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**A DISCURSIVE APPROACH TO
RELATIONSHIP PRACTICES IN
CLASSROOMS**

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

**A Thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree**

**of
Doctor of Philosophy**

**at the
University of Waikato**

by

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Abstract

In today's increasingly diverse classrooms it is well accepted that the relationship practices employed by teachers have consequences for the quality of the learning environment. Well chosen relationship practices are thought not only to help teachers to manage their classes but they can contribute to achieving desired educational outcomes. The principles and processes of restorative practice (RP) are seen by many to offer a significant contribution to relationship practices in schools. One of the challenges of realising this potential is to adapt RP for daily classroom use. However, increasing heterogeneity in the student population makes the classroom a complex environment where teachers and students are likely to operate from a range of paradigms of relationship. This study proposes that a discursive conceptualisation of relational identity supports the development of more equitable relationships. It is argued that this then manifests in greater individual and communal well-being.

The research involved the development of specific conversational moves adapted from narrative therapy, which were taught to 39 teachers in two schools through a series of four workshops. Following the workshops, a series of seven focus group meetings were held in which teachers engaged in a process of guided deconstructive reflection. The study set out to investigate the contributions of both the conversational moves and the reflective group practices to teachers' capacity for relationship management (with both students and adults), teaching, and maintaining their own well-being. The focus groups had a triple function of skill practice, reflection and sharing concerns. The group discussions were audio-taped. Examples given by participants of the effects of using the conversational moves were documented. The teachers' concern narratives were analysed using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis.

The study suggests that the use of both discursive conversation practices and deconstructive reflection increased the participants' capacity for dialogue and tolerating differences. Deconstructive readings of the teachers' concern narratives identified teacher-student conflicts as a product of multiple positionings and confusion about their respective roles.

Deconstructive analysis exposed a range of discourses of care, professionalism, pedagogy and gender as problematic, often placing teachers and students in opposition, and undermining teaching and learning.

These findings suggest that systematic deconstructive reflection can usefully inform teachers' relational strategies in the classroom. It can provide the opportunity for individual teachers to develop an understanding of themselves as teachers, and at the same time it offers useful appreciation of the discursive influences operating in the wider school culture. Some of these discourses deserve critical attention as they are central to the development of teachers' professional identities. This thesis argues that a discursive approach to relationship practice can support the development of teachers' capacity to manage the complexities of their work, and as such it is also restorative practice. This critical theoretical approach offers significant potential for explaining how a collaborative relationship paradigm can be understood, practised, and studied.

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This thesis is the product of many conversations, both exploratory and analytical, with colleagues, friends and family. It has been in the making for much longer than intended as the work of its writing was often hijacked by the mundane but sacred aspects of living: having to work full-time to earn a living and having to attend to my responsibilities of care in my roles as grandmother, and mother in a country where I do not have the support of extended family. I thank my family, my daughters, Judit and Mariska, Judit's partner Pai, their children Daunte and Peyton, who all helped me in different ways through this project. They took over the domestic tasks when I spent my days and weekends sitting at the computer for very long hours. I thank my daughter Mariska for helping me organise references and with the tedious technicalities of editing.

My friends and wonderful colleagues all patiently and kindly nudged me along, inviting me to a dinner or movie, or just contacting me when I needed it. They were all open to listening to my theoretical wonderings at all times. At the beginning of this project I was blessed to be able to have lengthy conversations with my former colleagues and friends at the University of Waikato. Kathie Crocket, Elmarie Kotzé and Kay O'Connor all nourished my passion and made me believe that I have something to contribute in this topic.

My supervisor Roger Moltzen was bravely and kindly prepared to take on this project when several others refused. His calm reassurance and patience taught me a lot about how to accept difference. Wendy Drewery, my chief supervisor, inspired me to learn everything I know about discourses. Without her friendship, collegial and supervisory support, I would not have been able to do this work. Her belief in it could not be unsettled even when I was ready to give up and conclude that my life cannot accommodate academic work. I thank her for providing whatever I needed and whenever I needed it, let it be guidance, advice, support, and very importantly opportunities to laugh at myself, which always proved therapeutic and gave me the impetus that carried me forward.

In the 'gap year' during this project, I went back to work as a full-time school counsellor at Aotea College in Wellington. It is there where I have the privilege and joy of correcting all the mistakes I made in this research. With the support of my colleague, Kathleen Kaveney and my principal Tim Davies-Colley, we have embarked on a three-year restorative practices project funded from the innovations pool of the Ministry of Education.

This thesis also owes its existence to all the students and teachers with whom I have worked during my teaching and counselling career but especially to the research participants. I dedicate it to my parents and grandparents, who have all sadly passed away, my parents especially too soon, who had all taught me so much about discourses and restorative practices at a much earlier time, when I did not even know that they existed.

CHAPTER 1 Positioning the thesis

1.1 Introduction

This study is a combination of a development of a relationship theory and practices, a demonstration of the use of those practices and an exploratory investigation of the potential effects of their take up by teachers. I wish to join the discussion and speak into the research about how diverse school communities can create and maintain the relational resources that are conducive to learning and teaching. I believe with several others (Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001; Cremin, 2007, 2010; Drewery, 2007; Drewery & Winslade, 2005; Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2008; McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead, Kane, Riddell & Weedon, 2008; Morrison, 2002; The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003; Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2007; Wachtel, 2003) that restorative practice (RP) has a significant contribution to make to this project. I will investigate what form this contribution could take and how the principles and processes of RP could inform teachers' relationship practices for the purposes of improving their well-being and creating a learning environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. I propose a discursive approach to relationships as one way of achieving this objective.

This chapter introduces the main threads of my project and provides a rationale for my interest in teachers' well-being. First I share some of my own as well as colleagues' recent experiences in the classroom in order to convey a sense of the relationship issues that currently attract considerable attention in New Zealand schools and elsewhere in the world. From teacher experiences I proceed to a broad brush overview of some major shifts in the educational landscape over the last few decades, which in my opinion provided both the context and the impetus for the emergence of restorative practice as a relationship paradigm that suits current school initiatives. I then describe the underlying principles and values of RP in order to pinpoint the overlapping characteristics of a restorative relationship paradigm and the one that many teachers are increasingly reaching for as an alternative to behaviour management. These overlaps mandate a broader utilisation of RP in schools.

In introducing the conceptual tools of a discursive approach to relationships I emphasise two practical benefits that they can offer to teachers. They provide a way of adapting restorative processes and principles for the classroom so that they can be mobilised for a broader agenda of enhancing the learning environment as opposed to being used only for reducing wrong-doing and behaviour problems. This is a challenge that has been issued by several researchers in the field (Bazemore, 2001; Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Buckley & Maxwell, 2007; Coetzee, 2005; Calhoun & Daniels, 2008; Cremin, 2010; Drewery, 2007; Lane, 2005; Liebmann, 2007; McCluskey et al., 2008; Morrison, 2001a; Morrison, Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Van Ness, 2010). A discursive approach also offers a critical, reflective and analytical framework that can sensitise teachers to the moral dimensions or ethics of their work as well as to those influences in the wider context that place teachers and students in opposition. In the data chapters I will show how specific, discursively informed adaptations of RP conversations can be put to work to help clarify teachers' moral positions and in turn, how such clarification can improve their well-being. I will argue that discursively informed conversations can develop teachers as moral agents, which makes such conversations a distinguishing strategy of a relationship paradigm of respect and enhancing teachers' well-being. I conclude this chapter by introducing the research questions and the research process.

1.2 Locating my interest in the topic

This study and my interest in finding relationship practices that support teaching and learning have grown out of my work as teacher, resource teacher, counsellor, counsellor educator and educational consultant in the last three decades in two countries, New Zealand and Hungary. As a teacher I have had numerous first hand experiences of the relationship problems, including violence, disobedience and interruptions that are perceived both as threats to teaching and learning and teachers' and students' right to safety (PPTA Hutt Valley Branch, 2008; Te Whaiti, 2006) as well as a cause for students' interrupted or missed learning opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2003a, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; 2010; Smyth & Hattam, 2002, 2004). As a counsellor I have comforted a considerable percentage of

students, whom well-being surveys would claim to be involved in bullying, either as victims or perpetrators (Fleming, Watson, Robinson, Ameratunga, Dixon & Clark, 2007; McGrath & Noble, 2006; Rigby, 1996, 2002; Youth Justice Board, 2005). I have listened to desperate teachers who contemplated leaving their jobs or school because of the daily stresses and the ongoing emotional impact of not being able to get on well with students, colleagues or parents. As an educational consultant I have been challenged to offer quick solutions and strategies to these relationship problems that workshop participants could take away and put to work immediately in their classrooms.

My acquaintance with social constructionism and the use of constructionist ideas to inform relationships and restorative practices came through my connection to the University of Waikato, first as a student in the Master of Counselling programme, then as a counsellor educator and doctoral student. In my work as a school counsellor, who uses narrative counselling (White, 1988a; White & Epston, 1990), I have witnessed the transformative power of discursively informed conversational processes many times. I also became interested in how these same conversational processes could be adapted for teachers' daily interactions both for strengthening relationships and communities as well as for addressing relationship problems constructively. Restorative practices have similar objectives. My teachers and colleagues at the University of Waikato had investigated how constructionist ideas could be utilised for different restorative conversations (The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003). Although their focus was on reducing suspensions, expulsions and stand-downs, in accordance with the concerns expressed at the time about increasing suspension rates in general (Ministry of Education, 2003a) and the disproportionate representation of Māori students in those numbers in particular (Brown, 1993; McElrea, 1996; Ministry of Education, 2010), they emphasised the wider potential of restorative practice. They viewed RP as the basis of a caring, inclusive school ethos and a school culture that is based on respect and developing responsibility rather than a disciplinary system that relies solely on behaviour management and punishment. At the time, about a decade ago, restorative conferences and interviews were seen to be suited to

support the work of deans and senior managers of schools, who are responsible for the pastoral care of students, rather than of classroom teachers. Since then, as a result of calls for the wider application of RP as the basis of relationship management and a caring school culture there has been a growing demand for the adaptation of RP processes for all classroom teachers. I wish to develop the work of the Waikato team further, by investigating the contributions of a discursive approach to adapting restorative processes for use by all teachers within a school. I will propose two ways to achieve this: firstly through a closer attention to the processes of classroom and other school conversations and secondly through the increased engagement of teachers in reflection that would invite them to examine the relationships between their values and the wider, social and institutional context.

1.3 Teacher experiences of relationship problems

The contrast between the order and the many 'docile bodies', characteristic of the classes I attended as a student and then taught as a beginning teacher, and my frequent failures to rise above resistances, disruptions, disorder and chaos during a recent year of relief teaching, possibly reflect the many changes of the educational landscape of these times. As a teacher and school counsellor, who is currently working in a multicultural secondary school with a thousand students, I am frequently reminded by colleagues how stressful they find constant interruptions to the kind of classroom order that allows learning and teaching to take place. I participate in class meetings daily, where I often witness different manifestations of disrespect towards teachers including an aggressive tone of voice, students swearing and responding with angry outbursts to teacher requests for collaboration. Students usually cite being picked on or being unfairly treated as triggers of their frustration (Bishop & Berryman, 2006) while teachers claim they become very stressed from students' refusal to collaborate, disobedience and violence (PPTA, 2008). Continual disobedience, physical assault on other students and verbal assault on staff have been the three leading causes of students' stand-downs in NZ over the last decade (Ministry of Education, 2010). The teachers I have worked with find it hard to

explain what in their practices and responses to particular students might invite resistance, disobedience and at times plain rudeness or aggression. It is these hard to explain and seemingly unjustified and uninvited acts of unkindness and disrespect that teacher colleagues, whom I speak to daily, find really difficult to manage on an ongoing basis. Those students who want to learn and positively engage with school also find these interruptions difficult to handle.

Many teachers believe that such uninvited acts of resistance are reflections of a worrying trend in education characterised by growing negative attitudes and hostility towards teachers. In a recent staff meeting a well-respected colleague complained: "I am a competent and experienced teacher, yet I get sworn at when I challenge students about school rules or uniform." I speak to teachers every day, who come back from a lesson at best disillusioned but often shaken and their confidence bruised after repeatedly being sworn at, called a bad and boring teacher, interrupted and argued with simply because they request from or remind students politely and respectfully to have their books or equipment ready for an activity, stop talking while someone else does or stop interrupting the learning of others by loud talk, playing music or using their cell phones. These are actions that teachers say should not be the topic of time wasting conversations but should be taken for granted as part of the routine of the classroom that every student knows. Yet, they are also actions that provide the platform for daily resistances, disobedience and interruptions. Teachers and those students who positively engage with school say as protest these actions are unjustified simply because they are not invoked by maltreatment or teachers being unfair or unjust. On the contrary, these responses are given to what teachers and many other students say are normal and kind acts of teachers and students doing their jobs.

There are also teachers who believe that the media, the public and particular groups of parents too readily blame them for students' failure to learn or behave according to the relationship codes of their schools. I speak to and hear from colleagues about upset parents daily, who phone the school on their children's behalf and verbally abuse anyone they encounter. A number of teachers in my school have been the target of derogatory remarks

from parents they had never met before. These parents deemed it appropriate to yell obscenities into the phone, which they also considered to be a legitimate protest against some vaguely identified injustice that allegedly happened to their child. Teachers simply saying 'No' to students as a response to an incorrect answer to a question can invite a parental reaction of phoning in and accusing teachers of 'picking' on their child.

Bishop and Berryman (2006) have shown that students' expectations of relationship conduct are not so different from those of teachers' and they include respect, fairness, interest in and care for them as persons. The education systems of the developed world have introduced safeguards to protect students' rights, mainly thanks to the inclusive movement (DENI, 1998; DfES, 2002, 2003; Health and Disability Commissioner, 2002; Human Rights Commission, 2001; Ministry of Education, 1997, 2004; O'Brien & Ryba, 2005; UNESCO, 1994) and advocates for the interests of different minority groups, such as people with disability (Neilson, 2005), feminists (hooks, 1994), Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand (Bishop & Glynn, 2000; Macfarlane, 2004) or people from various other cultures who make up school communities (Whyte, 2005). Hopefully few would want an education system where teachers enjoy complete power over students and where students and their parents are denied opportunities to critique a school or teacher. The student behaviours cited previously have been the objects of educators' and researchers' concern for some time. In New Zealand and internationally a number of studies have addressed the consequences of those behaviours by focusing on how to increase student engagement and keep students at schools (Ministry of Education, 2001, 2003a; Smyth, 2005; Smyth & Hattam, 2001, 2002, 2004) as well as through improving achievement levels (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2004; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2007; Ginwright, Cammarota & Noguera, 2005; Noguera, 2008a, 2008b).

We know that for students some of the effects of unsatisfactory or problematic teacher-student or student-student relationships ripple far beyond the classroom, resulting in missing out on learning due to exclusions, stand-downs or dropping out of the education system (Hattam & Smyth, 2003; Ministry of Education, 2010; Munn, Cullen, Johnstone & Lloyd, 2004;

Smyth & Hattam, 2002, 2004), mental health problems (Walker, Merry, Watson, Robinson, Crengle & Schaaf, 2005) or a lower qualification and a consequent worse standard of living (OECD, 2001, 2006; Willms, 2003). Restorative practices have been used to reduce the frequency of those behaviours and/or to remedy their effects on relationships (Adair & Dixon, 2000; Bazemore & Umbreit, 2001; Buckley, 2007; Buckley & Maxwell, 2007; Cameron & Thorsborne, 1999; Kane, Lloyd, McCluskey, Maguire, Riddell, Stead & Weedon 2007; Youth Justice Board, 2005; Zammit, 2001). Less attention has been paid to addressing the possible impact of those same behaviours on teachers' well-being and their ability to teach. The effects of unsatisfactory or difficult relationships on teachers' health and the number of sick days they might take, or on their decision to leave the job altogether, are less accounted for though teachers' unions express a growing concern about the bullying of teachers by students (Benefield, undated; PPTA, 2008). I believe there are also some less obvious but immediate emotional effects that problematic relationships can produce and the way teachers manage those can influence not only the course of a particular relationship but the quality of the learning environment in a classroom as well.

I wish to focus on these less obvious consequences of unsatisfactory relationships and what their human costs might be for teachers. Teachers' responses to conflict can be manifested as emotions of hurt, anger, frustration, pain and stress. Medical professionals can measure these effects as changes in heart rate or blood pressure but I can only hypothesise the cumulative health effects of such emotional responses. However, a change in the tone of voice, a conversation turning into yelling or a dialogue being stopped altogether are signs that I believe teachers cannot afford to leave unattended. They have to stay in dialogue with their students and colleagues, often for several years, in order to be able to teach. Therefore it is important that teachers have access to strategies that help them maintain respectful dialogue and remedy the impact of their immediate emotional responses to the break-down of such a dialogue. I propose that teachers can learn to recognise such potentially damaging emotional responses to a situation and they can utilise restorative conversations to address those responses.

This study explores how a discursive approach to restorative conversations can help teachers deal with or reduce the negative effects of their emotional responses to what they perceive as problematic relationships with students or colleagues. Schools already employ a range of preventative measures, such as relationship skill teaching (Cornish & Ross, 2004; Galey, 2004; Leyden, 2000), anti-bullying programmes (Cohen, 1995; McGrath & Noble, 2006; Robinson & Maines, 1994, 2008), mediation and alternative conflict resolution including RP (Crawford & Bodine, 2001; Cremin, 2007; Stacey & Robinson, 1997), circles or circle time (Bliss & Tetley, 2006; Collins, 2002; Pranis, Stewart & Wedge, 2003; Robinson & Maines, 1998) to alleviate the effects of relationship trouble. These interventions focus on improving outcomes for students, and several previous studies on RP also set out to reduce behaviour referrals, bullying (Cameron & Thorsborne, 1999; Schenk, 2007; Shaw, 2007; Youth Justice Board, 2005) and/or suspensions (The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003). Focusing on teachers and improving outcomes for them first is based on the premise that if teachers cannot manage their own emotional responses to problematic situations, then they are less likely to be able to model peaceful ways of relating to students. Stressed teachers probably have less cognitive and emotional energy to pay ongoing attention to the process of their interactions and to the wider, systemic and socio-cultural influences on the conditions of their work. I will show in the data chapters how discursively informed conversations can enhance this capacity through transforming teachers' meaning making and clarifying their teaching philosophy in ways that are also productive of improved well-being and relationships.

1.4 Changing relationship paradigms: from behaviour management to negotiation

The last three or four decades have witnessed some major shifts in the dominant philosophies and practices of schools. McLean (2004) claims that increasing disorder in classrooms is the symptom of changing school priorities and relationship paradigms and it is a necessary side effect of transition: from external control of students towards developing their capacity for internal control, as well as from a hierarchical, teacher-directed system towards a more

democratic and collaborative decision making where power is shared among the different stakeholders. While these changes are welcome from an inclusive perspective (Fraser, 2005; Meyer & Bevan-Brown, 2005), they can also be explained by the 'continued marginalization of the teacher' brought about by neo-liberalism (Watkins, 2007, p. 305). My intention with highlighting some characteristics of these shifts is not to provide an exhaustive historical overview of changing school priorities, others have done justice to this task (e. g. Wearmouth, Glynn & Berryman, 2005; Wearmouth, Glynn, Richmond & Berryman, 2004a, 2004b), but rather to point out the relevance of some broad trends within these changes for teacher-student relationships. I will consider the shift in pedagogy towards child-centred approaches, inclusion, the challenges to individual psychology and the consequent move from behaviour management as the dominant paradigm of teacher-student interactions towards ecological and socio-cultural approaches to behaviour as shaping the priorities and projects of schools. These shifts have also been instrumental in drawing up the parameters of a relationship paradigm that is very different from the teacher-centred one that schools have relied on for a long time. Arguably, this different relationship paradigm better serves current school priorities and initiatives. I will show how a discursive approach to relationships can also suit these priorities by responding to the multiple agendas of preventing and resolving conflict and building relationships. At the same time it provides a critical lens through which the suitability of different relationship practices for teaching and learning can also be examined.

The shift in pedagogy, at least in the English speaking world, from a teacher-directed system, which is perceived to transfer mainly subject knowledge and relies on compliant students, towards a child-centred, participatory approach, which tries to accommodate diverse student needs, has transformed the organisation of the classroom and lessons. In today's classrooms both teachers and students perform more complex roles than before. Students are relied on and involved as both learners and teachers, as in peer tutoring, where older or more competent in the subject students support their peers in practice (Medcalf, 1992; Medcalf, Glynn & Moore, 2004; Smith, 2002). Co-operative learning strategies require students to work together in groups, which ensure that a range of skill levels can be accommodated in the

same classroom (Brown & Thompson, 2000; McGrath & Noble, 1993; Slavin, 1987). Teachers move between different groups as opposed to always staying at the front. They support learning by providing ongoing feedback but they are also expected to frequently modify and adapt their practices to suit the needs of different students. AsTTle, assessment tools for teaching and learning (Ministry of Education, 2003b) and inquiry learning (Pultorak, 2010; Roulston, 2009) are two examples of the intensified attention that is being given to teacher feedback and practice change in support of students' learning. The shift from whole-class instruction to group-based learning means that in today's classrooms there is a far greater number of student-student and student-teacher interactions than what was common practice in the classrooms of some decades ago. Students have to communicate and engage with their peers more without the teacher involved. Effective teaching and learning cannot happen unless they have the relationship and communication skills that enable them to collaborate, share information, discuss different approaches to a task and make decisions together. This is very different from a classroom where mostly teachers direct and instruct and students follow their initiatives.

The publication of a wide range of resources over the last few decades that provide activities for teachers to use in order to improve students' relationship and social skills is a testimony to the paradigmatic change in methods of lesson organisation. Relationship skill teaching is added to the teaching of subjects. Teachers have different warm up, circle, connection building and sharing activities to choose from, which all focus on developing students' competence in turn-taking, listening and expressing their views and feelings (McGrath & Francey, 1991; Rae, 2004; Robinson & Maines, 1998). The purpose of including such relationship activities in subject lessons is to enable participation and contribution by all as well as the development of more inclusive classroom communities. The introduction of more complex anti-bullying (Maines & Robinson, 1991; PPTA, 2004; Robinson & Maines, 1997, 2008; Special Education Services, undated; Sullivan, 2000) and mediation and conflict resolution processes (Cremin, 2007; Stacey & Robinson, 1997) into schools, in addition to these simple relationship skills, reflects the growing acceptance and legitimisation of views that include among the tasks of schools

the teaching of citizenship skills and the preparation of students for participating in a civil society (Cremin, 2007; Drewery, 2007; Liebmann, 2007; Macfarlane, 2007; Noddings, 2002; Skiba & Peterson, 2003; Slater, Fain & Rosatto, 2002; Wexler, 1992; Zine, 2002). Cremin (2007) and Liebmann (2007) both note that the empowerment of children and the significance of social and affective skills are part of this trend. The employment of therapeutic approaches provides additional support for this empowerment. Solution focussed and narrative therapies (Durant, 1995; Winslade & Monk, 1999) are particularly popular in schools. They are used not only to remedy the effects of relationship problems, such as bullying (Cheshire & Lewis, 1998, 2000) but they reflect the recognition of the importance of health and well-being for both learning and resilience (Ungar, 2006).

The inclusive movement has also been a major contributor to both the changes in pedagogy as well as to the reconfiguration of classroom structures and teaching strategies. With its particular focus on human rights and legalising the rights of all children to the same education (Human Rights Commission, 2001; Health and Disability Commissioner, 2002; O'Brien & Ryba, 2005; UNESCO, 1994) the inclusive movement empowered parents and advocates of students with special needs (Ministry of Education, 1997; 1998; Neilson, 2005) and indigenous groups (Bishop & Glynn, 1999) to challenge practices that excluded particular students based on disability, ethnicity and gender. Human rights provided the moral and social grounds on which all these different agendas could unite (Cremin, 2007). Asserting the rights of all children to the same education meant that the composition of many classrooms changed. Classroom communities ceased to be even relatively homogeneous. Instead, they became heterogeneous by accommodating children with diverse needs, including various skill levels, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. 'One size fits all' teaching approaches have been replaced with strategies that could accommodate a much wider range of needs than what had previously been common. Rather than requiring students to adapt to the learning environment, the adaptation of the learning environment to the child had become the norm (Fraser, Moltzen & Ryba, 2005). Adaptation of teaching strategies responded both to students' academic and cultural needs. For some students individual education plans (IEPs) were drawn up, which,

after a thorough assessment of all aspects of a child's learning environment identified teaching strategies suitable to the child's skill levels (Ministry of Education, 1998; Thompson, 1991; Thompson & Rowan, 1995; Ysseldike & Christensen, 1993). In addition to methods that addressed students' academic needs, culturally responsive strategies also became incorporated into the practice repertoire of many teachers. In NZ the traditional teaching methods and pedagogies of Māori, the indigenous people of the country are now part of teacher training and teachers' classroom practices (Bevan-Brown, 2003; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Durie, 2007; Macfarlane, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2007d). The Māori concept of *ako*, which means both to learn and to teach and describes the reciprocity of a person being both a learner and a teacher, helps establish supportive relationships between older and younger students (Macfarlane, 2004).

The daily operation of these more student-centred, diverse and inclusive classrooms demands specific new skills from both students and teachers. Students have to work and get on with classmates who have different abilities or cultural backgrounds from them. They are expected to tolerate and value their classmates' differences rather than use them as a rationale for teasing, bullying and exclusion from a group, which children tend to do if they are not shown otherwise. Teachers also more frequently interact with different others. The adaptation of their programmes in order to meet students' academic and cultural needs requires them to consult, collaborate and negotiate with other professionals (Brown, 1998; Brown, Moore, Thompson, Walker, Glynn, Macfarlane, Medcalf, & Ysseldike, 2000; Thompson, Brown, Jones, Walker, Moore, Anderson, Davies, Medcalf & Glynn, 2003; Spedding, 1996), such as paediatricians, psychologists, speech and occupational therapists and teacher aides and they have to work in partnership with parents (Bull, Brooking & Campbell, 2008; Crozier & Reay, 2005; Glynn, Berryman & Glynn, 2000). The implication is that teachers might not have all the answers or knowledge needed to support a particular student so they are expected to forego their exclusive decision making position about what might be the most suitable programme or approach for a child. Teachers have to manage and incorporate into their decision making several different perspectives and agendas, as opposed to being able to assert

their own views. The successful implementation of inclusive policies calls for a capacity to tolerate differences along with the skills of negotiation and collaboration.

Parallel to these changes in pedagogy and practice the stronghold of individual psychology as the dominant paradigm of teaching and assessment practices has also been loosened and destabilised (Burman, 1994; Burman, Aitken, Alldred, Allwood & Billington, 1996; Gergen, 1990). Individual psychology, with its major focus on the normal individual was no longer adequate to provide strategies that could address the needs and/or accommodate the increasingly diverse interests of a multi-cultural and heterogeneous classroom. Individual psychology locates problems in persons and uses difference as well as comparison with an arbitrary notion of the norm as the basis for segregation, exclusion and/or an intervention that sets out to change this individual in ways that would make him/her fit the norm (Cremin & Thomas, 2005). Further, individual psychology explains behaviour by internal factors that reside within a person, such as their motivation and cognitive or emotional processes, thus it supports medical and behaviour management approaches to change (Wearmouth et al., 2005). Behaviour management approaches are particularly popular in schools with their reliance on rewards and sanctions (Alberto & Troutman, 1991; Rogers, 1991, 1994; Skinner, 1953).

Making the individual its project, individual psychology can be seen to collude with the practices of the recently much condemned zero tolerance approaches to behaviour problems (Robbins, 2005; Skiba & Peterson, 1999, 2000), which go against inclusive principles. Zero tolerance demonstrates an extreme form of behaviour management, which espouses greater teacher and school control and stricter punishments for any breaking of rules. By punishing the mildest transgressions with severe consequences zero tolerance is seen to curtail the educational opportunities of students and to open up 'the pipelines to prisons' as opposed to achieving lasting behaviour change (Cavanagh, 2004b; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Some extreme uses of zero tolerance have been reported in the United States (Skiba, Michael, Carroll Nardo & Peterson, 2002), such as the suspension of 16.1% of public school students of colour in the Baltimore region in the 2003-2004 academic year

(Maxwell, 2007). Noguera (1995) considers zero tolerance to be a form of demonstrating the power of the state rather than supporting current school priorities of inclusion or realising the possible contribution of education to the public good. I believe the reliance of individual psychology on the notion of the normal individual can also make this brand of psychology a tool of excluding students on grounds of ability, ethnicity or culture.

Lloyd (2000) in reviewing inclusion internationally concludes that inclusive education is still not a reality in many places. Cremin and Thomas (2005) suggest that the recently promoted standardised assessment relies on difference and comparison and acts as a barrier to inclusion. The critique of individual psychology emerged from several corners, including social constructionism, as well as critical psychology (Burman, 1994; Burman et al., 1996; Gergen, 1985, 1991, 2001a, 2001b; Parker & Shotter, 1990). It was mainly psychotherapists first (Parker, 1998, 1999a, 1999b), and specifically the proponents of narrative and discursive therapies (Epston & White, 1992; Kaye, 1999; Madigan, 1999; White, 1988a; White & Epston, 1990) who suggested that it was untenable to maintain the exclusion of clients' perspectives and knowledges from diagnoses. They developed processes that actively involve clients and utilise their expertise about their own lives in the decisions about interventions that they might require. Psychologists and specialists working in education also rejected labelling and pathologising and suggested that individual psychology could not provide adequate responses to the shifts in the focus of educational practice from individual students towards their relationships and wider communities (Alldred, 1996; Billington, 1996; Heshusius, 1994, 1995; Marks, 1996). Burman (2008) notes that in individual psychology and behaviour management approaches, the individual is abstracted from socioeconomic and political conditions, contrary to the ecological and socio-cultural approaches that emerged as more suitable explanations to behaviour.

Socio-cultural approaches consider individuals in the context of power relations, where gender, race and class affect the practices of persons (Bruner, 1996; Claiborne & Drewery, 2009; Wearmouth et al., 2005). Problematic behaviour within this approach is not viewed as the product of an individual's personal deficits but rather of the complex power dynamics of relationships.

Such theorising of behaviour transfers the responsibility for relationship problems from individual pathology to the barriers in the learning environment. It is these barriers that have to be identified and removed in order to achieve the inclusion of students who are different from the norm rather than changing the student to fit his or her environment. Within a socio-cultural theory inclusion is conceived of as restructuring the learner's environment 'to the extent to which students are able to participate in the school community on the basis of who they are, without having to leave their cultural identity at the gate' (Wearmouth et al., 2005, p. 70). One significant consequence of this theoretical shift, I believe, is an obligation to attend to the moral, ethical dimensions of practice and to acknowledge responsibility for the potential consequences of each interaction on others. My intention is to show how a discursive approach to relationships can contribute to the development of such moral capacity.

The above described shifts in educational theories and practices can only be realised with the support of a relationship paradigm that is very different from the traditionally dominant teacher-centred approach. In distinguishing this new paradigm I find Noguera's (1995) description of the purposes of early compulsory schooling in the US relevant. He proposes that compulsory schooling served three distinct purposes at the time of its introduction: *social control* or the monitoring of the population by providing a setting where people could be surveilled, *acculturation* for immigrants who were meant to learn the requirements of being a US citizen and *skill training* to meet the needs of the labour market and the economy. Early compulsory schooling thus fulfilled a governing function (Armstrong, 2005; Hook, 2003) in order to meet the economic and social control needs of society. A relationship paradigm that relies on external control, such as behaviour management, was suitable to support these economic and control agendas. However, the development of inclusive communities and educating responsible citizens require a relationship paradigm that normalises the plurality of values rather than those of the majority or a dominant group. Individuals are not only seen as an economic resource but a human resource that maintains social justice and serves the public good (Noddings, 2002). These values have been emphasised by proponents of critical pedagogy, who consider schools to be

instruments of social change (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1992, 2004; Satterthwaite, Atkinson & Gale, 2003).

The new relationship paradigm that emerged as a result of inclusive and child-centred approaches shifts the attention away from individuals onto their relationships. It centralises respectful communication and interaction, contribution, participation, shared decision making and community. It values difference as a resource rather than a problem, something to be appreciated rather than to be disappeared. It promotes relational responsibility or care for others and for one's community, rather than individual responsibility for only one's own behaviours. Finally, it accepts diverse views and supports power sharing rather than privileging the knowledge of experts and professionals. Such a respectful, participatory and collaborative relationship paradigm, which I will call collaborative relationship paradigm from now on, can better support a child-centred pedagogy as well as inclusive policies and practices than behaviour management. While behaviour management accepts a notion of discipline as external control, at least in the initial stages of teaching a new skill (Rogers, 1991, 1994, 2002), the collaborative relationship paradigm relies on responsible students who can discipline themselves as opposed to having to be disciplined by others. Discipline within this paradigm becomes internal control or ethical practice, a voluntary submission to the rules and the code of conduct that allow a community to carry out its tasks. My purpose is not to vilify behaviour management by highlighting some of its differences from the collaborative approach that I described. Rather, I want to emphasise that this collaborative paradigm requires from teachers and students greater competence in relationship skills of listening and curiosity about others along with the skills of negotiation and respectfully managing differences. Developing such relationship competencies is not a simple task even when schools attribute equal significance to relationship skills as they do to academic skills.

1.5 The significance of relationships

The recent increased attention that educational research and practice have paid to relationships confirms their significance both as the basis of

school life as well as being the pre-requisites for carrying out the core functions of schools. Smyth (2005) suggests that

schools are, at their core, relational organisations, therefore they are primarily concerned with creating the set of relational resources and conditions that enable learning to take place, among students as well as teachers. When this does not happen, for whatever reasons, schools are very dysfunctional, deeply disturbed and unhappy places. (p. 221)

Arguments for the impact of relationships on the quality of teaching and learning have mainly been put forward from students' perspectives. These arguments link the quality of relationships to inclusion, fairness, equitable educational outcomes and improved achievement levels, especially of students in ethnic minority groups, such as Māori in NZ, and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Bishop et al., (2007) present the perspectives of Māori students, who claim that the quality of their relationships with their teachers is the single most important influence on their decision to actively engage with learning or to disengage. Their relationships with their teachers thus indirectly impact on their academic achievement levels. Hill and Hawk (2005) suggest that while for students in high decile schools their relationships with their teachers have little effect on their engagement, for students in low decile schools the quality of teacher-student relationships might mean the difference between engagement and non-engagement with school. (The decile rating of schools from 1 to 10 reflects the average income of the people who live in a school's enrolment zone, with higher deciles corresponding with higher average incomes). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2000) considers good teacher-student relationships, which it defines as teachers getting along with students well, being interested in student well-being and listening to students, to be a feature of schools with higher level student engagement and participation. Such schools are also said to have a strong disciplinary climate and high expectations for success. In turn, better student engagement and participation are linked to health and well-being (Keating & Hertzman 1999; Putnam 2000) as well as to improved quality of life, which is created by the better economic circumstances that higher qualification and skill levels can achieve (Willms, 2003). Good relationships are considered to be a protective factor while the absence of significant relationships adds to the risk factors that undermine resilience (Ungar, 2003, 2004a, 2004b). Problematic relationships, such as bullying and other forms of

violence are associated with truancy, reduced connections with school, behaviour problems and lower rates of getting on well with others (Fleming et al., 2007). Students whose relationships are problematic are reported to have higher rates of depression and anxiety, suicide attempts and alcohol and drug use (Walker et al., 2005).

It is not only for interrupting the normal activities of a classroom, and thus providing distractions to teachers and students but because of these potentially far reaching additional consequences on achievement, life chances and well-being that relationship problems invite responses. They explain why relationships are considered central to developing an inclusive ethos in a school (Drewery, 2007; Harrison, 2007) and why they are also linked to the projects of inclusion (Cremin, 2007, 2010; Liebmann, 2007), establishing a culture of care (Cavanagh, 2003, 2004a, 2009; Drewery, 2004; Drewery & Winslade, 2005; Morrison, 2007; Noddings, 2002; Roach, 2000) resilience (Ungar, 2004b, 2006), well-being (Corcoran, 2005) and citizenship (Slater et al, 2002; Wexler, 1992). It is no surprise that there is much work being done to identify and develop processes that best serve both the development and maintenance of productive, supportive and respectful relationships as well as the previously described collaborative relationship paradigm that supports current school projects.

Since I carried out this research, relationship skills have been included in The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007e). They are now mandated by law and recognised to be equally as important as academic skills. The underpinning values of the Curriculum include excellence, innovation, inquiry and curiosity, diversity, equity, community and participation, ecological sustainability, integrity, and respect for self, others and human rights. There are five key competencies that the NZ Curriculum suggests can help students and teachers to implement the above mentioned values and they include the use of language and symbols, thinking, managing self, participating and contributing and relating to others. The Curriculum supports the development of students as moral agents who are able to participate and contribute as well as to manage themselves in order to respectfully co-exist with others in the classroom. The ability to relate to others is something that in the past has been taken as an implicit 'personal

attribute' rather than something that can be made explicit, taught, monitored and improved upon (Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2010). I suggest teachers can better support students to develop their moral agency if they themselves clarify their own moral positions and the interrelationships between their practices and values. I will show how restorative conversations can contribute to this process. In introducing the underlying principles and process characteristics of restorative practice I wish to highlight the similarities between restorative values and current school and curriculum priorities. These similarities explain why restorative practice carries so much hope for schools (Drewery, 2007).

1.6 Restorative Practice (RP)

Restorative practice (RP) or restorative approaches (RA) include a range of conversation processes and skills that support a non-retributive paradigm of responding to wrongdoing and conflict (Ball, 2003; Braithwaite, 2004; Braithwaite & Mugford, 1994; Morrison, 2001a, 2007, 2010; O'Connell, 2007; Sherman & Strang, 2007; Zehr, 1990, 2002, 2004). Restorative approaches in schools have been developed from restorative justice, which was born out of a recognition that the Western legal system is not always able to meet the needs of victims and offenders and that "the process of justice deepens societal wounds and conflicts rather than contributing to healing or peace" (Zehr, 2002, p. 3). Most restorative justice processes have been adapted from indigenous methods of dealing with wrongdoing, such as Māori hui (meeting) protocols (Macfarlane, 1998) and the circles of North American Indians (Zehr, 2002). Both involve a person's immediate community, family or extended family, who support the wrongdoer in carrying out whatever actions they deem appropriate to restore the balance of the community that has been upset by the wrongdoing.

Zehr identifies several principles that distinguish restorative justice from retributive justice. They include the acknowledgement that wrongdoing is a violation of people and relationships rather than of the law or the state as the traditional legal approach would claim. Violations create obligations and the main obligation is to put things right. Traditional criminal justice requires the establishing of guilt and the imposing of a punishment, while a

restorative approach focuses on the needs of victims and the community that is affected by harm along with accountability and responsibility for repairing the harm (Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2006a, 2006b; The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003; Zehr, 2002). Zehr further claims that restorative justice is not primarily about forgiveness or reducing repeat offending but rather about “the needs which crimes create” (p. 13). These needs have to be carefully addressed in accordance with the underpinning values of restorative practice, which include respect for the dignity and equal worth of all human beings, participation, honesty, humility, interconnectedness, accountability and empowerment (Moxon, Skudder & Peters, 2006). The principle of responding to needs and the values of respect, participation and empowerment echo what inclusive practices try to achieve.

I will introduce and examine the different restorative processes in more detail in the next chapter. For now I wish to point out that different restorative conversations, whether they are chats, meetings or conferences, all privilege a commitment to relationships through communication and dialogue. Restorative processes are facilitated face-to-face encounters (Zehr, 2002) where all those affected by the break down of a relationship participate and contribute to decisions about how harm should be repaired. The goal is to heal and to transform relationships rather than to simply change a wrongdoer to become more compliant with the relationship conduct of their community and/or to make him fix the harm that he has done. Wachtel (2007b) suggests that

The fundamental unifying hypothesis of restorative practices is disarmingly simple: that human beings are happier, more productive and more likely to make positive changes in their behaviour when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them. (p.2)

Wachtel’s explanation is based on the Social Discipline Window model, which maintains that the punitive and authoritarian *to* mode and the permissive and paternalistic *for* mode are not as effective as the restorative, participatory, engaging *with* mode. Restorative processes are structured to support a ‘with’ mode as they invite all those affected by an act of wrongdoing to share their views on what happened and its effects on them. At the same time participants are encouraged to collaboratively work out and

implement solutions. By involving the whole community defined by an incident, restorative processes extend the circle of stakeholders and they place the responsibility for dealing with the effects of wrongdoing with communities rather than isolated individuals (Winslade, Drewery & Hooper, 2000; The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003; Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2006a).

Restorative practices are processes that involve those who have a stake in a particular offence in identifying the harms and needs created by the offence in order to put things as right as possible. (The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003, p. 11)

As a paradigm of addressing wrongdoing restorative practice shares several characteristics of the previously described collaborative, participatory and democratic relationship paradigm that is being mobilised in schools in support of inclusive policies, a child centred pedagogy or the new Curriculum. The process of restoration is collaborative and inclusive and any outcomes are negotiated and mutually agreed upon rather than imposed. Both RP and the collaborative relationship paradigm privilege communication. They both require similar relationship competencies and skills of listening, sharing and negotiating along with a capacity to respectfully manage and negotiate different views. In a restorative meeting conflicting and diverse perspectives and agendas have to be voiced and reconciled so engaging with different others respectfully is crucial for the success of the process. The same mode of interaction is required of teachers, other professionals and parents who want to put inclusive policies into practice or of students in a classroom where citizenship skills and key competencies are taught. These common characteristics of RP and the collaborative relationship paradigm explain why many schools are turning to RP as the basis of their relationship management or pastoral care and discipline system (Boulton & Mirsky, 2006; Fields, 2003; Hopkins, 2004a, 2004b; Moxon et al., 2006; Rodman, 2007; Rundell, 2007; Schenk, 2007; Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2006a, 2006b, 2007).

Approaches to teaching that claim the co-construction of knowledge (Mansell, 2009) often prompt students and parents to think that for successful learning to take place there is no need for a teacher's subject knowledge or expertise about the processes of learning new skills. There are

students who are ready to easily dismiss a teachers' leadership if they find new learning challenging. The use of a collaborative relationship paradigm and teachers being interested in students' views can give the false impression that anything and everything is negotiable. Teachers most likely do not want such a paradigm if it makes teaching impossible. They also do not want their subject and process expertise invalidated, especially when they might have taken decades of continuous study and reflective practice to acquire it. The transfer of knowledge or content is still part of subject lessons in spite of increased focus on the processes of learning (Ministry of Education, 2007e). For this reason I believe it is important that teachers maintain a critical attitude towards any new initiatives, including the transportation of RP principles and processes into the classroom, and they carefully consider their likely impact on teacher-student relationships. Teachers have to establish some kind of classroom order for them to be able to teach and for students to be able to learn. The difficulty and challenge lies in trying to achieve this order not always through external control but through modelling and teaching the skills of respectful dialogue and internal control while developing students as moral agents. At the same time teachers also have to manage both their own and their students' emotional responses that might escalate conflicts. I believe restorative conversations can be successfully adapted to support this project but it matters what theory guides this adaptation. A suitable theory would incorporate a focus on relationships and it would provide guidelines for the respectful managing of differences and participation by all. It would have to be a theory that cannot be co-opted into coercive agendas of external control. Rather, it would support the kind of compliance with rules that is born out of a voluntary recognition that individuals have a responsibility of care for others and not just for themselves. I believe that social constructionism is such a theory. In the following I will introduce the conceptual tools from constructionism that I have used in this study.

1.7 Social constructionism: The conceptual tools of this study

I have chosen to ground this project in social constructionism as I believe it provides both a theory and practice that well support the

collaborative paradigm of relationships that are privileged by both RP and current school priorities. At the same time constructionism offers tools that support a critical approach to practice. I am building on discursive understandings of identity based on Foucault's work about disciplinary power and power/knowledge (1972, 1980, 1995, 2006) as well as on the work of those who have further developed his theorising to advance the discursive understanding of identity and relationships in general (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007; Burr, 1995; Butler, 1997, 2004; Davies, 1990, 1991; Davies, Browne, Gannon, Hopkins, McCann & Wihlborg, 2006; Davies, Flemmen, Gannon, Laws & Watson, 2002; Davies & Harré, 1990; Davies & Saltmarsh, 2007; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999; Parker, 1990, 2005; Sampson, 1989, 1993, 2003; Walkerdine, 2003). I have also relied on research that has applied a discursive approach to relationships in the school context (Burman, 1994; Burman et al., 1996; Davies, 1994, 2001, 2006; Davies & Hunt, 1994; Laws & Davies, 2000; Linehan & McCarthy, 2000; Noguera, 1995, 1999, 2002, 2003; Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004; Ungar, 2004a; Walkerdine, 1989; Winslade & Monk, 1999) as well as in therapy or more specifically in narrative therapy (Drewery, 2004, 2005; Monk, Winslade, Crocket & Epston, 1997; Parker, 1998, 1999a, 1999b; 2005; Weingarten, 1997; White & Epston, 1990; White, 1997, 2007; Winslade, 2004, 2005). I have been particularly inspired by the work of Bronwyn Davies, who has demonstrated the practical benefits of discourse knowledge and deconstruction for improving relationships and well-being (Davies, 1994, 1996, 1998) and Wendy Drewery, who has shown the significance of a closer attention to the process of conversation for both respectful relationships and restorative practices (Drewery, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2010; Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2010). The counselling team at Waikato University has also made a significant contribution to the development of narrative therapy by utilising discourse theory in narrative supervision (Crocket, 2001, 2002), mediation (Winslade & Monk, 2000) and restorative practice (Drewery, 2004, 2007; Drewery, Hooper, Macfarlane, McManemin, Pare & Winslade, 1998; The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003; Winslade, Drewery & Hooper, 2000). It is this body of knowledge that I wish to make a contribution to by adapting the use of discourse theory and some

conversational moves from narrative counselling for classroom use in support of both upholding restorative principles and improving teachers' well-being.

