruiting families for the study by attending an information meeting and facilitating the sharing of information with families.
- 4) To provide copies of any documents that we feel are appropriate and relevant to the research.

I have been given all the information I require about the research and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that Jeanette will do her utmost to maintain confidentiality and anonymity where required and that I can choose a pseudonym.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the research after the transcript checking of the first interview. To withdraw I need to contact Jeanette.

I understand that I will receive a copy of interview transcripts for checking and amending.

I understand that all data gathered will be securely stored at the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato and destroyed after 5 years.

I understand that the research may be used for the writing of Jeanette's Ph.D and other related academic articles and presentations and that it will be widely available as a digital copy is permanently lodged in the University of Waikato's digital repository: Research Commons.

I understand that I can request to meet with Jeanette at any time to be informed about the progress of the research and that I will receive a copy of the final research report.

I understand that if I have any concerns, issues or complaints about the research I can contact Jeanette's supervisors, Professor Margaret Carr (margcarr@waikato.ac.nz) and Associate Professor Linda Mitchell (linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz).

Signed.....

Pseudonym.....

Appendix E: Teacher consent form

CONSENT FORM

Teacher

Taitoko Kindergarten

Title of research: *Fighting the odds to make it even: mapping an affordance ecosystem in a kindergarten community.*

I.....(Teacher, Taitoko Kindergarten) give consent for the following:

- 1) To be interviewed (audio-recorded) by Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips for approximately 1.5 hours on three occasions at a time and place suitable to me. One interview will be some time in early 2012 and the other near the end of 2012 and the third around mid 2013.
- 2) To have Jeanette as a frequent visitor to the kindergarten in order to build relationships with the family and community.
- 3) To assist Jeanette in recruiting families for the study by attending an information meeting and facilitating the sharing of information with families.

I have been given all the information I require about the research and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that Jeanette will do her utmost to maintain confidentiality and anonymity where required and that I can choose a pseudonym.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the research after the transcript checking of the first interview. To withdraw I need to contact Jeanette.

I understand that I will receive a copy of interview transcripts for checking and amending.

I understand that if Jeanette and I have informal conversations and I say something that she thinks could be significant for the research she will check with me about using my comments as part of her data.

I understand that all data gathered will be securely stored at the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato and destroyed after 5 years.

I understand that the research may be used for the writing of Jeanette's Ph.D and other related academic articles and presentations and that the thesis will be widely available as a digital copy is permanently lodged in the University of Waikato's digital repository: Research Commons.

I understand that I can request to meet with Jeanette at any time to be informed about the progress of the research and that I will receive a copy of the final research report.

I understand that if I have any concerns, issues or complaints about the research I can contact Jeanette's supervisors, Professor Margaret Carr and Associate Professor Linda Mitchell. Their details are below.

Signed.....

Pseudonym.....

Supervisor Contact details.

Professor Margaret Carr Faculty of Education University of Waikato Private Bag 3105 Hamilton 3240 Ph 07 8384466 ext 7854 Email: margcarr@waikato.ac.nz	Associate Professor Linda Mitchell Faculty of Education University of Waikato Private Bag 3105 Hamilton 3240 Ph 07 8384466 ext 7734 Email: linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz
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Appendix F: Head teacher questions

Indicative Questions for Head teacher Taitoko Kindergarten

Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips

Ph.D research

Topic: *Fighting the odds to make it even; mapping an affordance ecosystem in a kindergarten community.*

1. How long have you been at Taitoko Kindergarten?
2. Do you live in Levin? If so, how long have you lived here?
3. What was the kindergarten like when you first arrived? What were child enrolments like- ethnicity attendance, roll numbers, turn over of children, ethnicity, sessions, staffing, what was typical day like?
4. How were parents/whānau and community engaged in the kindergarten? Which parents?
 - In children's learning?
 - What connections were being made with home?
 - What connections were being made with iwi/social services/health services?
 - What is the kindergarten like now?
5. What have been the events, issues, policies etc that have impacted on the kindergarten and contributed to its present state? How have they contributed/impacted?
6. Taitoko Kindergarten community has been called a 'vulnerable community'. How do you react/what do you think about that label? How would **you** describe Taitoko Kindergarten community?

7. How would you describe your “philosophy” beliefs as a teacher/what you believe in? How do you see your beliefs reflected in the kindergarten?