Burr (1995) suggests that there is no single definition of constructionism but it can be described by some key assumptions as its foundation. Out of these key assumptions constructionist notions of knowledge, language and identity are particularly relevant to my project. Constructionism takes a critical stance towards taken for granted knowledge and it questions the views, mainly characterised by positivism, that the categories we use are real and have their equivalent in the world. Instead, it claims they are historically and culturally located and they are specific to particular social and economic conditions. This means that a category or a view cannot be treated as 'the truth' but rather it is an accepted understanding of the world, bounded by time, place and culture, which is the product of and is negotiated in interactions. Constructionists emphasise 'the communal basis of knowledge, processes of interpretation, and concern with the valuational underpinnings of scientific accounts' (Gergen, 1985, p. 272). The previously described changes in pedagogy reflect a changing meaning and understanding of the categories of 'teacher' and 'student'. Constructionism would argue the significance of the clarification of those categories because, similarly to inclusive approaches, it accepts that in any school there would be a plurality of understandings of these categories.

In a constructionist framework, language is not merely a collection of labels that describe the world but a tool of producing knowledge and meanings in social interactions. The collaborative notion of interaction that schools employ today probably would not have made sense to teachers and students a century ago, when the categories of 'teacher' and 'student' had very different meanings. This 'turn to language' (Parker, 1999) changes language from an 'innocent' tool of interaction (Davies, 2001) into the site of producing both knowledge and identity (Burr, 1995). Meaning making becomes a very important activity in this process of knowledge and identity production. The meanings that people make of their experiences are also closely linked to how they experience themselves as a person, in other words how they perceive their identity and who they are. In addition, the emotional

responses that they have to a situation can also be tied to the meanings that they attribute to it. For example, if a teacher interprets the chaos and disorder in her classroom to be the reflection of her lack of behaviour management skills, such an interpretation might also invite an emotional response of frustration, resistance, anger and hurt. The teacher might be frustrated that she cannot create order in her class or she might resist the students. She might be angry with them or herself but she might also be hurt that the students do not respond to her as she would like. These are just some of the possible emotional reactions to the situation. It is unlikely that a teacher would be totally unaffected. In addition, the teacher's interpretation of the situation might also influence her sense of herself as a professional and as a person. She might not be able to think of herself as a competent teacher or as someone who can easily establish a rapport with students. This means that the effects of meaning making as well as language use, the words and categories chosen to describe what is happening, are far reaching. They can support or undermine a person's sense of well-being.

From a constructionist perspective meanings are not fixed but they can be negotiated and changed. This also means that improved well-being and a preferred sense of self can be achieved by challenging a problematic meaning that a person makes of an event. Narrative therapists support persons to change their understanding of problematic situations (Drewery & Winslade, 1997). If language works to produce knowledge and meanings that in turn help to form a person's identity, then the forms of language used have implications for the conversations and interactions that teachers and students have with one another. It means that these conversations have to be conducted with care for their effects rather than carelessly (Drewery, 2005, 2009, 2010). Meanings that are unhelpful or harmful for a person's sense of self could be avoided or changed. Restorative conversations acknowledge and accommodate the different meanings that persons make of the same event. I propose that teachers can do the same in the classroom, including changing unhelpful meanings for their own benefits.

The second important feature of constructionism is a 'turn to discourse' (Parker, 1999) and acknowledging its significance for both persons' identities as well as for institutional and social practices. Discourses

are coherent meaning systems (Parker, 1990, 2005) or culturally defined ideas, values and norms (Besley, 2002a, 2002b) that enable people to produce their identities (Davies, 1991; Davies & Harré, 1990). Each discourse has certain positions in them, which authorise or censor particular meanings and identities. For example, the discourse of early compulsory schooling has a position for an authoritarian, in control teacher along with an obedient student. Both these positions clearly define what such a teacher and student can do or say, what rights they each have as well as which one of them is taken more seriously than the other. This teacher and student take up identities in their interactions or conversations with each other within the discourse of schooling dominant at the time, which is also a process called positioning. The acceptance of a discursive view of identity means that every speech act becomes significant as it is an act of positioning or taking up and offering a subject position to oneself as well as to others in a discourse.

The notion of positioning is closely linked to the notions of power/knowledge and agency. Knowledge is broadly speaking the views and explanations that people have about the world. Foucault called knowledge that defines how an interaction goes power/knowledge as it is productive of particular identities and practices (Foucault, 1972, 1980, 2006). A discursive position can be either validating of a person's worldviews or not. A position in which a person can use their knowledge to determine how an interaction goes is an agentive position while a position where others assert their views and make a decision for this person is not. Respectful communication, whether a dialogue is maintained and whether a person feels s/he can participate is a function of how positioning goes (Davies, 1991; Weingarten, 2000, 2003). This makes the act of positioning significant not only for a person's identity but their well-being as well (Drewery, 2005).

An agentive position is more likely to support well-being because in such positions persons can carry out their activities in ways that are in congruence with the values and personal qualities they wish to live by. In other words, their self-understandings support the performance of their preferred identity. If, however, a person is unable to call on his or her discordant knowledge of the world during the act of positioning and has to accept that someone else's knowledge guides the interaction, s/he might

experience this as invalidating of his/her preferred identity and consequently as undermining of his/her well-being. Most of us have been to meetings where our contributions might have been constantly interrupted by someone else, or worse, they might have been completely ignored when the participants made a decision about the matter discussed. We also most likely remember some kind of emotional response that we might have felt in our bodies long after the meeting finished. The notion of positioning turns the project of individual identity into a relational engagement and it also attributes greater significance to the process of conversations and interactions. Similarly to meanings, positions are also negotiable and they can be changed during the process of negotiation.

Discourses are not only important for a person's individual identity. They also have a role in the construction of social life and as such they are linked to power (Burr, 1995). Some groups in society are enabled by particular discourses and the practices they support but others are constrained. Discourses produce and reproduce particular ideologies, subjects and institutions so they maintain particular social processes and power relations (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994). The way discourses define social processes is usually not obvious but rather hidden. This characteristic of discourses requires the kind of analysis and reflection that can expose their 'hidden rationalities' (Davies et al., 2002, 2006) or the ways they enable or disable particular relationships and practices (Banister et al., 1994; Davies & Bird, 1999). Such an analysis can help us understand the social processes and power relationships that they produce (Bansel, Davies, Laws & Linnell, 2009; Watkins, 2007). An understanding of discourses is also important for a person's well-being, as it helps us to "see" how discursive power can continue to produce the conditions of our lives, even against our intentions (Davies, 1994, 1996, 1998).

Accepting the significance of discourse for individual identities as well as for social processes makes discourse knowledge an important skill. Davies (1998) and Drewery (2005) suggested the term 'discourse user' for the application of discourse knowledge in the service of better relationships and improved personal well-being. I wish to develop Davies' and Drewery's ideas further by showing how the notion and practices of 'intentional

discourse user' could support teachers' relationship practices and inform the adaptation of restorative conversations into classroom use. In Chapter 4 I propose two applications of discourse knowledge: first as a relational tool of closely attending to the process and effects of conversations and secondly as a tool of understanding and analysis, both in teacher reflection and as a method of data analysis.

I consider deconstruction to be the most feasible conversational and analytical tool of putting discourse knowledge to work or using discourse intentionally (Davies, 1998; Derrida, 1998; Parker, 1999c; Parker & Shotter, 1990). Deconstruction in conversation means both an identification of the different discursive positions that conversation participants occupy as well as determining whether these positions support agency or not. This analysis, when done "on the spot", can help to shape a response in a way that positions the conversation participants agentively. Laws and Davies (2000) call this 're-positioning'. Narrative therapists call it re-authoring (Morgan, 2000). Deconstruction can enhance personal well-being when used for reflecting on and arriving at a different understanding of a person's sense of self and problems. This is achieved by identifying the discourses that influence a person's life and accepting those positions that are supportive of his/her preferred ways of living while rejecting the ones that are unhelpful (Davies, 1996, 1998). I will show in the data chapters how deconstruction was utilised by the research participants as both a tool of managing differences as well as a tool of clarifying identity.

The use of deconstruction as a tool for developing new understandings is also called discourse analysis (Banister et al., 1994; Larner, 1999; Parker, 1999b; Parker & Shotter, 1990; Philips & Jorgensen, 2002; Wetherell, 1998). I have adapted a form of deconstruction to inform teacher reflection but I also used it to analyse the research data, including teachers' stories of interactions that they perceived as unsatisfactory, stressful or problematic. I have used Foucauldian discourse analysis (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Davies 2006; Davies et al., 2002) as it focuses on the naming of discourses and the consequences of the positions they offer for practices and identities. I have also relied on some of the steps of the multi-step process that was described by Banister et al. (1994), which attends to

how discourses contribute to producing and maintaining problems. I used deconstruction for these purposes because it is a method that can provide new understandings of how problematic teacher-student relationships and conflicts might be produced and it can identify what discourses might play a part in this process (Duncan, 2007; Jones & Brown, 1999, 2001). Arriving at a better understanding of the influences that contribute to relationship problems between teachers and students was an objective of this study.

New perspectives and understandings are valued by the proponents of a critical, interpretive paradigm to research, who claim that discursive approaches raise issues and contribute to debates as opposed to offering solutions (Denzin, 2005; Howe, 2004; Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Canella, 2004; Mazzei, 2004; St. Pierre, 2000, 2004; Weems, 2006). Clough (2004) compares critical, postmodern approaches to prisms and crystals, which produce different patterns of light. Jackson (2004) suggests that a discursive approach to research can interrupt usual certainties and it can provide 'a better version of the lived world' (p. 422). Clough (2004) argues that such an approach supports moral and ethical practice by inviting reflection on one's location in as well as relationship to the social context. Both the proponents of critical pedagogy (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991, Giroux, 1992, 2004; McLaren, Martin, Farahmandpur & Jaramillo, 2004) as well as those who view education as moral practice (Biesta, 2004; Buzelli & Johnston, 2002; Preece, 2001; Pring, 2001) affirm the capacity of a discursive approach to transform practice. Discursive approaches have been utilised to gain new perspectives on relationships between teachers and students in the classroom (Bansell, et al., 2009; Corcoran, 2006; Dalley-Trim, 2005; Davies, 1990; Davies & Hunt, 1994; Linehan & McCarthy, 2000, 2001; Monroe, 2005; Walshaw, 2006; Watkins, Mauthner, Hewitt, Epstein & Leonard, 2007). I will describe my method of discourse analysis in Chapter 5. I will show in the data chapters how several of the dominating discourses offered to teachers deserve critical attention because they contribute to relationship problems that teachers experience as stressful.

This thesis is an argument for a 'discursive turn' in relationship practices in the classroom as well as in restorative practices. Constructionism and discourse theory provide both a critique to

individualism and individual psychology as well as guidelines for an inclusive interactional model that is able to respectfully manage diverse views. Gergen (1985) points out that constructionism moves the project of social science from individuals to the social, from inside to outside. Its focus is on the moral and political capacity of persons rather than on their social control. This matches the objectives of both the collaborative relationship paradigm that schools are reaching for as well as the principles of RP. In addition, a discursive view of relationships centralises the process of conversation as a tool of creating preferred identities and respectful relationships. Conversations occupy a central place both in RP processes and in inclusive classrooms (and, of course, in human interaction more generally). I will show how a discursive approach can provide specific relationship principles and conversational moves that are more suitable for classroom use because they are not invariant multi-step processes like currently used RP conversations. Rather, a discursive approach provides teachers with tools that help them respond to the unique characteristics and requirements of a specific interaction. These tools also make it easier to attend to the process of any conversation, in ways that maintain respect and manage difference without interrupting the flow of a lesson but nevertheless reducing the negative effects of intense emotional responses. Discursively informed conversations also increase attention to the moral aspects of an interaction so they can be used to develop both teachers and students as moral agents, which is an objective of the Curriculum. I will show how such conversations sensitise teachers to the ethics of their practices along with supporting their clarification of their values and identities.

1.8 Research questions and the organisation of the thesis

I have sought answers to the following two research questions:

1. Is a critical discursive framework and the discursive relationship practices that it proposes useful for improving teachers' well-being and/or changing their relationship practices?
2. Can a critical discursive framework provide new perspectives for teachers, when used for reflecting on and for arriving at a different understanding of relationships in the classroom?

I introduced a discursive approach to conversations and reflection to 39 teachers in two schools in a series of workshops and focus group sessions. The focus groups had a multiple function of skill practice and data generation through inviting teachers to reflect on and to discuss their experiences of the newly learnt discursive relationship practices. The teachers also shared their concerns and talked about conflict situations that were the source of considerable stress for them. The teachers' reflections and concern narratives were used as data and they were subjected to Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008) in order to identify the impact of discursive relationship practices on teachers' well-being as well as to uncover those less obvious influences in the context of their work that can undermine their relationships and ability to teach.

I will argue that being an intentional discourse user and utilising both discursively informed conversations and deconstructive reflection is not only a possible way of maintaining respectful relationships in schools. It is also restorative practice that can remedy breakdowns and conflicts on an ongoing basis, before those conflicts grow into a bigger problem. Further, the intentional use of discourses is also ethical practice as it requires a constant attention to and care for others. As such it is worthwhile to investigate it as a tool for adapting restorative conversations for use by classroom teachers not only in support of their well-being but also in support of the development of key competencies and ethical practice.

In chapter 2, I discuss the prevalence of the kind of behaviours that have long invited a range of interventions from educators and that are also responded to by restorative practices. I then introduce the findings of research on the effectiveness of RP in addressing those problems. I also present the additional findings of studies that relate not so much to reducing wrongdoing but to the positive relational outcomes that RP can achieve. These outcomes form the basis of recommendations to utilise RP more broadly, for improving the quality of the learning environment. I examine RP conversations more closely in order to identify those characteristics of their process that help achieve positive relational outcomes. In critiquing shaming theory, the most preferred theory of RP, I emphasise that its failure to theorise difference and power relationships makes it inadequate to support

the adaptation of RP processes for classroom use. I argue that it is worthwhile to investigate a different theory altogether: social constructionism and a discursive approach to identity and relationships.

In chapter 3, I describe in detail the critical discursive framework that I propose to explain relational identity and culture as well as the kind of relationship problems that might undermine teacher-student and teacher-adult relationships in schools. I demonstrate that awareness of the productive qualities of language use could help teachers pay more conscious attention to the process of their interactions, which in turn could prevent conflict. I introduce the notions of discourse, power/knowledge, positioning and agency, and I show how they can better explain than shaming both respectful and problematic ways of interacting. I situate relationship problems that undermine teachers' well-being in the identity work of teachers and students and in socially available discourses or cultural norms.

In Chapter 4 I introduce the discursive conversational and reflection practices that I taught to the research participants. I demonstrate how the conversational skills and moves of careful language use, asking questions from a not-knowing stance, externalising and repositioning, already used in narrative therapy by therapists, could be adapted and transported for classroom use as one-step responses that can address the specific characteristics of each interaction. I also show possible applications of deconstructive reflection that I claim could improve teachers' well-being, by providing different understandings of their own professional identity, relationships and the culture of their school.

In chapter 5, I locate the study in those critical, discursive, interpretive and performative traditions of research that claim to contribute to critical conversations and debates about issues. I describe a more formal, systematic use of deconstruction, Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, as my data analysis method and as suitable to arrive at new understandings. I also locate the professional development that I facilitated for research participants in those performative traditions that contribute to storying identity and ethics. I promote this approach as especially appropriate for places, such as schools, where complexity can easily unsettle the markers of certainty. I describe how I used focus groups for multiple purposes of professional development, data

generation and supervision and how the reflecting team process adapted from narrative counselling helped manage these multiple functions and my multiple relationships with the research participants. I outline my method of introducing a discursive approach to relationship practices to the teachers of two schools as professional development, along with focus group discussions and the criteria that I used to select which concern and distress narratives of teachers to use as data. I discuss the ethical dilemmas and challenges of the research process.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 are the data presentation and analysis chapters. I show how teachers took on both conversation and reflection processes, as well as how the discursive explanations of relationship trouble helped to make sense of the problems that teachers brought to their focus group discussions. Chapter 6 introduces the findings about the effects of different conversation skills on teachers' capacity to stay in dialogue with difficult students, colleagues and parents and to change their emotional responses to stressful situations. Chapters 7 and 8 present the teachers' concern and distress narratives and my deconstructive readings of those. The narratives are representative of problematic positionings in discourses that undermine teachers' well being. Chapter 7 provides examples of how multiple positionings can produce problems for teachers' own subjectification as well as their interactions with students and adults. In Chapter 8 I demonstrate how some specific discourses of the wider cultural context can be complicit in producing relationship problems.

Chapter 9 discusses the findings and the most significant effect of the conversational and reflection skills: the support that they can provide for developing a clear sense of teachers' identity and their moral agency. I provide arguments for discourse knowledge as a tool of changing teacher's interactions as well as their conceptualisation and understanding of the conditions that undermine their work. I describe specific discourses that deconstructive readings have exposed as complicit in placing teachers and students in opposition and in undermining teachers' well-being. They deserve critical attention because teachers use these discourses for their identity development. I discuss the implications of the findings for teacher reflection, the choice of preventative relational strategies in the classroom

and school culture. In conclusion I argue that a discursive approach to relationships is also restorative practice as it can support the development of teachers' capacity to manage the complexity of their work.

CHAPTER 2 Restorative practice: A response to relationship problems or a paradigm of respectful relationships

In this chapter I will first present qualitative and quantitative evidence about the prevalence of those problematic behaviours in NZ and elsewhere that are responded to by both punitive and restorative measures. I review the results of some large scale evaluative studies of RP that show reductions in wrongdoing and the use of disciplinary measures. However, I also wish to draw attention to the additional findings of these same studies, which support the potential of restorative interactions to improve relationships and to change the school culture. I argue that it is the capacity of restorative conversations to achieve relationship success that also makes them a significant strategy of supporting current school priorities of inclusion and relationship skill teaching. This study explores the relational success of RP, which has not been the specific focus of previous investigations. It also aims to arrive at a better understanding of how restorative interactions achieve positive relational outcomes. I identify what components and characteristics of restorative conversations are likely to produce relationship success and how their underpinning theory can account for those. I conclude this chapter with a critique of re-integrative shaming, which, I claim, cannot adequately describe how restorative interactions work. This critique forms the basis of my arguments for the usefulness of investigating a different theoretical approach, which is also a departure of my project from previous studies. I propose that social constructionism is worthwhile to explore as a theory of relationship, because it can better explain than shaming how to produce and reproduce the kind of conversations that are likely to improve relationships and to enhance the learning environment.

2.1 Some reasons for introducing RP into schools

2.1.1 Deteriorating classroom environments

Certain news items in the media echo the sentiments and exacerbate the desperation of those teachers, parents and members of the public who

think that there has been an overall decline in respectful teacher-student relationships. Titles in the *Dominion Post*, a NZ daily newspaper, such as “New rules needed for classroom violence” and “Bruises testify to teachers’ fears” (Williamson 2007a; Williamson 2007b) support a general perception that this problem is caused by deteriorating student behaviours and increasing violence. Expressions of desperation are also becoming more and more common among teachers that I speak to. News items about extreme crimes, such as murder, committed by youth are often used to validate such feelings (Guardian, 29 November 2000; Daily Telegraph, 17 April 2002 cited in Wearmouth et al., 2005, p. 14). The stabbing of a teacher by a student in Auckland two years ago and the vicious beating of a police officer by a group of secondary school students purport the views that schools are unsafe places and that young people constitute a threat to the social order. This kind of attention to young people certainly plays into the hands and strengthens the positions of zero tolerance advocates, who demand more serious punishments for misbehaving students and dismiss restorative practice as a soft option.

While media portrayals of violent classrooms and young people can be easily dismissed as sensationalist, it is harder to ignore the arguments of teachers’ unions that behaviour problems are on the increase. In New Zealand, the Post Primary Teachers’ Association (PPTA), the union for secondary teachers, continues to draw attention to disruptive behaviours and sees an urgent need to address the issue of ‘high risk’ students who undermine teachers’ ability to teach and students’ ability to learn (PPTA Executive, 2008). The Association notes that overseas secondary school unions, such as the National Union of Teachers in the UK and the Australian Education Union, also report increasing problems with student behaviour (PPTA, 2008). The PPTA Annual Conferences in 2006 and 2008 devoted significant attention to teacher and student safety, describing classrooms as disorderly and unsafe. They considered violence and disruptive behaviours to be the greatest stressors for teachers, because they take up an enormous amount of time and they negatively affect other students (ibid). The PPTA proposed that diversity and increasingly heterogeneous classrooms were the major source of behaviour problems and disruptions. This view is validated by Didaskalou and Millward

(2004), who found classrooms to be less disruptive in Greece than in the UK. They suggested that greater homogeneity or a lesser degree of diversity made it easier to create respectful classrooms in Greece, where there was a narrower range of competing value systems and attitudes and a greater acceptance of traditional authority figures, such as teachers. However, greater diversity and the tension of competing value systems in the UK were seen to increase the likelihood of students challenging and undermining teacher authority. The PPTA (2008) urges the Ministry to fund pro-social programmes that could have a beneficial impact not only on high risk students but on schools and society as well. Restorative practice is seen as one such strategy.

The evaluation of the effectiveness of a restorative justice pilot program in 26 schools in England and Wales (Youth Justice Board, 2005) provides both qualitative and quantitative evidence for teachers' perceptions of deteriorating student behaviours. The following response describes an increase in disruptive behaviours and disrespectful interactions:

It is my experience from attending head teacher conferences that heads are reporting that although there is not a rise in top-level misbehaviour, there has been a big rise in lower-level disruption. Pupils are less likely to take an order from a teacher without back chat, concentration levels are slipping and verbal abuse such as swearing are all on the increase. Pupil behaviour is different than what it was in the past and teachers need new strategies to cope with this. Their authority is less respected. (Head teacher, secondary school). p. 13

Forty-nine percent of teachers in the same survey said that behaviours got worse over the previous year. Staff ratings of pupil behaviour showed that a fifth of teachers believed students were generally not well or badly behaved. Seventy-nine percent of teachers reported that they had lost more than ten percent of their teaching time dealing with behaviour problems during lessons and more than a quarter reported that they lost a third or more of their teaching time due to problems with student behaviour. Dalley-Trim (2005) provides powerful transcripts of recorded classroom interactions from four Year 9 classes in Australia, most of which are corrections and invitations to responsibility by the teacher in response to disruptions. A small minority of students seems to be able to define the classroom culture and to take up most of the teacher's time. The teacher, "Mr Jack" is unable to do as he has planned and would desire. The only thing absent in these interactions is the work of teaching English, the subject timetabled for study. Anecdotal

accounts of teachers' subjective views, media perceptions and the stance of teachers' unions paint a grim picture of the context, which restorative practice has been called on to change. In the following, I review the extent of those two issues that frequently invite restorative responses: the behaviours that are classified as bullying and the inequitable use of punitive measures, such as stand-downs and suspensions.

2.1.2 The prevalence of problematic behaviours

The problematic behaviours that are qualified by large scale surveys as a source of distress for both students and teachers have been investigated under the collective name of 'bullying'. Rendering a range of behaviours under one category presents a problem for the interpretation of the data available as there seems to be no agreed definition of the term. Olweus (1993) defined bullying behaviours more broadly as the abuse of power through verbal or physical aggression and domination. The National Secondary School Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey (Fleming et al., 2007) is more specific and it lists a range of behaviours that constitute bullying:

when a student or group of students say nasty and unpleasant things to another student, or the student is hit, kicked, threatened, pushed or shoved around, or when a group of students completely ignore somebody and leave them out of things on purpose (p. 19).

Stand-down and suspension statistics add physical violence, verbal assault, continual disobedience and drug and weapon offences to the mix of problematic behaviours that interrupt and undermine teaching and learning (Ministry of Education, 2010). The students that I talk to daily consider teasing, put-downs, gossiping or rumour spreading to be the major causes of their distress, while my colleagues find it very difficult to deal with students who intentionally sabotage the flow of an activity. Cremin (2003) questions the reliability of the available quantitative evidence precisely because of the variations in definition. Cowie, Hutson, Jennifer & Myers (2008) note the absence of systematic data collection by schools, which can make it difficult to decide to what extent the violence and problematic behaviours presented as evidence describe the reality of classrooms.

Though there are inconsistencies in definitions and the process of data collection, surveys of students in the UK, Australia and NZ are in agreement

that bullying is widespread in schools and it affects both teachers' and students' sense of well-being and safety. Beinart, Anderson, Lee & Utting (2002), based on a survey of fourteen thousand English, Scottish and Welsh students aged eleven to sixteen years, report that eight percent of the youngest and nineteen percent of the oldest boys in the sample admitted to attacking someone with the intent to seriously hurt them. The National Secondary School Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey (Fleming, et al., 2007), which questioned 9699 randomly selected Y9-13 students from 114 schools in New Zealand, claims that half of male students and over a third of female students perpetrated physical abuse against someone in the previous year. Different studies provide different figures for the proportion of students who claim to have been bullied at least once or not frequently. In the UK these figures range from seventy five percent of all students in a sample of almost five thousand (Glover, Gough, Johnson & Cartwright, 2000) to half of the students surveyed (Katz, Buchanan & Bream 2001). A comparatively much lower percentage, twenty one percent of students claimed to have been bullied in the secondary schools that participated in a restorative pilot project (Youth Justice Board, 2005). In Australia half of the students (Morrison, 2001a), while in NZ a third of all students reported being bullied (Fleming et al., 2007). The proportion of students who are severely and persistently bullied ranges from ten percent (Katz et al., 2001) to seven percent (Glover et al, 2000) in the UK and nine percent of boys and five percent of girls in NZ (Fleming et al., 2007). In NZ about half of all students, fifty one percent of males and forty percent of females, have been on the receiving end of some kind of physical violence, either hit or physically hurt by others once or twice in the previous year (ibid, 2007). According to the same study, about twenty percent of students did not feel safe at school. It is not only students who suffer from the effects of bullying. The PPTA reported that almost a third of teachers surveyed experienced or witnessed some form of minor bullying from students daily or weekly and two thirds reported more serious forms of bullying, though less frequent, within a school year (Benefield, undated; Te Whaiti, 2006). In England and Wales, more than eighty five percent of staff reported being sworn at by pupils in the previous

month (Youth Justice Board, 2005). These figures seem to validate media and teacher perceptions.

These problematic behaviours have enjoyed intense attention from educators since the 90s, when a range of social skills, conflict resolution and anti-bullying programmes were introduced into schools (Cohen, 1995; Robinson & Maines, 1998; Stacey & Robinson, 1997). These programmes were not only expected to reduce those behaviours but they were to equip students with the relationship skills that would help them manage the collaborative interactions of inclusive classrooms. Bullying has not only been seen as undermining of such interactions and creating a barrier to inclusion and learning. Researchers have identified its other, potentially far-reaching, effects on the educational opportunities and mental well-being of students (Fleming et al., 2007). The grim consequences of bullying for offenders have also been pointed out. In the absence of positive connections with their schools, these students are more likely to get into trouble later in life (Morrison, 2001a). Not all responses to bullying and other problematic behaviours focus on skill teaching, as social skills and conflict resolution programmes do. These behaviours are often punished by the disciplinary sanctions of stand-downs and suspensions, which many educators believe curtail the educational opportunities of offending students. In addition to reducing the widespread prevalence of problematic behaviours, RP has also been expected to offer an alternative to these measures.

2.1.3 The disproportionate use of punitive sanctions

The punitive sanctions of stand-downs, suspensions and expulsions, though acknowledged as necessary by some as a deterrent, have weighed heavily on the conscience of and have been criticised by educators who are serious about inclusion. As they require the formal removal of students from school for a number of days at a time or for longer periods (for the NZ definitions of stand-downs and suspensions see Ministry of Education, 2010), they have been viewed as contradictory to the inclusive policies and practices that have been implemented in schools in the last two decades or so. Yet, these are the strategies that many schools use in response to the problematic behaviours that they perceive as undermining of teaching and learning. The three leading causes of stand-downs in NZ are continual disobedience, which

accounts for almost a third of all stand-downs, followed by physical assaults on other students and verbal assaults on staff (Ministry of Education, 2010). Publications of increasing numbers of stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and drop-outs in the UK, NZ and Australia (DENI, 1998; DfEE, 1996; DfES, 2003; Drewery, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2003a, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2010; SEED, undated; Smyth & Hattam, 2001, 2004) have certainly highlighted that there is a significant group of students in schools who struggle to engage and participate. The same statistics also paint a gloomy picture of lost educational opportunities that are considered vital for both the social participation and better life chances of students (OECD, 2000, 2006). Norton, Sanderson, Booth & Stroombergen (2000) suggest that additional years of schooling can have an estimated five to ten percent effect on people's incomes later. The risk of unemployment for those who have no school qualifications or only Year 11 qualifications is higher than for those who leave school with Year 12 and 13 qualifications (Ministry of Education, 2007c). Low attendance has been linked to underperformance as well as to further adverse effects on achievement, qualifications and socialisation (Munn, et al., 2004) including unemployment (Breen, 1991) and delinquency (Fahy Bates, 1996). Celia Lashlie, (earlier a manager of a prison), who has researched boys' engagement with school, suggests that keeping boys at school longer might reduce their chances of arriving at the prison gate (Lashlie, 2005).

Increasing numbers of stand-downs and suspensions registered as a concern on the radar of the NZ Ministry of Education (MOE) in the late 90s. At the time the MOE reported worrying increases in numbers of suspensions and exclusions of NZ children from schools, with suspension numbers doubling between 1995 and 1998 (Ministry of Education, 2003a). In addition to an increase in the overall numbers of the use of these sanctions, the NZ statistics also demonstrated that minority students, especially Māori were more likely to be the target of these disciplinary procedures. This problem is not confined to NZ as studies in the US and in the UK also highlighted the racial and socio-economic disparities in the use of similar punitive measures (Cowie et al., 2008; Maxwell, 2007). These disparities have been aptly called the 'discipline gap' (Monroe, 2005) and the 'colour of discipline' (Skiba et al., 2002). In the UK black, African Caribbean, gypsy and special needs students have been

overrepresented in exclusion statistics (Cowie et al., 2008). Analysing the disciplinary data of eleven thousand American middle school students for the 1994-1995 academic year, Skiba et al. (2002) have found that black males made up almost seventy percent of all suspensions and eighty percent of all exclusions. Almost half of all black males were referred for some sort of behaviour problem as opposed to only twenty one percent of white males.

The stand-down, suspension and exclusion figures for the ten years that include 2000 to 2009 testify that the racial disparities that were a concern in the 90s still exist in NZ (Ministry of Education, 2010). The data for each of these years reflect a consistent overrepresentation of Māori students as the targets of these responses. Both Māori males and females were approximately three times more likely to be stood down and four times more likely to be suspended than their European peers during this period. Though Māori suspension rates reduced by 2009, they still remained more than three times higher than the numbers for European students (14 versus 4.1 per thousand students). Māori students were excluded at more than three times the rate of European students each year in the same period. Expulsions were about three times higher for Māori than for Europeans in 2000, but their expulsion rates reduced to less than half by 2009. Pasifika students had the second highest rate of stand-downs for the same period, in some years about twice the rate of Europeans, while Asian students had the lowest rates. There has been an overall decrease in the number of stand-downs for all groups after 2006. The average suspension rates also reduced for most groups between 2000 and 2009. The PPTA suggests (2008) that reductions might be due to schools feeling pressured by the Ministry of Education to cut suspensions.

It is not only the racial disparities that have stayed constant over the last decade in NZ. Disobedience, physical assaults on other students and verbal assaults on staff have continued to be the leading causes for the use of these measures for more than ten years. This raises the question whether the punitive sanctions of stand-downs and suspensions are an effective strategy for reducing problematic behaviours and eliminating racial inequities. Strategies that focus on relationships are seen as preferable alternatives to the punitive sanctions and RP is considered one such alternative. In response

to the concerns that highlighted the anti-inclusive nature and the racial inequities in the use of these disciplinary consequences, the NZ Ministry of Education introduced the Suspension Reduction Initiative in 2001, which has since become the Student Engagement Initiative (Ministry of Education, 2005). These initiatives both have promoted and supported the use of RP in participating schools, which managed to successfully reduce suspension rates by almost forty percent in 2006 (Ministry of Education, 2007a).

The expectation that restorative practice would reduce both the problematic behaviours classified as bullying and the disciplinary sanctions that they attract has accompanied the introduction and trial of RP not only in NZ but in several other countries as well. This expectation might explain why many schools took on RP worldwide after the first restorative conference was held in an Australian school in 1994 (Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001). Since then conferences have been used on a large scale in countries such as Canada (Calhoun, 2000), England and Wales (Youth Justice Board, 2005) and New Zealand (Adair & Dixon, 2000; Buckley & Maxwell, 2007; The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003; Winslade, Drewery & Hooper, 2000). The Safer Saner Schools Programme now operates in about forty schools in countries such as Australia, Canada, the US, Hungary, the Netherlands, Scotland and South Africa (Chmelynski, 2005). The potential for RP to produce a reduction in wrongdoing is still part of the argument of those who recommend it as a tool of solving disruptions to learning in the classroom and many schools attach considerable hope to these practices for the same reasons (Drewery, 2007). Overworked and stressed teachers also want to find immediate solutions to what many see as deteriorating learning environments. This focus on quick fixes, though understandable and justified by the stresses of difficult classrooms, is also supported by evidence-based practice (Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Canella, 2004; St. Pierre, 2000, 2002), which demands numbers to justify any investment in training and professional learning. Teachers, principals and, to an extent, education ministries are placed at the junction of the pressures to solve behaviour problems and to provide proof for the solutions used. This, I believe, explains somewhat why they find solace in numbers that prove the effectiveness of RP by the reduction of something, whether it is behaviour problems, disciplinary

referrals or suspensions. It is such numbers that I will now review from some evaluative studies to see if restorative practice has lived up to the expectations of educators.

2.2 A review of the findings about the effectiveness of RP

2.2.1 The reduction of problematic behaviours and punitive sanctions

In the earliest introductions of RP into schools during the 1990s, restorative practice was applied mainly as a responsive strategy and it was 'reactive and crisis driven work' (McCluskey, 2010) as opposed to serving a broader agenda of transforming the whole community and changing the school culture. The initial implementation of RP was tied to the discipline processes of schools and behaviour management, rather than to their pastoral care obligations. Such a focus on trying to reduce bullying and suspensions responded to valid concerns about two different groups of students: those who were harmed as a result of the actions of their peers and those who had either harmed others or interrupted their learning. If schools wanted to maintain their credibility as inclusive institutions, they had to find strategies that catered for the needs of both groups. Restorative practice was seen as one such strategy.

There is no conclusive evidence that RP can reduce the problematic behaviours that are classified as bullying and that are seen as disruptive of the learning environment. Part of the problem is that different studies use different measures to gauge the pre- and post-intervention extent of bullying or disruptive behaviours. These measures include the frequency of disciplinary referrals, the number of disruptive behaviours and playground incidents as well as different methods of shame management. It is impossible to tell from the data what problematic behaviours invite disciplinary referrals and which behaviours are qualified as playground incidents. The evidence is also inconclusive in regards to whether it is minor disruptions or serious physical violence that can be effectively reduced by RP. Bearing this in mind, the positive effects of RP on bullying and other disruptive behaviours can still be considered significant. Some of the available quantitative data tell about fewer disciplinary referrals to senior staff or out of school (Chmelynski, 2005; Kane et al., 2007; McCluskey et al., 2008a), a fall

in the number of aggressive behaviours (Queensland Department of Education, 1998) and fewer playground incidents (Kane et al., 2007). Restorative conferences lead to significant reductions in the number of reoffending after conferencing (Calhoun & Daniels, 2008; Cameron & Thorsborne, 1999). Almost one third of adults and sixty five percent of students in a NZ trial of restorative conferencing thought that re-offending reduced (Adair & Dixon, 2000). The long term use of RP has yielded some impressive results in some schools. Zammit (2001) presents the example of a school in Arizona, which reduced the number of referrals for discipline between 1998 and 2001 from more than 3,700 to 625. Physical assaults and fights in the same school decreased from 841 to 18. Mirsky (2003) publishes disciplinary results from three schools in a pilot project with a combined student population of more than two thousand. Over two years all three schools decreased the number of disruptive behaviours, in some instances by more than fifty percent, after regularly including relationship and team building activities and circles in their subject lessons. The number of disciplinary referrals was reduced by more than thirty percent. Chmelynski (2005) reports that disciplinary referrals and incidents of disruptive behaviours were reduced by approximately fifty percent between 1999 and 2003 in Palysades High School in the US, which piloted the Safer Saner Schools restorative programme (Mirsky, 2003).

Several positive effects of restorative practice have also been demonstrated in alternative educational settings, such as residential group homes and day treatment programmes for at-risk youth who have committed criminal offences (Negrea, 2007). A survey of more than nine hundred young people in Buxton in the US found they had more positive regard for police officers than when they entered the programme. They have also gained in pro-social values, measured by a willingness to take responsibility for their actions rather than blame others. Their rate of reoffending also reduced significantly (Mirsky & Wachtel, 2007). Restorative protocols, or similar community panel meeting structures, have been utilised in the youth criminal justice system in New Zealand as well. Family Group Conferences were the first alternative to traditional, more adversarial legal processes, which

resulted in lower reoffending and reconviction rates for young offenders (Maxwell & Morris, 2006).

Morrison (2002) investigated the effects of the Responsible Citizenship Programme on the shame management of primary school students. She proposed that adaptive shame management, when shame is discharged effectively, is associated with a reduced likelihood of bullying, while maladaptive shame management maintains or increases it. She found a slight increase in the use of adaptive shame management and a decrease in the use of maladaptive shame management among the primary school students who were taught conflict resolution as part of the Responsible Citizenship Programme. The Youth Justice Board (2005) found no statistically significant differences between programme and non-programme schools in attitudes and levels of victimisation though programme school pupils showed more improvement in attitudes. Programme schools had nine percent fewer staff who reported that behaviours got worse, while twelve percent more staff reported worse behaviours in non-programme schools.

Restorative practice has also been the main strategy of a number of projects internationally that set out to reduce suspensions and exclusions. Some schools that introduced RP managed to find alternative ways of addressing unacceptable behaviours and they either have not used suspensions and exclusions for years (Maxwell & Buckley, 2007) or they have stopped using these sanctions while piloting RP in their schools (Youth Justice Board, 2005). The schools in the Waikato University trial retained students after suspension at school and more than seventy percent of the adults and just under seventy percent of students considered conferencing to be an appropriate way of dealing with issues (Adair & Dixon, 2000). In some schools in the US the use of RP produced impressive results, with suspension numbers being halved (Chmelynski, 2005) or reduced by as much as thirty percent (Mirsky, 2005). Others reported fewer exclusions (McCluskey, 2010) or a three fold reduction in truancy rates (Zammit, 2001).

The Youth Justice Board (2005) noted that in their evaluation of the effectiveness of RP it was impossible to ascertain its impact on exclusions as schools did not exclude during the pilot of introducing restorative practices into English and Welsh schools. If a similar evaluation were carried out in

NZ, the results might also be skewed as NZ schools can allow students to attend lessons during a stand-down (Ministry of Education, 2010) and they might not include such internal stand-downs in their official data. Nevertheless, it is the reduction of disruptive and harmful behaviours and the number of disciplinary measures that most schools and ministries of education expect from the use of restorative practice. These are justified and legitimate outcomes that schools are hoping for. However, the inconsistent quantitative evidence suggests that the reduction of wrongdoing, while important, should not be the single most important objective of introducing RP into a school. I believe some of the additional findings of evaluation studies also deserve attention and further investigation. They highlight the potential of RP to improve relationships and to manage relationship challenges. It is these relationship findings that I will discuss next.

2.2.2 Improving relationships and satisfaction

The qualitative evidence collected by evaluation studies provides support for various relationship successes or positive relationship outcomes that RP can achieve. These studies present the survey and interview responses of the teachers, students and parents who participated in some larger scale implementations of RP (Adair & Dixon, 2000; Calhoun & Daniels, 2008; Cameron & Thorsborne, 1999; Kane et al., 2007; Kane, Lloyd, McCluskey, Riddell, Stead & Weedon, 2008; Maxwell & Buckley, 2007; Maxwell & Morris, 2002; McCluskey et al., 2008a, 2008b; McCluskey, 2010; The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003; Queensland Department of Education, 1996; Youth Justice Board, 2005). The perceived benefits of RP relate to the improvement of the overall environment and relationships, the satisfaction with outcomes or the changed emotional responses of participants to harmful events and increased wrongdoer accountability and moral engagement. Some participants of restorative projects reported that they felt the overall school culture and climate improved and became more respectful or calmer (Maxwell & Buckley, 2007; Morrison, 2002; Youth Justice Board, 2005), with greater mutual respect among staff (Chmelynski, 2005; Kane et al., 2007) or a positive change in the overall atmosphere (McCluskey, 2010). RP also improved collaboration among staff, providing opportunities to learn from colleagues through discussions and observations,

which helped develop better understandings of each other (Kane et al., 2007).

These positive changes in the learning environment were attributed to improved relationships between the different participants of restorative processes. Some schools had better relationships with parents as a result or parents felt they were more valued (Kane et al., 2007). In other places, the wrongdoers felt increased connectedness to their school (Cameron & Thorsborne, 1999; McCold & Wachtel, 2003). Victims felt they had a voice and they appreciated to be actively involved in finding solutions (McCluskey, 2010). Falconer (2010) suggests that victims and offenders can establish a connection. He recounts the experiences of an elderly burglary victim, who discovered during a restorative meeting that the offender of the crime against her was a 'pathetic' drug user. This took away her anxiety and resulted in her employing the young man to work in her garden.

Participants were often able to change their negative emotional responses to an event that caused harm or resulted in conflict. Restorative conference participants reported high satisfaction levels with the process (Adair & Dixon, 2000; Cameron & Thorsborne, 1999; Youth Justice Board, 2005). Satisfaction might have been associated with the specific outcomes of conferences, such as both victims and parents feeling they were heard (Kane et al., 2007). Over ninety percent of adults and over seventy percent of students felt they could speak freely in the Waikato pilot. Almost all participants, ninety seven percent, in the same project felt the process was respectful and two thirds felt better about the problem (Adair & Dixon, 2000). In some instances, parents of victims shifted their evaluation of the situation from wanting to punish offenders to appreciating the empowerment of their own child (McCluskey, 2010). Teachers noted that they used less confrontational discipline after reassessing their practices. In addition, they found working restoratively not only moving but a more fulfilling way of being a teacher (ibid, 2010).

The capacity of the restorative process to increase greater wrongdoer responsibility and accountability might also have had something to do with overall satisfaction levels. Ninety two percent of restorative conferences resulted in an agreement and ninety six percent of those agreements were

upheld in the twenty six schools that opted into the restorative pilot project in England and Wales (Youth Justice Board, 2005). This project replicated the high compliance rates with agreements in an earlier Australian study (Cameron & Thorsborne, 1999; Queensland Department of Education, 1996). Wrongdoers were likely to develop a better understanding of the effects of their actions on others (Falconer, 2010; Queensland Department of Education, 1996; Mirsky & Wachtel, 2007). They also found the process fair and they appreciated not being told off or shouted at but instead involved in finding long term solutions (McCluskey, 2010). Restorative processes were also seen to be aligned with some traditional, indigenous methods of dealing with wrongdoing or to be adaptable enough to incorporate different cultural protocols. This was noted in the NZ context, where Māori have traditionally used meetings that are similar to restorative conferences with a focus on restoring balance and harmony in relationships (Bateman & Berryman, 2008).

2.2.3 Implementation and relationship challenges

In addition to the above benefits for the overall learning environment and relationships, the various implementations of RP have brought into educators' awareness some of the challenges that are likely to be presented by the change process that is set into motion by the introduction of RP into a school. Implementation success varied in different schools, with some schools significantly changing their practices, while others either incorporated RP into their existing procedures or did not change at all (Kane et al., 2007). Success was more patchy in secondary schools and greater where there was a whole school approach and a focus on school ethos and culture change rather than using the processes for discipline. Conferencing alone was not considered to be sufficient to affect the whole school (McCluskey et al. 2008b; The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003). Leadership and training were seen as two important foundations that successful implementation could be built on. Teachers valued institutional support and they thought it was difficult to incorporate the practices into school policies and existing systems where leaders did not have a vision or were not prepared to support colleagues, (Adair & Dixon, 2000; Morrison, 2002; Youth Justice Board, 2005). Quality training and enough time given for

training were considered essential for teachers to become competent in restorative skills (Adair & Dixon, 2000; Kane et al., 2007; McCluskey et al., 2008b, McCluskey, 2010; The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003). Without effective training and sufficient time provided for it, teachers were likely to resist the practices as yet another of the many initiatives that come and go or dismiss them as unsuitable for engaging with students in busy classrooms (Kane et al., 2007). It was also noted that staff needed to be prepared to change and have a willingness to interrogate their practices, reflecting on and exploring their values and beliefs especially when the changes they wanted to achieve related to the ethos of the school (Kane et al., 2007; McCluskey et al., 2008b; Munn, Lloyd & Cullen, 2000).

The diversity of views within staff has been identified as a problem and a challenge for introducing RP. Views and practices that supported a more punitive disciplinary system and ones that valued inclusion and restoration could be the sources of considerable tensions within staff (Cavanagh, 2009; Kane et al., 2007). Blood and Thorsborne (2006) associated this tension with the different, but inevitable phases of implementing a change process. They connected the different speed of uptake by different teachers not so much to the diverse views that existed among staff but to teachers' different attitudes to a change initiative, distinguishing early adopters from 'laggards'. The transition from behaviour management to relationship management was not equally smooth for all either. Coetzee (2005) reported the resistance of some South African teachers towards RP, who believed that the removal of corporal punishment in 1996 disempowered them when dealing with difficult behaviours. Calhoun & Daniels (2008) suggest that without clarifying and coming to a shared understanding of important concepts, such as accountability, restorative practices can become another form of discipline and they can lose their distinct characteristics. This means that they are also unable to deliver all the benefits that teachers expect of them. McCluskey et al. (2008b) consider the reconciliation of traditional and new ways of conducting relationships to be one of the major challenges of introducing restorative practices.

The challenges identified so far relate to either the practical or ideological aspects of the change process that is put into motion by taking on

RP as a new project or whole school professional learning. I am mentioning these two aspects separately here, though I believe they are closely intertwined. The success of the practical implementation of RP will be dependant on how closely the dominant values, which the teachers of a school align themselves with, match the underpinning philosophy of RP. The practicalities that schools need to address include the delivery of training, time allocation and collegial support, so they are related to school organisation and funding. The ideological challenges are likely to be presented by the dissonance between the values underpinning RP and those strongly held views among staff that support punitive methods of discipline. The findings about the tensions of views suggest that the introduction of RP invites teachers to assess or reassess their educational philosophy. It requires a clarification of individual teachers' and a school's positions on both the underpinning principles of RP as well as the kind of relationship paradigm that they deem conducive to teaching and learning. It requires a discussion between teachers and managers about their values and beliefs as they relate to the notions that lie at the heart of restorative practice. McCluskey (2010) suggests that the notions of power, control, reparation and restoration are especially important to address. I would add that the notions of discipline, accountability, respect and care are equally significant. Teachers' positions on either of these issues have implications not only for the introduction of RP but for the quality of teacher-student interactions in the classroom as well. I believe educators' stance on these notions is also defined by what they consider to be the role of teachers and students, so they are central to teaching and learning. I will show in the data chapters how some of the conversational moves within a discursive approach to RP can facilitate teachers' reflections and discussions about some of these concepts.

In summary, the findings about the contribution of RP to improving relationships and the satisfaction of different participants suggest that restorative processes have something to offer to the project of creating the relational resources that are conducive to teaching and learning. They provide support for those practitioners and researchers who have called for a shift of emphasis from behaviour problem reduction to prevention and proactive work by drawing attention to the importance of behaviour

education (Morrison, 2002), culture change (Blood & Thorsborne, 2006; Morrison, Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Drewery, 2007, 2010) and the significance of the process of every conversation in a school for respectful relationships (Drewery, 2009; Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2010). The findings of increased wrongdoer accountability highlight the potential of the processes to support the development of students' moral competencies, which is an important objective of the NZ Curriculum. However, some of the findings also reveal that differences of opinions and values can be the source of tensions within staff and they can also present obstacles to overcome during the introduction of RP as a new initiative.

Communication skills supportive of managing difference and ensuring the participation and contribution of students and teachers in heterogeneous communities constitute the most important relational skills of a collaborative relationship paradigm that schools need in order to realise inclusion and citizenship education. The relational findings of the evaluative studies of RP report participant satisfaction (Cameron & Thorsborne, 1999; Maxwell & Buckley, 2007; McCluskey, et al., 2008a, 2008b; The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003; Queensland Department of Education, 1996; Youth Justice Board, 2005), feeling heard and respected during the process (Adair & Dixon, 2000; Kane et al., 2007; McCluskey, 2010), and very different people, including victims and wrongdoers, parents and authorities or colleagues, being able to build positive connections and to improve collaboration (Falconer, 2010; Kane et al., 2007). These findings suggest that there is something about the shape or process of restorative conversations that can produce such positive relational outcomes. They also provide support for the potential of restorative conversations, or conversations with similar characteristics, to become a strategy of inclusive and respectful learning communities. Managing diversity, different views and values along with the interactions of the different contributors and participants of the teaching and learning process is one of the most important, yet possibly most difficult tasks in today's schools. McCluskey et al. (2008a) suggest that restorative practice offers processes and structures to successfully carry out this task, which makes RP compatible with current school priorities.

If we accept that schools are complex institutions then there will always be competing ideas, tensions and personal disagreements. Restorative practices

are seen as offering ways to manage these fairly and positively, to prevent conflict and harm but, importantly, still allow the expression of difference (p. 211).

In the following, I will examine the structure and shape of restorative conversations in order to better understand how these conversations achieve relational success and how they might support current school priorities of managing 'competing ideas and tensions' and the 'expression of difference'. I wish to identify those components and features of the process that help produce and reproduce interactions that leave participants feeling satisfied, respected and heard. A better understanding of these conversations could help their adaptation for the classroom and it would increase their positive contribution to the learning environment and teachers' well-being.

2.3 Explaining the relational success of restorative conversations

2.3.1 The structure and shape of restorative conversations

There is a variety of works that schools and teachers can draw on for a detailed description and demonstration of different types of restorative conversations and the kind of structures, conversational moves and questions they utilise (Bream Bay College, 2007; Costello, Wachtel & Wachtel, 2009; Hopkins, 2004a, 2004b, Moxon et al., 2006; The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003; Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2006a, 2006b, 2007). Most currently used restorative conversations rely on a set of specific questions. If they involve more than two participants, they are often conducted in a circle, which adds further structure to the conversation. The circle ensures that all participants' responses are heard and that no one can dominate the process by taking up more time or speaking more frequently than anyone else. This structure also guarantees that different views reflecting different moral positions can all be relatively safely articulated and admitted into the mix of perspectives that participants have about the topic discussed.

A specific set of questions keeps the focus on clarifying and coming to a shared understanding of the events that led to the conversation, along with exploring their effects on different participants and the actions required to restore relationships. The following series of questions, with minor

differences, are the most popular in NZ schools as they make up 'the script' suggested by several restorative practitioners (Moxon et al., 2006; Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Wachtel, 2007a). They include: What happened? What were you thinking? Who has been affected by what you did? What have you been thinking since? What do you need to do to make things right? The questions put forward by the Restorative Practices Development Team (2003) focus on the name of the problem that participants might use to describe the situation that led to the restorative conversation, followed by exploring the effects of the problem. However, instead of the thoughts of the wrongdoer, this process sets out to identify those personal qualities, intentions, purposes and hopes that support not only the reparation of the harm caused but the development of an alternative identity for the wrongdoer as well. The available range of currently used restorative conversations is commonly placed either on a continuum (McCold & Wachtel, 2003) or on a pyramid (Moxon et al., 2006), with less formal processes, such as restorative chats on one end of the continuum or at the bottom of the pyramid and with more complex processes, such as full restorative conferences, at the other end of the continuum or on top of the pyramid.

Restorative conversations include a low intensity process, called 'restorative chat' that is recommended for teachers to use on a regular basis in everyday interactions with students. Chats, similarly to other restorative conversations, utilise basic counselling skills of listening and questioning in a way that allows students to tell what might have happened in a conflict situation, such as a fight or argument with another student and/or disruptions during class. Chats are meant to be used straight after or close in time to the problematic event and they are meant to facilitate the quick resolution or remediation of a less serious problem such as disruptions and work avoidance in a lesson. Restorative chats can be accompanied by opportunities given to students to reflect on their wrongdoing by filling in a 'Restorative Reflection Form' either in the classroom or in a designated 'restorative' space, if the school has one, which might be used for following up on and dealing with relationship breakdowns after lessons. The purpose

of a brief restorative chat is to clarify any potential misunderstandings as well as to obtain additional information about a situation.

In the busy life of classrooms it is inevitable that situations are interpreted or judged based on assumptions and what is visible, which can undermine fairness. A brief clarifying chat may show up the mismatch between intended and interpreted actions allowing for teacher and student to carry on their relationship respectfully. It is easy for a teacher to interpret a student's talking to another student as disruption. It might be more difficult to appreciate that the talking student is actually helping the teacher and the whole class by giving some feedback to a peer who struggles to understand instructions. The student's feedback might mean the difference between relative classroom order, in which everyone can continue with their work, or the interruption of this order, if the struggling student expresses built up frustration through an angry outburst. Restorative chats also keep the sorting out of conflicts and misunderstandings in the hands of those who are part of these misunderstandings. Thus they can help avoid referrals to senior managers, which can remove authority from teachers.

The second tier of restorative conversations includes longer and slightly more complicated processes than restorative chats, such as restorative interviews, mediations, class meetings and mini restorative conferences. These are the processes that might be used to deal with more serious or recurring problems and conflicts, such as playground fights, gossip, classroom disruptions and ongoing work avoidance, bullying, disobedience and disrespect. These conversations also involve more people so adherence to a circle structure and a specific series of questions is vital because it can help manage multiple perspectives and power relationships and thus stop the meeting from getting out of control. There is no set formula for what situations warrant chats or more complex mediations, class meetings or mini conferences. Moxon et al. (2006) provide a useful list of what can be considered minor, moderate or serious behaviours (p.27). While their list can be used as a guideline, it is probably desirable that the teachers of each school negotiate their own lists. This second tier of restorative conversations, similarly to restorative chats, elicits the description of the event that upset the balance from all involved and/or affected. Following

that, the effects of the wrongdoing on everyone are explored and a plan is drawn up that outlines how reparation will be carried out to those who have been hurt. These medium level processes require more skills from the facilitator as conversations have to be sustained longer and a number of people have to be listened to, which might present a problem when emotions run high. They are also harder to fit into the daily operation of regular classrooms as they require considerable time investment for pre-meeting preparation and planning. Pre-conversation preparation and post-conversation follow up is considered just as important as the restorative conversations themselves by experienced facilitators and training providers (Moxon et al., 2006; Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003).

Second tier processes are more easily incorporated into the daily routine of deans and senior managers, who have more flexible timetables than classroom teachers. However, mini conferences and class meetings that address ongoing interruptions could be held by form teachers or subject teachers or both, who believe that it is important to involve the whole classroom community as they are affected by specific behaviours. If well run, mediations and class meetings can provide a safe place for all members of a group or class to tell their version of what has happened as well as to participate in finding ways forward. The discussion that uses the circle structure does not have to be focused on a problem. Circles can be used for sharing opinions on subject related concepts, such as discrimination, or they can support relationship-building through providing opportunities for class members to get to know each other and to learn the skills of turn-taking and listening. Some of the teachers think they cannot afford to spend time on relationship-building activities under curriculum pressures while others say they make their subject teaching more effective and easier.

Finally, the third and most formal tier of restorative conversations is the full restorative conference, when usually the family members of both wrongdoers and victims are invited along with anyone else who is affected by a person's wrongdoing. Restorative conferences follow the same steps and use the same questions as the lower tier conversations, however, the greater number of different participants makes them the lengthiest and most

resource-intensive of all restorative conversations (Calhoun & Borch, 2002). Conferences can take two to three hours and pre-conference interviews with all participants can add several additional hours to the facilitator's workload. Participants have to be informed about what to expect and coached about the rules of participation, so pre-conference preparation, including telephone calls and interviews, is also the pre-requisite of a successful conference similarly to medium level conversations (McGrath, 2002; Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2006a, 2006b; The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003; Wachtel, 2008). Conferences also end with more formal, often written and signed contracts or agreements that specify not only the commitments of wrongdoers but the tasks of supporters as well. Conferences are often facilitated by persons outside the immediate school community, such as special education advisors, community police officers or social workers. In some schools the school counsellor or another staff member facilitates them.

Many teachers who have made some form of restorative conversation an integral part of their relationship practices and interactions believe in their effectiveness and they claim they make a difference for their relationships with students. In my job as school counsellor, I have facilitated many mediations, mini and big conferences and class meetings myself. I have witnessed the restoration of teacher-student and student-student working relationships on a number of occasions. I have seen frustrated, stressed and very upset colleagues restore their satisfaction with their work along with their willingness to have another go with a student. I have witnessed students honouring the requests and meeting the expectations of their classmates after an act of serious wrongdoing. Though the conversations that I have been part of have not transformed these students magically and instantly into a different person, they restored broken dialogues and relationships that were not working or created space for further dialogues.

2.3.2 What makes restorative conversations work?

My personal experiences of the potential benefits of restorative conversations resemble those of others in a number of countries, which I described previously. However, accounts of positive outcomes such as high satisfaction levels, feeling heard and respected, greater wrongdoer accountability and strengthened connections and collaboration, are not

sufficient to answer the question of what it is about these conversations that produce those effects and how they might differ from the ones that do not. I agree with McCluskey et al. (2008a), who emphasise the capacity of restorative conversations to manage competing ideas and to allow for the expression of difference. It is this capacity of the practices and their relational success that forms the basis of recommendations that RP could be utilised more widely, for improving the quality of the learning environment rather than just for reducing wrongdoing (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Cremin, 2010; Drewery, 2007; Lane, 2005; Liebmann, 2007; McCluskey et al, 2008; Pennel, 2006; Van Ness, 2010; Varnham, 2005). Therefore, I propose here to identify what I believe are the characteristics and components of the process that, in my opinion, help achieve this.

All restorative conversations are born out of the principle of committing to respectful relationships in general and to the addressing and resolving of conflict in particular. The first characteristic that separates them from other forms of conversation is that they actually get conducted through to an endpoint rather than being abandoned halfway through. Restorative conversations require persons to stay with a difficult interaction, in other words to stay in dialogue, which might be uncomfortable, painful, embarrassing, shameful or hurtful. For many people it is often easier to avoid such difficult conversations than to have them. Their second important characteristic is that they have a structure and they rely on specific moves, which facilitators consciously adhere to. One function of the structure and the specific questions is to help participants stay with the topic as opposed to deterring from it.

The first step of the process, the question of 'what happened', focuses attention on the actions of the wrongdoer rather than him/her as a bad person. Such an emphasis is meant to avoid stigmatising, totalising and blaming and it is intended to maintain optimism about the wrongdoer's capacity for change. The second step, asking everyone about the effects of the wrongdoing, brings a moral dimension to the process. It supports the wrongdoer by giving them an understanding of the effects of their actions on others and developing empathy, which in turn can help them to be accountable for what they have done. This step also treats the wrongdoer as

a moral agent, capable of reflecting on and evaluating his actions, rather than as someone who has to be controlled externally. At the same time, the exploration of effects gives victims a voice and is intended to validate their experiences and moral positions as well. Both victim and offender are treated with respect. The last step invites everyone's contributions to the solutions, which ensures that achieving change becomes a shared, collective rather than individual responsibility. This move thus keeps attention on the relational implications and responsibilities around problems as opposed to locating problems in individuals.

The fixed structure and set of questions are instrumental in allowing the expression of difference and the managing of competing ideas and power differences. The first question that calls for the recollection of what happened ensures that everyone is able to contribute their, often contradictory, account of the same event and that they are listened to with respect. It also has the potential to counterbalance the blaming that wrongdoers are usually tempted to engage in. Their story might cease to stay the dominant story after everyone's accounts are listened to. The 'effect question' has the potential to reduce power imbalances between victims and offenders, as it makes the experiences of victims visible, which in turn might stop wrongdoers from blaming them. The previous power balance between wrongdoer and victim might also be changed in favour of the victim by the last question that invites everyone's contributions to the solutions. It gives victims and their supporters an active role in shaping the outcomes of the conversation which might be in stark contrast to their passive and powerless position while suffering abuse or bullying from the wrongdoer. Sometimes a more complex relationship between wrongdoer and victim can be identified through a restorative conversation and their respective contributions to problems can be better understood by all. In addition, the circle structure ensures equal participation and contribution because it provides everyone with a turn to tell their version of the events, their experiences of the effects and their proposed solutions. It is this structure of restorative conversations that enables the expression of diverse, often morally contradicting, perspectives and interpretations of an event.

However, the circle structure can only help manage the tensions between different views, or try to reduce the power inequities between different participants if it is well controlled by the facilitator. If participants talk out of order or take much longer to present their contributions than anyone else, it can tip the power balance. Even a well run circle might not be the perfect remedy for power imbalances. The different suggestions that participants contribute towards a possible solution might reflect biases and could make both wrongdoer and victim resist the decisions of the meeting. For example, the wrongdoer's supporters might suggest harsher consequences than the victim and their supporters, which might be readily accepted if there is an eagerness to teach the wrongdoer a lesson. Such eagerness might also leave out of an agreement the very consequences that victims suggest should be put in place in order for them to feel safe. Similarly, parents biased in favour of their own child might suggest disproportionate consequences to the wrongdoing. While the structure of restorative conversations enables the expression of difference, it is not a panacea for managing the complex power relationships and tensions that are invoked by difference.

Both the specific structure and the specific questions used in a restorative conversation seem to be important for their success. The pre-conversation preparation demonstrates a commitment to the relationships in question and it is vital to make the conversation happen. The circle structure supports the voicing of different views and it reduces power imbalances by ensuring that no one voice can dominate. The specific effect question engages participants as moral agents, while the solution question asks for their contribution to shaping their relationships after the conversation. I would identify four main characteristics of any restorative conversation which explain its relational success and participants' positive experiences: sustained dialogue, allowing the expression of difference, moral engagement and power sharing. Restorative conversations, even brief chats, are carefully organised and conducted according to rules that help keep participants in a respectful *dialogue* with each other as long as needed for a satisfactory solution. The participants commit to this dialogue, even when they disagree or have had a relationship breakdown, which means that the problems in

their relationship actually get addressed as opposed to being left to fester. The conversations allow the expression of *difference* as they invite contributions from and ensure the participation of disagreeing parties. Contributions often include: contradictory accounts of the same events, different effects the wrongdoing had on different persons, and a range of solutions that they might consider appropriate. This is unlike conversations where difference of opinion is silenced or ignored. Restorative conversations facilitate the *moral engagement* of participants, and specifically that of the wrongdoer, who is expected to understand the effects of his/her actions and offer some kind of reparation (Jenkins, 2006). The exploration of the effects of the wrongdoing on different participants also makes their moral positions visible. These three features of a restorative conversation also help reduce *power* imbalances. By power I do not mean the different physical strength of a wrongdoer and their victim, but the right to speak and a person's ideas being listened to and taken seriously. This is usually hard to manage even in interactions that do not involve conflict. Restorative conversations reduce power inequities by providing a forum for sharing diverse and contradictory views and by facilitating the active contribution of previously or otherwise passive participants.

I propose that interactions that have some of these four characteristics are more likely to achieve positive relational outcomes and they are more likely to be experienced as satisfying and respectful. I believe most people will prefer such interactions to the ones where they are told off, humiliated, blamed, not listened to, not taken seriously and not asked to contribute to any decision making. The relational success of restorative conversations can be replicated in a classroom situation if teachers can successfully produce and reproduce ways of speaking that support continued dialogue, the contribution of different views, moral engagement and power sharing. Restorative conversations achieve those by their specific structure and questions which are often scripted. However a rigid structure and script is harder to adhere to and reproduce during lessons in the classroom. Even when a range of opinions can be contributed to a discussion during an English or Social Studies lesson, there is no time for the equal participation and contribution of all students. In addition, the questions used in restorative

conversations only work in situations where there is a breakdown of relationships. Therefore, classroom conversations that have the same main characteristics as restorative conversations might have to be produced with different methods from the ones used in a conflict situation. A theory that can explain those characteristics might also help to produce relationally successful conversations more regularly. I will now examine the most commonly accepted theory of restoration - re-integrative shaming - to see how it can account for the relational success of restorative conversations, in general, and for those specific features of them, in particular, which I believe contribute to their positive relational outcomes.

2.4 Re-integrative shaming theory

2.4.1 Shame management

Some proponents of RP give different reasons, from those previously described, for the relational effectiveness of restorative conversations. They explain their positive outcomes, such as the upholding of agreements, with the notion of shame and they equate restorative conversations with a re-integrative shaming ritual, which works to elicit compliance with the rules and norms of a community or society (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2005; Braithwaite, 1989, 2000, 2002; Harris, 2006; Hay, 2001; Morrison, 2001a, 2001b, 2006; Nathanson, 1996). Harris (2006) notes that shame is not an unproblematic emotion and it can be hard to distinguish from guilt and embarrassment. He further suggests that shame could be a specific response to criticism, it could mean the loss of interpersonal relationships or social status but it could also be invoked by accepting negative evaluations by others. Conceptualisations of the role of shame in producing the positive outcomes of restorative conversations differ in terms of whether their emphasis is on the internal characteristics and attributes of offenders or on the actions of the people around them. Morrison (2002) associates shame with the internal sanctioning system of persons, calling it a 'social thermostat', which she says also regulates students' behaviour when they positively identify with their school community.

A social identity can be thought of as the psychological link between the self and the collective, in this case the school community. Through social identification, the school becomes a positive reference group for the student. When a student identifies with the school community, he or she will see

themselves as interdependent with this community and behave cooperatively, upholding the school's rules and values. (Morrison, 2001b, p. 7)

An individual's management of shame, whether it is adaptive or maladaptive, will also define their relationship to others. Adaptive shame management is associated with the acceptance of responsibility, which is instrumental to discharging shame properly, while maladaptive shame management directs shame towards self or others (Morrison, 2002). Maladaptive shame management hinders re-integration because it is often manifested as hostility or anger towards others and a rejection of responsibility, which might also explain lower levels of empathy (Harris, 2006). Nathanson (1996) implies that shame management is the innate capacity of persons and those who are able to control themselves commit fewer or no offences than those who are not. Though both Morrison and Nathanson refer to the interplay between wrongdoers and their communities, they nevertheless explain successful social participation by either an individual's internal characteristics (Nathanson, 1996) or their capacity to conduct themselves in specific ways (Morrison, 2001b; 2002).

Braithwaite (1989) attributes greater significance to the actions of the people who make up a wrongdoer's immediate social group as well as to the relationship between wrongdoers and their communities. He suggests that shaming has been used for a long time by families, communities and societies to manage deviance. Its purpose has been to deter a wrongdoer through invoking moral regret and understanding the effects of their actions. Braithwaite (2002) claims that there are two different kinds of shaming: stigmatising and non-stigmatising. Stigmatising shaming rejects both the actions of the wrongdoer and him/her as a person. Communities that treat an offender as a good person but condemn his/her actions engage in non-stigmatising shaming, which supports the offender's re-integration into their community. He further suggests that stigmatising shaming poses a threat to a person's identity and is likely to create oppositional identities, increasing the likelihood of reoffending, while non-stigmatising shaming offers a membership in one's community. He cites Japanese society as an example for the successful use of non-stigmatising shaming in schools (Braithwaite 2000), where clear expectations of right and wrong help children learn to

comply with the moral codes of their society. Mistakes during the learning process are considered inevitable and are accompanied by forgiveness and support for practising expected behaviours. The re-integrative shaming process, he claims, builds accountability through simultaneously condemning behaviours and providing support and forgiveness. Braithwaite mentions the power of a community to define what actions deserve shaming (2002), for example if women are not valued but owned in a community, then violence against them will not be considered as shameful. However, he does not suggest safeguards against possible communal abuses of power. Zhang and Zhang (2004) argue that shaming theory is a theory of crime control that offers a more meaningful community process than the stigmatising justice system. Non-stigmatising shaming 'reaffirms the boundaries of acceptable behaviour while encouraging a stake in conformity' (p. 433).

Several large scale studies have set out to test the validity of shaming theory and the contributions of non-stigmatising shaming to changing behaviours and relationships (Ahmed, 2001; Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2004, 2005; Harris, 2006; Hay, 2001; Makkai & Braithwaite, 1994). Makkai and Braithwaite (1994) have found that nursing home inspectors invited greater compliance from staff when they used non-stigmatising responses, while neither permissiveness nor stigmatising could achieve the same results. Ahmed and Braithwaite (2005) concluded that teenagers with parents who used stigmatising responses were more likely to bully than those with non-stigmatising parents. Hay (2001) identified that stigmatising shaming responses to rule breaking were predictors of increased predatory delinquency but he found no statistically significant evidence that non-stigmatising shaming would reduce delinquency. Shaming, regardless of being stigmatising or not, produced higher levels of re-offending. This suggests not only that the emotion of shame is a significant part of the restorative process but that other aspects or characteristics of the interaction between offenders and their communities might play a part in the reduction of re-offending. Hay himself proposes that it is the engaging of offenders in moralising during a restorative conversation that might achieve more positive outcomes, as it is a less coercive and intimidating interaction than a court hearing. Harris (2006) found that offenders did not experience

restorative processes to be less stigmatising but they appreciated being treated as a good person, which was not their experience in the criminal justice system. He also contends that the reliance of shaming theory on positive connections to a community, limits its applicability and usefulness for explaining how and why restorative processes work.

Shaming will only be an effective deterrent if it poses a threat to valued relationships, in which case social disapproval can increase internal control and regulate behaviour through a fear of losing membership in a community that is important for a person. However, in instances where the relationship between a wrongdoer and their community is not so positive, shaming cannot provide an explanation for why the process might still be experienced as satisfactory. We do not know whether all participants of successful restorative conversations had a positive connection before they engaged in a restorative process. Shaming cannot explain why the other participants of a restorative conversation, such as victims and their supporters experience the process as satisfying (Kane et al. 2007; McCluskey, 2010). It might well be that some other characteristics of the process, such as the engagement in moralising, make RP 'work' and become a positive experience even for wrongdoers rather than shaming. Engagement in moral reflection might not only be less coercive but possibly more validating of a person's identity.

2.4.2 A critique of shaming theory

Not all of the four characteristics of restorative conversations that I identified can be explained by shaming theory. We can assume that a supportive community will engage in a dialogue with a wrongdoer and it will also seek different contributions to solutions. The shaming process engages persons in moralising, which was identified by studies of shaming as a significant contributor to participants' positive experiences of the process. Restorative conversations were found to be more satisfying for offenders than court processes and they resulted in greater compliance rates or reduced delinquency, which was attributed to the less confrontational and less intimidating nature of moralising as opposed to court processes and punitive parenting (Braithwaite, 2002; Hay, 2001; Harris, 2006). However, shaming theory cannot account for allowing the expression of difference and

power sharing. In the following, I present some arguments that question the usefulness of shaming theory for explaining the positive relational outcomes of restorative conversations in educational contexts and thus supporting their adaptation for classroom use.

First of all, shaming theory does not address differences in moral positions and opinions but rather it assumes a degree of sameness. It does not provide suggestions as to how to give equal respect to individuals whose values differ. A person only experiences shame as a result of wrongdoing if they hold broadly the same or similar values as the members of their immediate communities at school or work or in their extended families. In that case, transgressing the rules of this community is experienced as shame while compliance with these rules is desirable. However, if a person's values and views are very different from those of the majority then the process of shame will not work. The requirement of sameness, I suggest, can easily turn the shaming process into forced compliance so change is achieved through external control rather than developing a wrongdoer's capacity for internal control and moral agency. I am not talking about respecting any and every difference, for example racist ideas or inciting hatred. Schools, workplaces and families need rules that are agreed upon by most members, as without them they cannot carry out their functions. I am talking about allowing the articulation of equally legitimate, but different from the majority, views without issuing judgements and evaluations about them. Though the structure of restorative conversations allows for the expression of difference, the focus of shaming is achieving compliance rather than reaching consensus after respectfully exploring different views. This is an important distinction, even if it seems to be minor. This is not arguing against compliance with rules per se, but privileging compliance that is a result of moral considerations and ethical behaviour as opposed to being achieved under pressure or out of fear.

I will demonstrate what I mean by using the example of different views that different teachers, parents and students might have about homework. Homework is usually a contentious issue in schools. Even teachers within the same school might disagree about its usefulness or necessity. Parents and students might also have a range of opinions. If a student's ongoing refusal to complete homework has lead to a restorative

conversation and this conversation is guided by the notion of shame, then the purpose of this conversation will be to elicit regret from the student for going against the school's stance. Remorse is then used to make the student comply with the homework policy of the school. However, a conversation guided by the notion of allowing the expression of difference will aim to explore and arrive at a shared understanding of different views. Compliance with the rules might not be an outcome. If it is achieved, then it is not the result of the emotion of regret or shame but of exercising moral agency and decision making. The student might decide to comply because she understands the advantages of such compliance but she might decide to refuse compliance and be prepared to bear the consequences for not compromising her views. I also suggest that it is easier for the student's parents to safely voice their anti-homework arguments during such a conversation. Furthermore, the conscious facilitation of expressing differences is more likely to leave teachers, parents and students with a better understanding of each other.

The absence of safeguards and procedures to address power differentials can also make a shaming ritual vulnerable to becoming a disciplining or punishing tool when the participants' diverse values are intimately connected to their different institutional and social status. The values of those who are at the top of the social hierarchy can easily be agreed with in such instances or accepted as the representations of what is morally right, often out of fear, because those persons command greater institutional power. This could suppress and marginalise other views and turn a restorative conversation into nothing more than an exercise in external social control. Offenders might feel they have to comply with the decisions made because failing to do so might result in existential or other consequences. In the above homework example a parent, for whom English is a second language and who might either be new to NZ or unfamiliar with the system, might accept the teacher's views without any resistance or without even trying to voice the very legitimate reasons that explain his child's failure to do homework. It could be that this student does not do homework because she has to look after siblings when her parents hold several jobs in order to be able to support the family. If the restorative conversation with this

student's parents is facilitated without an awareness and recognition of the power differentials between the school's representatives and the student's parents, then this conversation will make it difficult for the parent to speak and share his/her concerns. McCluskey et al. (2008a) criticise the failure of re-integrative shaming theory to account for the effects of institutional, systemic and social power dynamics.

Further, the majority of people in a community, including its leaders, might hold moral values that support practices that are against the law. An example of this can be the stance people have on the use of physical abuse against children as discipline. Though it is contrary to the law in NZ, many communities strongly disagree and demand its reinstitution as an admissible parental strategy. A restorative conversation with an adult who physically disciplines a child might only be a façade in such a community, to satisfy child care agencies rather than a forum for the abuser to take responsibility and seriously consider the effects of their actions. In this case, the process will not support accountability or developing moral agency as the exploration of the effects of wrongdoing might not be sincere and genuine. The above examples demonstrate that the failure to theorise difference and power might not only risk the suppression or marginalisation of different views but it could also cast doubt on the genuineness of accountability and taking responsibility. It also weakens the potential of the process to facilitate moral engagement. Schools are vulnerable to elicit the kind of forced compliance, which is described in the homework example, because of their reliance on the behaviour management paradigm for conducting relationships with students. Re-integrative shaming theory makes restorative conversations easy to co-opt into the behaviour management strategies of a school as opposed to using them in support of a more collaborative relationship paradigm.

The focus on compliance can also make restorative conversations vulnerable to the pathologising of individuals. The notion of shame keeps attention on one party to the interaction, the wrongdoer, as opposed to explaining the relational dynamics between the different participants. It is useful to theorise a judicial process and to explain community alternatives to the criminal justice system. It is also reactive, so it has less relevance for the preventative and proactive work that respectful conversations could

contribute to the learning environment. For these reasons, I argue that shaming is not a suitable theory within the current education context and for supporting the priorities of inclusion and relationship skill teaching. A relational theory that can account for the respectful managing of differences and power could better support the production of conversations that, while possessing the same characteristics as restorative conversations, can be put to work to support every day relationship management, where the emphasis is on creating a culture of respect rather than on addressing wrongdoing. Therefore, I investigate the usefulness of a different theory altogether: social constructionism and a discursive approach to relationships.

First, I explore whether discourse theory can offer a conceptual framework that can account both for satisfying and respectful relationships as well as for the kind of relationship problems that invite restorative responses. Second, I consider how a discursive approach can inform the process of conversations and what conversational moves it suggests for the kind of collaborative interactions that schools need to include in their relationship practice repertoire in support of their inclusive policies and relationship teaching initiatives. I hypothesise that a discursive approach to relationships can be one way of improving the learning environment and changing school culture by supporting respectful interaction and by enhancing the well-being of teachers. I now turn to introducing the conceptual tools of this approach.

CHAPTER 3 A discursive approach to relationships and respectful conversations

The turn to language

3.1 Language is productive and constitutive of knowledges and identities

Whilst shaming theory focuses on the psychology of the individual a discursive approach considers how meanings, identities, and consequently feelings and behaviours are relationally produced. Parker (1999) proposes that a turn to language is one of the characteristics that distinguish social constructionism. Constructionism postulates that language is much more than simply descriptive of the world and the human experience. The words and categories that we use are not in an exact correspondence with what they describe. Rather, they carry our interpretations and the meanings that we attribute to our experiences (Burr, 1995). This means that categories and descriptions cannot be treated as 'truthful representations' but must be understood as reflecting the understandings and subjective values of the people who negotiate them in a specific cultural and historical venue (Gergen, 1985). The process of interpretation is a communal exercise as opposed to being the activity of isolated individuals. The meanings that are made about the world do not only produce knowledge, or how people think the world is. They also form the basis of how people experience themselves or are experienced by others as a person. Language thus becomes the tool of producing both knowledge and identity. Davies (2001) puts it this way: "Language is revealed not as an innocent tool for describing the world that pre-exists its description, but as constituting the thing it speaks of." (p. 334). If we apply such a view of language to teacher-student interactions in schools, we can see that an interaction is not merely an innocent speech act but it has consequences for the possible practices and identities of both teachers and students.

In order to demonstrate this point I want to recall a situation that I witnessed in a primary school. Some six year olds in this school spent their intervals pulling down each others' pants, exposing their bottoms. They seemed to have a good time doing this, as most of them were giggling or

laughing, until a teacher on duty caught them in the act. The staff's reaction to what had happened varied. Some teachers called what the students did 'silly behaviour' but others termed it 'sexual harassment'. These two different names would lead to two totally different lines of action that the teachers in the school would follow. They would also call into existence different kinds of relationships with the students and their parents. If the students' actions were named as 'silly behaviour' I imagine they would only attract a low key response of telling off and/or pointing out what is considered appropriate behaviour. However, if their actions were assigned the name 'sexual harassment', it would lead to totally different consequences for their lives with maybe child protection agencies notified and stories going around in the staffroom laden with suspicions and assumptions about the students' families and their child rearing practices. Whatever names are chosen and used to signify the students' actions they would shape the stories that are told about them. These stories would enable and disable who the students can be in this school or in other words they would determine what identities they could choose from: the stories told would become life shaping. The way language is used to produce a particular meaning or knowledge about a situation also constitutes identities and relationships. It is exactly because language is not an 'innocent tool' that it is very important to 'watch what we say' (Drewery, 2005).

Teachers can be storied in similar ways. A conscientious teacher, who consistently follows up on uniform because it was agreed to by the whole staff, might be called 'mean' or 'the uniform police' by students. Postings of opinions on websites, such as Facebook, highlight the responsibility that should go with naming as well as the vulnerability of teachers and students to others. They are social acts on the world (Davies & Harré, 1991), with consequences for persons' lives, possibilities and relationships (Burr, 1995; Drewery 2005).

3.2 The significance of meaning making

In addition to its productive and constitutive power, I wish to emphasise some further points that constructionist theory highlights about language, and more specifically about meaning making. There is always a plurality of meanings that is available about a given situation. The different

meanings support different experiences that persons can have about themselves but also what others might have about them. Some of the meanings might be congruent with persons' values and their preferred identities, while others are not. Therefore the different meanings attributed to events can also invite different emotional involvement in a relational exchange, and these emotional responses can potentially either support or undermine respectful interaction.

If we asked the teachers in the example of the six year olds about what they meant by 'silly behaviour', they probably each would have listed a different range of behaviours. These would sit on a continuum closer or further from what is agreed to be normal and acceptable conduct at the school. What transpires from this story is that, for at least some teachers, the act of six year olds pulling down pants in a school playground constitutes silly behaviour but for others it does not. So the meanings different teachers make of the same actions called 'silly behaviour' are different. This is another significant conclusion that constructionism makes about language. Meanings are made by people as they interpret what they encounter rather than being out there independent of persons (Wittgenstein, 1953). Meanings are not fixed but they are contested, changed, accepted or rejected all the time. Language is a vehicle of this meaning production.

In the above example of the six-year-olds both teachers and students had some pre-existing ideas about what constitutes silly behaviour or sexual harassment. Their ideas would most likely have differed from the ideas that people might have had several hundred years ago or in a strictly religious community. Meanings are also intertwined with culturally available ideas that people can draw on in specific geographical and historical locations (Besley, 2002b; Gaddis, Kotzé, & Crocket, 2007). Cultural ideas or stories licence certain responses and actions as proper and thus possible while they prohibit others. Our cultural milieu shapes us through the meanings that it makes available but we also shape these cultural stories by constantly renegotiating the meanings they carry. Therefore meaning making is at once a social and relational act and it is part of the process of constructing our identities in relationships with others within a particular social and cultural context.

Numerous factors, including people's interests, desires, economic and social status, impact on how the above contestation takes place, whose meanings are accepted and validated by a given community, or in other words whose meanings define how people interact with each other and how they experience themselves as a person. In the case of the pulling pants, if the school principal had named the students' actions as sexual harassment, this most likely would have shaped the actions of both teachers and students in the school. Meanings have consequences for the kind of identities that are possible or impossible to perform in a community. For example, if only certain meanings of 'teacher' and 'student' were accepted in a classroom, it would also mean that only certain kinds of teacher and student identities would be allowed to be performed or practised. A few years ago I taught some refugee students, who were from the Middle East and Africa. They told me that they had never back-chatted or misbehaved in their home countries. The notion and the practices of 'student' in their homelands were defined by very hierarchical societal and religious structures and the only way they were allowed to relate to their teachers was through displaying complete obedience. They quickly realised that 'student' meant something else in New Zealand and they stepped into the practices of greater freedom and agency when it came to 'misbehaving'. They thought that occasionally being 'naughty' was part of being a normal student. They took the opportunities that I provided for active participation to mean that I gave permission for them to disrupt. Similarly, 'teacher' for them meant someone who exercised external control through severe, often physical, punishment. Negotiating, reasoning and requesting collaboration, which I saw as part of a teacher's practice repertoire, were seen by them as 'weaknesses' so in their eyes I was not a 'proper' teacher. Our different meanings of 'student' and 'teacher' enabled and disabled certain kinds of identities that we could take up in our relationship with each other. There were almost certainly some culturally located expectations about gender power involved also. As neither of us affirmed the other's preferred identity and we did not negotiate our different meanings, we struggled to get on well. We were also frustrated, angry or upset with the other most of the time. I could not be the 'good teacher' I wanted to be and they could not be the 'good student' they aspired to be.

Meanings that we bring to any situation have consequences for how different people conduct their relationships and the kind of identities they take up. They also shape the emotional responses of persons to a situation.

Different meanings might also be treated differently over time. Some meanings become to be accepted as 'the truth' and they become the norm defining how the members of a community or society should conduct themselves in specific interactions. My idea of acceptable and 'normal' teacher and student behaviours was very different from those of my refugee students. Our different societies endorsed different notions of 'teacher' and 'student'. As to which ideas or meanings become accepted within a community depends on who might have an investment in them and what their place might be in the social hierarchy. Winslade (2005) suggests that the legitimacy of meanings is also intricately intertwined with social power relations, which he calls the 'politics of meaning making':

Some meanings will come to dominate the understandings of participants in a conversation, not so much because of their superior truth value, but because they resonate more strongly with the dominant discourses that hold sway in a social field. These are the meanings that have been authorised with institutional legitimacy, blessed with the assent of the most privileged social groups, or, through constant repetition by the majority of people, have just come to be accepted as how things are. ... Other meanings, and by elaboration, alternative identity positions, are thus systematically excluded by processes of social legitimation and authorisation. It is simply much harder to get such alternative meanings heard. (p. 354)

Constructionist conceptualisations of language explain both knowledge and identity production as a relational exercise, therefore they attribute a distinguished role to conversations. The recognition of the productive and constitutive power of language calls for an increased awareness of the possible consequences of naming for people's identities and practices, as the example of the six year olds demonstrates. It requires a careful use of language, or as Drewery (2005) puts it watching what we say. Accepting that there can be multiple meanings of the same concept or event makes the clarification of different meanings an important conversation strategy. This should produce a very different approach to conversations from that which assumes that the meaning that we attribute to a situation is the same as what others make of it. Different understandings of how we should go on can jeopardise smooth interactions, as was the case for me and

my students who came to NZ from other parts of the world. The experience of such a mis-match, or, to say it another way, not being validated by others, can have very negative consequences. In my classroom I was prevented from performing my preferred identity as a teacher. Such negative emotional experiences are the product of hidden assumptions: and such hidden assumptions can be made explicit, and challenged. Constructionist analyses offer processes for such a challenge, which can be theorised and utilised in practice. In the remainder of this thesis I will show how this can be done using a particular form of restorative conversation.

I argue that people are more likely to experience a conversation as respectful or restorative if the participants carefully select the names they use to qualify events and persons. It is more satisfying to be part of a conversation where the meanings that we make of events are admissible and acknowledged rather than ignored and silenced. Studies show that positive relational outcomes of restorative conversations include people feeling they were heard and respected (McCluskey, 2010) and being able to speak freely (Adair & Dixon, 2000). This is an effect of facilitation that avoids disrespectful language use and allows different views and interpretations of the same event. However, I suggest that it is more than a chance outcome; these outcomes are achieved by the structure of restorative conversations. Constructionist ideas about language provide a theory that helps explain the practice of producing and reproducing respectful conversations. Having now explicated the productive importance of language, I will continue my exposition of the theoretical tools of this study with the introduction of the second important characteristic of constructionism, its 'turn to discourse' (Parker, 1999) and I will show the relevance of the notions of discourse, power/knowledge, agency and positioning for respectful relationships.

The turn to discourse

3.3 Discourse and identity

3.3.1 Definitions of discourse

The notion of discourse as used in constructionist theory is central to explicating the productive significance of conversations. I will first define discourse and then I will discuss how it can be used to conceptualise people's

identity projects, relationships and the institutional processes they participate in. The different meanings that people repeatedly attribute to different events can be organised into coherent meaning systems, and for those who engage such coherence, these organised systems of meaning provide a description of how the world should be. These coherent meaning systems are called discourses (Parker, 1990). We can also say that discourses are the repositories of the cultural norms of a society or community, against which people measure themselves in the process of taking up and producing their identities (Besley, 2002a, 2002b; Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007; Marsh, 2002). Discourses carry these norms in the form of a hidden but taken for granted “system of statements, which constructs an object” (Parker, 1990, p. 192) and they prescribe “practices which systematically form the objects of which we speak” (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). Though nobody actually articulates them during an interaction, these statements help people understand how to go on in a particular situation and how to relate to others. The system of statements of any discourse also calls into existence a coherent set of human relationships and social interactions, in other words it organises people into different kinds of ‘social bonds’ (Parker, 2005). By authorising certain moral orders and condemning others (Morgan, 2005; Morgan & Coombes, 2001) discourses produce both the practices of a society or community as well as the kinds of persons, or identities, who willingly engage in these practices (Fairclough, 1992; Parker, 1994, 1999a; Winslade, 2005). For example, the practices of a discourse that privileges teacher authority while disabling children’s contributions to any decision making in the classroom might be prescribed by statements such as “Teachers know what is best for students” and “Teachers have got the right to make students do whatever they want”. These statements also construct as their objects a teacher who might not tolerate any challenges to his authority and a student who is obedient. When both and accept the unwritten rules of their interactions, there may be little conflict.

3.3.2 Individual identity as positions in discourses

The contribution of discourses to persons’ individual identities can be more easily understood if we compare discourses to stories. Burr (1995) claims that each discourse or story tells a particular version of the world and

it portrays the people and the events it speaks of differently from other discourses, while also prescribing how people should interact with each other. Different stories offer different subject positions or roles and people choose which positions they want to occupy, though the choice of positions is not quite as simple as that. I will explain how others can interfere with this process later. For the moment I will say that people will choose positions that endorse the moral values they agree with, because those positions help them produce their preferred identities. The process of taking up positions in discourses can be complicated by the simultaneous availability of several different stories about the same thing, such as teaching, parenting or discipline, in a given social and historical context. These stories can be contradictory and they usually endorse different moral values. Nevertheless, people might take up positions in two or more contradictory discourses depending on the circumstances of an interaction (Davies, 1990; Walkerdine, 2003).

For example, zero tolerance and restorative discourses of discipline are both available in many New Zealand schools. Each discourse is based on different beliefs about what is an appropriate response to wrongdoing. The zero tolerance discourse promotes the necessity of punishment, while the restorative discourse considers the strengthening of relationships a priority. Even teachers who pride themselves in being 'restorative' might not always be able to position themselves in the discourse of restoration. They might at times react with a punishment in response to inappropriate behaviours, for example on occasions when they do not have time for a conversation. If we accept a discursive conceptualisation of identity, we can also conceive of people's identities as a collection of the different discursive positions that they choose to occupy in the different stories that are available to them about the variety of roles that they have to perform in their lives. These include being a parent, a child, an employee, an employer, a friend, a partner and so on. Taking up a range of positions in a number of storylines also means that people have what seems multiple and contradictory identities rather than one coherent identity (Drewery, 2004; Shotter & Gergen, 1989). It also means that relationships, rather than individuality, are centralised as the basic unit of analysis (McNamee & Gergen, 1999; Parker & Shotter, 1990).