8. Are there any ideas or people who have influenced your philosophy? explain/talk about that.

9. What is your vision for the kindergarten?

10. Does the kindergarten have a shared philosophy/vision? If so how has this been developed? How does this philosophy/vision effect decision making

11. How would you describe your way of working with families and community organisations now?

-----How do you find out about families knowledge about their child/ren?

-----How do you include families in the curriculum? How do you find out about children’s wider lives?

-----How has your work with families changed since you have been at the kindergarten?

-----What do you think has attributed to these changes?

11. What dilemmas do you face in working with families? (describe and explain how you address these).

What was good and bad about the PS&D project? Do you have copies of the evaluations etc?

12. How do you think the kindergarten is perceived amongst the community?

13. How are families engaged in their child/ren’s learning? Looking back has this changed over time- in what ways?

14. Home visiting? JR McKenzie Trust. What community things are you involved in?

15. Tell me about the oral hygiene initiative.

Age bracket

Ethnicity

Educational qualifications

Years of teaching experience

Other work experiences (What?/ how long?)

Current study

Current professional development

Fulltime/part time employment

Appendix G: Teacher questions.

Indicative Questions for Taitoko Kindergarten teachers

Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips

Ph.D research

Topic: *Fighting the odds to make it even; mapping an affordance ecosystem in a kindergarten community.*

1. How long have you been at Taitoko Kindergarten?
2. Do you live in Levin? If so, how long?
3. What was the kindergarten like when you first arrived? What were child enrolments like- attendance, roll numbers, turn over of children, ethnicity, sessions, staffing, what was typical day like?
4. How were parents/whānau and community engaged in the kindergarten? Which parents?
 - In children's learning?
 - What connections were being made with home?
 - What connections were being made with iwi/social services/health services?What is the kindergarten like now?
5. What have been the events, issues, policies etc that have impacted on the kindergarten and contributed to its present state? In what ways have they contributed/impacted?
6. Taitoko Kindergarten community has been called a 'vulnerable community'. How do you react/what do you think about that label? How would **you** describe Taitoko Kindergarten community?

7. How would you describe your “philosophy” beliefs as a teacher/what you believe in? How do you see your beliefs reflected in the kindergarten?

8. Are there any ideas or people who have influenced your philosophy? explain/talk about that.

9. How would you describe your way of working with families and community organisations now?

-----How do you find out about families knowledge about their child/ren, what families do at home or what their strengths are?

-----How do you include families in the curriculum?

-----How has your work with families changed since you have been at the kindergarten?

-----What do you think has attributed to these changes?

10. How are families engaged in their child/ren’s learning? Looking back has this changed over time- in what ways?

11. How do you think the kindergarten is perceived amongst the community?

Age bracket

Ethnicity

Educational qualifications

Years of teaching experience

Other work experiences (What?/ how long?)

Current study

Current professional development

Fulltime/part time employment

Appendix H: Family recruitment flyer

Tena koe,

My name is Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips and you might have seen me around the kindergarten. I have been visiting the kindergarten a bit over the past 18 months.

I am from the University of Waikato in Hamilton and am doing research towards my Ph.D. My Ph.D is entitled "*Fighting the odds to make it even: mapping an affordance ecosystem in a kindergarten community*". This research is about Taitoko Kindergarten and some of its history, particularly since the Whaanau Tangata centre opened.

In 2007-2009 another person from the University of Waikato and I came and did some research when the Whaanau Tangata centre started. It seemed to me that having Taitoko Kindergarten as a Whaanau Tangata centre was useful but I guess I'm interested in hearing from families about how it all works and whether in fact it is useful.

Some families from the kindergarten are part of my research and we have been chatting together about various things. I would be keen to involve some more families in my study and wondered if you would be prepared to be a participant.

If you are prepared to be involved then I can give you more information and answer any questions you have about my research. Tania could also give you some further information.

I would need you to be involved for about 8 months and in that time I would like to chat with you a couple of times- once in November, 2013 and again around May 2014. Our conversations would be audio-taped so I can listen to them later as I am likely to forget all the detail of our conversation. I will give you a copy of the transcript of the audio-tape and you can make any changes you like and let me know if there are any parts you don't want me to use. I will do my utmost to keep your identity confidential and you can choose another name for me to use in my research.

If you think you would like to participate then it would be great if you could let Tania know and she will pass on your details to me. I will make a time to come to the kindergarten and meet you to answer any other questions you might have and to arrange a time when we can chat.

Thank you for considering my request.

Ngaa mihi,

Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips

Appendix I: Family information letter

Tena koe,

Thanks for agreeing to be involved in my Ph.D study, I really appreciate it.