3.4 Power/knowledge

3.4.1 The defining and constitutive power of discourse

According to constructionist and discursive theorising the term 'knowledge' is roughly synonymous with the term 'discourse' or the system of statements that make up a discourse and prescribe specific practices and ways of relating to others. Foucault (1972, 1980) calls these "regimes of truth" because they suggest a particular view or knowledge about the way the world is. Knowledge is also the story or perspective on the world that is presented from a particular position in a discourse (Burr, 1995), and it is a particular version of events that is "preferred" by those who take up that position in the process of producing their identity. When a certain knowledge or story becomes accepted as 'the truth', it becomes legitimised by this social process (Banister et al., 1994; Budd, 2005; Burr, 1995; Grant & Hall, 2005; Winslade, 2005). It thus acquires a regulatory function, and can then be used to influence what behaviours, responses and personal qualities are not only seen as possible, but accepted or rejected in a particular place and time. Thus knowledge also enables and controls what identities are considered normal or pathological. As there are many different knowledges available at any given time and in any given place, not all knowledges have the same regulating influence over people's actions and identities. Previously I said that both punitive and restorative discourses might be available to teachers and students in NZ schools. Yet, some schools will consider themselves to be restorative, while others will advertise their zero tolerance approach to wrongdoing. As to which worldview has more defining power in a specific school depends on how it authorises the preferred moral order of that school community or not. If it is given institutional support then it is more likely to define the "proper" or expected behaviours, roles and, hence, identities than other views.

However, it is not always the knowledges that are privileged by the majority that will automatically enjoy institutional support. The views of social groups with considerable economic, political or decision making power usually get greater recognition. In a school where the principal and the senior leadership team do not agree with the restorative philosophy, it might be difficult to make it the dominant paradigm of relationships even when the

majority of teachers would prefer it. The defining power of knowledge is linked to social status and power relationships. Burr (1995) claims that knowledges or discourses reflect society's structures and the way society is run (p.54). Some discourses carry these agreed social structures and rules of living more than others. Based on what I have said so far, there are two characteristics of knowledge or discourse that I wish to emphasise as relevant for teacher-student relationships. Firstly, discourses, and the different subject positions they offer, are productive and constitutive of identities, relationships and practices. Secondly, they also occupy different places in a hierarchy as they are tied to social power relationships. In the following I will show some of the possible implications of this hierarchy for individual identities, relationships and institutional practices.

3.4.2 Individual identity and relationships defined by dominant discourses

Walkerdine (1989) presents a powerful example for how the defining and constitutive power of a specific discourse is able to shape teacher-student relationships exactly because it has greater social legitimacy assigned to it and because it is tied to society's structures. This example also shows how the productive power of a discourse can be a stronger influence on the quality of an interaction than the intentions and purposes of its participants. Walkerdine describes a preschool classroom where four year old boys resist the teacher's instructions and they call the teacher 'cunt' and refer to her 'tits'. Such sexual references are completely unexpected by the teacher. However, they can be made because the boys position themselves in a discourse of patriarchy that views women as objects of male sexual desire and pleasure. They do not, at that moment, stay in the discourse of schooling where the teacher has complete authority. The interaction between the teacher and the children is dominated by the little boys and the teacher finds it difficult to redirect the situation. By taking up a position in the discourse of patriarchy, the knowledge that is produced by this discourse has the power to define what happens as the discourse of patriarchy carries dominant social values. The particular identities that are offered at this moment in this classroom are males who treat a female in a disrespectful, objectifying way and a female who is powerless to do anything about it. The dominance of the

discourse of patriarchy is demonstrated by how easily such little boys are able to take control of an interaction, and how readily the teacher is called into it as well.

Of course, the little boys do not consciously set out to take up a position in the discourse of patriarchy and to objectify their teacher. However, they engage in practices that are socially available to them and that are supported by a system of meanings and practices that does not demand equal respect for women. Neither the boys nor the teacher are explicitly aware of this knowledge during their interaction, yet it defines their relationship at that moment. This shows how discourses can influence people's relationships in ways that remain hidden from them. It is usually the practices that a discourse endorses and their various effects that are visible to the participants in an interaction, and not the statements or knowledges that make them possible. I would use the analogy of a house and its foundation to further explain how discourses work to produce and hold in place particular relationships, identities and practices. The foundation of most houses is invisible. Foundations also differ in shape and size and they hold different visible structures, walls and roofs in place, which could not be built without their particular foundation. Similarly, the practices and identities that a specific discourse calls into existence could not be maintained without a specific system of statements or knowledge. I will come back to the significance of this hidden work of discourses later.

3.4.3 The reliance on others for legitimate identity

It is not only different discourses that occupy different power positions. The available positions within one discourse are not equal either. The discourse positions that are accepted and lived by a privileged social group are called dominant, while other positions are termed subordinate or subjugated (Burr, 1995; Foucault, 1972, 1980). Dominant positions offer persons identities that are legitimated by that discourse. Those who do not fit within the boundaries of such "proper" identities are positioned as subordinate and may even be treated as abnormal or pathological in relation to the dominating identities. Accepting dominant knowledges and worldviews and taking up legitimate identities in dominant discourses, such as the good student or competent teacher, can produce feelings of pleasure,

satisfaction or contentment, in other words well-being. Occupying dominant positions can also bring economic and social benefits: so compliance with the prevailing values and norms of a society may be less problematic than trying to “buck the trend”. Many persons would not be aware of the workings of this subtle form of social regulation, though all are subject to it. And in any case, as B.F Skinner (among others) has demonstrated, social recognition is a powerful motivator. Therefore most people take up positions that validate what their communities consider to be legitimate identities. However, dominant positions can also be undermined by others. A person can have access to a legitimate identity but s/he can also be prevented from taking up such a position. Individual identity projects are therefore both reliant on and inseparable from the identity projects of others (Davies, 2001; Davies & Hunt, 1994).

Dominant and subordinate positions are also dependent on one another. As Derrida (1998) has argued, one “side” of a binary term depends on its opposite for its meaning. In order to know what a good student or teacher is we also have to define what it is not. Davies and Hunt (1994) have shown how binary positions can work to produce the identities of both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ students in a classroom. They describe how Lenny, an Aboriginal student, repeatedly tries to position himself as ‘good student’, doing what is expected of good students, including trying to sit at his table in an upright position and asking for work. However, his attempts are not validated as his teacher and his classmates do not read and acknowledge his actions as those of a proper student. On the contrary, they consistently position him outside this category by finding some fault with his attempts. After several rejections and being denied entry into the position of good student Lenny gives up and climbs out of the window. The students in Lenny’s class take up the position of and define themselves as ‘good student’ by positioning Lenny in the subordinate position of ‘bad student’. They validate themselves as legitimate and proper by assigning the oppositional identity and the position of naughty student to someone else.

The way persons use dominant and subordinate positions for the validation of their own preferred identity does not always produce negative relational outcomes. While Lenny’s classmates denied him access to a

legitimate identity position, Davies (2001) also demonstrates the opposite process, where access is given and a person is validated as 'proper', because such validation positively contributes to the identity project of everyone else as well. Davies gives the example of some female students who are keen to be the 'good' students and to appear as literate subjects during an English lesson. The girls happen to have a teacher whose explanation of what is required for their exam is not comprehensible at all. In fact it seems he has not thought about what to say and some of his sentences do not make sense. It is also a reasonably fair conclusion based on the conversation he has with the students that he has not read the information he is supposed to pass on to them. However, the students patiently repair what he says, suggesting an interpretation of what he might want to state. He takes up the students' suggestions as they provide greater clarity. The students thus position him as someone who has valuable information for them. The female students' hard work in producing themselves as competent and literate students also constitutes the teacher as competent.

The description of a reading circle by Davies and Hunt (1994) is a further example of how others can provide access to a position of legitimate identity. In this example Leigh, a member of a junior class, where the students have to take turns to read a story, cannot read the words on the page. When it is his turn, another student, Jamie, helps him by whispering each word in his ear, which he then repeats loudly to demonstrate that he is reading. The circle is not held up and everyone has a turn. Nobody comments on this as inappropriate so Leigh is positioned by the others as a competent student. These examples unsettle the idea that changing behaviours or behaving as expected is only a matter of individual responsibility. To be a legitimate subject and to take up what is considered an appropriate identity is a much more complex task that is dependent on the identity projects of others.

3.4.4 Institutional practices defined by the productive power of discourses

Discourses do not only produce individual identities and relationships between certain individuals. They also have a role in the construction of social life (Burr, 1995) and the production of particular power relationships

and institutional practices through reproducing particular ideologies (Banister et al., 1994). In order to demonstrate this point, let us say that some teachers in a school might define themselves as good teachers by making themselves available to listen to students at lunchtime, unlike others, who might insist they should have a break. These same teachers might also allow students, who are late, into their classes without any consequences, even when it requires them to disregard the teaching staff's collective decision to reduce lateness by all staff applying consistent consequences. Further, some of the teachers in the same school might also agree with students that all lessons should be fun. They might go out of their way to present subject material using power point presentations and colourful visual aids to break up the monotony of practice. The statements that hold such practices in place might include 'Teachers should put care for their students ahead of caring for themselves', 'Teachers are there to teach not to police rules' and 'Learning should be fun'. If these practices were supported by the majority of teachers, and the school leadership, over time they could also make the knowledges or discourses that support them dominant within the school. They would be the ideas and practices that would enjoy institutional support in that school. I would say these practices and ideas would then define the school culture as well, which could be characterised by the approachability of teachers, a relaxed teacher attitude to rule follow up and a fun approach to teaching. However, it is unlikely that all teachers in this same school would agree with each of these practices. There would be a range of approaches between relaxed and consistent rule follow up. There would also be teachers who would want a break for themselves at lunchtime. It is also likely that different schools would have different numbers of teachers who would more or less align themselves with this discourse of teaching.

This example demonstrates that there can be a range of discourses or knowledges about teaching and teacher-student relationships from which different teachers and students in a school may take up their identities (Berndt, Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1997). These knowledges can be contradictory to one another. However, as we have seen, some may become more dominant than others and they could produce teachers who are

accepted as legitimate or considered a good teacher. If the fun idea of teaching became dominant, then teachers who believed in the usefulness of repetitious practice in a Maths lesson, for example, might not only find it difficult to convince students about the importance of practice for recall but to be accepted as good teachers as well. The point is that whichever idea becomes dominant or subordinate, it has consequences for the identities and practices of the teachers and students of that school and it will determine what kinds of relationships will be preferred and responded to positively or negatively, by both students and teachers. Discourses and knowledges thus also shape institutional practices, processes and power relationships through authorising specific ways of interacting as proper or preferable while rendering others as inappropriate or undesirable. Based on the role of discourses in shaping an organisation's life, I propose that the notions of power/knowledge and discourse are more useful to conceptualise and understand the culture of a school than a singular adjective, such as restorative or caring. School culture can be analysed as a complex mix of the different discourses or knowledges that influence the practices, interactions and relationships of teachers and students in a particular school. Such a conceptualisation can make visible some of the ideological influences, including expectations of teachers, students and even the leadership and parents, that actively shape teacher-student relationships there. Further, the identification of complexities within these ideological influences might also suggest why some teacher-student relationships come to be problematic. I will show in the data chapters the effects of some popular discourses of teaching and learning on teachers' well-being and relationships with their students and colleagues. In the following, I will take what might seem like a detour and summarise why Foucault (1972, 1980, 1995) described knowledge as power/knowledge and what he meant by power.

3.4.5 Foucault's explanation of power

Foucault (1972) used the term *power/knowledge* to explain how the constitutive and productive force of discourses can achieve its influence over people's lives in a non-transparent way and how hierarchies of knowledges and positions contribute to this influence. The notion of knowledge/power implies that the worldviews associated with different subject positions work

as a constitutive, productive as well as a constraining force that have implications for persons' identities and relationships. Power in this sense is not a commodity that people do or do not have. Neither does it mean something punitive or oppressive as a common meaning would suggest. Rather, it is productive in the sense that it produces positions from which people can act; it can also bring new knowledge into existence and reject the old - as such it can be viewed as the defining force of the knowledges associated with different discourses (Brown, 2007b; Davies, 2001, 2006). Foucault described the workings of power and its constitutive and productive qualities in several of his writings (Foucault, 1972, 1980, 1995, 2006). He proposed the writing *power/knowledge* because he viewed power and knowledge as inseparable (Foucault, 1972). I elaborate more on Foucault's notion of power because it helps understand how discourses can shape the outcomes of teacher-student relationships in both positive and negative ways.

Foucault differentiated between two kinds of power, the more traditional, so called 'sovereign power' and what he termed 'modern power' (Ransom, 1997; White, 1992). 'Sovereign power' was used by those in political power, such as the sovereign, in order to make people do things and as a social regulation tool of pre-capitalistic societies. The increase in the number of urban populations in 18th century Europe required newer ways of population control on the one hand, as well as the production of a more sophisticated and skilled labour force on the other hand. This project was achieved, according to Foucault, through the workings of what he termed '*disciplinary power*' (Foucault, 1995), which he likened to what might go on within the walls of prisons. 'Disciplinary power', instead of subjecting prisoners to public humiliation, is exercised in the form of training and treatment, which work on prisoners' bodies, minds, times and lives. Their purpose is to produce 'docile bodies', who could become not only obedient citizens but also would be equipped with the skills of an efficient worker.

Foucault notes both the connection of this new form of power with political power as well as its need for increased individualisation, categorisation and normalisation for its operation. In order to transform prisoners into proper citizens and to teach them the skills of a good worker,

detailed and precise descriptions are needed, which set the parameters of the kind of persons that have to emerge after being subjected to training and 'discipline'. These descriptions are obtained through a never ending production of different and new categories or new knowledge. The new form of power, the prisoners' training and treatment, relies on this knowledge. After a while the categories and descriptions are also used to formulate norms that would help shape all members of society into useful citizens through different operations performed on their bodies. In this way knowledge is used to constitute certain kinds of persons. This is why Foucault says that there can be no disciplinary power without knowledge and there can be no knowledge without this power, hence the term power/knowledge (Foucault, 2006).

In addition to constituting particular identities and persons and relying on a constant production of knowledge, Foucault emphasises the hidden rather than transparent workings of disciplinary power. Knowledges are first used to inform the trainings, which operate on people's bodies, but after a while, he argues, they come to regulate their souls. If people transgress the norms they are quickly noticed and sanctioned with 'abnormal' populations ending up segregated in prisons and mental hospitals, which Foucault describes in his other works (Foucault, 1967, 1972). The effect of these treatments is that people voluntarily police themselves to comply with the norms.

So there is a continuous pressure of this disciplinary power, which is not brought to bear on an offence or damage but on potential behaviour. One must be able to spot an action before it has been performed, and disciplinary power must intervene somehow before the actual manifestation of the behaviour, before the body, the action, or the discourse, at the level of what is potential disposition, will, at the level of the soul. (Foucault, 2006, p. 52)

Foucault used Bentham's Panopticon as the metaphor to convey how disciplinary power works to produce docility in respect of norms. The Panopticon was an architectural design, which used a semicircle. It had rooms on each side and a tower in the middle from where the inhabitants of the rooms could be watched. Whoever inhabited the rooms of the Panopticon could not see the central tower so they couldn't know if they were being watched or not. Nevertheless they behaved as if they were at all times. Foucault claims that disciplinary power works on the same principle of self

surveillance. It requires persons to voluntarily apply technologies on their bodies and minds, to discipline themselves, in order to behave in ways that fit the norms of their societies and communities. We can see that the technologies of sovereign and disciplinary power are in stark contrast to one another. The first uses visible technologies of domination, physical force and public displays of punishment, such as executions. Disciplinary power, on the other hand, can govern and direct the conduct of citizens through manipulating them and structuring their 'possible field of action' (Davies, 2006, p.341) without having to rely on visible technologies of control. Disciplinary power achieves voluntary compliance with norms, even when these norms are arbitrary. Hook (2003) claims that the hidden working of disciplinary power provides the illusion to persons that they freely constitute themselves in ways they prefer. This is why disciplinary power can be an efficient tool of social control in Western democracies that cherish personal freedom.

This hidden working of power is significant and I will return to it when I consider the relevance and possible contributions of a discursive approach, and more specifically discourse knowledge, to relationships in the end of this chapter. Here I want to reiterate that the hidden workings of power can affect relationships in unpredictable and unhelpful ways as we saw from the example of the four year olds and their teacher. Davies (2005) argues that the unexamined power of discourses has what she calls a 'seeping into consciousness' quality. In order to demonstrate her point she calls on a story by Nelson Mandela, in which Mandela reacts with some panic to the sight of a black pilot of the plane he is about to board. For a moment he thinks of him as not being competent enough to fly the plane. However, he catches himself by identifying the discourse through which his anxiety has been produced. In order to counteract this 'seeping into consciousness' quality of discourses and to take charge of the production of one's identity and relationships as opposed to leaving it to the force of discourses, Davies (ibid) argues for the significance of strategies that help us understand how discourses shape our lives. She suggests that without understanding the constitutive forces of discourses we cannot control their productive force. But by exposing the kinds of relationships and practices that they call into being we can unsettle their

power and achieve changes in a way that helps (Davies, Dormer, Gannon, Laws, Rocco, Taguchi & McCann, 2001). In an earlier piece of work Davies argued that poststructuralist theory and deconstruction could make it possible 'to see the multiple discourses in which we are inevitably and contradictorily caught up' (Davies, 1994, p. 2). In Chapter 4 I will introduce deconstruction and discourse analysis as strategies for exposing and understanding the productive power of discourses. I will also show how such an understanding can support respectful relationships and well-being.

The following example illustrates how the unexamined productive power of discourse can undermine teaching and learning by creating unhelpful teacher-student relationships. Several of my colleagues have recently complained about students who cannot or are not willing to do independent work and expect the teacher to rush to their aid every two minutes, providing individual feedback. It is hard to imagine a classroom where a teacher is able to offer such level of availability to fifteen let alone thirty students simultaneously. The discourse that promotes the practice of catering for all students' needs and providing differentiated learning opportunities for them is currently popular among teachers and it is one of the dominant discourses promoted by ministries of education. Few would argue that it privileges practices that support the inclusion of students with different skill levels. However, it might also be worthwhile for teachers to consider to what extent this same idea contributes to producing the kind of unreasonable expectations that my colleagues talked about along with the kind of student subjects who demand constant individual attention. The point I want to make here is that when teachers' relationship to a discourse is unexamined then its productive force can constitute them and their relationships with their students in ways that are not supportive of their collaboration and of carrying out the tasks they are there to accomplish together. The productive power of the discourse takes over and it is in charge of teachers' and students' subjectification through prescribing particular actions as opposed to teachers and students controlling this power by negotiating and coming to an agreement about the most suitable and reasonable method of their interaction and collaboration. The notions of

agency and positioning, help further understand how discourses can constitute both satisfying and problematic relationships.

3.5 Agency

3.5.1 Access to a legitimate identity position

Davies (1991) defines agency as having access to a subject position in which we have the right to speak and be heard. According to Davies to have authority is to take on a speaking position with its available practices as our own - but we also have to be allowed access to this position by others. This view implies that the possibilities for personal agency are not infinite, as there is always a limited number of discourses and positions available in any given place and time. Moreover, some of the discourse positions available to persons for producing their identities are subjugated positions that do not provide speaking rights. Drewery (2005) points to the significance of decision making power, linking the notion of agency to productive power. Agency thus is not only having a place from which to speak and be heard but also the capacity to influence the conditions of our own lives. Drewery suggests that 'persons who are participants in the conversations that produce the meanings of their lives are in an agentive position' (p. 315) and they are 'engaged in co-producing the conditions of their lives' (p.315). Agency is an important aspect of the process of producing identity as it also ties in with Western cultural notions of personal freedom and choice. More importantly it can explain well-being.

Drewery (2005) and Weingarten (2000) provide examples of the effects of both speaking and silent positions on people and the relationship of agency with well-being. They both describe situations in a medical setting from their personal experiences. In Drewery's example a doctor asks an elderly patient's daughter, and not the patient, about his activities as if he was not present. In Weingarten's story her mother's doctor decides not to tell her mother that she has terminal cancer. He conducts a conversation with family members, in the mother's presence, as if she was expected to recover. In both stories it is the doctors who are positioned as having the right to speak and/or to make decisions while the patients are excluded from the conversation and they are silenced regardless that this conversation centres on their lives. Their capacity to exercise agency is undermined. Both Drewery

and Weingarten note the possible detrimental consequences of the inability to constitute oneself in the dominant position of a discourse and to take up what is considered a legitimate identity. Weingarten is aware of her emotional response to the situation, the anger and frustration that she feels in her body. Drewery refers to the discomfort that can be experienced in one's body when one is thus excluded. In a previous example (Davies & Hunt, 1994) Lenny was denied access to a position of agency by the other students and the teacher. He ended up climbing out of the window of the classroom and hanging at a dangerous height above the ground. His response to being denied a position of agency could have had serious implications for both him, in the form of a physical injury, and for the teacher, in the form of legal proceedings, not to mention the grief or guilt for the other students in the class had they had to witness him being carried away by an ambulance. These implications are not entertained in Davies' and Hunt's article but they are nevertheless possibilities. The absence of or being denied agency might not always invite the kind of resistance, physically removing himself, which Lenny chose. However, people might respond to similar situations with feelings of anger, frustration, stress, pain or hurt. They will most likely notice some kind of reaction or effect in their bodies. Drewery (2005) proposes that people's well-being can be a function of exercising agency. These examples show that the experience of having agency or not is connected to knowledge or the worldview that is expressed in speaking and dominant positions. It is associated with the power to define oneself and be defined by others as legitimate - someone with an accepted identity. In this view agency relates to the extent a person might feel able to participate, which can be the difference between inclusion and exclusion.

3.5.2 The capacity to take up a new identity and to go beyond a discourse

The second point that I want to make about agency is put forward in Davies' (1991) definition. According to this definition agency is the capacity to counteract and reduce the constraining power of a given discourse position by going beyond the meanings associated with it and thus creating new discourses and subject positions within them:

Agency is never freedom from discursive constitution of self but the capacity to recognise that constitution and to resist, subvert and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted. (p.51)

This means that we are not condemned to silence or exclusion from speaking positions forever but that there are opportunities for us to subvert the power relationships of a given discourse. In support of this argument I would like to use as an example the 'naughty boys' described by Davies and Hunt (1994). They are told off by a teacher after a fight. It seems they willingly submit themselves to their teacher's discourse by accepting her definition of them as naughty as they practise compliance with her during the act of telling off. They behave as the teacher expects them to behave. However, when she leaves they walk down the corridor laughing and saying "We are the naughty boys". This signifies their only partial submission to the teacher's idea of 'naughty' and her power to define who they are. They are able, at that moment, to seize some of this defining power by rejecting the remorse and shame that is also part of the teacher's idea of how they should behave. By claiming to be naughty but also laughing about it they rework the category of 'naughty boys' and they find a space for resistance. They go beyond the possibilities of the teacher's naughty boy discourse and they create a new position and thus a new identity for themselves. Teachers have similar opportunities for subverting the categories of the discourses that are on offer to define their identities. They can choose to take up the position of 'good teacher' in a discourse of teaching, where membership in the category of 'good teacher' requires participation in ongoing professional development, especially if such a discourse is privileged by the senior managers of their school. However, they can also go beyond this position by only partially implementing the strategies that professional learning providers present.

According to discourse and positioning theory, people's individual identity projects are inseparable from the identity projects of others. The production of legitimate identities as well as classroom order both rely on and are achieved with collaboration from others (Davies et al., 2001; Davies & Hunt, 1994). Suitable conditions for learning in a classroom are arrived at through the cooperation of both students and teachers, as we have seen from Lenny's example and from the description of how a reading circle was achieved. When a person is repeatedly denied access to a legitimate identity position, similarly to Lenny (Davies & Hunt, 1994), they can respond with

frustration, hurt or anger. These intense feelings can at times find an outlet in extreme behaviours, such as the ones that Lenny resorted to. Emotional responses to the absence of agency can also remain invisible but produce harmful physiological effects in a person's body (Drewery, 2005; Weingarten, 2000). In addition, some persons can find it hard to take up a new identity and to go beyond a given discourse when they are only validated in particular positions but not others. It might be easier for teachers to notice students when they are naughty or disruptive and not recognise their multiple and contradictory positionings, which can make behaviour change very difficult. These are just some of the situations where people are not the authors of their own lives and they cannot interrupt the work of a given discourse.

3.5.3 Challenging humanist notions of identity

Davies (1991) proposes that the concept of agency helps us critique and go beyond the humanist notion of identity. Agency in humanist terms is to be located in positions of power and to be committed to the moral positions that are endorsed by dominant social groups. Such a view of agency is normative and is linked to moral rightness. Humanist notions of identity equate it with human nature or personality (Burr, 1995). Such views could be considered essentialist as they define personal qualities and characteristics, or identity, by genes, biological traits, drives and needs: things that reside inside persons. Humanism privileges coherent identity narratives about persons, regardless of their different responses to different people in different situations. Schools are places that tend to favour coherent and internalised views of identities and they widely utilise diagnostic labels of behaviour and learning difficulties, for example ADHD or dyslexia.

Diagnostic labels are used to make sense of how a student might differ from dominant, culturally sanctioned versions of identities that are considered the norm in a society or a school (Besley, 2002b; Burman, 1994; Burman et al., 1996; Law, 1997; Smith & Nylund, 1997). Labels are not necessarily problematic in themselves: in fact many parents and professionals find solace in them as they provide an explanation for behaviours that may be difficult to live with, along with offering strategies to change them. But they become problematic when they are used in a totalising manner and they are taken to be the only available accounts about a person.

Such use of labels ignores behaviours that contradict the negative, internalised descriptions and it can become complicit in preventing change (Gergen, 1991, 2001a, 2001b; Gergen & Davis, 1997; McNamee & Gergen, 1999). Constructionism rejects totalising and internalising and it assumes and normalises contradictory behaviours in persons' lives. It proposes that people's life events demonstrate an absence of consistency rather than all fitting a story of a single identity category or personal quality. It accepts that identities are multiple and fluid rather than stable and coherent (Burr, 1995; Drewery, 2004; Gergen, 1990, 1991, 2001a). A constructionist analysis does not proceed to hypothesise essential internal characteristics, because it remains at the level of productivity in language. It does however pay attention to the real effects of different forms of language use.

3.5.4 Constructionist conceptualisations of agency and identity

Agency in social constructionist or poststructuralist terms is taking up legitimate identity positions, both through a person's own positioning of themselves and through others providing access to these positions. In addition, it is the acknowledgement of one's multiple, and often contradictory, positionings in several different discourses at the same time. It is the understanding of one's own constitution within those discourses and as a result of such understanding having the capacity to move beyond the meanings of a given discourse by creating new discourses and subject positions. In other words, agency is the (not necessarily explicit) recognition of the constitutive power of discourses as well as deliberately using this power to disrupt dominant practices. Davies and Hunt (1994) have shown in the example of the naughty boys how it is possible to go beyond the given meanings of a discourse and to create new subject positions. While the humanist notion of identity assumes a stable and coherent story about a person, the constructionist notion of it recognises contradictions and it assumes fluidity, movement and change. This is very different from occupying dominant positions of moral rightness that all support one coherent identity story. Accepting this view means that the humanist notion of identity as stable becomes problematic. Constructionist theorists often use the terms 'subjectivity' and 'subjectification' (Davies et al., 2006; Davies et al., 2002; Davies & Saltmarsh, 2007), which better reflect that taking up

positions in a variety of discourses, in other words a person's identity project, is an active, shifting and changing process rather than the acceptance of and coming to terms with the permanency of one's internal characteristics. I am using the term identity throughout this thesis because of its greater familiarity to teachers.

3.6 Positioning

3.6.1 The relational process of negotiating identities

Understanding the notion of positioning requires familiarity with the notions of discourse, power/knowledge and agency. Positioning is based on the assumption that individual identity production is at once shifting and changing and reliant on others. When we take up, accept or reject positions we also have to engage in a negotiation process with others. It is through this negotiation process that we produce and author our identities from available discourses. Positioning as a conceptual tool 'focuses on how we become particular kinds of subjects' as well as 'how we take up certain identities and not others' (Drewery, 2005, p. 4). Davies and Harré's (1990) seminal work on the topic defines positioning as 'the central organising concept for analysing how it is that people do being a person' (p. 62). In other words, positioning is the process of becoming and performing who we are in relationships with others. Positioning theory defines *identities* as the products of discourses and it claims that we can only make up who we are from the discourses that are available to us. Each discourse offers several positions with different consequences for our lives. We can only choose from a repertoire of social interactions and ways of being, or *subject positions*, that are offered to us through the work of the discourses of the place and the time where we are historically located (Davies, 1991).

Davies and Harré (1990) claim that positioning is also a process, during which the participants of a conversation jointly produce the storylines in which they locate themselves and they use cultural stereotypes as a resource. One person can position others by adopting a particular storyline but the different participants of a conversation might have different interpretations of their positions depending on their subjective histories. Persons usually adopt complementary subject positions if they have a shared understanding of their respective positions. My refugee students and I had

different understandings of our positions and we operated from different storylines of schooling and of our respective roles. Our different views might be easily explained by our originally different cultural and geographical origins. However, teachers and students might step into and they might identify with several different discourses within a mono-cultural school as well. Some teachers might operate from a discourse that privileges subject teaching as a teacher's main task, while others might incorporate pastoral tasks, such as listening to students' personal problems in their lessons. Therefore, the project of producing our identities is also the project of negotiating which ones of the multiple positions in the many different, and often contradictory, discourses that are available to us we are going to accept and/or reject (Dimitriadis 2004; Yon 2000). I now want to describe some of the implications of negotiating multiple positions.

3.6.2 Positioning and power relationships

The idea that we can negotiate multiple and often contradictory positions implies that positioning is an active process, in which each participant is trying to put themselves in positions they prefer whether they succeed or not. The positions offered by a given discourse structure rights and responsibilities and they determine what each person can do and say when taking up a position in a specific discourse (Besley, 2002b; Burr, 1995; Davies & Harré, 1990; Davies, 1991; Davies & Hunt, 1994; Laws & Davies, 2000; Winslade, 2005). Thus positioning is not without consequences for persons' lives, because some positions offer more rights than others. Depending on how the negotiation process goes, positioning can result in persons being able to speak and be heard but they can also end up being unable to contribute to the discussion or not being taken seriously. Drewery (2005) suggests that the capacity to speak and be taken seriously in a conversation is a prerequisite of feeling included. In a traditional discourse of schooling, where teachers knew what was best for their students, the position of teacher was probably more desirable and had more speaking rights attached to it than the position of parent. Teachers were the ones who decided what intervention might be best for a child without wanting collaboration from parents. Nowadays some parents wish to assume more rights to make these decisions than teachers.

Many of us have attended meetings where we have had experiences of active participation and contribution to the agenda as well as experiences of being silenced, not being able to say what we thought about the topic discussed. Morgan and Coombes (2001) would say that our contribution was 'inadmissible' as it was neither taken up to advance the discussion nor used to shape any decision making. Drewery (2005) and Weingarten (2000) demonstrate the different effects of speaking and silent positions and they also show how the negotiation process involved with positioning can be affected by social power relations similarly to knowledge. Besley (2001) describes it this way:

Subject positioning involves power relations ... determining whether a person can speak, what is sayable and by whom and whether and whose accounts are listened to... each of us stands at multiple positions in relation to discourse, which we engage or participate in on a daily basis. Thus discourse ... is seen as the organising and regulating force of social practices and ways of behaving. (p. 138)

It follows from the above that we all possibly feel better in, and desire to take up, positions that allow us speaking rights and decision making power. In other words we all want to be included. The concept of positioning can help make sense of the different relational outcomes of the many negotiation processes between teachers, parents, outside school professionals and students.

3.6.3 Identity as multiple and contradictory

The notion of positioning expands the discursive view of identity that I described previously. On the one hand, it draws attention to the relational dynamics and implications of people's individual identity projects. On the other hand, it helps explain identity as a process, or a permanent flux. In addition, positioning theory claims that we can simultaneously take up positions in different, contradictory discourses. Davies' work has demonstrated how a discursive view of identity can be useful to explain the contradictory subject that is so different from the stable, rational, consistent subjects of modernist and humanist theorising (Davies, 1990, 1991, 1994; Drewery, 2004). Conceptualising individual identity as multiple can also help challenge totalising descriptions about persons, which might only validate them in particular positions but not others. In any classroom in a NZ school there are most likely numerous positions available in different discourses

about schooling that both teachers and students can choose to take up and that they can use for producing their preferred identity. Teachers for one are required to perform multiple roles and tasks in a single day or at times even in a single lesson. During a lesson they might have to assert their authority and they might have to work to be taken seriously as an expert while they introduce new information. Straight after the same lesson we might find them attending to their pastoral tasks, listening to one or several students from the same class, who might share their family problems at home. The two activities require very different relationships between teacher and student and they position them very differently in relation to one another. Teacher-student relationships might be further complicated by different teachers, parents and students privileging different views about how teachers and students should behave in their interactions with each other.

3.6.4 Possible implications of multiple positioning for individuals

Simultaneously occupying multiple and contradictory positions in several discourses at any given time also means that teachers and students might take up a dominant position in one discourse, while they might be relegated to subjugated and silent positions in others (Davies, 1990; Davies & Harré, 1991). Such contradictory positioning can pose problems for both persons' individual identity projects as well as their relationships with others. The girls who corrected their teacher (Davies, 2001) took up the position of good students but at the cost of having to place themselves in the subjugated position of females in the discourse of patriarchy, by propping up an incompetent male teacher. Davies et al. (2001) term such a simultaneous taking up of both dominant and subjugated positions the 'ambivalence of subjectification'. Achieving mastery of the practices of one discourse and willingly taking up dominant positions in it, such as good or literate student, might also require persons to relinquish a dominant position and to accept instead a subjugated position in another discourse.

In order to demonstrate this argument I have also used some of Peter Noguera's theorising about students in the US who are members of ethnic minorities, such as Black American or Hispanic students (Noguera, 1999, 2002). These students feature in statistics of underachievement and they are the objects of disciplinary procedures, such as harsh punishments, exclusion

and zero tolerance (Noguera, 1995, Skiba & Paterson, 1999) similarly to Māori and Pacific Island students in NZ. Noguera (2002) attributes the difficulties that young people of colour might have with constituting themselves as good students to multiple positioning. When these students try to be good students they also simultaneously try to take up positions in the discourses of their ethnic culture. Noguera points out that when these students constitute their ethnic or cultural identity, they have to define this identity as different from the dominant category of 'white'. However, by rejecting the category of 'white' in order to position themselves within their own cultures they also have to reject those 'identity markers' of whiteness that are associated with the practices of being a good student. Some of these identity markers include the practices of behaving well at school, working hard and complying with rules. These have to be discarded as 'uncool' or 'geek' because they are also linked to 'whiteness'.

The above examples also show that the range of available positions can create tensions. It can be difficult for persons to reconcile multiple identity positions and to simultaneously occupy dominant positions in different discourses. A dominant position in one discourse may coexist with a subordinate position in another. Noguera's black students might have had a greater investment in positioning themselves in the discourse of their culture rather than in the discourse of 'good student'. The effects of multiple and contradictory positionings, if not revealed and understood, can be far reaching and they can negatively influence a person's future possibilities. The way the students dealt with their multiple positioning in Noguera's example had implications on their participation in learning activities and their skill acquisition, which can have consequences for their future social participation as well.

3.6.5 Some problems of multiple positioning for interactions

In addition to the problems it might pose for a person's own identity work, multiple positioning can unhelpfully affect relationships. Walkerdine (2003) puts forward the conceptual tools of 'neo-liberal subjectivity', based on the work of several others (Giddens, 1991, 1994; Gee, 1999; du Gay, 1996; Rose, 1999) and 'discursive slips' to explain the possible negative relational outcomes of multiple positioning. The neo-liberal subject, according to

Walkerdine, is the product of the economic and social changes of the last few decades as well as the changes to the global labour market. One of the most important characteristics of this subject is that it has to reinvent itself according to the altering demands of the workplace through lifelong learning. Walkerdine claims the impossibility of this constantly shifting, multiply positioned subject and she identifies two problems that it might present for people's own identity projects and relationships. Firstly, multiple positioning makes it difficult for persons to produce coherent identity narratives about themselves. People might not be able to reconcile their different positions, as in Noguera's (1999, 2002) example, and they choose only certain positions but not others. Secondly, the demand to constantly shift between different positions can bring about an 'ambiguity between classifications' (Bauman, 2001, cited in Walkerdine, 2003), which Walkerdine calls 'discursive slips'. This means that the meanings of the positions that we take up become ambivalent as opposed to being clearly and straightforwardly defined. When people are uncertain about what practices are acceptable or unacceptable in a position or understand their positions differently, their interactions can become difficult.

It is not only students who are multiply positioned and have to cope with contradictory positions. Previously I also talked about how teachers have to perform distinctly different tasks within the same lesson or day. By shifting between these tasks the category of 'teacher' can also become ambiguous. One moment it might equate with the traditional notion of teacher as a person transferring knowledge while the next moment it is more akin to the notion of counsellor or social worker. I suggest that this ambivalence of positions can also be the source of distress for both teachers and students because it makes their interactions vulnerable to misunderstandings and confusions about their respective positionings and expectations of each other. It can be that while they both assume that their intended positioning is understood by the other and they both operate from the same storyline taking up complementary subject positions (Davies & Harré, 1991), in fact they both act based on different understandings of what the roles of 'teacher' and 'student' might be in a given situation. I will

show in the data chapters some implications of such ambiguities and discursive slips for teacher-student relationships.

3.6.6 Ethical positioning or agency exercised ethically

The negotiation of positions is also an act of moral significance because of its consequences for people's possibilities, identities and practices. If we accept that every speech act is an act of positioning with effects on self and others (Drewery, 2004), then positioning requires careful attention to both our own and others' agency. Just as the absence of agency can be detrimental for persons, it also matters whether agency is exercised ethically during the process of positioning, with consideration and care for others, or destructively, in ways that prevent others from taking themselves up agentively in positions they prefer. In schools, agency can also be used to undermine and disrupt classroom order, for example when students might deliberately choose a dominant position in a discourse other than the discourse of 'good' student. They might want to be a 'cool student' who does not comply with the teacher as compliance might be viewed as 'uncool' or the practice of 'geeks'. When some students in a classroom 'show off' and deliberately disregard the teacher, they experience themselves as agentic in the discourse of cool student. However, their disruptions to the class order possibly prevent several others from engaging in learning and from constituting themselves as what is considered appropriate student subjects in their school. The disruptive students also prevent themselves from learning important skills as a result of how they position themselves. This example shows that exercising agency for oneself can be done by making it impossible for others to do the same. This is not ethical agency as it does not consider others.

Similarly, teachers who might disregard whole staff decisions about agreed practice, such as following up on incorrect uniform, homework, lateness or asking students to attend extra support lessons for exam preparation, can make it hard for their more consistent colleagues to be validated by students in the position of 'good' teacher. Every action of a teacher or student is also an act of positioning. It sets in motion a 'train of consequences' (Davies & Harré, 1990) that can affect the agency and identity possibilities of several others. Davies et al., (2002) suggest that

understanding the constitutive power of discourses would provide better control of the possible outcomes and effects of positioning than letting the unbridled forces of discourses shape these effects. I argue that understanding how discourses work can support the constitution of one's preferred identity in a way that does not constrain others doing the same. Not constraining others is also a demonstration of care and it means that we are using discourse productively and constructively as opposed to destructively and manipulatively. I would also call it ethical positioning and agency.

3.6.7 Ethical positioning is maintaining dialogue with different others

Such ongoing attention to positioning with care for others, what I termed ethical agency and ethical positioning, is also described as dialogical agency (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004), 'unconditional kindness' (Sampson, 2003) and the 'mutual process of becoming' (Butler, 2004; Davies, 2006) by others. All these terms help theorise what the process of positioning might mean for school communities that have to manage and accommodate differences (Besley 2002a, 2005; Hodges, 1998; Linnehan & McCarthy, 2000; Sampson, 1993, 2003; Wong, 2002). Sullivan and McCarthy (2004) claim that participating in a community, such as a classroom or school, requires persons to manage the tensions of complying with their community's rules and producing their individual identities as unique. This is a delicate balancing of conforming to normative practices and of maintaining one's individual difference. The participants of a community have to be both the *same*, at times voluntarily suppressing their difference from others in the interests of maintaining their community of practice, as well as *other*, maintaining their difference in the process of producing their identities as unique. As Davies (2006) puts it, persons have to be able to hold the tension of individualising and totalising, while negotiating their identities in an ongoing discursive process. This might, of course, sometimes be very difficult because none of us can identify and agree fully with all the practices of each community we participate in. It then matters how these moments of 'non-identification' with the norms are handled as these are the spaces where resistance can be acted out (Hodges, 1998).

Sullivan and McCarthy (2004) suggest that instances of non-identification with a community of practice should become the platforms for negotiating the collaborative production of selves and identities so that learning does not become disabled. This is a significant argument for schools where differences more often stop people from negotiating as opposed to remaining in dialogue. It is more common practice that differences of opinions, beliefs and practices invoke fear or resistance rather than more conversation. Sullivan and McCarthy (2004) call for dialogue with others in these instances because our capacity to carry on with our identity projects relies on others:

Through dialoguing with the other, we get a sense of who we are. We feel the value that the other places in us through their intonation. At the same time however, we also have the agency to make this value part of the self or react to it with “repulsion and hatred”.... We can see that the agency of the other in this model of dialogue lies not so much in the ability of the other to constrain or enable our agency as cultural accounts indicate but in the ability to introduce tones of value into our sense of ourselves.. (p. 307)

Having a conversation with someone who is different from us can introduce ‘tones of value’ into their sense of themselves. It can be as simple as listening to a colleague who has different views from us about discipline, for instance, without trying to convince them of the truth value of our own views.

Sampson (2003) adds the metaphor of ‘unconditional kindness to strangers’ to this dialogical view of positioning and interacting respectfully with different others. He offers the notion of sociality or the unconditional obligation to others as a necessary condition of human survival and well-being (Sampson, 1989, 1993). For schools it means a willingness to respectfully engage with others, often without knowing what this engagement will produce for one’s future. Positioning with care for others or practising agency ethically is staying open to the process of identity formation, or as Davies (2006) suggests the ‘mutual process of becoming’ along with the unpredictability and contradictions of such a process. Butler (2004) puts it this way:

I find that my very formation implicates the other in me, that my own foreignness to myself is, paradoxically, the source of my ethical connection with others. I am not fully known to myself, because part of what I am is the enigmatic traces of others. (p.46)

Davies (2006) considers that such availability to the other can open different conversations and a new approach to relationships, which she adds is contrary to the neo-liberal concept of responsibility for the self and not the other.

The full knowledge of self that is implicated in humanist ideals of ethical practice, must, in this understanding, be put aside in favour of an awareness of the emergent process of mutual formation. (p. 436)

In summary, understanding the effects of discourse positions for our identities helps us go beyond the possibilities of any given discourse. The agentic positioning of others is necessary for ethical relationship practice and maintaining dialogue. Exercising agency ethically involves not only an understanding of our own and others' constitution from discourses, but also an understanding of the effects of managing our differences from as well as our sameness with the community of practice that we have to submit to in our daily lives. I will now present some arguments for the relevance of a discursive approach for the ongoing production of respectful relationships.

3.7 The relevance of discourse theory for relationships and conversations

Accepting a discursive view of identities, relationships and organisational practices means that *dialogue* is not only important for sorting out the effects of wrongdoing and re-integrating someone into their communities. Every conversation becomes significant as it is the site of producing both individual identities and institutional practices. As everyone is implicated in both the identity projects of others as well as the production of the culture of an organisation and a society, conversations have increased moral significance. They come to be viewed as social acts on the world rather than just speech acts. This means that staying in dialogue with different others is an ethical responsibility because we not only rely on others for our identity projects but introduce 'tones of value' to theirs (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004). In addition, because the dialogues that we have with others, whether they are family members or colleagues, produce and maintain the systems that we are part of, choosing to stay away from them can be considered the abrogation of our obligations and responsibilities as citizens. Corcoran (2005) contends that every day relationships should be informed by

relational rather than individual responsibility. He adds that relational responsibility encourages dialogue while individually based discourses 'debilitate communicative activity' (p. 119).

The analysis of both individual identity and institutional practices or organisational culture using discourses normalises *difference* as an unavoidable characteristic of communities, whether they are small families, a school or a society. Teachers' and students' differences, contradictory views, and some of their conflicts, disagreements and misunderstandings, according to this explanation, are not the result of their deliberate resistance towards the other. Rather, they are the effects of the production of their preferred identities from different positions in the different storylines or discourses that are available to them. Teachers' and students' differences can also reflect their different alignments with or rejection of the different values that are carried by the discourses that define the culture and the organisational practices of their school. The notion of discourse can also explain tensions between punitive and restorative perspectives on discipline that researchers have found to pose a problem for the introduction of RP in some schools (Cavanagh, 2009; Coetzee, 2005; McCluskey, 2010). A discursive approach to relationships normalises heterogeneity rather than homogeneity, so sameness is not assumed or is not necessarily a desired outcome of a conversation (Drewery, 2007). Rather, the exploration of different views, meanings, interpretations and values becomes an inevitable and significant conversation strategy as well as the intended outcome of an interaction. Re-integrative shaming theory normalises sameness rather than difference, employing an idea of community that homogenises the group. Though different views might be explored and voiced in a conversation that is guided by the notion of shame, according to the main theorists such as Braithwaite, the main aim of such conversations is to achieve compliance with rules through invoking remorse or regret rather than through supporting the moral agency of conversation participants by working to better understand their differences. This does not mean that conversations guided by the notion of shame are less morally engaging but rather that their procedural focus is different. Attention to and privileging difference within a discursive approach does not mean moral relativism or that anything goes, a criticism often

directed at social constructionism. It does not mean endorsing a wrongdoer's views in conversations that respond to conflict. Rather, it is an acknowledgement that knowledges, ideas, rules and values are historically and culturally situated and they should be subject to critique and discussion (Gergen, 1985).

Power difference is not conceptualised by re-integrative shaming theory either. According to constructionism power is the constitutive force of discourses that produces particular relationships and practices in hidden and invisible ways. Most people would be familiar with power as greater physical strength or a dominating presence in a conversation, which might be manifested as talking out of turn or taking up more time than others. However, in discursive terms power is not simply either of these visible technologies of domination. It is the invisible work of socially dominant ideas or knowledges, which reproduces social power relationships and particular hierarchies of moral orders and people, reinforcing some but oppressing others. The invisible working of power can affect people in ways that they might not understand, and teacher-student relationships are not exempt from such effects. Teachers might experience an interaction as stressful but they might not be able to provide reasons for why it has played out in a particular way and not the other. In this thesis I will investigate how familiarity with the notions of discourse and power/knowledge can increase teachers' sensitivity to the relational significance of every interaction and to the ways the constitutive power of discourses might shape its outcomes. Sensitivity to the work of discourses supports ongoing *moral engagement*. It requires attention to and care for the identity projects of others and an awareness of our contribution to producing and maintaining institutional and social processes. Therefore, a discursive approach to relationships helps develop persons as moral agents who stay in touch with the ethics of their practices through examining their effects on others and the systems that they are part of.

If we accept a discursive approach to individual identity, relationships and institutional processes, the moral significance of dialogue with different others and power as the productive force of discourses, then *discourse knowledge* becomes an important skill for respectful interaction. In this thesis

I propose two main applications of discourse knowledge for classroom teachers. Firstly, I claim, that discourse knowledge can support the kind of careful attention to the process of conversations that leads to positioning others agentively, in legitimate and speaking positions and in discourses that do not undermine their relationships. I will describe in more detail the conversational moves that can achieve such intensified attention in Chapter 4. Secondly, I argue the significance of discourse knowledge for reflection and analysis that can help us understand how the productive power of discourses constitutes individual identities and interactions in an organisation, such as a school. Davies and her colleagues have shown how the invisible forces of discourses can produce relationships which are contrary to people's intentions (Davies et al., 2002; Davies et al., 2006). Senge and his colleagues have pointed out the potential detrimental effects of unexamined discourses or values for organisations (Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton & Kleiner, 2000). They claim that if the members of an organisation do not regularly examine what values make their usual practices and ways of relating possible, these practices can support and maintain value systems that are contrary to what most people within the organisation believe in. Therefore it is important that teachers understand the productive forces that define their school or class cultures and identify what specific ideas compete to define teacher-student relationships.

I shall call a person who uses discourse knowledge for conversational and reflection purposes '*intentional discourse user*'. I consider intentional discourse use a possible way of producing and reproducing respectful conversations in the classroom that are based on a commitment to dialogue, expressing difference and addressing power relationships. Such conversations also require people to be morally engaged in their interactions meaning that they use discourse with consideration and care for the identity projects of others as opposed to using them for manipulation. In Chapter 4 I will describe in more detail what I mean by 'intentional discourse user' and what skills I believe can help utilise discourse knowledge for the improvement of teachers' well-being and relationships. I will go on to show the implications of the process of conversations on the lives and possibilities of persons.

CHAPTER 4 Discursive relationship practices of conversation and reflection

4.1 The intentional use of discourses: respectful relationship practice

In the previous chapter I proposed that utilising discourse knowledge or becoming 'intentional discourse users' could be one way of supporting teachers with the production and reproduction of conversations that have the characteristics of restorative conversations. By intentional discourse use I do not mean any deliberate and purposeful use of discourse knowledge for manipulating others. I have borrowed the term 'intentional discourse user' from Drewery (2005) to denote a range of relationship practices that utilise discourse knowledge in at least two ways: for a person's own purposes, in order to achieve particular goals and/or to manage individual well-being but also for improving the relational outcomes of interactions with others. Both ways of using discourses can contribute to improving teachers' well-being and to positively influencing the learning environment in schools. The adjective 'intentional' is added to Davies' (1998) term of 'discourse user' in order to distinguish the kind of discourse use that I propose for teachers from the unconscious and unexamined use of discourses that, I believe, everyone is involved in. We all use discourses in one way or another, taking up and rejecting positions but we do not necessarily reflect on their consequences all the time, even when we might be familiar with the notions of discourse and positioning.

Davies (1998) argues that discourse analysis or deconstruction can be a way of using discourses for our own purposes and for achieving desired outcomes. She proposes the mobilisation of positions that allow access to particular actions or resources in the interests of a particular agenda. She provides, as an example, her use of the liberal feminist discourse from which she can work to secure the rights of girls to the same education as what boys have. Such action would not be available to her from a patriarchal discourse. Discourse use in this sense provides opportunities for different action. It is freedom from the essentialist notion of the self and an acceptance of multiple positionings in several discourses. It is a recognition of the possibilities for action that each position might offer in support of a particular agenda and

taking advantage of those possibilities. Understanding the scope of actions that different positions in different discourses enable can also improve personal well-being, which Davies (1994, 1996, 1998) demonstrates through the example of one of her students. The partner of this student sexually abused her daughter and she found it extremely difficult to navigate her different relationships with psychologists, child protection agencies, social workers and her family. When she examined the effects of the discourses she was positioned in, it became easier for her to refuse the ones that she saw as counterproductive for her or her daughter but she could relatively painlessly comply with the discourses she understood as non-optional. I will return to this example again later in this chapter.

Using discourses intentionally can not only provide access to different action for individuals but it can open up possibilities and improve the outcomes of an interaction between individuals. I view the practice of re-positioning (Laws & Davies, 2000) as a way of using discourse for relational purposes and for positive relational outcomes. I will describe this practice in detail later in this chapter. Using discourse in the interests of advancing a relationship or in order to arrive at positive relational outcomes is a way of practising the kind of ethical agency that I described in Chapter 3. It is a responsible use of discourses, rather than irresponsibly exploiting them for a person's immediate purposes. It is examining each discourse for its potential negative effects and using them to improve individual well-being and satisfaction without causing harm or at least minimising harm to others. It is also challenging and unsettling discourses that position persons in opposition to each other.

Intentional discourse use can be a tool of maintaining respect in teacher-student and other relationships in schools. If teachers become discourse users they can avoid careless and harmful ways of speaking. They can also increase their sensitivity to the possible relational outcomes of those ways of speaking. In addition, discourse use requires from teachers ongoing moral engagement with the interactions that they have with others, which in turn can support the production and reproduction of conversations that are more likely to be experienced as respectful. Previously I suggested two specific areas of teacher practice that could be informed by discourse

knowledge: conversations and reflection. Using discourse knowledge in these two areas of practice requires a distinctly different stance from teachers' usual stance of certainty, which with Drewery we have termed 'a stance of enquiry' (2010). A stance of enquiry in conversations can be implemented by paying conscious attention to the process of every conversation. This means an acknowledgement of the productive power of language for persons' identities, relationships and institutional processes. It also means care for the effects of one's ways of speaking on others. Such a stance calls for conversation practices that provide opportunities for persons to articulate and voice their views, to explore a variety of meanings and to develop meanings that position them differently in relation to unhelpful discourses. In reflection the stance of enquiry can support teachers to reveal the workings of discourses and how their constitutive forces might undermine wellbeing or position teachers and students in opposition to each other.

Deconstruction is a suitable process for such a reflection as it can expose how some of the hidden rationalities or knowledges might prescribe particular teacher and student identities and practices that are not conducive to teaching and learning. Currently available restorative processes do not include conceptual and analytical frameworks that specifically try to identify or theorise the reasons for relationship breakdowns and the undermining of teachers' wellbeing in schools. I propose to add deconstructive reflection to teachers' restorative practices repertoire as I believe it can provide such different perspectives on, and understandings of, relationship problems that can also offer new ways of conducting and managing teacher-student relationships. In the following I will introduce what I consider to be the relationship practices and skills of a teacher, who utilises constructionist theorising and discourse knowledge both for producing respectful conversations and for reflecting on the wider social context in order to improve the learning environment. I claim that these practices and skills do not only complement currently used restorative processes but they can be used as proactive strategies in the classroom. Unlike scripted, multi-step restorative conversations, each of the conversational moves that I describe can be used as a one-step response, tailored to the unique utterances of an interaction, which makes them easier to use in the classroom. Once

understood, deconstructive questions can be invented on the spot according to the situation.

4.2 The contributions of narrative therapy

Several of the relationship practices that I propose for teachers' daily relationship management have been invented and developed by narrative therapists, particularly through the work of Michael White and David Epston (Bird, 2000, 2004; Epston, 1993; Epston & White, 1992; 1995; Freeman, Epston & Lobovitz, 1997; Monk et al, 1997; Morgan, 2000, 2002; Nylund, 2000; Smith & Nylund, 1997; White, 1988a, 1988b, 1992, 1997, 1999, 2007; Winslade & Monk, 1999). By proposing relationship practices commonly used in therapy, I do not suggest that teachers become therapists in their classrooms. Rather, I believe that particular therapeutic processes and techniques can be adapted for use in everyday interactions as they attend to the relational effects of conversations. Narrative therapy is 'a postmodern, poststructuralist form of therapy positioned within the social constructionist domain of psychology' (Besley, 2002b, p. 131). It draws extensively on both Foucault's notion of constitutive power and constructionist ideas of language. Narrative therapy puts the discursive view of identities and relationships into practice by using a story metaphor (Gergen, 1990, 1991, 2001), which is based on the premise that persons' identities and problems are the products of the meanings that they make of their experiences and the stories that they tell about themselves based on these meanings. Narrative therapy examines and unpacks these stories, first through separating problematic stories from persons and locating them in the social, relational domain of discourses (Besley, 2005; Carey & Russel, 2002; Kecskemeti & Epston, 2001; Morgan, 2000; White, 1988a). It then helps persons 're-author' or reconstruct their stories, in other words, find an alternative story or position to the dominant, oppressive and/or limiting ones that shape their lives and relationships in problematic ways.

The therapeutic process achieves this re-authoring with the help of an adaptation of deconstruction as described by White (1992). The kind of deconstruction he proposes serves the dual purposes of changing the individual stories that persons tell about their lives and persons' positionings in relation to the social and cultural stories that shape them in unhelpful

ways. Narrative therapy acknowledges that meanings are not made in a vacuum. Instead, they are borrowed from the culturally available stories of the social context and they are produced and reproduced through the use of language in conversations. People's problems usually originate from the way they are positioned in relation to cultural stories and power. Problems are exacerbated when damaging positionings are repeatedly circulated and recycled in conversations. When the oppressive and constraining power of dominant discourses affects people's lives and identities negatively, the practices that are grounded in those social discourses put them in conflict with either themselves or others. Contradictory positions can be the source of distress, confusion and uncertainties for one's preferred identity. Being positioned in ways that deny agency and/or the possibilities that exist for agency can put persons in opposition with others. These are instances when narrative therapy tries to help persons shift their relationship to such discourses by deconstructing their effects and by finding alternative, more suitable discourses or stories that will position people differently both in relation to dominant discourses as well as others. This is achieved through care with and particular attention paid to the use of language because its productive qualities are acknowledged.

The deconstruction and re-authoring process is supported by the conversational moves of 'questioning with genuine curiosity' and 'externalising'. 'Curious questions' are used to consciously create opportunities for using the clients' meanings for organising their lives rather than allowing socially and culturally dominant meanings, including the therapist's, to do the same. Externalising is a way of speaking that removes problems from inside persons into the social and cultural arena (White, 1988b; White & Epston, 1990). It also helps deconstruct limiting and constraining cultural stories in order to replace them with ones that support the agency of all participants of an interaction. Some of the conversational skills and moves developed by narrative therapists can be used in everyday conversations and relationships as they have the potential to support respect in the process of 'mutual formation' (Davies, 2006). I will now describe these skills as I propose them to be used in classrooms with examples from my own teaching and counselling practice.

4.3 Conversations that open possibilities

In diverse school communities there are always many different knowledges about the world and there are always many different interpretations of the same event based on different experiences of life. It is likely that certain teachers' or students' views become validated and privileged while the experiences of others are ignored. The constructionist claim about different knowledges competing to become truths is relevant in such a context. Those whose experiences and knowledges are constantly dismissed will find it extremely difficult to feel included and to participate. Thus the generic approach to relationships in schools that could alleviate this problem has to be founded on an acceptance that there are many ideas, truth claims or versions of events which could affect people in different ways. If students and teachers started their relationships from the position of such an acceptance, then it is likely that they would be more willing to explore the different ideas and the different perspectives that others have. With Wendy Drewery, we have proposed that such willingness is necessary for building respectful and peaceful relationships between students and teachers. It is also one of the relationship-building habits of an effective teacher, a necessary companion to the attitude of certainty that is also required from teachers in their teaching roles (Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2010).

I propose four conversational skills that, I believe, can help teachers utilise constructionist and discursive theorising in support of respectful relationships in the classroom. The first skill that I propose is not a specific conversational move, instead it is using theory about the productive power of language as a guide to organise and structure interactions on an ongoing basis. The second skill is questioning from a not knowing position which supports the exploration of different meanings. The third skill, externalising, locates problems in discourses rather than in individuals, which can facilitate the process of examining the hidden productive power of discourses. The fourth skill, repositioning, is using the notion of discourse positioning to positively influence the relational outcomes of a conversation and to position others agentively.

4.3.1 Language use: What we say matters

The person you are, your experience, your identity, your 'personality' are all the effects of language.language is a fundamentally social phenomenon; it is something that occurs between people, whether they are having a conversation, writing a letter or a book, or filling in their tax return. It is in such exchanges between people that the construction of the person can take place. (Burr, 1995, p. 39)

Accepting a poststructuralist, constructionist view of language invites teachers to attribute greater significance to the ways they speak and to consider their language use in the classroom to be a moral and ethical activity. This calls for developing greater sensitivity to what effects language use might create for teachers and students. It also means that teachers use language being aware that it is the site of assuming and assigning identities and positions, and therefore it determines what identities are legitimised or silenced in a school. In other words, teachers' and students' identities are created not only by how they are spoken about but also by the ways they speak about themselves (Buzelli & Johnston, 2002; Carter & Osler, 2000; Davies, 2000; Dimitriadis, 2004; Drewery & Winslade, 1997; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003).

...in many ways the process of identity formation is the single most important thing that happens in education, and one that involves all of the aspects of education...: language and discourse, power and authority, and culture. It is a process in which two crucial strands are interwoven: the identities that children adopt, select, or claim for themselves and those assigned to them by others (Buzelli & Johnston, 2002 p. 115)

The process of assigning and assuming identities also reflects the workings of power. Depending on what identities are privileged by those in decision making positions, specific teacher and student identities or representations of identities might be given a greater sense of authority than others. In some schools, more traditional teacher identities, persons who operate through the external control of students, might be authorised along with obedient student identities. Other schools might pride themselves on promoting and privileging more autonomous student identities along with more permissive teachers. The process of what kind of persons and identities schools want to produce and privilege is a complex issue, also linked to economic, class and gender considerations (Wexler, 1992).

Whatever teacher and student identities are promoted in a particular school, trying to fix certain identity descriptions as truths, as real or as normal,

can have far-reaching consequences for non-dominant groups of students and teachers. It can affect their mental health, their ability to participate as citizens in the life of the school and their access to resources. It is not difficult to imagine what a struggle daily life might be for a controlling teacher in a school that privileges democratic interactions between teachers and students. Similarly, students who expect to be 'controlled' might find it really hard to operate in a school where teachers rely on students who take initiative and independently make decisions about their learning. The process of inscribing certain identities as normal can also maintain the status quo, of class, of economic status and of advantage and disadvantage. For this reason it is important that teachers are aware of the productive power of language and they are able to change their use of language in order to create different relationships. This requires teachers to watch how the names they give to persons and events might prescribe particular relationships and modes of interaction that they can have with their students (Drewery, 2005). The phrase 'what we say matters' could be used as the guiding principle of conversations and relationship practices that draw on constructionist theorising about language. It could serve as a reminder that some names and meanings might relegate some students, parents or colleagues outside the categories of normality. The following example taken from real school life demonstrates the different effects of language use. It comes from observing two different teachers' responses to the same situation.

During a formal prize giving ceremony one of the senior managers of a college tried to include greetings and phrases from different languages in his speech. Some students, who were fluent in those languages, found his pronunciation unsatisfactory and started laughing. Their behaviour was quite noticeable and was deemed unacceptable according to the protocols of such formal occasions. After the ceremony, one teacher looked sternly at the students and told them off publicly and loudly: *'How dare you behave like that? Who do you think you are?'* Another teacher, who saw this interaction, went up to the students and asked to speak to them privately in her office. The students were apprehensive but followed this teacher. She told them in a calm and respectful tone: *'Look, I would like to give you some feedback about what I have observed during the prize giving. I want to tell you about the disappointment I*

feel because I consider you are leaders, who can influence others. I am sad that you felt you had to laugh rather than appreciate that someone from another culture made an effort to use your language. I would like you to think about the example that you set for younger students.' The students apologised after hearing this feedback and entered a conversation with their teacher about the difficulties of learning another language. The underlying meaning that shaped the first teacher's response was wrongdoing and breaking the rules. This meaning assigned identities to the students that were outside the category of acceptable identities and it closed the possibility of a further conversation. The second teacher's name for the students and interpretation of the situation was very different. She viewed them as leaders who had made a mistake but she trusted their capacity to learn from their mistakes. She put forward her views not as some kind of certainty or truth but as one possible interpretation. She spoke about the effects on her of what she had witnessed rather than try to issue some generalised conclusion about the students. The second response has left space for negotiating not only the students' relationship with this teacher but for taking up their identity differently as well. It also provided the students with access to a speaking position, from which they could defend themselves and reflect on their actions.

Such careful use of language in classrooms is more likely to maintain the dignity of participants and is unlikely to invite destructive resistance. On the contrary, it can build connections and strengthen relationships. Language used with such attention to its possible effects opens options, and invites the other into useful dialogue as opposed to conveying a judgment. It engages not only the teacher as a moral agent but the students as well. They are given an opportunity to ponder the effects of their actions. It does not take more time for classroom teachers to speak in different ways and to pay more careful attention to the effects of their use of language although it may take time to unravel habitual judgmental ways of speaking.

4.3.2 Questioning from a not-knowing position

Restorative conversations consciously set out to allow the expression of difference as they provide everyone with the opportunity to tell their version of the events that invited a restorative response. Students, parents and teachers are more likely to experience an interaction as respectful if they can,

at least at times, contribute their views on an issue and if those views are invited and explored. While it is not always possible to have longer conversations about everyone's different interpretations in the classroom, it is possible to insert in usual ways of speaking one-off questions that call for clarification and that demonstrate an interest in the meanings that different people make of the same event. Such questioning can interrupt and destabilise dominant and fixed meanings and it can also help persons develop their own meanings. The skill of 'questioning with genuine curiosity' can facilitate this process.

Questioning with genuine curiosity was developed by narrative therapy practitioners both as a stance and as a technical skill that has the potential to unsettle power relations tied to knowledge. It is based on the premise that clients experience their lives and relationships as problematic when they are limited or prevented from using their knowledge to shape their lives (Drewery, 2005). Curiosity can help privilege clients' local knowledges. Curious questioning is done by therapists assuming a 'not-knowing' stance, which is meant to prevent the therapist from having too much authority over clients' lives (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). Clients are positioned as experts on the content of their lives, which supports the re-authoring of their problematic stories and changing their relationships with harmful knowledges (Brown, 2007a; White & Epston, 1990). Curiosity supports the exploration and articulation of the client's perspectives, meanings, strengths, possibilities, new directions and new descriptions of themselves (Monk et al, 1997, p. 28).

Teachers and students alike are very familiar with ways of speaking that are based on advice-giving and offering solutions to problems. Many of us often use these ways of speaking in interactions with friends, family members and colleagues. On such occasions we all are likely to enter into a relational exchange with some prior assumptions about the situation. There are times when this is what people might find useful and helpful. However, these solution-focused responses, which are so commonly called for in the busy lives of teachers and students, might not always allow for the exploration of different meanings and different 'truths' after a fight or ongoing bullying, for example. Suspending assumptions and putting aside prior meaning making can leave space for the articulation of a variety of meanings. In addition, a

genuinely curious stance can interrupt fixed meanings or identity descriptions that might be assigned by both teachers and students. It has the potential to destabilise hierarchies of knowledges because it can bring forward different perspectives based on different experiences as opposed to one strong perspective (perhaps that of a teacher or a feared student) getting support and silencing disagreement. A stance of respectful curiosity recognises that our own assumptions may not always be correct. This stance is tolerant of diversity and the fact that different people make meaning differently – they come from different backgrounds and use different tools for understanding what is going on. The following two vignettes demonstrate the differences between advice-giving and imposed meaning and a conversation where a person is given an opportunity to tell his version and interpretation of what has happened.

Conversation 1

Teacher

Two girls complained about you and they said that you had been harassing and stalking them. You even pushed one of them to the ground.

Student

No, Sir. She tripped by accident. I admit that I had asked one of them out but when she said 'No,' I stopped. I have witnesses and you could ask them, too.

Teacher

Well, that is not what they are telling me. Harassment is a serious offence and it could result in a stand-down.

Student

I did not do it, Sir. You can ask James, too. He will confirm what I am telling you.

Teacher

Don't think that you can trick yourself out of consequences.

Conversation 2

Teacher

I have received a complaint about you. What can you tell me about what happened?

Student

I admit that I have followed two girls and I have asked one of them to go out with me. I stopped when she said No.

Teacher

What about pushing one of them to the ground?

Student

I did not do it. She accidentally slipped and fell over. I have witnesses and I am happy for you to ask them.

Teacher

I am going to interview some of the bystanders and clarify what has happened. I will then call everyone together to have a conversation.

Student

I am fine with that.

The first conversation privileges the teacher's and the girls' version of what has happened. No space is provided for any other telling as disagreement invites a reprimand from the teacher. The teacher approaches his exchange with the student from a position of certainty and with a fixed meaning about the events. Moreover, he implies, though not directly, that the student is a 'stalker' and a 'harasser'. The possibility of considering other options is closed down by the teachers' certainty. He does not enter this conversation with curiosity about how the student might interpret the situation. In the second conversation the teacher does not impose his version of events and he provides space for the student to tell what his perspective is by saying: 'What can you tell me about what happened?' This open question invites the student to elaborate on, if he wants, his version of the situation. Such a conversation is more likely to de-escalate conflicts as it offers agency to the person questioned. It can reduce the possibility of one view or knowledge becoming 'the truth' as the teacher is willing to entertain different meanings and interpretations of the same event.

In order to practise questioning with genuine curiosity after a playground conflict, for instance, it is usually enough to ask 'What has happened?' from everyone, and then simply let every person tell what they think has happened, listening to them without interrupting and adding the interviewer's views. Usually some further questions that shed light on details are enough to support a person telling his/her story. However, it is useful to ask for clarification starting with 'Do you think or do you mean' such as in the question 'Do you think he would agree with your story?' This is not the same as what would traditionally be viewed as a closed question, which can only invite a Yes or No response. If asked with a tone of voice that expresses a degree of uncertainty, this question can facilitate further clarification of meanings. This simple, and seemingly negligible difference helps put forward any assumptions with uncertainty, using them as reference points, from which the person questioned can further elaborate his/her perspective as opposed to the conversation ending with the imposition of the interviewer's perspective.

Questioning with genuine curiosity is not only a technique for getting a student's story. It is also a stance of persistence and a philosophical position, which accepts that people's identity stories and meanings are not fixed and that it is always possible to find stories and meanings that support another, more helpful identity description. From this stance it is also possible to acknowledge that there are always many different meanings and interpretations of the same event, which can lead to misunderstandings and breakdowns in relationships. Clarifying different understandings can help restore dialogue. Questioning with genuine curiosity, from a stance of not knowing, requires that teachers consciously shift from their usual 'teaching' ways of speaking that are based on much more certainty. The above example makes curious questioning look very simple yet it is not the most commonly used way of speaking in schools. In fact, a curious stance might provide quite a challenge to teachers who think they can transfer their usual teaching ways of interacting into pastoral roles. A pastoral interaction can be more successful if teachers are able to give up their expert position in favour of privileging a student's knowledge of themselves. This way of questioning can be useful for mediating conflict or sorting out arguments. It is more likely to support wrongdoers to take responsibility for their actions rather than to deny and blame others. It can also go a long way in supporting colleagues who might feel silenced. I propose that 'curious' questions can also be used in the classroom as a one-off strategy of supporting respectful interaction during discussions. A well-placed question starting with 'Do you mean' can help a student clarify his/her ideas and it can prevent future misunderstandings. It also invites persons into a moral position and a position of agency where they have to own what they say by explaining or justifying their position. Such questioning, I claim, can also help people feel listened to and respected.

4.3.3 Externalising and externalising conversations

Externalising is a therapeutic tool, originally developed by White and Epston (1990) that is widely used by practitioners of narrative therapy (Carey & Russell, 2002; Epston, 1993; Madigan, 1996, 2007; Monk et al., 1997; White, 1988b). It is, at once, a way of speaking or a linguistic device that separates persons from problems as well as an epistemological position that is

concerned with how knowledge is socially produced and how it can become truth or power/knowledge. Externalising supports the deconstruction of power/knowledge or discourses. White's famous statement 'The person is never the problem. The problem is the problem' encapsulates what it can achieve. The technical skill of externalising involves turning adjectives into nouns. Instead of describing a student as 'violent', his/her relationship with 'violence' is talked about, recounting what s/he might do when s/he allows violence to dictate his/her actions. This move creates a linguistic challenge to internalising, pathologising and totalising descriptions of persons, such as 'violent', 'angry' or 'naughty'. It paves the way for the exploration of the problem in relation to people, as socially and collectively produced, rather than being the property or the inner characteristic of an individual. By talking about problems in a way that does not locate them within persons, externalising challenges medicalised notions of identities that are often used in schools, such as ADHD, conduct disorder and oppositional defiance disorder (Burman et al., 1996; Delafield, 1999; Smith & Nylund, 1997; Parker, 1999a). Externalising supports the exploration of the social context of problems, of their discursive origins and the ideas, practices and institutional processes that maintain them. It supports the deconstruction of unhelpful social stories in longer conversations where the influence of problem stories can be explored on different areas of people's lives along with the scope of influence persons have over problems.

Individuals are positioned by and within discourse and such positioning has particular material effects in their lives that can be traced and understood. In a narrative approach to counselling, the practice of building externalising conversation (White & Epston, 1990) is a technique built upon this assumption. Rather than making a pathologising assumption about the origins of a problem in a personal deficit in the client, a narrative practitioner will typically seek to locate the problem that brings a person to counselling outside the person and in the world of discourse and story. (Winslade, 2005, pp 356-357)

Externalising does not simply add one more conversational move or instantly applicable 'formula' to teachers' interactional skills. It supports a distinctly different epistemological position, from which problematic student and teacher identities and classroom relationships can be seen as the products of their particular relationships to knowledges and/or the effects of the workings of discourses. Externalising conversations used in schools by

deans, form teachers and those who deal with disciplinary matters in such a manner can then lead to finding and supporting alternative identity descriptions about difficult students and alternative ways of conducting relationships between teachers and students (Kecskemeti, 2000; Winslade & Monk, 1999). They can also be utilised in class meetings for discussing pertinent and pervasive problems such as interruptions, gossiping and bullying. Externalising can have the effects of destabilising and interrupting cultural stories and dominant meanings that are likely to put students in opposition with their peers, their parents or their schools.

Recently I was asked to conduct a class meeting by a form teacher in response to her and her students' concerns about Jayden, a 'repeat offender' and 'bully' as he was called by both teachers and students. Jayden had been stood down several times because he physically hurt other students in his classroom. He used his height to intimidate his peers, ordering them to surrender their lunches and/or money to him. Several of the students were also threatened that if they did not comply with his wishes they would suffer serious consequences. Jayden's classmates informed their form teacher, who notified the school principal, and a meeting was called. Jayden's mother shared at the meeting that Jayden used similar tactics at home not only with his younger siblings but her as well. The principal decided to give one more chance to Jayden provided he was willing to hear what effects his actions had on others and to offer reparation to his classmates. The form teacher organised a class meeting but Jayden's classmates collectively decided that he should not be at the meeting as his presence would silence the other students. They would inform him of the outcomes later. There was considerable distress in the class meeting that followed when one by one, Jayden's classmates recounted how he acted violently towards others. Acknowledging the seriousness of the situation and validating their concerns, the form teacher summarised what they had told using externalising language: *'It sounds like Jayden lets himself be guided and advised by serious bullying tactics and violence that cause much harm to others.'* The class spent considerable time discussing the effects of Jayden's actions as they constituted serious assaults. Everyone agreed that the harassment and violence had to stop. Continuing to use externalising their teacher asked: *'Are*

there times when Jayden manages to free himself from the influence of violence?’ His classmates readily provided examples of Jayden’s kindness and collaboration.

The students also discussed how they wanted him to be accountable to them on a daily basis. Their teacher asked: *‘How could Jayden prove to you that he is changing his relationship to violence?’* They suggested several small changes as to how the class enters and leaves rooms when lessons start or finish, suggesting Jayden is the last to enter or leave as it would minimise his opportunities for banging the door on others. A plan was drawn up and presented to Jayden and follow up was carried out by one of the deputy principals Jayden had to report to daily. Jayden stayed out of trouble for the rest of the school year, a whole school term. Externalising conversations did not change the unhelpful cultural ideas that support violence in relationships and that had been extensively available to Jayden for taking up his identity. However, they changed, even if temporarily, his positioning in relation to those ideas. The opportunities he had for re-authoring his relationship to violence also led to altering the ways he conducted his relationships with his classmates.

Externalising can be part of a teacher’s language repertoire that can be used in the classroom in everyday interactions. It can add humour to the difficult task of behaviour management. A teacher told me that when she said *‘Guys, disruptions / too much talking / bickering / arguments have managed to sneak back into the classroom again’* instead of *‘Stop talking, this is really getting annoying’* it invited laughter and cooperation rather than resistance. Such personalisation of problems can bring humour into an interaction and it preserves students’ agency. White and Epston (1990) have introduced some very creative and entertaining names for problems such as ‘Sneaky Poo’. Younger children usually enjoy giving themselves over to their imagination and finding novel descriptions to problems such as the disruption of temper tantrums (Kotzé & Morkel, 2002; Kecskemeti, 2007). Though externalising might not permanently rework or erase the discourses that enable children to respond to requests of compromise with resistance or temper tantrums, it can temporarily shift students’ positioning in relation to them. The shift can

also open the way for different ways of engaging with and relating to others in the classroom.

Some teachers might say that externalising is not different from naming and discussing behaviours or issues instead of persons. I would say that externalising is much more than the technical skill of using language in a particular way. It assumes familiarity with, and acceptance of, the discursive production of problems and identities and that problems are located in the social arena rather than inside persons. It is not abdicating responsibility but recognising the constitutive power of socially available ideas or discourses. Externalising can open conversations that invite persons to reflect on their stance on socially available ideas and their effects on their relationships. Jayden and his class could have had another conversation about what supports violence in their school and what kind of persons might choose it as a preferred way of responding to conflict. Such a conversation could have supported Jayden and his classmates with storying their identities and clarifying their moral stance on the use of violence. Externalising, if included in teachers' daily interactional repertoire, can help address the power of discourses through inviting students and adults to take a moral position and reflect on their relationships to different discourses. Externalising can be used during whole class or group discussions of issues and concepts, during subject lessons such as English, Health, History and Social Studies and during form time also.

4.3.4 Repositioning: the possibility for new identities and agency

Laws and Davies (2000) provide an example of repositioning, the fourth conversational skill that I propose for facilitating the production of respectful conversations in the classroom. Repositioning is the on-the-spot use of discourse knowledge for ensuring a positive relational outcome for an interaction. It is an understanding of the effects of discursive positions for identity and agency and using this understanding for the purposes of constituting persons agentively. Laws and Davies claim that repositioning can prevent conflict and it can help persons stay in dialogue with each other. They describe Robert, an 11 year-old, who is shouting obscenities from the rooftop of the school citing an injustice that allegedly happened to one of his friends as the reason for his actions. Cath Laws, who is Robert's principal,

knows that the police will not go around to Robert's house without taking two cars. When Robert responds to her caution about the slippery roof with the sentences of "Get fucked. You are all bastards" Cath thinks about the discourses Robert might be operating from and she responds: "I didn't know that you had such a strong sense of justice and will do just about anything if you thought a friend had been wronged." (p. 218). Robert comes off the roof and goes to his class. When Cath checks on him later he is still fine. In this exchange Cath managed to go beyond the discourse of schooling as usual and she has offered Robert a position of protester against injustice rather than the position of delinquent student. She attributed a different meaning to his actions from the ones that the usual discourses of schooling made available. She *positioned or re-positioned* Robert outside the usual teacher-student discourse by reading his actions as a stand against injustice rather than non-compliance. She could have asserted her view or knowledge of what happened and she had the choice of calling Robert's parents, her colleagues or even the police. Instead she worked to position both Robert and herself as persons who have agency, which invited collaboration from Robert rather than further resistance. This story demonstrates how the person with power, the teacher, can help students go beyond the possibilities of one discourse, in this case the discourse of schooling, by offering other positions in other discourses that allow agency for everyone.

That the process of repositioning as described by Laws and Davies has relevance for how respectful relationships can be built in schools and how conflicts and/or relationship breakdowns can be prevented. The skill of repositioning allows teachers to work with the concepts of discourse positioning, power/knowledge and agency simultaneously in relationships. Teachers can utilise their discourse knowledge as a framework for looking at how particular discourses call certain ways of relating into being and how it might be possible to offer different discursive positions, ones that can transform relationships. To perform repositioning in conversations as part of everyday relationship practice requires the application of analytical skills on the spot. It takes time to acquire this analytical capacity but, if applied, it can offer a new way of understanding what is happening in a relationship, which can open possibilities for consciously and deliberately transforming that

relationship. The following example from my teaching practice demonstrates how the repositioning process can work in the classroom.

When I completed a long-term relieving tenure in a secondary school not so long ago, my Middle Eastern students organised a farewell party for me. Most of these male students usually preferred to position themselves in discourses of patriarchy, where men are not expected to do any 'women's jobs'. The cultural ideas that dictated how they performed their male identity drew a clear demarcation line between the tasks of men and women, with looking after other people and/or preparing and serving food strictly in the women's domain. However, during this farewell lunch, one of my Assyrian students stepped into the position of host, which involved offering food to everyone, pouring drinks and cleaning the tables afterwards. As this was a single sex school, there was no other option but one of the boys having to perform 'women's jobs'. The other boys, who seemingly enjoyed being served, laughed at him and commented: 'Look Miss, *she* acts like a woman'. This was meant to be a humorous insult, familiar to me from other occasions, when actions judged to belong outside the category of a normal male identity invited the use of the female pronoun. Using *she* instead of *he* usually signalled that someone has wandered too far away from the spaces that were designated for admissible male identities within the all boy classes. On this particular occasion I strongly resisted this positioning as I very much appreciated the efforts of the boy who acted as host. After some thinking of positions I managed to come up with the following: *'I think he acts like a host who takes care of the guests.'* After this comment, several boys started talking about how their mothers taught them to cook and how, on some occasions, they helped their mother prepare food for the family. They told me that they probably would not volunteer such help during a public gathering but it turned out to be a more frequent event than I expected in the confines of their homes. When I renamed what the student was doing as 'acting like a host', I made a position in a different discourse, a discourse of hospitality available. This repositioning opened up a different conversation and boys who usually behaved in what can be described as 'macho', shared events from their lives that stood outside their usual stories of masculinity. Storying what they would normally consider feminine identity descriptions of care for others, suddenly became available to

everyone in the group. In addition they did not feel they had to condemn practices otherwise deemed outside of dominant masculinity (Gaddis, 2006; Jenkins, 1990).

Repositioning after an on-the-spot analysis offered possibilities for admitting other than usual identities into the classroom. It enabled all students at that moment to 'go beyond' their usual discursive constitution and take up a new identity position for themselves (Davies, 1991; Davies & Harré, 1990), at the same time avoiding being positioned subordinately in the discourse of patriarchy as 'female'. Repositioning allowed the reworking of the constitutive power of the discourse of patriarchy. The positioning that would normally have been considered an exclusion from dominant positions in the discourse of patriarchy was used to retain agency and to create the possibility of a new identity for all. The process also prevented likely disruptions that would have followed in the form of heated arguments, and maybe even physical violence, as the student might have debated and angrily refused his positioning as 'female'. I hope this example also demonstrates how momentary utterances in classroom conversations can completely alter the potential trajectory of an interaction. It is not just a matter of saying something else or something differently. How teachers structure their responses and whether they utilise the concept of discourse, positioning and agency in their interactions with students can make a difference to what identities and relationships become possible to perform. Repositioning is another skill that does not require extra time in a lesson. It can be used as a one-off respectful response to a particular conversational exchange that is otherwise likely to end up in arguments.

The four conversational skills of careful language use, questioning from a not knowing position, externalising, and repositioning, all help produce conversations that have the characteristics of restorative conversations. I proposed previously that commitment to dialogue, allowing the expression of difference, addressing power relationships and moral engagement are not only features of restorative conversations but respectful relationship practice also. I hypothesise that the four conversational moves that I have just described are more likely to facilitate respectful interactions in the classroom that not only support teaching and learning but can improve teachers' well-being. I have suggested that in addition to conversations, reflection is another area of

teacher practice that could benefit from constructionist theorising and the intentional use of discourses. I will now demonstrate some possible uses of deconstructive reflection that are informed by discourse knowledge and that I propose could be useful for teachers for improving their personal well-being, relationships and institutional processes and systems.

4.4 Reflection that provides new understandings

Discourse theorists recommend deconstruction, a form of discourse analysis, as a useful strategy to understand the effects of the productive forces of discourses (Davies et al, 2002, Davies, Browne, Gannon, Honan & Laws, 2004, Davies et al., 2006, Davies, Edwards, Gannon & Laws, 2007), which can make it easier to resist and challenge unhelpful discourses and positions. Davies (1994, 2005, 2006) and Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008) provide a process of deconstruction or discourse analysis that I have adapted for teachers. The steps of this deconstructive reflection include the identification or naming of the discourses, then the consideration of what practices, relationships, identities and moral orders they make possible, whom they privilege or silence, how they might support or undermine the tasks that the interaction participants have to complete together and what relational outcomes they make possible.

Reflection has been a buzz-word in education for a long time (Dewey, 1933; Miller, 2002; Mills & Satterthwaite, 2000; Schön, 1983, 1987). The *deconstructive reflection* that I propose can support teachers to engage with their own moral and ethical positions on a daily basis. It involves being able to identify and name the ideas that shape teacher-student, teacher-parent and other relationships in schools, including those ideas that produce antagonistic and disrespectful relationships leading to distress and dissatisfaction. In order to reflect deconstructively, teachers need to learn to use a conceptual framework that helps them identify and name at least some of those hidden rationalities and values that call unhelpful student/teacher and teacher/parent relationships into being. These values are components of the wider culture which directly produce the stressful effects for teachers of daily conflicts with students. They are part of the broader discursive context of education, and not directly or solely the responsibilities of teachers. Seeing these effects in this way is not an attempt to off-load responsibility. Being able to name and unpack

the discursive context distributes the burden of problems, and relieves the impact of blame and stress on teachers, who are only a small part of the whole picture. I will now show three different applications of deconstructive reflection that I propose could help improve teachers' well-being. The first example demonstrates the use of deconstructive reflection for improving individual well-being. This outcome is achieved by facilitating the understanding of one's multiple positionings in contradictory discourses. The second example is an argument for deconstruction as a strategy of reducing stress caused by misunderstandings or discursive slips in relationships. It demonstrates that understanding or clarifying discursive positions can prevent conflict and transform unsatisfactory relationships. The third example shows deconstructive reflection as a tool of mapping the culture of a school or those discursive influences that might be implicated in producing conflicts between teachers, students and parents.

4.4.1 Deconstruction for personal well-being: identifying contradictory positionings

Walkerdine's (2003) neo-liberal subject, and Noguera's (2002) students, find it hard to constantly shift between their positions in different discourses and to construct a coherent identity narrative. Teachers might also struggle with reconciling the various positions that they occupy, which can also make their identity projects ambivalent. Such ambivalence might result from teachers' difficulties with clearly defining their different positions but also from different positions differently supporting and validating the values they might identify with. Others, such as students and colleagues, might become confused about a teacher's multiple positionings and they might only validate them in one but not the others of several positions they might want to take up. These ambivalences can lead to unhappiness, hurt or stress as they make taking up a preferred identity difficult. Davies (1994) suggests that deconstruction can support the possibility of multiple 'I's, 'who can talk about the world from more than one position of a single ego locked into a unitary interpretation of the world' (p.27). She recalls one of her students in the USA, who wanted to withdraw from her course because she felt she had no control over her own life and doubted her own sanity. This was because the man she was about to marry sexually molested her daughter

and she had to report him to authorities. Failure to do so would have risked losing her daughter. The student considered herself a failure as a mother and a partner and was unable to find acceptable ways of dealing with the situation other than blaming herself. Davies suggested that she ‘look at all the discourses that she was caught up in and see how each one made some things sayable and do-able and precluded others’ (p. 27). Davies also suggested to her to consider ‘where the power rested in each discourse’ and which positions she could refuse. The student entitled her essay ‘Poststructuralism as a map through crisis’. After reflecting on the different discourses that positioned her differently in relation to her daughter, partner and welfare agencies, the student felt relieved and was able to respond to her situation in a different way. I suggest deconstruction can be a tool that teachers can use to navigate and successfully overcome similar or lesser personal crises that are the results of not explicitly recognising the contradictions of multiple discourse positionings. Davies adds that examining an individual’s identity provides access to the constitutive effects of discursive practices. Seeing the multiple discourses that we are caught up in can help us see the limitations and entrapments of particular categories. We can then decide whether we hold onto those categories or abandon them, or with Derrida we could ‘put them under erasure’ (Davies, 1998).

4.4.2 Deconstruction for improving relationships: identifying discursive slips

Understanding how discourses work can also prevent conflict or it can reduce stress caused by how a relationship plays out. The example of my students’ and my different meanings of ‘teacher’ and ‘student’, or in other words our different discourses of schooling, undermined our capacity to get on with our tasks smoothly. Such or similar ‘discursive slips’ (Davies & Harré, 1990; Walkerdine, 2003), when the meaning of a position is ambiguous or it might change frequently, can cause confusion. The ongoing mismatches between the intended position calls that persons issue to others and the interpreted positions that others take up in a conversation (Davies, 1991; Winslade, 2005) can create considerable tensions and stress, as desirable and possible identities become exclusive of one another. Understanding and reducing these confusions is important for our capacity to care for others as

well as to care for ourselves. Caring for others would mean that we allow them to take up their desired identities, provided that those identities are not harmful for a community (such as identities that privilege violent and aggressive practices). Caring for ourselves would mean to alleviate the stress and distress that contradictory positionings might produce. Deconstructive reflection can reveal such contradictions. In the following example of contradictory discourses and a discursive slip, a teacher's and a professional development facilitator's different ideas about what constitutes good professional development are problematic for their relationship. The differences of their positions are also the source of this teacher's ongoing stress. Deconstructive reflection exposes how those contradictions prevent her from taking up an identity she prefers. Revealing the contradictions is enough to reduce her discomfort.

Carol, a teacher in the junior school could not agree with how a particular ongoing professional development was delivered in her school. She felt that she was made to feel inadequate and discouraged from having professional discussions in the meetings that she and others had with an outside consultant, who delivered the professional development. She frequently complained about forthcoming meetings to the extent that her colleagues started to call her a moaner. She devoted considerable emotional energy to the meetings but could not free herself from the stress her disagreement with the ways of delivery brought to her. In one of our conversations we tried to name the discourses that the consultant and Carol were positioned in, exploring what professional relationships and identities they enabled and constrained for both of them. The following exchanges are from our discussion:

Carol: We do professional development and when we go to these meetings we are told what we should be doing with the children and how others have been able to do it. I feel inadequate and I'd like an honest discussion about it but everybody says just don't bring it up. The person facilitating the professional development is quite sarcastic. When I go back I feel bad that I know I judge the students well but I don't say anything. The person doing the professional development knows more.

Maria: So you would like to speak up but in the end you don't. What name would you give to this problem? Does 'not saying anything' or 'not speaking up' sound like a good name?

Carol: 'Not saying anything' is fine.

Maria: What are the practices that are allowed in the 'not saying anything' story?

Carol: I get frustrated and I feel dismissed. I feel put down. The person doing the professional development decides what is good. She makes the judgement. I want a discussion but I can't have it.

Maria: What view of yourself as a professional becomes available to you in this story?

Carol: I am not equal. I feel inadequate.

Maria: What would be your preferred way of doing things in the professional development?

Carol: I would like to speak up and have an honest discussion.

Maria: So what practice would 'speaking up' make possible?

Carol: We could examine possibilities during the course. We could see how a teaching practice is done by others. We could see examples.

Maria: How would your relationship be different with the consultant?

Carol: It would be professionals exchanging ideas.

Maria: How would you view yourself if you were able to speak up?

Carol: I would feel that I am a professional, too and I can have knowledge about the children, too.

Maria: What are you going to do now? Do you think you will speak up more?

Carol: If it is only me, it is not enough. They will see me as difficult. I will certainly stop worrying about it. I will do what the professional development person wants but I won't let myself feel inadequate.

This process of deconstructive reflection allowed Carol to see the contradictions between the different discourses of professional development that she and the consultant positioned themselves in. Previously, she experienced her and the facilitator's different understandings of professional learning as frustration and stress and a sense of inadequacy was part of her story of her own professional identity. The reflection process validated her professional knowledge about the children she taught and it clarified the discursive slip or contradiction that was the source of her resistance and reduced sense of well-being. Deconstructive reflection thus offered a theoretical framework to make sense of the effects of inequitable power relationships and/or absences of agency. We exposed hidden rationalities

behind practices, which was transformative for Carol as it generated new possibilities both for her relationship with the consultant as well as for how she was able to take up her professional identity.