As I said in our earlier conversations it would be great if you can be involved for about 18 months and I would like to be able to talk to you (and audio-record this conversation) about three times between February 2013 and February 2014. We would have these conversations at a place and time that suited you.

After our conversations I would have the interview transcribed so that you can look at what you said and tell me what parts I can use in the study and what parts you want me to delete.

I will do my absolute best to ensure your identity is not known. Whenever I might use information I have got from you in either my PH.D thesis or any other academic writing or conference presentations I will use the name you have chosen as a pseudonym.

It would also be helpful if I were able to have copies of Learning Stories or things from your child's kindergarten portfolio that might help with my research. I will check with your child and you before I take any copies and you or your child can tell me not to take copies if you don't want me to.

If you do want to stop being involved with my study then that is fine. All you need to do to stop being involved is tell myself or Tania. It would be really helpful if you could be part of the study until after I had talked to you the first time.

You can contact me if you need further information at any time or if you aren't happy with me then you can contact my supervisors at the University of Waikato. Their names are: Margaret Carr & Linda Mitchell. Caryll, Michelle and Tania know them well so they could help you contact them if you needed to.

The University of Waikato has approved this study and said I can go ahead and do my research.

I would be very appreciative if you could sign the attached consent form.

Thanks again for being willing to help me with my study and I am looking forward to working with the Taitoko Kindergarten community again.

Ngā mihi,

Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips

Appendix J: Family consent form

CONSENT FORM

Families

Taitoko Kindergarten

Title of research: *Fighting the odds to make it even: mapping an affordance ecosystem in a kindergarten community.*

I..... give consent for the following:

- 1) To be interviewed (audio-recorded) by Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips for approximately 1.5 hours on three occasions at a time and place suitable to me. One interview will be some time in February 2013, one around the end of 2013 and the other at the beginning of 2014.
- 2) To let Jeanette have copies of my child's Learning Stories (if my child says that is ok) and other documentation from their kindergarten portfolio

I have been given all the information I require about the research and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that Jeanette will do her best to keep my identity and my families identity confidential. We can choose pseudonyms.

I understand I can stop being involved any time after I have checked the first interview. To withdraw I need to contact Jeanette or I can tell Tania.

I understand that I will receive a copy of interview transcripts for checking and amending.

I understand that if Jeanette and I have informal conversations and I say something that she thinks could be significant for the research she will check with me about using my comments as part of her data.

I understand that all data gathered will be securely stored at the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato and destroyed after 5 years.

I understand that the research may be used for the writing of Jeanette's Ph.D and other related academic articles and presentations and that the thesis will be widely available as a digital copy is permanently lodged in the University of Waikato's digital repository: Research Commons.

I understand that I can request to meet with Jeanette at any time to be informed about the progress of the research and that I will receive a copy of the final research report.

I understand that if I have any concerns, issues or complaints about the research I can contact Jeanette's supervisors, Professor Margaret Carr and Associate Professor Linda Mitchell. Their details are below.

Signed.....

Pseudonym.....

Supervisor Contact details.

Professor Margaret Carr Wilf Malcolm Institute for Educational Research Faculty of Education University of Waikato Private Bag 3105 Hamilton 3240 Ph 07 8384466 ext 7854 Email: margcarr@waikato.ac.nz	Associate Professor Linda Mitchell Department of Professional Studies in Education Faculty of Education University of Waikato Private Bag 3105 Hamilton 3240 Ph 07 8384466 ext 7734 Email: linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz
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Appendix K: Family questions

Indicative questions for initial family interviews

Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips
Ph.D research

Topic: *Fighting the odds to make it even; mapping an affordance ecosystem in a kindergarten community.*

The demographic details I will get during the course of the interview. I will not be starting with these questions.

Age bracket.	Gender	F/M/other
15-20		
20-25		
25-30		
30-35		
35-40		
40-45		
45-50		
50-55		
55-60		
60-65		
65-70		
70+		

Ethnicity

Family make-up

Illustrate your hopes and dreams for yourself and your family.

Appendix L: Kaimahi information letter

Daveida Putu
Taitoko Kindergarten
36 Kinross St
LEVIN

Tena koe Daveida,

Caryll has probably told you about my interest in doing further research at Taitoko Kindergarten around the Whānau Tangata centre. I am embarking on the long journey of a Ph.D and the topic of my study is: *'Fighting the odds to make it even: mapping an affordance ecosystem in a kindergarten community'*. I am particularly interested in exploring what might be the impacts on families of the initiatives to do with the Whānau Tangata centre.

I would like to interview you because you have been involved as a kaimahi at the kindergarten for some years and have very strong relationships with the community. It seems to me that you would have some ideas about the impacts of the Whānau Tangata centre on the community.

If you are willing to be involved then the interview would take place at a venue and time that suited you. The interview would probably take about 1- 1.5 hours and it would be audio-recorded. The interview would then be transcribed and I would give you a copy of the transcription to read and make any amendments. Your identity would be protected to the best of my ability and I will use a pseudonym of your choosing in any reference I might make to you in any written material to do with the report.

I am hoping to be spending time at Taitoko Kindergarten in late February- early March 2012 so would like to interview you some time during this period. It may be that another interview of a similar length at a later date (around Dec 2013)

might be useful, too. The same procedure of audio-recording and checking of the transcript would apply.

I am also hoping to recruit up to five families to help me with my study and would be grateful for your assistance with this (along with Caryll, Michelle, Tania and Rasella). I am planning on having an informal meeting where anyone who is interested in finding out about the research can come and ask questions. I would like to seek your advice, and that of the teachers, in deciding how to best do this.

I have two supervisors from the University of Waikato for this study, Margaret Carr and Linda Mitchell and the study has been approved by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee.

Attached is a consent form that you would need to sign to indicate you are willing to be involved and understand the reasons for the research.

Thank you for giving this your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Ngā mihi,

Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips

Appendix M: Kaimahi consent form

CONSENT FORM

Kaimahi

Taitoko Kindergarten

Title of research: *Fighting the odds to make it even: mapping an affordance ecosystem in a kindergarten community.*

I.....(Kaimahi, Taitoko Kindergarten) give consent for the following:

- 1) To be interviewed (audio-recorded) by Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips for approximately 1.5 hours at a time and place suitable to me. This interview will be some time in early 2012. If Jeanette needs to interview me again at a later date (around December 2013) then I am willing to do this knowing that the interview will be about 1.5 hours and I will get to amend the transcript.
- 2) To assist Jeanette in recruiting families for the study by attending an information meeting and facilitating the sharing of information with families.

I have been given all the information I require about the research and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that Jeanette will do her utmost to maintain confidentiality and anonymity where required and that I can choose a pseudonym.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the research after the transcript checking of the interview. To withdraw I need to contact Jeanette.

I understand that I will receive a copy of the interview transcript/s for checking and amending.

I understand that if Jeanette and I have informal conversations and I say something that she thinks could be significant for the research she will check with me about using my comments as part of her data.

I understand that all data gathered will be securely stored at the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato and destroyed after 5 years.

I understand that the research may be used for the writing of Jeanette's Ph.D and other related academic articles and presentations and that her thesis will be widely available as a digital copy is permanently lodged in the University of Waikato's digital repository: Research Commons.

I understand that I can request to meet with Jeanette at any time to be informed about the progress of the research and that I will receive a copy of the final research report.

I understand that if I have any concerns, issues or complaints about the research I can contact Jeanette's supervisors, Professor Margaret Carr and Associate Professor Linda Mitchell. Their details are below.

Signed.....

Pseudonym.....

Supervisor Contact details.

Professor Margaret Carr Faculty of Education, University of Waikato Private Bag 3105 Hamilton 3240 Ph 07 8384466 ext 7854 Email: margcarr@waikato.ac.nz	Associate Professor Linda Mitchell Faculty of Education University of Waikato Private Bag 3105 Hamilton 3240 Ph 07 8384466 ext 7734 Email: linda.mitchell@waikato.ac.nz
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Appendix N: Kaimahi questions

Indicative Questions for Kaimahi, Taitoko Kindergarten

Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips

Ph.D research

Topic: *Fighting the odds to make it even; mapping an affordance ecosystem in a kindergarten community.*

How long have you lived in the Taitoko community?

How long have you been a kaimahi at Taitoko Kindergarten?

What changes have you seen at the kindergarten in that time? Attendance, enrolments, family involvement, community perception

What impacts do you think the Whānau Tangata centre has had on the community? How do you know this?

In what ways do you think families have opportunities to learn about what their children are learning?

In what ways do you think that the kindergarten connects with children's lives at home and in the community?

Taitoko Kindergarten community has been called a 'vulnerable community'. How do you react/what do you think about that label? How would **you** describe Taitoko Kindergarten community?

What would you like to be happening in the future at the kindergarten