4.4.3 Deconstruction for culture change: understanding the influence of dominant cultural ideas

Understanding the constitutive power of discourses can be helpful not only for improving individual well-being and relationships with others but for identifying those aspects of and influences on the culture of a school that position teachers and students or teachers and parents in opposition to each other. There are some dominant cultural ideas that do not support the kind of relationships that make teaching and learning possible in the classroom. They include the idea that learning has to be fun all the time or that parents and students are consumers of education, who can demand a different service when and if the service they are getting does not meet their demands. It is important to understand the effects of these ideas on the kind of relationships and identities that they make possible and how they might undermine the project of learning in order to use this understanding to change interactions and relationships in a school. The following vignettes demonstrate the power of such discursive understanding and being an intentional discourse user.

Vignette 1: Problematic student/teacher relationships

Student: The teacher is mean. She comes and helps me, but after a while, when somebody else calls out, she leaves me and helps someone else. I don't understand the material and she doesn't help me.

Vignette 2: Problematic parent/school relationships

A parent told me that her child didn't like the form teacher so she wanted her child to be put in another form class. The school refused. The parent was very upset as she felt her child could not approach the form teacher about personal matters. The school told her to treat this seeming conflict as an opportunity for her child to learn to live and work with someone whom she doesn't like, as this is a situation she will encounter many times in life. The parent told me: "You can actually leave a job if you don't like it". She continued to threaten the school with taking her child to another school.

The dominant attitude is one of blaming in the above stories, an attitude that focuses on exercising rights: the right to challenge relations of power without taking responsibility for one's own share in shaping the relationship. There is an absence of the kind of community of practice that is necessary to carry conversations to the end, and there is an absence of practices such as listening, respectful consideration and engagement with the ideas put forward. Teachers are often the target of such relationship practices. If teachers accept this responsibility, they are in a no-win situation, where the other, students or parents or the public, has all the power, and the teacher has none. Teachers instead of teaching address constant interruptions and breakdowns that wreck interactions within the class.

Some of the discourses that influence schools', students' and teachers' daily lives relate to ideas of entitlement and rights, which put children in positions of power of which they are very well aware: "If you don't do what I want, I will mess it up for you, I will not cooperate and I will make it impossible for everyone". These rights and entitlement ideas are not always used in a negative sense and they should not mean that children should not have rights or that practices of power should not be challenged. However, discourses of entitlement and rights can easily upset the balance between rights and responsibilities in ways that allow rights to be used as an excuse for laziness, non-cooperation and inactivity. It is the moments when rights turn into irresponsibility that teachers need to be able to identify. Beginning teachers and relievers particularly need support to maintain their own personal and professional sense of agency: to resist being called into the position of the one who needs to fix it as well as the one who is solely responsible for problems. This is why I suggest teachers need a conceptual and analytical framework, such as deconstruction that helps them identify the discursive context and/or those ideas or hidden rationalities that produce problematic relationships. This identification then can support the use of another deconstructive process, described by Davies (1994), which calls for the identification of a binary or opposing term of a concept or issue mentioned in a statement. Identifying a binary is a prerequisite for formulating some well-worded questions, which can expose so far hidden or oppressed ideas and can invite the student or the parent into a position of

moral responsibility. This form of deconstructive questioning can also be used in conversations for the purpose of repositioning a situation but it is not the same as repositioning. So, for example, when a student tells you that:

The teacher is mean. She comes and helps me, but after a while, when somebody else calls out, she leaves me and helps someone else. I don't understand the material and she doesn't help me.

A teacher response might be one of the following:

Do you think it is reasonable to expect the teacher to help only you and not the others? How much of the teacher's time do you think is fair to give to one student during a busy lesson?

In the actual conversation from which this example was taken, the student responded with:

I guess the teacher can only give me a couple of minutes as there are twenty five of us in the classroom. I have to practise more at home or ask my friend to help.

The questions exposed 'reasonable help' and unsettled the idea of unreasonable expectations. The student stepped into an agentic position when invited – but it would have been all too easy for the teacher to simply accept the blame and feel guilty about not helping enough.

Another idea that supports the culture of blaming is the idea of having a right or entitlement to choose. It is similar to a consumer attitude that might encourage parents to treat schools as if they were delivering a commodity. Parents might believe that they can just throw out, exchange or take back a product they are not satisfied with. Hence, we might end up with parents who threaten to take their children elsewhere.

I will have to take my child to another school because she cannot even talk to her form teacher. You can actually leave a job when you are not happy.

A teacher response might be:

How do you think your daughter will learn to get along with people she does not like? Do you think it's an important skill? Do you believe it is possible for everyone to just get up and leave a job whenever they find a relationship difficult or do you think some people might have to consider existential consequences?

In the real conversation from which this example was taken the parent responded with the following:

Maybe our expectation of what form time should be about is different from the teacher's. We have to clarify that and I am going to arrange a meeting with the form teacher.

The questions introduced the idea of getting along with people we do not like as a binary to the parent's idea of leaving if you don't like a person. They also implied that being able to leave a situation when you feel like it is a privileged position that is not available to most people. In my experience, teachers become comfortable with this form of deconstruction after practising and becoming fluent in identifying discourses and their effects on identities and relationships. Exposing binaries or alternative discourses can be done easily after a number of collegial discussions that help clarify teachers' moral positions in relation to at least some of the particular discourses that affect their relationships and practices in their classrooms. These examples do not provide an exhaustive list of the discourses or the ideas that make up the cultural context of education but nevertheless they are important ideas that shape the context significantly. The examples are representative of similar stories I often hear from teachers, students and parents, about conflicts, relationship breakdowns, confrontations or a lack of collaboration. Teachers also report being stressed, frustrated or angry about these situations. Such interactions undermine their wellbeing and they ruin their satisfaction with their work, their life and other relationships. Teachers, students and parents are usually clear about their distress, stress, anger, pain or disappointment but they have no clarity about what could be done differently. Utilising the notions of discourse, positioning, power/knowledge and agency in the above ways, can provide a different understanding of a conflict situation. Further, this different understanding can help formulate different responses. If the staff of a school identified and explored those harmful cultural ideas that have become dominant in their school communities, they might be able to jointly plan how they could rework those ideas and make discourses that foster respectful, rather than disruptive behaviours.

The conversational and reflection processes and skills that I have introduced in this chapter are my proposed ways of putting a discursive approach to relationships into practice. I taught both the conversational moves and deconstructive reflection to the research participants in a series

of workshops and focus groups and then sought their reflections on the usefulness of the practices. Awareness of the potential consequences of language use for possible identities can minimise the exclusion of both students and adults from legitimate identity positions, which is more likely to maintain ongoing participation and dialogue. From a not-knowing position it is possible to support the expression of difference and to arrive at a better understanding of different views of the world. Externalising and repositioning can help challenge and change the unhelpful power relationships that particular discourses call into being. Deconstructive reflection can further expose power/knowledge and discourses as it might be implicated in exclusions from dominant positions, in interruptions and conflicts due to misunderstandings and in opposing community as a result of being positioned in particular relationships to dominant cultural ideas. Deconstructive reflection could be critical for understanding how the force of a particular discourse constitutes people in relationships, what identities it privileges and what moral orders it might authorise. The 'hidden rationalities' could be considered both as how they might be oppressive of persons as well as how they might work against what people want. There are other socially available discourses that students and teachers can step into. Their harmful effects can be reduced if they are reflected upon, in other words if they are exposed and understood.

The relationship practices introduced in this chapter can facilitate the production and reproduction of respectful conversations in the classroom and they also have the potential to reduce relationship problems. They locate behaviour problems, such as resistance, non-compliance, disruptions and non-engagement in the relational domain rather than attributing them to the individual pathology of persons. These practices help attend to the process of conversation, and also to the process of teachers' and students' identity formation in relationships on an ongoing basis. Thus they are not simply responsive strategies that can be applied when relationships go wrong but ways of doing relationships with care; for oneself and for others. They are proactive rather than reactive and they can help maintain respect and minimise harm in heterogeneous school communities, where dealing with difference respectfully is important. Among the currently popular

relationship strategies that schools rely on for managing difference and relationship problems, restorative practices privilege relationally based solutions to wrongdoing. However, currently popular restorative practices do not attend to the wider, social context of teachers' and students' work and to how culturally dominant ideas might contribute to the kind of conflict situations that they are meant to remedy. Relationship practices informed by discourse theory can provide ways of addressing this context for teachers also.

CHAPTER 5 Deconstruction for supporting change

5.1 The objectives of the study

In this exploratory study I wanted to investigate the usefulness and implications of a discursive approach for transforming both teachers' practices and identities along with its restorative potential. I had two objectives for this project. First, I wanted to find out if discursive conversational practices can be a way of adapting RP principles and processes for classroom use. Second, I wanted to arrive at new understandings of the conflicts that place teachers and students in opposition and undermine the kind of relationships that are conducive to teaching and learning. I have sought answers to the following research questions:

1. Could a critical discursive framework and the discursive relationship practices that it proposes be useful for improving teachers' well-being and/or changing their relationship practices?
2. Could a critical discursive framework provide new perspectives for teachers, when used for reflecting on and for arriving at a different understanding of relationships in the classroom?

The first question is about the conversational practices of careful language use, curious questioning, externalising and repositioning. I wanted to see what contributions those relationship practices offered to a collaborative paradigm of relationship and how it was possible to incorporate them into teachers' interactional repertoire. The second question invites the exploration of the contributions of deconstructive reflection to new understandings of and perspectives on problematic teacher-student and teacher-adult relationships that can be the source of distress and that might invite restorative responses. I was particularly interested in identifying what discourses might be revealed as complicit in creating conflict, disruptions and stress in the classroom and in preventing teachers and students from getting on with each other in ways that are conducive to teaching and learning. In addition, I hoped to find out if teachers' understanding of the constitutive effects of discourses on their own identities, practices, relationships and organisational systems would be enough to improve their well-being. I wanted to see if a discursive approach would transform the meanings that teachers made of their work and if they

changed their emotional and practical responses to difficult and problematic relationships. I view both the conversational and reflection practices that I have proposed as supportive of teachers' agency. They require teachers to clarify their moral positions and their stance on the discourses that operate in their environments. Such clarification can provide a process for teachers to be in charge of developing their identity, as opposed to leaving identity formation to the forces of discourses, because it helps decide which positions to choose or reject. I wanted to find out if exercising agency in this way, or setting the directions of their identity development, would help teachers reduce their stress levels and improve satisfaction with their work. Generalisability was not an objective of the study. Rather, I set out to gain insights into teachers' experiences of an unfamiliar to them theoretical approach along with how this approach would help teachers account for and manage the problems that undermined their well-being. Ethical approval to carry out this research was sought from and was granted by the Ethics Committee of the School of Education of the University of Waikato (see Appendices 1, 2 and 3).

5.2 The research participant schools and teachers

In order to fulfil the objectives of the study it was important to recruit research participants who were willing to voluntarily trial a different theoretical approach rather than having it imposed on them by their senior leadership and/or feeling pressured to please a researcher. Potential research participant schools were identified from among schools that sought professional development in restorative practices from the University of Waikato. I had informal discussions with several school principals and deputy principals, who attended workshops that introduced a discursive approach to relationships and RP. These senior managers saw the potential of the approach for their schools and they wanted to make training in the approach available to their whole staff. They also thought that participating in the research would provide additional professional learning opportunities for interested staff. After consultations with their staff and deciding that they wanted relationship practices to be one of their professional learning priorities for the following year, two school principals invited me to do a preliminary presentation to their whole staff. They asked me to introduce the discursive approach and to provide information about my proposed research project in a staff meeting. I

emphasised that my proposed approach differed somewhat from other available approaches to relationship practice and RP in that it had a critical, analytical and reflective component, the use of deconstruction, in addition to various skills of conversation. I told teachers that it might be a disappointment for those who expect practical solutions and/or scripts for every relationship problem. I also informed the teachers that I intended to deliver a combination of four workshops and between five to eight focus group meetings. I made it clear that the purpose of the workshops would be to provide professional learning in the discursive approach. The focus groups would be used for further skill practice and reflection on the newly introduced practices, which would also become the research data. I gave a written summary of the purposes and the process of my research (see Appendix 1) to the members of the Board of Trustees, the principals and all teachers in both schools. My presentation was followed by further discussions and consultation with staff and the schools' Boards of Trustees, after which both schools decided to participate in the research and they entered into a formal agreement with me (Appendix 2). The principals in both schools made the workshops open, and thus compulsory, to every staff member. However, participation in further focus group discussions was made voluntary. Overall 39 teachers signed up to become research participants (Appendix 3). I organised the workshop and focus group schedules with the two school principals and the participating teachers in the fourth term of the 2005 academic year and carried out most of the research, with professional development workshops and focus group meetings over the 2006 academic year.

School One was an area school where students of all year levels of primary and secondary school learn together. The area school that opted to participate in this study was located in a small town. The total number of students in this school was just over 400 during the time this study was conducted. There were 35 teachers employed in this school and 30 of them signed up to participate in the research. The ethnic composition of students was 55% Maori, 38% NZ European, 3% Pacific Island and 4% other. The decile rating of the school was 4. School Two was a primary school located in a multicultural suburb of one of the five biggest cities of NZ. The roll of this school was about 260 at the time this project was carried out. The ethnic

composition of students in this school was 68% Maori, 7 % NZ European, 10 % Samoan and other Pacific, 3% Asian, 2% Indian and 10% named as other ethnicities, some from Africa. There were 19 teachers in the school and nine of them chose to participate in the study. The school's decile rating was 1. The participants informed me that they were attracted to a non-punitive, caring approach to relationships. They wanted to learn new relationship skills that would offer them respectful ways of dealing with relationship problems and they were open to new theoretical ideas and theorising relationships. The teachers in the area school had previously participated in several different workshops about restorative practices that were based on different philosophies of relationships. They learnt about the notion of discourse in one of the workshops organised for staff and they indicated that they were interested in exploring and comparing the effectiveness of different approaches. Approximately two thirds of the research participant teachers were female. One third of the participants in both schools were in a senior position (a senior teacher, dean or assistant or deputy principal). Most teachers were experienced, and there were only five participants with less than five years of experience.

5.3 Procedures the participants were involved in

My engagement with the research participants simultaneously included the delivery of professional development in the conversation and reflection practices that I described in Chapter 4 along with using the professional development project for data generation and collection. I delivered four workshops, which were made open to all the teachers of both schools over two terms. In the area school the school declared the workshop times 'teacher only days', which meant they closed for students for a whole afternoon. Each workshop lasted for approximately five hours. In the primary school the number of workshops was the same but their duration was shorter, about two hours each, as the school was committed to other professional development initiatives as well. Both schools provided the teachers who volunteered to become research participants with release time to attend seven additional focus group meetings, which lasted two hours each and were spread relatively evenly, at three-four week intervals, over the whole academic year. I will describe the structure of these meetings under Focus Groups in more detail. In

the area school the workshops and the focus group meetings together became the major professional learning initiative for one academic year, with thirty teachers attending both the four workshops as well as the focus group meetings. All senior managers and deans participated actively in the focus group discussions along with regular teachers. In the primary school three senior managers, three senior teachers and three regular classroom teachers, approximately half of the whole staff signed up to become research participants. Once teachers signed up to participate, they were expected by their school management to attend focus group meetings in return for release time. It is interesting to note that both schools had a change of principals after the research contract had been finalised. In one of the schools the new principal participated in the workshops and the focus groups. In the other school, the new principal attended the workshops but did not participate in the focus group meetings.

5.4 Focus groups

5.4.1 A method of professional development, data generation and supervision

The group meetings and discussions alternated with the workshops in the first two school terms, and they became the only forum for maintaining my ongoing relationship with the research participants in the third and fourth terms of the academic year. There were usually four to six teachers in each group. The teachers allocated themselves to different groups based on the year levels of the students they taught. The teachers of Year 1-3 students, Year 4-6 students, Year 7-8 students and those who taught Year 9-13 students formed different groups in the area school, with each group having regular teachers, senior teachers or Deans and/or senior managers in them. In the primary school the groups were formed along the teachers' different positions, with regular teachers, senior teachers and managers forming different groups. This allowed for simplified release time and for teachers to stay with colleagues whom they did not perceive as a threat. I met with these groups of teachers for two hours at a time, seven times over the course of one academic year. The teachers' engagement with restorative practices through the focus groups was supported by their schools. They were released from their classrooms during teaching hours and they were not required to attend these meetings after

school. This was a manifestation of their schools' commitment to RP and to making it the major focus of professional learning for that year.

The term 'focus group' was chosen, together with the research participants, to describe our different interactions during the group meetings with a simple name. We used this name to denote all aspects of our work that were specific to this research project and this might differ significantly from what is usually meant by 'focus groups'. Focus groups are commonly used in qualitative research as a form of group interview, which utilises the interactions and discussions between the members of the group to produce data about topics provided by the researcher (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Silverman, 2005). While this way of conducting focus groups was present in my research, I made the focus groups a forum and a site of multiple purposes and activities. Firstly, they were used to generate data in the way it is described in qualitative research. I sought participant teachers' experiences of the different conversation and reflection skills that I introduced to them in the workshops. I asked them to bring to each focus group meeting and share with their colleagues accounts of their specific use of the skills along with reflections on their actual or potential relational outcomes. Such sharing prompted further discussions about the possible applications, advantages and disadvantages of skills like curious questioning, externalising and repositioning in the classroom. Secondly, the focus groups were a form of professional development, because the teachers were provided with the choice of practising and clarifying the skills that they were taught in workshops. Depending on the specific interests of group members at the time, some focus groups would spend up to an hour on different occasions practising the use of externalising language, formulating possible questions or repositioning responses to specific situations that teachers shared with their colleagues. I took a non-directive approach to these two functions of the focus groups and left it to the teachers to choose which specific skills they wanted to share examples of or practise further. Thirdly, the focus groups were, at times, used as opportunities for peer supervision. This was when teachers sought advice from their colleagues and me on difficult conflict situations or their use of the skills learnt in the professional development.

This third, therapeutic use of the groups was unplanned and it developed spontaneously. It became evident after the first couple of focus group sessions that the participant teachers mostly wanted to discuss and practise the conversation skills and they shared narratives that recounted their experiences of those. They did not bring examples of their use of the deconstructive reflection that had been introduced in the workshops and that I hoped would help the teachers identify some of the discourses that affected their relationships and well-being in unhelpful ways. Instead, the teachers started sharing what I later termed 'distress or concern narratives' with me and their colleagues. These were accounts of their own or others' conflict situations with students, parents or colleagues that invited emotional responses of considerable stress, frustration, hurt or feelings of inadequacy from the teachers who told them. Some narratives included the voicing of ongoing concerns about challenging students and clarifications of the teachers' preferred ways of practice. The teachers usually shared these stories because they wanted to find out how the restorative skills they were familiar with could have been used to alleviate these situations or to reduce their own stress levels. The sharing was prompted by colleagues, who wanted to know 'what's on top', as these teachers usually arrived to a particular focus group session looking stressed or overwhelmed. On some occasions I was able to ask questions that facilitated deconstructive reflection about the discourses that I or the teachers thought might be at work in those conflict or challenging situations. I will show examples of this in the data chapters. However, there were times when I was only able to facilitate the telling of distress or concern stories without much deconstruction on the spot. I performed deconstruction on these stories later, as part of my data analysis. The distress and concern narratives constitute a more extensive part of the data collected than the accounts of teachers' experiences of the use of the conversational and reflection skills. Before explaining in more detail which accounts and narratives I selected as data and why, I will introduce the process that I used to structure the focus group discussions that helped generate accounts of practice and distress.

5.4.2 Processes for generating narratives and performing identities in the focus groups

The teachers' accounting for and reflecting on their use of the conversational skills and their sharing of distress or concern narratives provided opportunities for me to demonstrate the use of both the conversational and reflection processes that I introduced in the workshops. In order to generate rich accounts of teachers' practices and experiences, I modelled the use of curious and deconstructive questioning as much as I could. I also used and modelled, where the situation allowed, applications of deconstructive reflection. This mostly involved the naming of discourses that I thought the teachers drew on for the constitution of their identities and/or asking questions that helped them consider some of the consequences of their positionings in those discourses for their practices and relationships. I also asked questions that I hoped would help them choose which positions to accept or reject or at least clarify their moral position in relation to a discourse. In other words, I demonstrated being an intentional discourse user in both my interactions with teachers as well as in my on-the-spot reflections on their narratives.

Inviting and generating teachers' narratives of their practices and problematic relationships with their students or other adults was important for answering both research questions. I hypothesised that teachers' narratives, if they were subjected to a form of reflection or discourse analysis, would contribute to new understandings of relationship problems. The narratives could reveal the characteristics of the situations that teachers perceived as examples of relationship problems with their students and colleagues that was also undermining of their well-being. They could also reveal the role of particular discourses in constituting teachers' identities along with how different positionings in those discourses might disable and enable respectful teacher-student relationships.

In addition to generating narratives in order to answer the research questions, the focus group format had the potential to demonstrate the performative, transformative and restorative potential of the conversational and reflection skills and the discursive conceptual tools introduced to the teachers in the professional development workshops. Arguments for the performative, restorative and transformative potential of narratives, and the

telling of one's narratives in front of others as witnesses can be drawn not only from discursive theories of identity but from narrative counselling supervision and qualitative research also. Self narratives are accredited with a performative and constitutive potential of becoming (Jackson, 2004) as well as with the potential of transforming the self through resisting institutionalised processes of standardisation (Willig, 2000). Lincoln (2005) proposes that the telling of narratives can support the transformation of meanings, an effect similar to how Greek tragedies invite us to imagine new ways of being in the world. I also saw the generating of teachers' narratives of their practices and experiences as opportunities for them to perform and story their identities in front of their colleagues and a way of finding out if developing a clearer sense of professional identity has a beneficial effect on well-being.

Proponents of narrative therapy and narrative supervision in particular, also argue the performative and constitutive effects of storying professional practice and identity as inseparable. Crocket (2001, 2002) and McMahon and Patton (2000) propose that examining the ideas, values and beliefs that produce our practices is a way of supporting an awareness of one's identity. I consciously facilitated the focus group discussions and teachers' tellings of their experiences in a way that resonates with a specific practice of narrative counselling supervision, called reflecting teams (White, 1997, 1999). Reflecting teams or outsider witness groups are used in both therapy and supervision to support persons with enriching and expanding the stories of their preferred identities facilitated through a process reminiscent of definitional ceremonies (Myerhoff, 1982, 1986). After a person tells a story from their life and/or of their professional practice, the members of the reflecting team are meant to contribute to the story they have heard with specific types of responses. They might name what image stood out for them from the story and they can contemplate what it might mean about the teller's personal qualities, intentions, hopes and dreams. They can also choose to reflect on the transformative effects of the telling on their own practices and identities. The reflecting team format is a way of introducing different meanings to a person's experiences and as such it can support clarification of and then the change of positioning in problematic discourses. By consciously

facilitating the focus groups in ways that also resembled reflecting teams, I wanted teachers to evaluate their practices and the dominant practices of their schools in a way that would allow them to articulate their moral position in relation to those. Such evaluation of practice is considered essential for developing one's professional identity (Crocket, 2002). I argue that the process can also be relevant for teachers. It can help them clarify their positionings in relation to different cultural stories or discourses that carry socially legitimised values within educational and schooling contexts and then argue for or against the usefulness of those discourses for their work. Such clarification develops not only identity but the ethics of professional practice also (Pring, 2001). I will show in the findings how the discussion format that we used has achieved these goals.

In summary I wanted the focus groups to be a forum where teachers can discuss their practices and where the process of discussion can be both performative and constitutive of the meanings they make of their practices. It is a process that is designed to support the telling and retelling of preferred identity stories. The focus group, if conducted similarly to reflecting teams, can be a place where teachers are able to articulate and share with colleagues those narratives of their practice, identity and life that they find significant. The responses that they might receive from colleagues could also contribute to further developing and enriching those narratives. This process in itself has the potential to improve teachers' well-being as it provides opportunities for storying life events, qualities and competencies that make up their preferred identity but that might be forgotten or brought into doubt by the different pressures and problems of school life.

5.5 Researcher – teacher relationships: multiple positionings

I had multiple roles in this research project: that of researcher, deliverer of the professional development programme and supervisor. Delivering the professional development required me to take up an expert position at times, when I introduced a new conceptual framework during workshops, along with taking a collaborative stance when I facilitated discussions and explored teachers' local knowledges in the focus groups or listened to their distress narratives. This multiple positioning, and the requirement to shift between different positions, provided an opportunity for

me to demonstrate and explore with the participants how multiple, contradictory identities might be possible to manage (Walkerdine, 2003). My positionings in relation to the teachers also resembled the positions teachers have to take up in relation to their students. At times they are required to be experts and claim their authority on the subject knowledge that they teach. At other times, when they perform their pastoral duties, they might operate from a collaborative relationship paradigm, positioning students as experts on their lives. I have found Larner's (1999) considerations about the power relationships between therapists and clients relevant for deciding how to manage my multiple relationships with the research participants. My positions resembled what Larner terms a kind of not taking a position while taking one, or being a 'master illusionist' who has to make power unapparent where it is apparent. Like therapists who facilitate clients' tellings about their life experiences, I was in a paradoxical but powerful position of both knowing and not-knowing. I had knowledge about the conversational and reflection practices that I introduced, which the research participants did not have at the time. I mobilised these skills in order to place myself in a position of not-knowing about their experiences so that I could better facilitate their reflection and the development of their practice and identity narratives. Larner (1999) considers that a not-knowing stance can facilitate the sharing and exploration of different meanings, as well as recognising rather than dissolving oneself as a subject.

The therapeutic, supervision function of the focus groups presented some ethical dilemmas and challenges, which could not all be predicted at the start of the research. As the study was exploratory about the use of particular conversational and reflection skills, I could not totally foresee all the consequences and effects of the research process for the participants, especially not the intensity of the pain that some teachers might have accessed when retelling their 'distress narratives'. I could only manage such effects by recommending personal counselling after the focus group sessions or by making sure that research participants negatively affected by the telling of a conflict situation also had access to someone to talk to. On some occasions during the research, when it was specifically requested, I made myself available for an additional, one to one conversation with some

research participants, who were finding it difficult to manage their responses of pain and hurt to their experiences. Being a trained counsellor made such conversations easier as I had processes available to me that helped me work to reduce the effects of pain on the teachers concerned. On these occasions I worked according to the NZ Association of Counsellors' Code of Ethics (Retrieved 28 December 2009) and adhered to their guidelines about confidentiality. The participant teachers also signed a confidentiality agreement about the stories and sharing in the focus groups. Decision about which narratives could be used as research data was made by the teachers. They gave permission to use any of the recorded stories for transcribing and inclusion in the research report. However, they also exercised their right to delete and/or to not record some focus group discussions. On several occasions teachers indicated that they did not want me to include a narrative by asking me to turn the tape recorder off before proceeding to share their concerns or to erase what had been recorded immediately afterwards. I honoured those requests.

In order to manage my multiple positions without causing harm to the teachers I endeavoured to utilise the therapeutic function of the focus groups, and the reflecting team process, in a way that would enhance rather than undermine the participants' well-being. I wanted to make sure that they can take something, such as reduced stress levels, in return of giving their experience as data. White (1997) terms such an exchange between supervisor and supervisee 'taking back practice' where the person in a greater position of power, in this case the researcher, has to consciously work to reduce the power imbalance. My only evidence that this was achieved is the change that I witnessed in the teachers' emotional responses. When, at the end of a focus group discussion day, I reconnected with teachers who earlier had shown considerable distress in their focus groups, I noticed that they had changed their posture and they had a more relaxed or happier facial expression. They usually commented along the lines of 'I feel so much better' or 'It was so good to talk about that issue'. The multiple positioning of the researcher could be considered a disadvantage because it has made my engagement with the research participants more complex, which they might have experienced as confusing. From a constructionist perspective, I

perceived it as an advantage because it not only helped me facilitate the development of both professional practice and identity stories but allowed me to support teachers while they were trying to manage their emotional responses to the telling of distress narratives. This way I could give something back to them.

5.6 Narratives as data

In addition to using discourse theory to explain relationships and to inform relationship practices, I also wanted discourse analysis and deconstruction to guide my data analysis, because it is credited with the capacity to deliver the kind of new understandings that I was hoping to gain as a response to my research questions. Discourse analysis provides different perspectives on the complex conditions of relationships and individual identities (Banister et al, 1994; Burman et al., 1996; Parker & Shotter, 1990). It is a method that can also reveal something about the social and cultural production of teachers' work, or the wider context of education (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Davies & Bird, 1999; Watkins, 2007). I was hoping that it would help me provide an explanation about how oppositional teacher and student identities are produced and what discourses might be complicit in placing them in opposition (Bansel et al., 2009). Different texts, talk or narratives, are suitable for studying the complex human realm (Polkinghorne (2007) by performing discourse analysis on them. According to Davies and Davies (2007) narratives are archives of experiences, which are treated differently by discourse analytic and evidence-based genres of research. In evidence-based practice experience is considered to be the expression of reality and of membership in a category so it can be normalised and fixed. In constructionist terms experience is impossible to capture as it is constantly changing and is being interpreted by both researcher and participants. It is not the truth or falsity of experience accounts that matters but the reading of them as performance, which can reveal something about the process of how people produce their identities and the ideas or discourses that shape those identities, from the external context (Wetherell, 1998) or the discourses that are available in a particular social, historical and political landscape (Davies and Bansel, 2007).

The texts that we produce in interviews, in auto- or collective biographies, are texts in motion, texts that produce moments of life as it is being lived; they form archives that enable us to study that production. The archive can tell us a great deal about the production of lives, about the way discourse is drawn on in that production, and shapes that production. It cannot give us a fixed or fixable truth about particular identities or particular categories or particular social worlds, though it can, paradoxically, tell us about the complex processes of producing oneself and being produced as “having an identity” and “belonging to a particular category. (Davies & Davies, 2007, p. 1157)

I have already described how the triple function of the focus groups and using the reflecting team process helped generate teachers’ narratives of their use of conversational skills and of various conflict situations. I audio-taped all focus group discussions, except for a few occasions, when the teachers asked me not to do so due to the sensitivity of the information they shared with their colleagues and me. I listened to these recordings at least three or more times. This listening also became the first step of my data analysis. I specifically listened for examples of teachers’ reflections on their use of the conversational skills and moves that they learnt in the workshops. I transcribed only those reflections that evaluated and described in detail the effects of careful language use, curiosity, externalising and repositioning. I present and analyse these data in Chapter 6. I also listened for examples of relationship problems between teachers and students or teachers and other adults, such as colleagues and parents. I first identified what I termed ‘concern or distress narratives’, which were accounts of teachers working to find solutions to challenging students or accounts of conflicts and relationship problems that the teachers thought contributed to their increased stress levels, frustration, anger, pain or hurt. I then decided which narratives to use as data according to two further criteria.

First, I selected distress or concern narratives that represented recurring themes and issues that were brought up in different forms in a number of focus groups in both schools. The themes included issues of care, professionalism, pedagogy, and gender. I hypothesised that their recurrence was not a chance event but might indicate something about the wider social and discursive context of the participant teachers’ work, which could help find different understandings. Second, I further examined the selected distress and concern narratives in order to establish if they represented any

of the three problems with positioning that I described in Chapter 4 and that I proposed to respond to with deconstructive reflection. I suggested that multiple positioning in contradictory discourses, discursive slips or misunderstandings and ambiguities of positionings and being unaware of how the constitutive forces of some discourses of the wider social context produce problems for interactions can each undermine well-being. I found that most of the distress and concern narratives could be made sense of using one of these theoretical explanations. I will discuss this finding about the possible contributions of a discursive approach to theorising and explaining relationship problems later. After this process of deciding which narratives to use as data, I divided them into two groups. I present the narratives where multiple positionings or discursive slips pose problems for teachers' personal well-being or relationships in Chapter 7. The narratives, which demonstrate the hidden workings of some popular discourses of the wider social context, are included in Chapter 8. I chose to include those segments of the narratives in the data chapters that represent the different ideas that the teachers had about the topics discussed. I changed teachers' names and the descriptions of their positions in their schools in order to protect their confidentiality. The last two examples of Chapter 7 and the last example of Chapter 8 demonstrate the use of deconstruction on the spot, as a relationship strategy of changing unhelpful positionings and clarifying positions. I also performed deconstruction using a more systematic form of it as a data analysis method on all narratives.

5.7 Deconstruction as different applications of being an intentional discourse user

This thesis argues that deconstructive reflection, or having the capacity for a discourse analysis of relationships and practices, is worthwhile to include in teachers' interactional repertoire and restorative practices. I want to distinguish here the two different applications of deconstruction that I have utilised in this project and that I also consider to be two possible implementations of being an intentional discourse user.

Firstly, I regard the conversational skill of repositioning and the different applications of reflection informed by discourse knowledge, which I described in Chapter 4, as practical strategies that have the potential to

enhance personal well-being, relationships and organisational culture. These strategies rely on an on-the-spot use of discourse knowledge, which loosely follows some possible steps, but does not necessarily perform a systematic analysis of situations and interactions. Such reliance on discourse knowledge might involve the naming of some of the discourses that shape an interaction and considering their possible effects. The purpose of this less formal use of discourses is to move beyond an impasse or stuckness by pointing to different action and thus producing short term change on a personal and relational level. It is an immediate response to problematic interactions that can transform those interactions into more satisfying ones by supporting dialogue, the expression of difference, addressing power relationships and engaging persons with the moral aspects of their practices. This form of being an intentional discourse user, which I recommended as relationship practice, could serve teachers and school communities to manage their diversity and complexity by changing the ways teachers speak and interact and by contributing to a better understanding of how the dominating ideas of these communities might affect members.

Secondly, I use discourse knowledge, or deconstruction as a method of data analysis. This form of deconstruction is a more systematic and structured process of analysing texts, or teachers' narratives of their experiences, the purpose of which is to provide new perspectives and understandings, or different accounts, of the problems that undermine respectful teacher-student relationships. Such deconstruction can support longer term change on a systemic and cultural level by drawing attention to the influences of the wider social context on the work of teachers. I argue that deconstruction as a data analysis method also has those four characteristics, although in a different way, that I previously claimed help restorative conversations to achieve positive and satisfactory relational outcomes.

Deconstruction *supports the expression of difference* as it can uncover and bring forward previously hidden or unknown perspectives, concerns and agendas. Parker and Shotter (1990) claim that it brings to the fore and exposes different concerns from the ones implicated in the discourses that are studied. Deconstruction works against the repression of concepts and

subjects so it is necessary for critical opposition or to inform different action (Banister et al., 1994; Parker & Shotter, 1990). It provides space for articulating multiple meanings and different perspectives by fostering 'new networks of understanding' (Larner, 1999, p. 42). It reveals hidden binaries, ideas and discourses that might be oppressed because they stand in opposition to dominant ideas (Bansel et al, 2009; Davies, 1994; 1996; Davies et al., 2002; 2007). In this research I want to expose teachers' concerns and needs which might go against the intensified attention paid to students.

Deconstruction *challenges power relations* by destabilising and complicating positions of power and revealing whom they privilege or oppress, what moral orders they authorise, thus helping discourses to function better (Larner, 1999). Deconstruction interrupts the idea that one pair of a binary is superior to the other (Davies, 1996). It helps in the search for alternative ways of constituting identities by recognising patterns that individuals are caught up in, thus helping them change or unsettle the discourses that position them in opposition to others (Bansel et al, 2009). Deconstruction 'turns the gaze' on discourses (Davies, 1998) and it reveals them as complicit in the production and reproduction of problems instead of blaming individuals. There is a growing body of literature that recommends a discursive turn in teacher reflection and professional development. Its proponents suggest that discourse knowledge and deconstructive skills can strengthen teachers' professional authority and agency in standing up to market agendas and in refusing to uncritically accept reforms (Davies, 2003). Critiquing dominant discourses is important if teachers want to have 'emancipatory authority' and to be 'transformative intellectuals' (Harrison, Clarke, Edwards & Reeve, 2003; Hursh, 2003; Satterthwaite, Atkinson & Gale, 2003; Slater et al., 2002). Discourse knowledge is also considered to be the educational profession's safeguard against governmentality (Armstrong, 2005; Hook 2003) or with other words against teachers being instruments of disciplinary power. I wanted to identify which discourses might produce teacher-student conflicts and to reveal how they might work to undermine teachers' professional authority and capacity to teach.

'A necessary step in refusing these new conditions of our existence is to be aware of the discourses through which we are spoken and speak ourselves into existence. We must find the lines of fault in and fracture those

discourses. And then, in those spaces of fracture, speak new discourses, new subject positions, into existence.' (Davies, 2005: 1).

Deconstruction supports *engagement with the ethics of practice*. It can be a tool of political and responsible action (Larner, 1999; Parker & Shotter, 1990) that helps maintain in public awareness the ongoing concerns of a profession and find ways to contribute to changing the conditions that undermine it. It invites taking a stand on discourses and to decide which ones to accept or to reject. It interrupts usual ways of thinking about problems (Clough, 2002; St Pierre, 2000, 2004) and it supports 'asking questions previously unasked and unthought' (Larner, 1999). It can be a way of facilitating the kind of critical consciousness and understanding of the ideological influences on a profession that the proponents of critical pedagogy advocate for (Freire, 1970, Giroux, 2004; McLaren et al., 2004). Deconstruction is credited by some with no less than helping teachers to consider the purposes and nature of education and whether to keep education as a service to the common good (Armstrong, 2005; Bell & Entin, 2000; Biesta, 2004; hooks, 1994) with teachers being accountable to their profession and society or to foster a culture of corporate managerialism, which erases teacher agency (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). I view deconstruction as a strategy of maintaining ongoing attention and sensitivity to the social context of education and teachers' work and a tool of challenging those discourses, policies and practices that impose conditions contrary to teacher-student relationships that foster rather than interrupt teaching and learning. I consider this research project to be exercising my ethical responsibility to the teaching profession through the contribution of new knowledge about the discourses that undermine teachers' well-being and relationships.

Last but not least, deconstruction can *facilitate professional and public discussion and debate* by providing new understandings and perspectives on issues (Banister et al., 1994; Denzin, 2005; Parker & Shotter, 1990; St Pierre, 2002). Deconstructive approaches are a useful method for studying complexity as they set out to uncover what is not so evident in conversations. They can show up some of the scaffolds of complexity: the messiness, the chaos and the lack of order of the many contradictory discourses that contribute to relationship trouble (Mazzei, 2004; St Pierre, 2004). With this

research project I hope to provide new perspectives on teacher-student relationships and conflicts that might help foster professional and public dialogue about the purposes of schooling.

In the remaining section of this chapter I introduce the steps of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, which I used to inform my analysis of the teachers' narratives.

5.8 Data analysis: FDA (Foucauldian Discourse Analysis) as a form of deconstruction

I further analysed the teachers' stories to see whether the analysis might reveal how teachers could move beyond problematic positionings with their students. I applied elements of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis or FDA (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008) and steps of a deconstructive process that Davies (1994) proposes in order to identify how the research participant teachers constituted themselves in particular ways, what discourses they drew on and how their positionings in those discourses shaped their identities and with what effects/consequences on their relationships.

Walkerdine and Arribas-Ayllon (2008) suggest that the purpose of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) or any discourse analysis for that matter is not to arrive at solutions to problems but to develop a different, alternative relationship to contemporary regimes of truth. Discourse analysis is a study of the formation of objects, transformation of practices and the intersection of chance events that form the conditions for the production of discourses. Walkerdine & Arribas-Ayllon propose five steps as methodological guidelines for FDA. *Selecting a corpus of statements* is the first step of FDA. A text is needed that includes statements that form the conditions of possibility for the studied phenomenon, which in my case is relationships between teachers and students and teachers and other adults. FDA can be conducted on a variety of speech activities and Walkerdine and Arribas-Ayllon list interviews, telephone conversations, focus group discussions and audio-visual recordings of classroom interactions as suitable for such analysis. I used the teachers' narratives of relationship practices and problems that they described during focus group discussions as my corpus of statements. These stories also told about the practices teachers engaged in,

how they tried to constitute themselves as good teachers as well as what interactions with their students reduced their sense of well-being.

Problematization is the second step of FDA. It is the process of making discursive objects and practices problematic, and as such visible and knowable. The questions a discourse analyst might ask relate to what aspects of human being are rendered problematic according to what moral domains, judgements and what official discourses and counter-discourses render particular problems visible and intelligible. I problematised the particular teaching and relationship practices that the participant teachers shared. I tried to identify what conditions might have produced student and teacher subjects who did not get along. Problematizations invite us 'to think differently about the present by taking up a position outside our current regimes of truth' (p.101). They make a taken for granted practice visible, and then help draw attention to the opposites or binaries of those practices in order to make it possible to interrogate them and to arrive at a different understanding about them.

Identifying *technologies of power and self* is the third step of FDA. Technologies of power govern human conduct through dominant knowledges or norms. Technologies of the self are the techniques that individuals use to regulate and enhance their own conduct. I was particularly interested to identify what technologies, such as self-surveillance, guilt, doubt and self-improvement, the research participant teachers used in order to constitute themselves as good teachers and what dominant discourses of schooling they drew on to constitute their identities as such.

Identifying *subject positions* is the fourth step of FDA. It is naming the available discourses and the subject positions they offer. In my analysis I focused on the specific subject positions that were available to the research participant teachers within their schools and I identified the consequences those positions might have had on their interactions with their students.

Describing *subjectification*, the final step of FDA, identifies how persons try to transform themselves and according to what moral orders they want to achieve being an appropriate subject. I wanted to identify how the research participants tried to achieve themselves as good teachers revealing the practices through which they regulated themselves.

In summary, the focus of my analysis of discourses refers to 'the practices through which certain objects, concepts and strategies are formed' (Walkerdine and Arribas-Ayllon, 2008, p. 99). I wanted to identify what kind of teacher and student subjects became possible through the specific discursive practices that teachers engaged in and accounted for as part of their teaching and interacting with students. I wanted to describe what teacher-student relationships became available and what kind of interactions they supported and/or made accessible. By adhering to the FDA process, I wanted to show how discourse analysis could be used to arrive at different understandings of how relationship problems in the research participant teachers' classrooms might be produced and what discourses might be complicit in positioning teachers and students in conflict with each other. I was interested to find out what kind of teacher and student identities and strategies of teaching, learning and interacting were formed through the different discursive practices that teachers talked about and what impact those had on teaching and learning.

The process of FDA allows for undermining and exposing oppositions or binaries. That is the main purpose of deconstruction. Davies (1994) describes three steps of deconstruction. First, the binaries or oppositions of an argument are identified. Second, the dependant term is relocated from its negative position as the very condition of the positive term. The third step involves creating a conceptual organisation that is able to transcend binary logic. We can consider teachers and students as a binary pair, each of which depends on the other for its constitution. The notion of 'teacher', who teaches new knowledge and skills requires for its definition the notion of 'student' who receives this knowledge, listens to the teacher, and follows his/her instructions. When we focus on either the practices of teachers or students, we keep hidden the practices of their pair or binary. The deconstruction process can bring those hidden practices into awareness and it can make visible taken for granted actions or behaviours. I wanted to reveal binaries that might need to be interrogated as ones that position teachers and students in relationships that were not conducive to learning.

I also wanted to show if and how the conversational and conceptual tools could help teachers go beyond their discursive constitution and

positionings that cause stress. In this sense I examined the usefulness of the conversational moves and the conceptual tools for immediate restorative purposes of opening new possibilities and/or improving well-being. I also wanted to demonstrate what new perspectives the discursive analysis can make available about how relationship problems are produced, along with what contributes to cultures of respect and/or disrespect. With Davies (2005) I believe that we have to understand the constitutive force of discourses and make those forces visible and revisable if we want to change problematic relationships. I was looking for ambivalences in the discursive positions and categories of teachers and students and/or confusions, where teachers and students found it difficult to move between the multiplicity of positions that they had to take up. I was looking for instances where their production of a unitary, coherent or satisfactory narrative or the maintenance of such a narrative proved difficult. Such ambivalences are termed 'discursive slippages' by Walkerdine (2003) and Davies et al. (2007) and they are considered to be the sites and moments where problematic relationships are called into being. I set out to expose the constitutive force of discourses at such moments where people lose their agency and they are overtaken by the force of discourse, which produces them against their own desires, making the direction of this production unpredictable. I wished to identify those moments when the productive force of discourses might not be understood by teachers and thus it might produce dissatisfaction, reduced wellbeing or disruptions to their relationships. I also wanted to find out how the skills of a discourse user might be taken on by teachers, what use they might attribute to those skills and how they would apply them to their dilemmas and concerns that they bring about their relationships with their students to the focus groups. After the above process of data analysis I finally looked at how the findings of this research might contribute to theorising and developing restorative and inclusive relationship practices in schools. Now I turn to presenting and analysing the data that I collected during this project.

CHAPTER 6 Conversations that build relationships and improve satisfaction

In the workshops I taught four conversation strategies informed by constructionist theorising and discourse knowledge for classroom use: an awareness of the productive power of language, curious questioning, externalising and re-positioning. I hypothesised that these conversational tools can support the production of interactions that have the characteristics of restorative conversations because they can facilitate dialogue, the expression of difference, the challenging of power relationships and moral engagement. I also proposed that these conversational strategies are able to respond to the unique requirements of specific situations, as opposed to scripts, and they can provide a one-step response that can interrupt usual ways of speaking without extra time input. I asked the teachers to bring to the focus groups examples of their use of these skills as well as to share with colleagues the relational outcomes that they thought the skills had achieved. There were fewer examples of applications of the conversational skills that teachers wanted to discuss with their colleagues than of narratives of concern or distress. The teachers provided only fragmented references to the use of externalising but no examples of the potential usefulness of this strategy so I present data about three of the four skills that I taught to the participants. I took a non-directive approach to the organisation of the sharing and left it to the teachers to decide what to discuss with colleagues. In hindsight, setting homework tasks and requesting to bring examples of a particular skill might have better ensured that there were data generated for the use of each skill. However, the data collected in a non-directive fashion might better reflect either which skills have had the greatest appeal to these teachers or which strategies they have found easiest to learn and/or most applicable to their work. The awareness of the productive power of language and questioning with genuine curiosity, from a not-knowing stance were talked about the most. Re-positioning was only taken up by a few teachers, which can be attributed to the complexity of the skill.

In the following I will show how the participants changed their ways of speaking and interacting and what practical applications they developed for classroom and other school conversations that use constructionist theory as their guiding principle. I will also show what different effects were produced by these different conversations for the teachers' relationships and satisfaction with their work. I divided the examples I present in this chapter into three groups according to the theoretical ideas and conversation skills that they demonstrate. The first set of data shows how teachers tried to interact with students and colleagues they perceived difficult with an awareness of a relational paradigm of identity work, and with sensitivity to the productive power of language and to the actual personal effects of their conversations and ways of speaking on their own and on others' lives. The second set of examples demonstrates the participants' use of respectful curiosity. The teachers tell how, with a constructionist perspective on knowledge and meanings, entering their interactions with students and colleagues from a stance of 'not-knowing' transformed their relationships. The third part of this chapter provides examples of the conscious application of discourse knowledge, and the use of re-positioning both for reducing conflicts and for supporting behaviour change. After each set of data I will present a deconstructive reading of the teachers' accounts of their practices as described in Chapter 5. With these readings my main intention is to identify the discourses that teachers, students and other adults are positioned in and to consider what practices, values and moral orders they authorise and/or restrict. I ponder how these discourses support teachers' identity work as well as how they might set up teachers and students in opposition to each other. In addition, I describe the possibilities the different theoretical ideas and their accompanying conversational skills opened up for managing differences and/or restoring difficult student-teacher, teacher-teacher and teacher-parent relationships along with the teacher and student identities they enabled and/or disabled. In concluding the chapter I present some arguments for why I believe that conversations, which centralise relationships and utilise discourse knowledge can improve well-being or be restorative. I also argue for the value of such conversations in schools in addition to conversations that are task-oriented.

6.1 Awareness of the productive power of language

Participants were introduced to constructionist theorising about language and they learnt to conduct their interactions with a conscious awareness of the productive power of conversations. They familiarised themselves, through various exercises and examples, with the assumption that language use and the different subject positions that we offer to others have actual material and social consequences on persons' lives and identities (Davies, 1991, 2006; Davies & Harré, 1990). The teachers were shown language use that supports agentive positionings. They were also introduced to the metaphors of 'unconditional kindness to strangers' (Sampson, 1989, 2003) and 'hospitality', informed by the welcoming practices of Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand (Drewery, 2005). These metaphors were suggested as reminders of a relational rather than individualistic paradigm of personhood and of practices that support ethical agency. They also linked the various consequences of the positionings offered, accepted and rejected in interactions with others to persons' well-being. Both the unconditional kindness and hospitality metaphors assume and promote the acceptance of difference as opposed to privileging sameness. They both put emphasis on entering relationships from a position of respect and goodwill, with a specific attitude of welcoming difference rather than suppressing it, while at the same time acknowledging the potential consequences of our ways of speaking.

The slogan of 'what we say matters' was offered to the teachers as a reminder of the significance of their language use and that careless speaking is more likely to produce subjugated, rather than agentive subjects, who are excluded from participating in the decision-making processes about their own lives. The teachers were encouraged to try to speak differently in their classrooms, by offering storylines with agentive subject positions for both students and colleagues or other adults. They were encouraged to be vigilant to and to notice harmful positionings and to aim to have conversations that go beyond the limitations of such positionings (Davies, 1991, 2006). The main skill that the participants had to learn was to change their 'careless speaking' into speaking that is intentionally and purposefully carried out with an awareness of its possible implications for the quality of teacher-student, student-student and teacher-teacher relationships. This might sound

like an easy task but in fact, it required teachers to replace, at strategic times, their usual instructional and informative paradigm of speaking, with one that intentionally sets out to produce respectful agentive teacher and student subjects. This did not mean that teachers were able to centralise relationships at all times in their classrooms. There were times in their lessons when the emphasis was on explanations and/or instruction. So the teachers also had to develop the capacity to decide which paradigm should be the dominant paradigm in their specific interactions with students, colleagues and parents. Further, in creating and modelling respectful conversations, the teachers had to enter into and/or stay in dialogue with persons whose values and worldviews differed greatly from their own. Such willingness to enter, and carry to the end, difficult conversations is also a requirement of restorative practices. The following examples show how the participants practised such difficult conversations with students and adults, colleagues and parents, and how their awareness of the productive power of language provided support for carrying out this task.

6.1.1 Commitment to dialogue with students

The following accounts are also representative of how the productive power of language idea informed participants' relationship practice. All teachers, without exception, credited the 'what we say matters' idea in their responses to an evaluation questionnaire with the potential of positively transforming difficult relationships and improving teachers' satisfaction and well-being. They considered strong relationships a prerequisite for successful teaching-learning interactions so they purposefully created opportunities for dialogue and they worked to initiate, maintain and/or resume dialogues with the students they had found difficult. Laura, an experienced teacher, tells how she no longer accepts the breakdown of her relationship with a student to be final or impossible to remedy, even when the child did something bad. Her commitment to repairing such relationships is an integral part of her professional identity and practice, in spite others judging her 'weak'.

Laura: And I think that the great thing for me is the relationship part, because I just don't want that relationship to break down. It doesn't matter how bad or what the child has done to me or whatever is going on, that relationship must be maintained for me to move ahead with the child. And for others looking in, it might look a bit weak, but I'm looking at long term and long term for me is the

answer. I wish it could be fixed within a second but it is very long term, so I'm looking at the bigger picture at the end. 6.1.1

Linda and Wilma both find that their availability for ongoing conversations with children is a prerequisite for teaching them. Linda also wants her students to trust her.

Linda: Probably, it would be the most important thing in my teaching, really, is how I get on with the children, how they relate to me. I find that they have to feel secure and comfortable and be able to talk to me freely... that there's just sort of an open communication, they can talk to me about anything they want to or when I'm available in the classroom that they can come and speak to me. 6.1.2

Wilma: Well if you don't have a good relationship with the children then you aren't able to teach them well. They're not going to respond to you so well and you won't have that feedback going backwards and forwards. 6.1.3

Jane, who has taught for several decades, attributes behaviour-changing potential to teachers' willingness to have ongoing conversations with difficult students. She uses as proof the example of a so called 'problem student', who is well-known to staff. This student can now participate in a conversation rather than respond violently, as he used to. Her commitment to ongoing dialogues with this student is seen by Jane not only as a potential strategy for success with difficult students but also as a moral position she wants to take up as an educator.

Jane: I think you need to keep the dialogue open with these difficult children. We can't walk away from it. We don't always like what they are doing but if you can talk to them, this is the success if there is any success at all. John is a very difficult child but staff can now talk to him and he is not trying to punch your face in or swear at you or walk away and try and make you look stupid. You can actually have a dialogue, and if we can talk with these difficult children, then everybody is better off, aren't they? 6.1.4

Mike, with a teaching career as extensive as Jane's, considers ongoing conversations significant for working out issues and for relationship and teacher credibility building. He makes conversations part of his teaching philosophy, similarly to Jane.

Mike: We have to see all of our conversations with young people as part of our longer conversations. We have to have these conversations with them and work through issues with them. They are not part of classroom practice. Many times I hear the idea of a conversation is that you set aside a time and a space and a place and it happens but I actually think we are in conversation all the time. Teaching is not something that happens in a vacuum, it happens within the relationships. So I think we are always building up our relationships and our credibility. 6.1.5

However, David, a beginning teacher, is unable to credit his similar practice with any useful effects. He expects of himself no less than motivating a disillusioned student and to shift his relationship to education. With his intervention incomplete, due to the student changing schools and leaving the next day, he considers his attempts futile.

David: Well I've been with Hone and there was some major avoidance of any work and we were doing Maths and I said let's do some Maths. He said he was dumb for Maths. Then I said you know, there is a lot of maths in different parts of the world, there are patterns everywhere, like geometry, and we could look at the world like that. And he said yeah, yeah I could do that. But you know he was still total avoidance and I was just trying to stretch his thinking, but you know, he was complete avoidance. And then I was just trying to maintain his interest in education and his motivation. I kept up my conversation with him over several days and he said in the end I don't know what I feel or how I feel. So he had no reference points. He couldn't name his thoughts and feelings, what he should feel and why he should feel in a way. I just asked the questions of him how can we make education more relevant for you? How can we help you to be more motivated? But he actually left the next day and I feel that I haven't done anything. 6.1.6

In the following excerpt from a conversation between Jane and Laura, they both value the greater personal connectedness with children that their open conversations make possible. They believe such conversations position them as persons rather than as teachers. They also note that changing the way they respond to students, having a dialogue as opposed to 'putting kids in their place', has a positive effect on their own mental health. It also helps them stay rational and reduce intensive emotions. Instead of 'seething', Jane suggests it is better to have an open dialogue even when she doesn't have her own way.

Laura: I think for me, and not only with the cases that I'm working with but in general, the relationships ... there is more openness. I feel that part of the community here, the kids are responsive to seeing you as a person and not so much..., my role is slightly different too, not so much as a teacher. So that the relationship I have with these kids is in a special way..., so when I go to classrooms, there is a lot of warmth there ... I feel really secure, especially in this school when I go class to class, it's a nice feeling. 6.1.7.1

Jane: You're right. There is a temptation to just fly off the handle, put those kids in their place and have my own way, because I can do it quite well. But I know that that is the least productive way to do it now. I've learnt this in the first course we went through, but that actually isn't the best for my own mental health because you go away seething about it. If you have these more open and honest dialogues, even if you haven't gotten your own way, when you go away you feel OK. You think that's all right then, that's just the way it is. And if an adult feels like that, who is supposedly rational, then it is so that children do, too. So I try to talk to these children, when I see them in the playground. I try to keep the dialogue going on whether they are being naughty or not, and I think that is helping. 6.1.7.2

Laura: It really does, I'm sure it is helpful ... You are always clouded by emotions and if you go into a situation where you enter a conversation and you are seething or

you are angry because you are clouded by that emotion, that conversation will not go ahead. And if you think that your values are much better than somebody else's values, that is not going to help you either. 6.1.7.3
Jane: We didn't restore anything really, except my mana. 6.1.7.4

These teachers saw ongoing conversations as a way of building better connections with students. They thought that different ways of speaking could be productive of different relationships and they could also facilitate changes in student behaviours. They believed them to be necessary for engaging students and teaching them (6.1.1; 6.1.2; 6.1.3; 6.1.4; 6.1.5; 6.1.7.1). These conversations positioned and portrayed these teachers as persistent in their work of changing difficult students, as professionals who do not shy away from difficult challenges (6.1.1; 6.1.4; 6.1.5; 6.1.6), as trustworthy and forgiving adults the children could turn to and feel secure with (6.1.2; 6.1.7.1), and as adults who can be rational and who can control their emotions (6.1.7.2; 6.1.7.3). The teacher identities enabled through these conversations were similar to those of a parent who provides warmth and security rather than someone who asserts their authority (6.1.2; 6.1.7.1; 6.1.7.2). The teachers in the above examples mostly trusted their competence to make a difference in the lives of their students (6.1.1; 6.1.2; 6.1.3; 6.1.4; 6.1.5), except for David, a beginning teacher (6.1.6). The conversations enabled student identities that were forgiven their faults because they would become appropriate subjects as a result of the teachers' input (6.1.1; 6.1.4; 6.1.5; 6.1.6). In turn, the children were able to turn to and trust the teachers, and their conversations were considered one way of building such necessary trust (6.1.1; 6.1.2; 6.1.3; 6.1.7.1; 6.1.7.2).

These carefully constructed interactions located teachers and students in the discourse of care, where it is the moral obligation of adults to initiate and create connections as well as to cater for the social, emotional rather than only for the academic learning needs of children. The children subjects within this discourse were allowed to be naughty or bad because it was exactly those qualities that the teachers could act upon in order to validate themselves as committed and devoted teacher subjects. Jane (6.1.7.2) acknowledges that changing the way she speaks in these ways is a different paradigm of conducting relationships with students, one that is less authoritarian and emotionally charged. I believe, an additional significant

effect of the conversational skills was that teachers changed how they made sense of their own identities and practices. They were able to arrive at a different sense of themselves because they could articulate the values that the practices supported, which included care, availability, reliability and the capacity to change students. The teachers also found pleasure in taking up these practices because they positioned them in a discourse of schooling that maintains hope in the possibility of change. This discourse also positions teachers as indispensable agents of change and as persons who have the capacity to be transformative of difficult students in the long run.

6.1.2 Commitment to dialogue with colleagues

Committing to stay with and consciously setting out to repair difficult relationships has not only made it easier for Jane to deal with difficult students, it also helped her get through a particularly difficult time in her job when she even entertained the idea of resigning.

Jane: I think it has helped with the more difficult relationships. I think that with the ordinary ones we were probably dealing with quite well, but then this very difficult relationship came crashing down, out of the blue. I wasn't expecting it, but this year there have been big changes (in the school). I also think that it has been nice having ... a time to look specifically at restorative practices. It has been good for me personally and also professionally, to have that time and step aside and reflect ...and for me this has given me a way to think through it. I go over things and I won't resign. There is a way and it is not hopeless. I think that is quite important personally. Without it I don't think I'd still be here, I don't think I would have found a way through it. 6.1.8

Laura and Wilma note how the conscious awareness of the productive power of ways of speaking made opening conversations easier for them with colleagues. They now deliberately enter more conversations in order to get to know colleagues better.

Laura: I've just got to know a few (colleagues) a lot better, because I'd never really entertained talking to them socially, but I'm actually finding out a lot of really interesting things about those who are here. Not only that, but I find that when I go to different staffrooms in different schools that I force myself to sit down next to people, I don't know, and engage, see how successful I am in engaging in a conversation with them and finding a bit about themselves. So when that person goes away they've had quite a good session with me, and I feel quite positive.... because it is very easy to focus on a specific relationship and forget that there are others out there that you can have a meaningful relationship with, and discover a lot more about those people. So it's been very useful. 6.1.9

Wilma: Yes and sometimes I find myself going to sit down and then I think "No I won't sit down there, I'll go and sit here instead." I'm usually glad that I've done it because I've had a chat to someone I perhaps don't normally chat with. I should really make a point of doing it more often. 6.1.10

Wilma, Lynn and Linda also suggest that a willingness to have ongoing conversations is a necessary prerequisite for resolving conflicts and for managing differences with colleagues. Lynn goes further to claim that it 'makes or breaks the job' (6.1.12). These teachers also find that their willingness to have difficult conversations with colleagues reduces their stress levels and impacts more positively on their well-being than resolving conflicts with students.

Wilma: *On a personal level I find it very important to have good relationships with my colleagues and it's really distressing when relationships break down ... There is nothing more stressful than not getting on with your colleagues. I would rather have a hard time in the classroom than have a hard time in the staffroom. Nothing has stressed me more than having poor relations with one or two sticky staff members over the years You know... you can forget a child that you have problems with... you can go home and forget about that and start fresh the next day but when it's a colleague, it can really drag you down. So if you've had a bad relationship with someone you realise that for professional reasons and for your peace of mind you've still got to sit next to that person in the staffroom, you've got to work with them in the classroom. ... Well yes, they would have to be willing to sit down. They have to get past the anger stage. They have to have calmed down and realise that there's a problem there and it needs to be solved so that people can work together. ... 6.1.11*

Lynn: *Restorative practices are, for me, more about relationships with staff. I know that I've got a happy class and we do the odd mediation here and there, but I know that my relationship with staff and colleagues is far more important for me personally than a horrible day with the kids. So it's how we relate to each other as adults that makes or breaks the job really. If anyone is feeling upset about something it's usually about another adult. ... In discussions I've actually used the idea of what we say matters and everybody has got a right to their own story. It was a conflict situation; there were differences and people wouldn't listen and I actually said that. The situation was resolved in the end. Probably for me the relationship principle gave me a little bit more strength. It made me feel more comfortable about speaking out more and trying to resolve the situation. It allowed me to tell my side to someone; what my point of view was. It gave me a basis for discussion or to enter into a discussion about it. Especially with adults it is respecting each other, it is a big part of it isn't it? 6.1.12*

Linda: *I'll speak out more if things aren't right; I'll say so. Or I will work through things to get things sorted out so I won't go home with it. So I request conversations more easily because things need to be talked about but I also pick my battles. I do feel that it does improve my satisfaction, yes. It does stop the situation from deteriorating. I feel that things get resolved even if it's just by email and not face to face; I feel that things are sorted out in the end. 6.1.13*

The teachers described the principles of committing to dialogues and the productive power of language as supportive of working through difficult relationships (6.1.8) and sorting out problems and issues professionally, without being bogged down by emotions (6.1.11, 6.1.12). Understanding the shaping effects of conversations was believed to make or break the job and it

had the potential to prevent situations from deteriorating (6.13). Dialogue was also considered useful for simply getting to know others (6.1.9, 6.1.10) through opening and entering into what could be termed uncomfortable conversations. Committing to and staying with difficult collegial relationships had the potential to restore teachers' well-being and it could ease the implications of negative emotions, such as anger (6.1.8; 6.1.9; 6.1.11; 6.1.12). With teacher colleagues the different conversations positioned teachers as professionals, who welcomed the challenge of engaging and building connections with colleagues, who were different from themselves (6.1.8; 6.1.9; 6.1.10; 6.1.11). Their willingness to enter into a dialogue with such colleagues positioned teachers as professionals who can rise above and move past differences. They were also positioned as persons who are able to overcome intense emotions and are willing to engage in conflict resolution, which is referred to as a desirable practice of a proper workplace and a skilled professional (6.1.11; 6.1.12). The principle of 'what we say matters' also offered a position from which it was possible to claim space for a teacher's views as opposed to being silenced (6.1.13). The examples show these teachers located in a discourse of professionalism that is popular in schools and is also well supported in corporate culture. This discourse of professionalism values the courage to take on difficult challenges, the capacity to manage and overcome emotions, and the willingness to contribute views even when it might be seen as risky. It validates as appropriate a professional, who is able to problem solve and collaborate with different others who are part of their team, in the interests of improving the quality of the workplace. It has considerable appeal to many teachers as it validates them as professionals.

6.2 Curiosity

The postmodern, constructionist conceptualisation of knowledge and the notion of the politics of meaning-making were introduced to teachers as theoretical ideas that can underpin and inform conversations from a habitual stance of enquiry. The practice of curiosity was linked firstly, to the idea that there are no absolute truths but different interpretations and meanings that persons make of events. Secondly, it was suggested that, depending on whose meanings become authorised to define how an interaction develops, it has

significance for relationships. Those persons whose meanings become dominant and gain institutional support and legitimacy have their moral orders validated. They also experience themselves as agentic subjects who are considered appropriate (Burr, 1995; Drewery, 2005; Winslade, 2005). The teachers were also introduced to the idea that those persons, whose meanings are repeatedly or permanently excluded from defining the terms of interactions, are unable 'to speak themselves into existence' (Davies, 1991). In the workshops that I ran for the participants I proposed that some relationship problems in schools and classrooms might be due to meaning making politics that undermine the agency of one or more participants of an interaction. I encouraged teachers to reduce, as much as they could, the possibilities for such interactions. They were taught a particular way of questioning developed by narrative therapists that is inclusive of many different meanings (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992; Monk et al, 1997). The teachers were asked to add this method of questioning to their interactional repertoire and to see how they can apply it in the classroom. The skill that the participants had to learn was to take up a not-knowing stance and to conduct conversations, where they deemed appropriate, based on genuine curiosity. They were asked to abandon certainty about their own meanings and interpretations and explore instead the meanings that others - students and colleagues - make of events. I was aware that the practice of curious questioning goes against the grain of teachers' usual instructional style and requires them to enter into an interaction with hesitance rather than certainty.

As a counsellor I knew that in therapeutic relationships, taking a curious and not-knowing stance is a strategy for changing the politics of meaning making because it allows for socially oppressive, dominant meanings to be identified and destabilised. Putting aside prior meaning making can bring forward different perspectives. I hypothesised that exploring a variety of meanings can be a useful approach for finding alternative identity descriptions for difficult students when teachers set out to achieve behaviour change and want to turn disruptive behaviours into co-operative ones. In addition, intentionally finding out about and including every participant's perspectives and interpretations of events into a conversation can resolve conflicts that usually develop due to misunderstandings and mismatches of interpretations. I

hoped that a not-knowing stance can help carry difficult conversations to conclusion as opposed to abandoning them halfway through, which is common practice when dealing with different meanings. The following examples show how the teachers employed the skill of questioning with genuine curiosity. They are grouped according to the effects they achieved, as perceived and reported by the research participants.

6.2.1 Supporting decision making and agency

Jane and Hannah have both noted that questioning with genuine curiosity requires a different stance from problem solving. They believed it also made them better listeners and increased their ability to explore some other stories, a possible reference to finding alternative identity descriptions. Jane noted that curiosity reduced her stress levels, because it also relieved her of the burdensome responsibility to solve problems for others.

Jane: For me, in the past I was too concerned about solving people's problems and giving them advice, so now I don't feel this burning need to solve all their problems and make them perfectly happy. I'm doing more listening and curious questioning and I think it has reduced my stress a little, I don't feel I have to do that, so I found that quite helpful. 6.2.1

Hannah also commented on the potential of this skill for supporting persons with working out their own solutions. Her reference to 'there are several other stories' indicates that she has taken on the theoretical ideas of different 'truths' and possible interpretations of the same event.

Hannah: I've learnt that there is another story, or that there are several other stories ... and it is that sort of curious questioning, but like the others it isn't necessarily my problem but how can I support others to work out that problem, or go forward really ... and in personal relationships as well as professionals, with children and the adults that we work with ... I don't do anything more than that. But I would really want to get more into curious questioning, that is an area I'd really like to get into and that would have to make me a better listener ... because there are some areas where I know if I had asked the right question I would have gone down a different track. I have just missed the beat sometimes. And I haven't quite used it with adults ... I haven't applied it as such to the teachers here, but I would like to take it further, perhaps not in this setting but with parents and further out. 6.2.2

The stance of curiosity also helped Laura ease the burden of feeling responsible for others.

Laura: I know at one stage there was a lot of expectation on me to fix the behaviour and get on with life. Basically I was in the same situation where everybody else was. But we did not know what to do because we were all going on the same track, the same technique of finding out what was happening, what was the problem and now I am also in the same place where Jane is at, where I don't

feel total responsibility. I still feel responsible about finding out what was happening but I don't feel totally to blame. 6.2.3

Jane noted both positives and negatives about exercising curiosity and taking up a not-knowing position. While the skill supported others to take charge of their problems and to work out their own solutions it could also be experienced as a tedious process for the person doing the questioning. Jane also identified another effect of the skill, persons feeling they are treated well.

Jane: *I admit I was a little bit surprised because I got a little bit fed up with the curious questioning and trying to wade through this mire that this person had gotten themselves into, but an hour and a half later their response was quite different. But the interesting thing was that they came to me, I hadn't said you have to, they came back at the end of the day, and I found that children do that, too. So they must feel that they are being treated well during the discussion, enough to basically in their own time to think about it and come back themselves. I certainly didn't say come and see me after school about it, I've stopped doing that, I used to do that to myself all the time, so not saying that seems to have the effect that I wanted. 6.2.4*

Elsewhere she suggested that the stance of curious enquiry could invite students and teachers into a position of agency rather than relying on someone else to solve problems, though she also drew attention to the extra time involvement required.

Jane: *It can be slow, I've discovered that it is better not to speed it up but rather to stop the dialogue, and if the person comes back to you later, which I've had a few interesting successes with at school, if they don't come back to you later I assume the best thing is to go back and re-open the dialogue yourself because it is not finished. With the children in this school and some staff, they feel no responsibility for their own behaviour, it is always somebody else's fault, and it is always being caused by you doing something or whatever, and the traditional role is that you are the person who cracks heads. You come over and yell at someone and put someone in their place, then you stomp off and it all carries on. They've got to accept a different role from us, we are not Mrs Fix-It, there are no answers to some of these children, some will always have difficulties, and self management has got to become part of it, for all of us 6.2.5*

Stress reduction and not feeling responsible for others were the significant effects these teachers identified as a result of taking up a curious stance in the above examples (6.2.1; 6.2.3). They noted being positioned as listeners and supporters (6.2.2; 6.2.3; 6.2.4), which differed from their more common positions of experts and 'fixers' (6.2.3; 6.2.5). A more important effect of using curious questions was the support it provided for persons' agency (6.2.2; 6.2.4; 6.2.5). Those who were listened to in this way felt they were trusted to have the capacity to act on their own behalf, or in others

words they were given the opportunity to make decisions about the directions of their lives. This, in turn, reduced the burden on the interviewers as well (6.2.1; 6.2.3; 6.2.5). Curious questioning in these instances supported a paradigm of interaction that was different from problem solving or 'fixing', practices that are so available to teachers, especially those in management positions. Jane and Hannah felt relieved of the responsibility of trying to solve others' problems. Curious questioning authorises a moral order that values different knowledges and acknowledges that others, not just a select few, can have ideas about how to solve a situation. Thus it can support agency. It also privileges the acceptance of difference, that the other's ideas might be just as adequate as one's own. The teacher identity that is enabled in the above examples is that of accepting supporter, who provides opportunities for both students and colleagues to take responsibility for their own actions, as opposed to imposing solutions. The other can exercise agency and be active on his/her own behalf in finding solutions to their own problems.

6.2.2 Tolerating differences and managing power imbalances

Jane also shared how she can now accept different meanings and listen to both sides without feeling responsible. The theoretical idea that there can be many meanings and knowledges about the world helped her shift how she viewed her responsibilities. It enabled her to stop internalising other people's problems as her own.

Jane: I think the difficulty in our jobs is that we have to maintain a relationship with the child and the adults, and I think I probably learnt the hard way how not to get caught in the middle, because often the stories are opposites. You'll be told one thing and they'll tell someone else the opposite and the person in the middle is aggressive, and I really hit the wall with that. I've decided that that's maybe because I thought that I had to fix it and I can't, but I can listen to both sides now and not feel I have to be responsible for both. I can also sit in the middle somewhere, and that seems to be the least aggressive way to deal with the whole situation. 6.2.6

Laura talked about how she was more able to accept and respect the diversity within her team and 'respect where they are coming from'. The stance of curiosity changed the way Laura dealt with differences, which she also found more satisfying.

Laura: It has worked really well for me within my team, because I have a pretty diverse team, and to respect where they are coming from ... to respect what they have, to utilize what they have and to trust them in their work, I think has been more

satisfying for me, because I feel now that I am actually more successful with the work I do in running the team. It hasn't been easy, but also, I am finding that I'm starting to talk to other people in the school a lot more, opening dialogues. 6.2.7

Lynn thought that curiosity was important for exploring different views and making people feel listened to. She believed that being able to put forward one's own point of view could lead to the resolution of problems though a person's capacity to voice his/her views was more important for her than resolving problems. Lynn also credits curiosity with providing an opening for the admission, sharing and validation of different views.

Lynn: If the situation is not restored, then there's no resolution there. If you don't talk about the situation then you could just end up with little niggly things just hanging in there. Resolving would be hearing everybody's point of view no matter if it's a teacher or child, everybody has their point of view on an issue and I think it's really important that you listen to it. If things are left there they can linger there for years. Gosh, families sometimes have things that go on for years. But if you can reach a certain resolution, you can leave things behind and go forward and even help the relationship between the concerned parties. Well, you can agree to disagree, but it's really important that you are listened to, especially when you are in a situation when someone has more power, it's important that you are listened to. Really being listened to is more significant than the resolution. ... Unless there is some discussion about it, it's very hard to shake off. So yes, I do think that you do need to listen to each other and be allowed to talk to each other. So, yes, the overriding principles of listening and accepting there are different views and giving everyone the chance to voice their views. 6.2.8

Dora suggests that taking a curious stance about everyone's views has the potential to reduce power imbalances between managers and teachers as it provides space for all views. She refers to the theoretical idea that was introduced to the teachers according to which differences of opinions and interpretations are assumed and normalised rather than feared. The curious stance is also a way of getting on with people.

Dora: As far as I'm concerned the person who has the power is not a better human being than I am. Just because they have more pay or more power they are just another fellow human being. So you know everyone has their own personality and you might not be able to change that personality but you are learning to live with that personality. If the restorative practice principles are used you have more of a chance of not being dominated by someone because people get very set in their ways... You don't change the person, you change your interactions with them; agree to disagree, speak out when you need to. Because otherwise, if things aren't resolved, or there are too many things that you disagree with or you don't have a say about, then you will say I'll have another job. That's the bottom line of it really. It's a way of living with people and the situation if it gets very hard this could be a way of getting on with people. 6.2.9

Diana believes that learning to accept different views increased her capacity to deal with difficult adults and parents with less emotion.

Diana: I think it's helped with adult relationships and that people have got different points of views and to accept that they shouldn't be thinking what I think. It's also good for your personal life really and you know with that difficult parent I talked about, I felt better. You know that you are not going to change her but actually in the end she apologised to me. I couldn't believe it. Before, she was going to blame me for what kind of child she had. You know here she is blaming me and just exploding about how bad I am and you really just feel like thumping them. Excuse me, it's not my fault that your child is like that, you know. It's sort of trying to deal with that; that you don't feel so personally angry. 6.2.10

Curious questioning is also shown to support the managing of potential conflict situations with colleagues and parents (6.2.8; 6.2.9; 6.2.10), a less aggressive way of dealing with situations (6.2.6), getting on with those in a position of power (6.2.9) and managing diversity within a team (6.2.7). The questioning teachers are positioned in these situations as listeners who have the capacity to value the different contributions and views of their colleagues or parents. They are able to explore and accept contradictory views and meanings, which in turn positions the persons interviewed as participants of the conversations. Their meanings are validated rather than excluded from defining the terms of interactions, so they are positioned as agentive subjects, who are able to speak themselves into existence. Curious questioning is shown in these examples to support a discourse that normalises, assumes and tolerates difference, not viewing it as problematic but rather as a resource that could be used for the benefit of a team. It supports the voicing and exploration of different views as opposed to suppressing them or getting upset about them. The practice of curiosity is described in one interaction as a potential strategy for resisting the exclusion of the meanings made by a person, who is in a lesser power position than her manager (6.2.9). It is seen to enable democratic, rather than authoritarian and hierarchical, relationships. The teacher identities that are enabled in these interactions are tolerant and inclusive of differences.

6.2.3 Curiosity as a tool for conflict management with students

In the following excerpt from a conversation between Claire and her colleague Pania ponder the potentials of curiosity. They think it supports fairness when teachers try to judge and deal with children's conflicts. They recall how their investigation of a hitting incident, during which one of them was able to adhere to a curious stance, contradicted their initial assumptions.

They think the capacity to suspend assumptions and to explore different interpretations of the same event was important for achieving restoration between the two girls in conflict. They also refer to the potential of a curious stance to sort misunderstandings and 'to get a fuller picture' or a clarification of different perspectives. They note the repositioning of those in conflict that can be achieved through such clarification. Claire and Pania are also able to give up certainty and to step into a discourse, in which the students are positioned as experts about their situation.

Claire: *We did a little bit of curious questioning and the girl who did the hitting is new. She is actually a kind and considerate girl, who doesn't go around hurting other people but actually it turned out that she had been over-zealous with the other one. It was tidying up time and because the girl who did the hitting wasn't tidying up or doing it as well as the other one and she was told off, she felt aggrieved this was happening and lashed out. We wouldn't have expected it, I mean the other girl wasn't particularly aggressive but she was obviously overdoing it. So we automatically assumed that it was the girl who was doing the hitting, it was all her fault, but it turned out it had sort of been instigated by the other one. Hitting people is not acceptable but after talking it through and giving both the opportunity to talk and listen to each other they went off as friends.*

Pania: *Well, actually I reacted in the beginning and took her out of the room. I reacted in a way that I shouldn't have reacted. I was appalled. I didn't do it in a restorative way.*

Claire: *But by doing the interviewing we got a fuller picture and we were able to restore the relationship and so they have got a better relationship. The person who did the hitting was listened to and she was understood. We could tell where she was coming from and so she had the opportunity to be heard and for her own hurt as it was, and not feeling blamed.... The conversation restored the relationship between the two girls, the relationship between Pania and the girl who did the hitting. Maybe the person who did the hitting (she's not in my class), might have a different view of me as well. So you give a chance for the different stories to be heard.*

Pania: *And you get an uninterrupted account of what's happened from both people. I think it's also important for them to listen to the other one.*

Claire: *And they get the right of reply. 6.2.11*

Darryl's experience demonstrates what the different effects of resisting and utilising the curious stance can be. Matiu, a student in Darryl's form class, displayed anger in a disruptive manner in another teacher's class. He also had to be restrained from hitting another student. John, the other teacher, did not know why Matiu was so angry, but, he did not have time or was not willing on that occasion to take up a not-knowing stance with Matiu. However, he informed Darryl about what had happened after the lesson. Darryl saw that Matiu was still seething when he entered his classroom after

lunch. Darryl claimed his use of curious questioning de-escalated this conflict situation. The following account is Darryl's write-up of his conversation with Matiu, which he prepared for one of the focus group discussions.

Darryl: *I'm not in a class with them in that particular period of the day but I get pulled aside by a particular teacher on the way back to class at the beginning of lunch who said: "I got your boy in my class and he blew and he's swearing and he won't settle down." Then I said: "Let me just find out what's going on and I will get back to you". So, I now walk into my classroom after lunch and I settle everybody down with silent reading, and I say "Matiu, could I talk to you?" And the others say "Oh, he was getting smart" and I say "I haven't said anything, settle down." But he is on the defensive straight away and the whole class is going "Oh, he is angry and he is going to give so and so the bash." So I say: "I need to talk to Matiu and you boys just need to keep reading." I asked him what happened and he said he was getting smart. I said "So you were getting smart but how were you doing that? Were you saying something or pulling gestures, making faces? I need to know".*

Matiu: *He's a cheeky punk. He was calling me names and getting smart.*

Darryl: *What was he saying to get you upset?*

Matiu: *I'll smash the cheeky punk.*

Darryl: *Something obviously set you off and I can see you are feeling angry and upset.*

Matiu: *You tell me. He always gets smart. He said I got Jo pregnant.*

Darryl: *So you were upset about what he said?*

Matiu: *Yes, I've never done that.*

Darryl: *I know you are genuinely upset but you can't go around threatening people or bash them up around school. How do you think that would make them feel?*

Matiu: *They'd be scared.*

Darryl: *Is there another way this problem could have been sorted out?*

Matiu: *Tell the teacher. But they don't sort it.*

Darryl: *So next time when this sort of thing happens, are you going to tell the teacher and let the teacher sort it?*

Matiu: *Yes 6.2.12*

Darryl commented in the focus group discussion how situations similar to Matiu's can cause 'horrible problems in horrible proportions'. He thought that having a discussion and sorting misunderstandings in similar situations is necessary to avoid further conflict. Darryl proceeded to discuss the effects of gossip and rumours within his class for the rest of the afternoon. The teacher who was not prepared or did not have time to explore the situation was left upset and at a loss as to why a student behaved in an extreme manner in his class. The student's reintegration into learning did not happen either. However, the teacher (Darryl), who was willing to step into a position of not-knowing, could de-escalate a potentially risky situation.

Curious questioning proved helpful in mediating a conflict between two students (6.2.11) as well as for de-escalating a potentially violent situation (6.2.12). The two girls involved in a physical altercation made up after spoken to, or their teachers interpreted their responses as such. Matiu

settled down and was re-integrated into learning. The mediating teachers, Claire and Darryl were positioned as teachers who either do not insist on the accuracy of their own interpretations (6.2.11) or are prepared to go beyond appearances (6.2.12). The teacher identities enabled in these examples are fair and non-judgemental persons, who believe in and are supportive of their students' capacity to change and to behave according to what is expected of a good student. Both teachers allowed the students' meanings to be entered into their interactions and they were willing to give up their expert position of knowing about the students' lives. They used their expertise in applying a conversational strategy to put the students in a position of knowing about their own lives. The above two conversations both located teachers and students in the discourse of inclusion as well as the kind of conflict resolution that differs from behaviour management as it prefers and relies on students' contributions as opposed to adults deciding what needs to happen. The students are given an opportunity to exercise moral agency. The moral values of inclusion, fairness and a belief in change were also validated by these conversations. These examples also demonstrated that participation and contribution can be achieved by strategies other than behaviour management.

6.2.4 Validating different identities

Suspending assumptions was seen to help validate persons and contribute to satisfying relationships with both students and colleagues. Dora and Wilma talked about the importance of colleagues suspending judgements and instead, validating and accepting their different preferences for teaching styles and ways of living. Taking up a curious stance can support such validation, which in turn can lead to more satisfying relationships.

Dora: I want them to be non-judgemental... like with your planning for example. We all have our ways of planning ... like one of my colleagues...she is not judging how you do it by her standards... And not coming in and saying "I do it like this and this is how I want you to do it." And even though we do team planning and sometimes team teaching, we do rotations, I've never had anyone say to me "No, you don't do it like that!" They're quite... they just value you as an individual with differences in your teaching styles....I mean she has her own ideas about planning which I don't always agree with but she'll come into your room... we have appraisals every year and she'll come in and she'll say "This is what I do and you might like to try it but you don't have to!" and I don't feel threatened by that. 6.2.13

Wilma: I mean we have a very multicultural staff and we have had off and on over the years and we are all quite different and we lead different lives at home. Some

of us come from very strict religious backgrounds and others from the opposite and we all have to work together and get on together so just having that neutral respect I think... and the willingness to accept and willingness... to accept the difference and accept that even though you may not agree with somebody over something, you can put that aside and still have a good professional and personal relationship while you're at work.... Being able to put aside differences and accept the other person's point of view and that they accept yours and actually work towards the better good rather than getting stuck in your own personal little issues or area where you're right and everyone else is wrong, so stuff everybody else. [6.2.14](#)

Lynn and Ron, based on their own generational and cultural experiences of managing differences, noted the limitations of applying a curious stance. They suggested that when only one party applies it, it is unlikely to advance the interaction and to provide a platform for admitting different views.

Lynn: *My parents are really conservative people and if we wanted to talk about something we didn't agree with, they really felt offended because they came to take it personally. They can't see that I'm just disagreeing about the issue. Well now it actually bothers [me] and they've never learned to just step back and have a real gutsy discussion about something. They think I'm just being stropky, but a lot of people are like that, aren't they? They think that you are personally attacking them but you're not, you are just not agreeing with the issue. [6.2.15](#)*

Ron: *Well in my culture, we can talk about how we feel or what we think but really in my culture you've got to respect the elders. So in our culture how we say it matters more and also what you hear out of what's said. So me and my brother might say "oh, this is how we should do it" but my dad would tell first what he thinks needs to be done, and when we have given our opinion he might say "OK, let's give it a go". But it's very important that he makes the last decision. [6.2.16](#)*

Dora and Mike find it equally important to suspend judgements with students. This helps explore the students' version of events and show interest in their views as well as a teacher's preparedness to look at alternatives. Listening with curiosity supports Dora's claim to not being prejudiced and judgemental.

Mike: *I think that notion of not knowing how you feel or why you say something is really OK. I could have told the student you are a truant, you are a slacker and here is a list of what teachers have given me as evidence of that and I know all of that stuff is happening but I need to find a way forward for him. For me it is trying very hard to not to assume that I know where they stand on an issue and what's happening. If I kept going in assuming that actually I don't know then it is much easier for me to keep asking questions to give me something that might clue me into what to do next. If somebody is growling or yelling, whatever the interaction is if I don't presume and I ask a question about what is happening and what are you feeling, I'm much more likely to get good information. So in a classroom you need those methods of allowing a student to know that you listen and that you are actually prepared to look at a problem in another way. And if you delay the discussion until another point in time, the students are much more willing because they know you are listening. [6.2.17](#)*

Dora: *Listening is very important and to children... particularly with the children here... listen! Believing them, not judging them and not saying to them "I don't believe you!" I mean you might know that child's lying for example but sort of giving them the chance to... like on Monday morning I greet all the kids that come past me and I'll say "Hi!" and just all of that and ask "How was your weekend?" even in passing and then you know you get... like one of the girls that I've known for a long time, I'm on duty on Monday so it's really nice and I just ask her "So what did you do in the weekend?" and she says "Oh, I went to see my uncle in Waikeria (a prison)." And I just say "Oh, well that's quite interesting!" and they'll... they are quite happy to tell me things like that and I really think that's quite neat. I heard this story one day... that it wasn't my uncle's fault and they sent him down but it wasn't his fault and I'll say "Oh what made you think it wasn't his fault?" and you know... it's just neat that they can tell you things like this.* 6.2.18

These examples demonstrate that applying a stance of curiosity by listening to and allowing each person's different meanings into a conversation can validate both adults and students as legitimate subjects. It allows them access to a speaking position as opposed to being silenced. In their relationships with colleagues the teachers were positioned as professionals who were just as competent as their supervising colleague (6.2.13), professionals who were able to work with different others (6.2.14; 6.2.15) and professionals who respected cultural traditions (6.2.16). In their relationships with students they were portrayed as: a teacher who does not totalise students and is flexible in supporting behaviour change (6.2.17) as well as a teacher who can free herself of prejudice even when a child's family member transgresses the law (6.2.18). The teacher identities enabled were those of inclusive and supportive professionals who provided opportunities for others to participate. The practice of curiosity supported a discourse very different from medicalising, totalising and pathologising. Rather, it supported fairness, inclusion and a belief in the possibility of change, that there are other possible identity descriptions for persons (6.2.13, 6.2.17, 6.2.18). The interactions authorised the moral values of appreciating differences and the uniqueness of each individual. In summary, a curious stance supported a collaborative paradigm of interaction, where participation and contribution is encouraged. This is in contrast to an authoritarian paradigm, in which the person in power, usually a teacher or a senior colleague tells what to do. Curiosity was also helpful for the managing and admitting of differences as opposed to authorising sameness. It was shown as a strategy that has the potential to develop moral agency, people taking a position in relation to a

practice and working out their own solutions instead of relying on someone else to make decisions for them. The emotional responses of stress reduction and greater tolerance for different others were the perceived additional benefits of this conversation strategy.

6.3 Repositioning

The research participants were introduced to the discursive conceptualisation of identity and the notion of positioning. They had several opportunities, in the workshops and also in the focus groups, to practise how they could formulate the kind of responses to difficult interactions that would reposition the participants. They were asked to bring examples of situations that did not go well and together with their colleagues they came up with statements that they thought would have achieved a different relational outcome. Re-positioning is the on-the-spot use of deconstruction and a discursive view of identity in conversations. It is more of a multi-step, analytical process that requires the fluent use of, and links established between, the concepts of discourse, positioning and agency during conversation. A teacher who uses re-positioning understands the productive and constitutive power of discourses for persons' identities and she/he is able to rework the harmful effects of cultural practices. The participant teachers practised identifying what discourses different speech acts position conversation participants in and with what effects for the quality of their relationships and identities. They also practised shaping and manipulating their speaking in ways that support each participant's agency and position participants in discourses that open rather than close possibilities (Laws & Davies, 2000). I hypothesised that re-positioning could potentially minimise the constraining effects of unhelpful positionings in relation to socially dominant ideas (Davies et al, 2002). Students who disrupt the usual activities of classrooms are often positioned outside the range of what are considered legitimate and normal identities in their classrooms or schools. I suggested to teachers that they use the notion of repositioning to make the category of good student available for such students. Repositioning is a complex skill and it was resisted by several teachers. Jacob and David found it hard to apply it on the spot under the pressures of their work.

Jacob: *I have actually found it quite hard to talk to the kids between class time and during lunchtime. I've got another class to go to and it's quite hard to get the conversation going. It's quite hard to take the deconstruction, repositioning type conversations. It's quite difficult but I guess it's just like other things, you have got to practise to get better. It's not sort of flowing out naturally. 6.3.1*

David: *You know the kids are trying to get out at break but you know if you can engage it can be useful. I find that I almost have to use that approach later because where there is too much time pressure or emotion involved we are not getting to that conversation. I think you can have that conversation with them the next day and I think it's good that they can be heard. I think it's a good skill; it's a good skill to learn but I think I found, and students have found it hard initially. 6.3.2*

Several teachers mentioned how, in the business of their jobs, they might occasionally totalise and pathologise students who do not engage with learning all the time. Dora talked about how easy it was for her to always attribute disruptions in her classroom to particular students but at the same time, how difficult it was to offer alternative identity positions. She found the idea of repositioning helpful for changing her practices with students like Ricky. The notion of repositioning helped her think about opening up alternative possibilities and storylines.

Dora: *Any misdemeanour that's happened in the classroom, you sort of always look to those children first and you've got to be so careful not to do that. So I find myself... I reflect on my own practice like... I've got this little boy in my class who's been there all year and has learnt nothing. And in a moment of sheer frustration, I said to my student teacher, when they had all gone out to lunch "Ricky's just thick! He must just be thick!" It was just in sheer frustration you know... he's had all the teacher aide help and... he needs glasses so we're working on that but he mucks around. Now what happens is, say the kids are on the mat and you're having a lesson and you can hear fidgeting going on and bustling and you know someone's poking... why is it that your eyes always go to those two or three children? So I made a conscious effort and I kept noticing the good things Ricky was doing, which is good. So at the end of the day I thought... and I'm not a big certificate giver, I don't believe in... how do you say the word... extrinsic... but anyway... So I said to him "Ricky, I've been so proud of you today. I've just noticed how you've been making good choices all day and been really helpful" and I gave him a certificate and his mother just... she just blossomed as well, she thought it was wonderful. You know what, almost a complete turn around and I haven't given any more and this was two weeks ago and it's like a changed child. ... And yeah... so what a difference it's made. It was exciting! 6.3.3*

During a focus group discussion, Diana complained about her stressful relationship with a parent, who often brought her child late to school. When on occasions, Diana had challenged this, the parent complained about her to the school principal. This led to Diana starting to doubt that her expectations were justified and she questioned if they fulfilled the criteria of the teaching discourse that encourages teachers to have high expectations for every child.

Diana asked her focus group members what they thought she could do to change this situation in a way that restores both her confidence in her expectations as well as her relationship with this parent. Dora suggested that repositioning could open other possibilities for everyone.

Dora: You could actually try to reposition her. Say something to her like “Do you realise what he is missing in the morning?”, rather than get into a conflict situation. So try to give her another perspective, another story. Maybe what you could do is say “This is what he is missing in the morning. This is what you could get him to do at home” Put that parent in a different role. She has to be the teacher and she’s got to realise that there is something that has to be done. You say this constantly every morning so you are trying to get her into a different place. So quite nicely just say to her “This is what I’ve been thinking about”. That is just a suggestion, maybe giving her a different story to work with. 6.3.4

One effect of repositioning for Dora was the support it provided for change and giving up totalising of a student (6.3.3). She was able to consider the effects of always validating Ricky in the subject position of naughty student. She consciously worked on finding events that belonged in a different storyline and she offered Ricky positions in a storyline that validated him as an appropriate student subject. This practice confirmed her identity as good teacher as well. Dora also positioned a difficult parent as a partner of the teacher in teaching her child as opposed to leaving her stuck in the position of teacher and school blaming. This increased the potential for collaboration rather than positioning teacher and parent as enemies who represent irreconcilable interests of the child.

Darryl presented to his colleagues the following example of repositioning that he said he had come up with for some of his male students who preferred to take up their identities from discourses of ‘toughness’ and ‘machoness’. These students’ usual response to anyone, who did not do what they wanted, was physical violence. Darryl wanted to position them as persons who are able to show care for others but also as persons who are willing to consider more than one possible meaning for the same event. This is the story he told his students:

Darryl: The boys in my classroom usually respond to disagreement with their fists. To reposition them I use the story of the bloke who gets on the train and it’s stinking hot and he’s got five kids and they all pile in. I say to them to imagine they are one of the passengers. They’re all sitting on the train and the kids are running around and jumping up and down on the seats and you’re thinking “God, sit the kids down!” because you’re trying to read a book. All the boys go: “Yeah, that’s us! That’s us!” and I say “So what do you do?” “Oh, you get up and bash them!” and I say “So you get up and walk up to the bloke and say, look your kids are a

pain..." and he says "Yeah, they're a bit off the wall because they've just come from the hospital and their mother's got three months to live." And I say "Now what do you say? That you're gonna bash them?" and they say "Oh no!". So even those boys can understand that a way of looking at something from somebody else's perspective is important. Yeah, it quickly shifted everybody... you know.
6.3.5

Darryl presented his story as a problem and first invited the boys to give their usual response to the situation, which would have been physical violence. He knew well that they would position themselves in the discourse of 'bash them in order to achieve compliance'. When they did, his way of repositioning was not through directly offering a different identity position to the boys in a different discourse but through renaming his story and repositioning the characters in it. By providing additional information about the father and his children, that their mother is terminally ill and dying, he shifted the meaning and transformed the story of naughty children into a story of grieving children. He then invited the boys to reflect on their original positioning and its possible effects on the story's characters: "Now what do you say? That you're gonna bash them?" He provided an opportunity for the boys to choose a different position, one from which they could show more care and empathy. By leaving it to the boys whether they stay in their original position or if they take up another one, he supported their agency while helping them clarify and develop their moral positions, in other words to think of the ethics of their practices. Darryl took into his practice the notion of different stories and different identity positions and thought about how to provide opportunities in his classroom to shift boys who are normally 'tough' into a position of caring and reflecting on their usual practices. In addition he intentionally worked to provide opportunities for them to take a moral position in relation to an event. He also showed these boys that there can be other stories and other identity positions that they can take up. He supported them with going beyond their usual identities.

Only a few research participants reported that they had used the skill of repositioning. However, others might have had interactions that achieved repositioning without the teachers reading them as such. Those few teachers who took on this strategy saw it as a way of developing alternative identities, resolving conflict and developing moral agency. Re-positioning supported a paradigm of interaction that consciously sets out to move beyond stuckness

or a usual, familiar pattern of practice. As such it has the potential to be utilised as a strategy of change and hope. It positioned students as moral agents who are capable of making better choices. It supported a teacher identity of change agent, who consciously works to teach students other ways of living and being in the world.

In this chapter I have shown how it might be possible for teachers to put into practice the habitual stance of enquiry in their classroom conversations and interactions with students, colleagues and parents, mobilising conversational skills and moves informed by constructionist theory and discourse knowledge. Conducting conversations with the conscious awareness of the productive power of language, questioning with genuine curiosity and repositioning were all shown to have the potential to transform unsatisfactory student behaviours, conflict situations and relationships with different others into what teachers found more satisfying, less stressful and more supportive of their well-being. The examples demonstrate that there can be actual, social and emotional consequences of conversations and that it is possible to manipulate those consequences if teachers intentionally and purposefully change the ways they speak. When the teachers entered their relationships with an awareness of the productive power of language use they were in charge of the direction of their interactions and their own identity work as opposed to leaving such work vulnerable to others or circumstances. When they used curious questioning they acted with care for the identity development of others. They included, rather than excluded, a range of diverse meanings, which supported their students and colleagues as agentive and participating rather than oppressed subjects. When they practised repositioning they were able to offer storylines to students and parents that provided spaces for them as legitimate subjects so it was also easier for them to change. These conversational skills enabled and validated the kind of teacher subjects who are committed and available to their work and persistent in their willingness to produce changes. The skills enabled these teachers to practise in ways that validated the moral values of care, collaboration, fairness, tolerating difference and inclusion. These are values most teachers aspire to live by and rely on during the development of their professional identities.

Through using different rather than their usual ways of interacting, these teachers created conditions for new possibilities in their relationships with students and colleagues. Their conversations opened rather than closed down options (Davies, 1991). The conversational strategies also positioned students and colleagues as participants and contributors rather than as passive subjects who need others to decide what they have to do. The participants of the interactions could exercise moral agency. The teachers who consciously applied the skills were aware of and could articulate what identities they wanted to take up and they could choose the practice that validated it. In addition, the three skills helped the teachers to consciously consider the effects of their interactions, which Crocket (2002) suggests can enhance staying connected to a person's moral stance and to the ethics of their practices. I wish to add that a continuous awareness during conversations of one's ethical stance and its potential effects on others is preferable to a stance that is blind to the implications of the practices it enables. Practising with conscious awareness also makes it easier to fulfil what Sampson (2003) calls one's ethical obligations for others.

With the examples of this chapter I argue that conversations conducted from a habitual stance of enquiry and informed by discourse knowledge have a place in classrooms and they can become a significant contribution to teachers' interactional repertoire. I have shown that teachers can incorporate such conversations into their practice in several ways. They can use them to transform their problematic relationships with students and colleagues into more manageable and/or satisfying ones. They can also rely on such conversations to support student behaviour change. Taking greater care with language use, curiosity and repositioning can help manage differences and they can support teachers and students to carry on and return to their usual activities of teaching and learning after a conflict or disagreement. I argue that the specific effects achieved by the three conversational skills that I described confirm their potential to support the production of interactions that facilitate dialogue, allow the expression of difference and enhance the moral engagement of both teachers and students, which I previously claimed to be characteristics of restorative conversations in Chapters 2 and 3. The potential of the skills to remedy momentary

breakdowns, resistances, frustrations, dissatisfaction and stress through restoring the potential of continuing rather than shutting down the relationships of the interaction participants was also demonstrated. Therefore I argue that the intentional use of discourses and constructionist theorising can move speaking from simply being words into social and ethical action. In Chapters 7 and 8 I will present examples of the research participants' concern and distress narratives and I will demonstrate how a form of deconstructive analysis can reveal new understandings of the situations that undermine teaching and learning as well as the well-being of teachers.

CHAPTER 7 Deconstructive reflection: understanding multiple positions and discursive slips

In addition to changing ways of speaking with the help of various conversational moves and processes, I proposed that deconstructive reflection could also support teachers with managing relationship problems and enhancing their satisfaction with their work. Deconstructive reflection has the capacity to provide new perspectives and new understandings for those complexities of identity work that are theorised with the notions of multiple and contradictory positionings (Davies, 1990; Davies & Harré, 1991) and discursive slips (Walkerdine, 2003). In addition to conversations informed by constructionist theorising, I introduced deconstructive reflection as another possible practice of an intentional discourse user to the research participants. There were opportunities in the workshops to practise and to become skilled in a kind of discourse analysis that exposes a person's constitution and the hidden rationalities that shape it (Davies, 2006; Davies et al, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2007). In Chapter 4 I showed several possible applications of such deconstruction that I thought could be adapted for teachers to structure either professional conversations similar to supervision and/or individual reflection about practice, in addition to its use to improve the outcomes of interactions. I taught the teachers a conceptual and analytical framework that included the following steps: identifying the discourses that teachers and their students are positioned in, naming the practices and identities these discourses enable and disable and examining the potential effects of the moral orders they authorise on the teacher-student relationship. This was a simplified version of the FDA process that I used as a method of data analysis (Walkerdine & Arribas-Ayllon, 2009). I asked the teachers to apply at least one or more steps of this framework to examine and discuss with their colleagues those conflict situations, disruptions and resistances that they experienced as stressful and limiting of their work. I hypothesised with Davies (1990; 2006) that after such reflection, it might become possible to accept or reject the positions that undermine productive teaching and learning interactions. It might also become possible to create new discursive positions, from which the teachers

could develop their capacity to negotiate which positionings might be most beneficial. The focus group discussions provided opportunities for such discussions. They were the forums where teachers shared their ongoing concerns and distress narratives of those interactions with students and colleagues, and at times with parents, that invited considerable distress, anger, hurt, pain and frustration. I chose stories that represent the themes most commonly discussed in both research participant schools. The events described in each of the following stories were the source of stress and affected the well-being of not only the teacher protagonists of these stories but also a significant number of other staff. Some stories include the teachers' ongoing concerns about particular students whom they had found challenging to teach. In those instances the teachers were searching to find suitable practices that they thought would meet the needs of those students. On most occasions the focus group discussions fell short of the teachers utilising discourse knowledge or deconstruction in the systematic ways I described in Chapter 4. However, the group discussions facilitated and supported the teachers' telling of their concerns, which on many occasions helped them clarify their positions or arrive at a different understanding of the conflict situations that undermined their well-being.

A preliminary deconstructive reading of the teachers' narratives, which I performed to organise the data, highlighted teachers' and students' multiple and contradictory positionings and discursive slips as possible sources of relationship problems and concerns that the teachers struggled to make sense of or to find solutions for. They could be potentially detrimental for respectful interactions and teachers' satisfaction with their work. The first problem of contradictory positionings related to teachers' own identity work. Several of the stories included in this chapter illustrate that managing and successfully incorporating either two binary or multiple positions into their identity narratives posed problems for teachers. It could become a source of stress especially when teachers did not have an adequate strategy for accommodating and reconciling such contradictory positions. The examples also revealed that the research participant teachers could not move beyond their unsatisfactory relationships and/or the stress, resistances or frustrations that such relationships might create. Rather, they were trapped

in an impasse, where the contradictions seemed impossible to resolve or to overcome. The teachers could only entertain an 'either/or' choice between their available positionings but they were struggling to accommodate both or all. They were unable to achieve the freedom of different action or understanding themselves in a different way that might become available after considering which positions to accept or reject (Davies, 1998).

Another contradictory positioning, or a discursive slip (Walkerdine, 2003), was produced when teachers and students, or teachers and their colleagues, were located in and operated from two different discourses that represented binaries or oppositional values about the same practice or relationship. The participants in those instances did not perceive their positionings as complementary; consequently their possibilities for collaboration were reduced and their interactions were not going smoothly or to their satisfaction. The transcripts that I present capture moments in which it is much harder for these teachers and students to get on with the tasks they are meant to complete together. After each example I will present a possible, deconstructive reading of the concern or distress narratives that the teachers shared with their focus groups, following the FDA process (Walkerdine & Arribas-Ayllon, 2009) that I introduced in Chapter 5. I will show how these readings can provide different understandings which might point towards new possibilities and different action. As the time frame of the research project was not enough for the participant teachers to learn the fluent use of such a complex and reflexive analysis, I produced these deconstructive readings later. However, in those instances, when I was able to facilitate the application of at least a few steps of the deconstructive process on the spot, it was able to help teachers go beyond the stress of their multiple positionings.

Multiple positionings

The following example exposes multiple positioning as a source of stress and as a problem for a teachers' identity project, in addition to making relationships more difficult. I want to show how hard a teacher might have to work and how she also struggles when she is trying to reconcile her different, contradictory positionings into a coherent identity narrative. The emotional

consequences of her struggle, her anger, stress, frustration and hurt, are also felt.

7.1 Contradictory positions as a source of stress or a space for agency

Diana brought a story of her distress to a focus group discussion with Dora and Lynn. She felt that she had been unfairly treated by a parent, for whom she had made considerable allowances in the past. She also believed that she had built up a relationship with this parent so her complaint about Diana to the principal was unexpected and very upsetting. Lynn sympathised with Diana, as her similar conflict situation with another parent produced considerable stress for her.

Diana: Yeah. I sort of felt that because of the whole situation with her son, I have had to build up quite a relationship with her. I sort of felt what was going through her head? What have I done so wrong that the very next day after she had spoken to me, and I sort of said no, that's fine, it needs sorting out, it's a soiling situation, I just felt, you know, what on earth was that all about, ringing the principal and saying the teacher had a go at her when she brought him to school late? (And now I find it is making me feel, whenever I see her, "you bloody bitch".) I think what's the point of even trying to talk to her anymore? And I'm just feeling angry for myself. ... Yeah, because I feel too scared, too. I told the principal about it and was told not to blow it up, and I thought, no, blow it, I am going to ring the family and ask them what was it all about. Because she had spoken to me the day before and I brought my student teacher as a witness to what I had said. It was quite clear I said you have my support as long as we are informed why he is late and then I sort of felt a bit betrayed. I thought well, here is me, I have listened to her marital problems, her husband's breakdown, and we had built up this relationship that is not one, where I am just in a position of power because I am a teacher. ... I know that I didn't do anything wrong, but I just thought what was it behind it all. I mean, I know that she has a lot of issues in life. She has a terrible marriage, her husband calls her son a retard, I mean how much chance has the poor child got? But on the one hand, she doesn't want our advice and then the next thing she wants you to be the mother. It's like what does she want us to be? And I thought no, I am just a teacher now. I am not going to worry about anything else, I am just a teacher. You can't get away from her, I sort of try and maintain a professional distance but she comes in and says: "Oh, my husband had a breakdown over the holidays" and you have to listen. And you know how much it affects the whole family, so you give them sympathy, but how far do you go?

Maria: I am thinking of what Lynn said, that maybe it's not worth getting into these kinds of conversations. I think it complicates the situation, doesn't it? You will have a more complex relationship with this parent. When you only have the teacher-parent relationship and you kind of have an agreement what belongs to that relationship ... maybe intimate details and personal life don't belong to the teacher-parent relationship. When you are listening, maybe she assumes that now this has gone into a different kind of relationship. It's almost like a friendly relationship or counsellor-client type relationship, so it becomes hard to manage when there are different aspects of it. You have to be very clear which one you are having at what time.

Lynn: *I had a traumatic experience where the parent abused me and it felt that because I have seen her on a fairly regular basis and I have tried to be supportive. The fact that I had built up a rapport with her and tried to do everything I could to help her son, who was having behavioural issues.*

Diana: *You feel betrayed.*

Lynn: *Yes. You've gone the extra mile to help her and her child, even suggesting things that she could do to help the relationship at home. Then you know it just makes the whole situation worse.*

Diana: *But the thing about being a teacher; we're not just teachers...You have to be mother and teacher.*

Dora: *Well, I'm in a position with a child that I make lunch for him every morning. Every morning his lunch is made for him. It's just one of those things, it's like knowing a lot about this child. You've got to create a relationship. So it's just a mothering role, but I'm able, if necessary, to put the teacher role in there as well. And I suppose, to use your words, I can reposition myself and where I'm coming from, so the child does understand the difference when the mother is coming out of me or the teacher is coming out of me. And I think he accepts it just the way it is.*

Maria: *Do you think it is because you are clear about your positions and when you take up one and when you take up the other?*

Dora: *He knows that most of the mothering is done out of hours basically or at other times it's after school or at lunchtime.*

Diana is struggling to comfortably move and shift between the multiple positions of teacher, mother, friend, counsellor and advisor that she takes up in her relationship with a particular parent. Though at times she willingly takes up all these positions, at other times she is called into them by the parent in the example. Even when the tasks that go with the different positions become difficult or stressful to manage, she does not refuse the parent's position calls. One explanation for this might be that acting as mother, friend, counsellor and advisor to the parent confirms her as a committed teacher. Another explanation could be that she is not clear about where the boundaries lie between her different positions. Diana's multiple positioning becomes a problem for her when the parent does not respond appreciatively to her hard work of balancing several positions and ways of interacting. She is stressed, angry and hurt by the parent's complaint and she is struggling to establish satisfactory coherence between her different positionings. She is only able to arrive at accommodating her positions of both teacher and mother after an emotionally charged, long monologue in her focus group, which is not the first time she has told her story.

The problems with Diana's multiple positioning illustrate a specific effect of multiplicity, namely what Walkerdine (2003) describes as the ambiguity of categories. When Diana performs tasks that traditionally do not

belong to teachers, such as listening to the parents' personal problems, she at once both expands and blurs the meaning of the category of teacher. In other words the position of teacher becomes ambiguous and destabilised. This ambiguity of the position can bring about confusion and it can pose problems for a person's validation in a preferred identity position by both others and herself. The parent in the example might not always respond appreciatively to Diana because she might measure her according to changing and unstable criteria. When Diana believes she acts as a good teacher and she gives advice to the parent about how to study with her child at home for instance, the parent might expect her to sympathise with her parental difficulties, more like a counsellor. Diana herself might find it more difficult to validate herself as a proper subject because she might be unclear about where and how to demarcate the confines of each of her positionings. I would say that Diana thus becomes vulnerable to others setting the directions of her subjectification rather than she deciding them herself. Diana is forced to shift between positions in discourses of teaching, counselling, consultation and friendship, which confuses her sense of herself and muddles her clarity about the timing of accepting or rejecting those positions. Diana's uncertainty also enables a parent subject who believes she has a licence to demand whatever she wants from the teacher. She also believes that she has the right to rush to complain to the principal, the person on the top of the hierarchy. The parent behaves like a customer and she treats the services she receives from Diana as if they were consumer goods. It is interesting to note that the more Diana goes out of her way and the more she does for the parent, the more vulnerable her subjectification seems to become to the other. Diana internalises the problems with multiple positionings, a relational rather than an individual concern, and searches her self for solutions, feeling inadequate and stressed along the way, instead of turning her attention to the discourses and trying to unsettle those.

Dora, on the other hand, shows how the contradictions of multiple positionings could be used as a space for one's agency. She can clearly identify and name her different positions, so she is able to decide which position to take up and which one to reject. The same clarity is only achieved by Diana by the end of her telling, after a long period of being stressed. Dora overcomes the potential contradictions of her multiple roles because she is

aware of them and she has worked out a suitable way for her to shift between different positions, while Diana is developing a similar awareness during the act of telling about her concerns. . Dora is more in control of her own identity rather than giving up this control to others. She moves beyond the 'either/or' contradictory positionings and she is able to take up both positions. She can integrate them relatively smoothly into her identity narrative, because she utilises the notion of positioning as a conceptual tool to make sense of her different interactions. I have to add that Dora also interacts with a child rather than adults, so her relative position of power in relation to her student might make it easier for her to act agentively.

Discursive slips

Students and teachers move in different discourses of schooling

The following two stories expose some possible consequences that are set into motion in the kind of interactions, where discursive slips or ambiguities make it difficult for teachers and students to find complementary positions in the process of taking up their identity. The resulting mismatches of their practice preferences also sabotage their capacity to produce and reproduce satisfying relationships with each other.

7.2 Internal and external control

At the time of this research, James and Helen taught the same group of 12 year old students. In their focus group they often talked about the stresses caused by the disruptive behaviours particular boys displayed regularly in their classroom. The following segment is from a discussion where they tried to find strategies for reducing the effects of the boys' disruptions for the class. They also hoped that if they were able to find an explanation for the boys' inability to sit and listen well, they would be able to come up with practical solutions to their problems. I want to expose here the work of the different discourses the students and their teachers are operating from and the consequences of those discourses for both the accomplishment of their learning tasks and for teachers' and the students' possible identities .

Helen: But don't you think that kids of today aren't, well I'm finding anyway, dare I say it, boys aren't good listeners or they're not effective listeners?

James: Boys aren't as concerned with education

Helen: *Because society has changed and they've got all these games and kids can't sit and watch one programme. They've got to flick through twenty and you know, everyone has got Sky... they can't concentrate too long and society has sort of created it...*

James: *You take that threat of, I mean I can't identify with it, because I never got the strap, but you take the physical threat of getting a boot up the arse away from a male and it's free reign time. You can do what you want and that's probably why people could sit still in school in your day... But I wonder, it's not nice to think about it, but I wonder sometimes, some of my boys ... you know, they could be getting kicked up the arse at home, they could be getting slapped around quite severely. As a teacher, I don't know this, but you take that threat of getting slapped around ... here it is obviously a way, maybe it is a conditioning that these kids have, that they respond to that, because that is all that they get at home ... they get a clip around the ears...*

Helen: *Because that's all they know maybe, and they come here and it's like it feels loose for them, because they're not getting a slap so they go...*

James: *..They get away with it...*

Maria: *Compliance is achieved through physical threat or use of physical violence ...*

Helen: *It's almost like in our environment you need to take some responsibility for your self control and in their environments someone else is controlling them...*

Maria: *So it's external control when you are expecting internal control?*

Helen: *...which is a big ask if you're only used to external, so it's going to take a long time...*

James: *And that's why they function so well in education outside of the classroom.*

On first reading, the two teachers and their students seem to be positioned in two contradictory discourses of producing acceptable behaviours. The teachers and the school are in support of interactions and operate from a discourse that privileges internal control and voluntarily submitting to the practices of the classroom, in other words, they expect students to have the capacity for ethical agency. This way of interacting is believed by James to be unfamiliar to the students. He believes the students are positioned in a discourse, where compliance with interactional rules is achieved through external control and/or the threat of or actual physical punishment. Neither the teachers, nor the students perceive each others' positions as complementary, so their interactions are not going smoothly. A possible explanation for this might be that because the students are located in

the discourse of external control, they might expect a teacher subject who is able to assert his/her authority more firmly than what Helen and James are willing or are capable of delivering. The teachers, on the other hand, operating from the internal discipline discourse, expect a student subject who collaborates and responds to verbal rather than physical reasoning. The teachers believe they do not have the means of achieving compliance and collaboration from the students, as the absence of physical threats enables the students to have 'free reign'. Helen also incorporates changed social practices and too much television into her explanation for the students' difficulties with listening. On further deconstructive reading, it is possible to see the constitutive effects of some additional discourses that shape the teacher-student identities and relationships in this situation. These additional discourses act as hidden rationalities here and they amplify the contradictions of the teachers' and students' original positionings. I would identify these otherwise hidden or taken for granted rationalities as the educational discourse of tolerating differences, the humanist discourse of valuing the uniqueness of individuals and the gender discourse of learning that claims that boys learn differently. I suggest that the discourse of tolerance might work to weaken these teachers' determination to teach internal control to the boys and it supports an acceptance of the students as they are. It positions Helen and James as teachers who seem to accept the status quo, that the boys function better outside the classroom and that it will take a long time to change their relationship to internal control. Similarly, gendered explanations of learning attribute different capacities to boys and they usually render boys to the category of practical rather than theoretical learners. The hidden work of these discourses, with support from the discourse of respecting unique individuals, positions Helen and James as teachers, who do not seem to have a clear and firm stance in regards to whether they consider internal control a necessary and valuable skill for the boys.

The teachers describe in detail the differences between the students' and their own value systems in relation to control. However, they stop short of moving past or resolving those differences. Rather, they seem to accept that they are helpless and powerless to open access for the boys to positions in the discourse of internal control as they are unable to name a strategy to do so.

The teachers get as far as naming the different discourses the students and they operate from but they stop short of taking a moral stand in relation to them and of making a decision about which discourse they want to support or reject. The unexamined constitutive forces of discourses function in a limiting fashion: they undermine the two teachers' agency and confidence to deliberately and purposefully intervene in the work of the external control discourse and to try to reduce its effects. This, in turn, might also limit the boys' opportunities as the teachers might not insist on activities that require the boys to sit and listen. The boys are validated by their teachers in the position of practical learners, making their access to positions of theoretical learning compromised. Helen and James inadvertently collude in the reproduction of the very discourses that produce their concern for their students, their frustration and their unsatisfactory relationship with the boys: gendered explanation for learning and external control. As a result, students and teachers who are positioned in different discourses to start with, are pushed further away from one another and continue to operate from different discourses. The teachers place their students in the discourse of external control but not both discourses. The meaning of the category of external control is also narrowed here to controlling someone else through physical violence, while its other possible meanings - adults guiding and coordinating the activities of children in the interests of teaching them new skills - is lost. Helen and James have to position themselves outside the discourse of physical force, but this erodes their authority to claim greater significance for the discourse of internal control. They are unable to step into a position of authority about their own preferences because stating them with more certainty would show them up as aligned with the discourse of external control, from which they must separate themselves. Paradoxically, taking up a position of authority, or a non-physical form of external control, could be useful for these teachers to teach internal control to their students. The 'either/or' positioning, of both themselves and their students, limits the range of interactions the teachers and students can participate in. It also calls into existence teacher subjects, whose authority is undermined and student subjects, who cannot respond to these teachers because they are used to other ways of interacting.

A discursive understanding of the teachers' and students' multiple positionings could provide an opening into a different conversation and interaction between the students and teachers. Helen and James could invite their students to discuss and evaluate the usefulness of both external and internal control, along with how they affect the students' lives and their relationships with Helen and James. The teachers might not shy away from the kind of external control that does not operate based on violence but which is necessary in the teacher-learner interaction: the teacher having authority about their own practices. Helen and James do not use discourses in this example for their own purposes and to improve their relationship with their students. They get as far as naming them but, on this occasion, they do not evaluate their effects and decide how they could serve their interactions better.

7.3 Theoretical and practical learning

The following story also reveals how the mismatches of teacher and student positionings can prevent successful and satisfying teaching and learning interactions. The topic of how difficult it is to teach students who have several useful skills but lack the skills of sitting and listening to explanations or a willingness to stay with so called non-practical tasks, such as writing, was brought up by a number of teachers. All those teachers recounted their hard work and ongoing efforts in trying to teach these students. They also talked about how difficult it was for them to achieve a collaborative response from such students, and how their interactions were characterised by constant disruptions and interruptions. The following conversation starts with discussing some boys.

Jack: ...I don't think they feel or think that this is a place that they belong. This is their school and they had better come here and that is a good thing because it is easy for children to be alienated, you know, from school and from learning ... Like I said, they're not vindictively bad kids, they just, you know, have a few issues outside of class, maybe, and come from a different set of constructs, I suppose, than most other kids. I look at them now and yeah, they're a lot better than they were. It's just the frustrating thing as a teacher ... it is so exhausting...it's so exhausting...If you take those kids on a trip or when we took them on camp ... they got their gear and they don't worry if they miss a shower and they don't mind. And they're out there doing stuff like, you know, we had no issues at all with them on camp. And the other kids that are normally good, are freaking out because they forgot this and they can't have a shower that night and where are

they going to sleep. They've got that survival skill and they never mind. They're just glad to be out there doing stuff, having fun, but you know, back in the classroom situation it really is different. But we discussed that, eh, we said we haven't heard once from those kids. Give them a job, they're out there getting the firewood, getting the food out from your car because that's what they're used to and what they want to do. They want to help you and it's easy for us to forget sometimes, like I do it all the time. They bug me at times in the classroom and you know they just hate me, but they're totally different when you take them on a trip and they don't worry ... they're there and they're helping you. They're so excited you know ... it's just different...

Stephanie: That's why I worry about the education system...

Jack: They seem to function better in an unmanaged, chaotic environment ... it's almost...

Stephanie: Like you know, you think they forget these...

Jack: Yeah, eighteen out of twenty-four hours are like that...

Maria: But do you find that you will teach new skills to them in the end, that you will teach some of those unfamiliar things?

Jack: Well, it takes time, a long, long time...

Maria: But I'm wondering what is the way in. ... So what is your way in, what is it that they listen to, what is it that makes it easier to teach those unfamiliar things?

Jack: Well, I think that I'm at an advantage because I know some of their parents. They were at school on my way out of school. I know most of their grandparents, some of their mums and dads and the backgrounds that they come from and I'm out in the community a lot, as we all are. And I think that little bit of familiarity that they might see with me, that is my way in...

Stephanie: You're a young role model for them, too...

Jack: I mean you know that is my opening, I suppose, you could say and even with all of that it is still a hard job ... I was just thinking, in PE, for example, while we're all sitting in our classes waiting to start, they will sit there and listen to you. They do. Whereas in a classroom it seems harder for you to shut them down and I think that is maybe about, I don't know, the strategies in the classroom ... they want to hear what you have to say in PE, because they want to get out there and play.

Stephanie: Well, I mean, that group of boys don't like classroom schoolwork basically, they don't like sitting still in a chair doing their work. It just doesn't happen and you've all seen it, it just does not work...

Jack: You've got to get them out and get them to do something and get them to come back and then spend the last part trying to do stuff ... you do feel like five out of

eight days are nightmares but you'll have two or three that are just perfect. They're awesome, you feel good as a teacher ... You feel like you actually got through to them, they've learnt something and then next week out the window again, totally opposite and you know it's exhausting ... takes a lot of energy...

This story also exposes the potentially harmful work of two contradictory discourses, when teachers cannot intervene with their constitutive force. The discourses of learning as theory and learning as practice are revealed as starting a chain of consequences for both teachers' and students' identity work. Jack implies, similarly to James in the previous story, that the students and the teachers in his school value different things about education. In the students' discourse of learning, practical skills that produce immediate and tangible results, such as organising food and setting up a camp, are appreciated. The efforts and longer term persistence that might be required for learning essay writing, for instance, are not valued as much. The teachers, Jack and Stephanie, are also shown as caught in the narrow space between the 'either/or' of theory and practice as they are only able to offer positions for their students in either the discourse of practice or theory but not both. I would like to note here that such categorisation of students and the separation of practice and theory commonly feature in teachers' conversations in staffrooms and professional development meetings. We do not know to what extent Jack and Stephanie might value theoretical learning. We only see that they do not put up a strong argument for its potential values and benefits for the boys but they are sufficiently concerned about the boys' exclusive attraction to certain tasks. I would say that Jack aligns himself more with the discourse of learning as practice when he gets the students out of the classroom and then brings them back to do something that requires sitting and listening. Choosing to position himself in the discourse of practical learning is understandable and can be explained by the productive force of some additional discourses possibly operating in this situation. Constituting himself as a teacher who cares for and goes out of his way to cater for the needs of less academic students, positions him in the discourse of inclusion, where he can claim the position of teacher who is committed to all of his students and thus supports the value of equity. Failing to argue for the importance of theory also aligns him with the discourse that

values practice over theory and that distinguishes teachers from academics, who are distant from the real world. Though Jack and Stephanie are aware that the boys' exclusive preference for practical activities is a problem for classroom work and they most likely do not agree with the students about what constitutes useful, enjoyable and legitimate activities in school, nevertheless they are unable to reconcile the contradictions of theory and practice. Doing classroom work remains a chore and cooperation from students there is hard won.

The teachers' struggle to overcome the contradictions of practice and theory limits the teachers' and students' movements between different positions. The students are given less time to access the positions where they can practise more theoretical skills, as Jack takes them out before classroom work. If the two teachers could theorise their conflicts as a consequence of their locations in different discourses about learning and the primacy of practice over theory, they might be able to conduct different conversations that explore the usefulness of both theoretical and practical activities in their students' lives. The 'either/or' pattern of choosing subject positions makes theory and practice irreconcilable in Stephanie's and Jack's interactions with their students. Neither the students nor the teachers are able to take up positions in both discourses and shift comfortably between the two. Classroom-based activities remain difficult for these teachers and students. The students will most likely continue to resist learning that requires sitting and listening.

I believe it is not too farfetched to ponder some additional consequences that the unresolved contradiction of theory and practice could potentially set in motion. It enables student subjects who do not aspire to learn anything other than what they perceive as useful and practical. This, I would argue, limits their capacity to do academic work. The theory and practice divide also enables teacher subjects who are likely to undervalue their theoretical knowledge and skills. It could support the kind of teacher subjects who use their practice preference as a marker of their superiority over academics, who are distanced from the real world. If the above and similar students cannot be convinced to value academic work, their chances of higher education might be seriously compromised. The 'either/or' choice

of contradictory positionings is again shown as limiting the teachers' agency to set direction in their practice. The teachers are unable to defend theory yet they continue to struggle to incorporate it into their teaching and to make it a greater part of the students' activities. They do not notice, that by providing more practice, taking the students out before asking them to sit and listen, they also reproduce the very problem that makes their work so exhausting. They are also unable to identify some additional social consequences of the 'either/or' positionings. Privileging practice can be a serious problem for intellectual work - as its value is undermined - but more importantly for the social mobility through tertiary qualifications of practically-oriented students. The previous two stories both demonstrate that the practice of singular positioning, in either one of two contradictory discourses, can lead to an impasse and it can limit practice and relationship change. Accepting, offering and taking up both the contradictory positions might provide the opening for moving past the unsatisfactory relationships produced by teachers' and students' contradictory positionings. Finding ways of taking up both positions could create new discourses and new positions.

Teachers and their colleagues move in different discourses of teaching

The next two examples illustrate the various consequences of teachers' positionings in different discourses of professionalism, when the effects of those positionings remain unexplored. I want to specifically expose how unexamined discourses can limit both students' learning opportunities as well as teachers' collaboration with each other. The second example also highlights the potential harmful effects of multiple positionings for a teacher's satisfactory identity work.

7.4 New skills and familiar or unfamiliar teacher

James, Sarah and Katie are talking about introducing peace making circles into their classes. Katie thinks it would be a good idea if I (Maria) modelled it for them as part of the restorative professional development programme.

Katie: It sounds great. I would really like someone to come in my class and show me because I'm a real visual person and I learn better ... I could do that. I don't know it's just me. It's easier for me to watch someone in practice. It's the same with

anything we do. If people start drawing pictures on the whiteboard ... it just works way better for me and I would really like someone to come and demonstrate.

Sarah: Do it in a group, as a syndicate and the rest would be observers or something...

James: Well, I could imagine something like this happening really well, if I could take four or five students out of my class. I mean I could honestly sit here and say that those four or five students that can't keep their teeth together would jeopardize an activity like this before it even started...

Sarah: They're the kids that need it...

James: They are the kids that need it but how do you actually facilitate getting them into a position where they can take part in something like this, you know?

Well, that's the thing. How do we as teachers provide that preparation for them?

Katie: That's a good idea, but how does it happen?

Maria: I'm just thinking about ... I wonder if it might be a better use of our time next time if I came in and did it...

Katie: That would be cool.

Sarah: That would be fantastic. Shall we try it with one class?

Katie: Well, then you'd know where we are coming from, too ... I just think of your English class, James, you've got those verbal ones, haven't you?

James: Yes, I do. I've got all of them, or some of them.

Sarah: Well, you've got most of them. The ones that can't sit still and can't concentrate, so maybe you could use that in your room.

James: No, probably not a good idea. It's hard to say ... it'll either work or it will be a total shambles.

Maria: Maybe because it's a new skill for them it probably won't work as we expect it on the first occasion, but they will learn it over time....

James: Yeah, it's not that it's not achievable, it's just that it would take a lot of time....

Katie: Who are you worried about if Maria tried it? The kids or Maria?

James: Um ... I don't think I'd have to be worried about individuals or you know anyone playing up, but they probably just would not listen to you. They'd talk about rugby, what they played on the weekend or what happened on the way to school and what they've got for lunch and for you to actually say, right guys, let's focus here ... Sometimes it's unattainable or even to get started... especially being young males and you being a ...

Maria: A woman from a different culture?

James: A female who they don't identify with. It could be very difficult...

The three teachers in the above example are positioned in different discourses regarding the methods of introducing new skills to their students. The two women teachers, Sarah and Katie introduce the discourse of professional collaboration and they want to work together as a syndicate, albeit they choose James' class as the best site for introducing a new practice. James rejects their invitation to use his class for trialling a new practice and he introduces two new discourses, the discourses of cultural and gender differences, as explanations for his refusal to agree with his colleagues. Sarah's and Katie's practice decisions about how to utilise the professional development are informed by the skills they perceive as important for the students. Sarah is the senior teacher in this trio, the leader of the three classes that the school has of same aged students. James claims that the young boys he teaches would not respond well to a woman and especially to a woman from a different culture.

This excerpt does not allow us to become fully aware of the politics of the three teachers' relationships with each other. It would only be an assumption to claim that James might find Sarah's and Katie's decision imposing or that Sarah might find James' disregard for her suggestion non-compliance with her leadership. Whatever the dynamics of the three teachers' relationships, there are actual, tangible social and practice consequences of their inability to go beyond the contradictions of their different ideas. These consequences include all teachers missing out on observing and learning a new practice, James' students missing out on being exposed to a new way of interacting and the three teachers missing a collaboration opportunity for their team. I am not proposing that every new practice is useful and should be taken on. Neither do I want to debate whether it is desirable or not for students to be taught by persons from their own cultures or gender. Rather I wish to highlight how the different views and discourses of learning can stop a conversation and they can distance the participants when they do not have an adequate strategy to deal with their differences.

This is only a possible reading, but the way the three teachers' interaction plays out could also be explained by the hidden productive influence of the discourses of gender and respect for cultural differences,

which I believe also shape this interaction. James is the only male in his team and he belongs to a different ethnic group from his colleagues. His refusal to consider what his colleagues suggest might be enabled by the discourse of patriarchy, which simultaneously works to increase his confidence but undermines the women teachers' confidence to take up a position of authority in relation to their professional decisions. The women teachers' authority might further be undermined by the support that the discourse of respecting cultural differences provides for the discourse of patriarchy. While James' agency receives further support from this discourse, his more experienced colleagues seem unable to continue to argue for the usefulness of circle time skills for James' male students. So the discourses that dominate in defining this interaction are the discourses of patriarchy and cautious respect for cultural differences rather than the discourse of professional decision-making based on careful consideration and negotiation about what the students need. It could be argued that James is the only winner of this interaction as he is the only one who exercises agency in setting the direction of what happens next.

The hidden and unexposed work of the different discourses and the three teachers operating from different discourses of learning produce a leader, Sarah, who cannot assert her leadership, professional expertise and experience. This same discursive force also produces an employee and a colleague, James, who is free to make his own decisions without consultation and consideration for his team. I am not saying that leaders are always right or that James, in spite of his young age, cannot be right. It is the absence of negotiation and the abrupt shut down of a professional discussion that I want to emphasise. I also want to draw attention to how, in the complex interweaving of different discourses, it is the discourse of gender that is able to dominate as a constitutive force for the three teachers' identities, producing female teachers whose claim to their expertise is eroded, while at the same time producing a young male teacher whose confidence is significantly pumped up.

If the teachers used deconstructive reflection and identified the discourses that constitute them, they could have a further conversation about what benefits each one of those discourses and practices might have for the

students. It would be possible to talk about why each teacher thinks it might be useful, or not, for tough male students to experience an unknown female teacher from a different culture and how it might serve the students in different situations if they had the skills of participating in circle time. So the teachers could ponder and evaluate together the constitutive effects of their different ideas for their students' lives. In other words they could engage together in clarifying and articulating their moral positions, which in turn would help the development of the ethics of their practices. After such a reflective conversation, they might make a different decision about how to introduce an unfamiliar interaction to the students but they also might change their ways of operation as a team. They could rise over their differences and move beyond the limitations the unexamined discourses produce for their practices, collaboration and their students' learning opportunities. In the absence of deconstruction or applying their knowledge of discourse to make sense of the situation differently, the teachers miss out on building stronger connections within their team and the students miss out on building connections with and experiencing an interaction with someone who is different. I believe privileging familiarity is not always helpful in a learning environment as it could discourage engagement with the unknown or new knowledge. I have heard students say in many class meetings that they are only willing to collaborate with teachers whom they know and like but they refuse to show 'unconditional kindness' to relievers or new teachers.

7.5 Professionalism and self care

Hannah talked about what she perceived as an injustice to her. On one occasion, when she became very stressed as a result of her different roles in the school, she complained to her senior teacher. The senior colleague thought an experienced teacher like Hannah should be able to manage any challenges that her job presents. This example is not enough to prove that it is the person in the lesser power position, who is more likely to experience greater stress, when teachers and their senior colleagues are positioned in different discourses. However, it demonstrates how multiple and contradictory positionings can undermine a person's well-being by producing actual, physiological consequences of stress, anger and hurt in her body. Hanna also cried a lot while she talked about her disagreement with

her colleague. Her retelling illustrates and provides another example of the potential problems with multiple positionings both for relationships and for a person's own identity project as well.

Hannah: Yes, I am stressed because I have to be in three places today. I'm in the class for half of the day, sharing the class with another teacher and all of a sudden we've got five new children with high, high behavioural needs and the balance has tipped. It was so hard to manage. And on Tuesday at lunchtime, I've never had this in my whole teaching career, I was so, so angry. Just angry because I was trying to manage the whole lot and some colleagues even said I will take your class. And I said no, and the principal came down to talk about it but you can't talk about it like that. I was trying to have my lunch and I was trying to supervise three children. There were three children I ended up sending to the withdrawal room, and I think that's part of what made me angry. So I was trying to get the notices to go home in my lunch hour, plus supervise the kids inside, and my senior teacher came down to talk and the teacher came back in, the other teacher, and there's this conversation between the three of us and I'm trying to do my written work. Plus supervise the kids for lunch and have my own lunch. I was getting so cross. Well, I decided I wasn't going to talk back. I was not going to discuss the situation, I was basically trying to catch my breath and trying to go to the toilet. So I just said excuse me, and walked out and came up here to have my lunch. And I said to my colleague "I'm not happy" and she said "you know, you've got release time tomorrow, so come and talk to me". I said "no, I'm busy tomorrow, I've got my time committed and I needed a day to think about it". In the afternoon when I got home, I thought about it, and I thought I'm managing three lots of children, I'm doing release time for other teachers and you know the children, when their teacher is out of the classroom, are a bit more challenging and so I'm having to work with that, plus with my reading group children, and I'm trying to work behind the screen (Hannah is part of a professional development programme of changing teacher practices and this requires her to be watched by colleagues and her work taped for discussion) ... and I'm struggling with a particular child, instead of twenty minutes I'm giving him forty minutes trying to push it really hard, and it's not my fault that he's not making accelerated progress. There's many dimensions why he's finding reading difficult.

So, this is the second part of my morning, and I go into this class where there are thirteen high behaviour need children. And how do you reach that many children and give them all a bit of an affirmation? There's one kid there who just swears at the teacher and his mother's been called in and it's so hard. It's so hard on the other children and it's so hard on the teacher. So things were getting pretty hard for me. The next day I went and asked the senior teacher "Look, can I talk to you? I'm feeling quite stressed about my job". I asked a colleague to support me in the meeting and I decided to have it after school and I wrote down what my day is like. The meeting went on for an hour and a half, and while the senior teacher listened, there were other things that came into the picture. There were other issues that were raised that perhaps shouldn't have been raised but never mind, but really what she said was that I should take stress leave the following day, and the senior colleague said could she think about it in the weekend. And I thought that was fine, but I realised I was actually quite physically unwell. I had an awful cold. I decided to go to bed early and I wasn't really feeling well so I went to the doctor and he said I've got bronchitis and I was put on antibiotics. The colleague rang me and I thanked her for ringing because I had sort of the impression that she really cared. I was actually not well enough to come back to school on the Monday or the Tuesday

so I rang my doctor and said "Look, I'm not actually feeling really well" so I did have the Tuesday off. On Wednesday I came back to school and I did have the release day. The senior teacher came to me and said that she didn't find the conversation between us easy, because other issues were raised, and because I was an experienced teacher I should be able to manage the children, no matter how difficult they were and how many of them there were. I should be able to manage and that I would have to take a difficult class for the rest of the year. But I would get release time every Wednesday, something that I should have had all year.

The situation has improved because I'm getting every Wednesday off. The thing is, I can understand from a senior manager's point of view, who is managing the relieving budget, but I know that if you are determined to support your colleagues you can take money from another budget and juggle things around.

Maria: So am I getting it right that you weren't quite satisfied with how the situation was dealt with?

Hannah: Like I have never told in my thirty years of teaching that I am stressed because of the job. We have highs and lows in our profession and we have stressful times and other things.

Maria: So it sounds like you were not believed when things were getting too much. When teachers are getting stressed, do some colleagues think it's their fault?

Hannah: Hmmm. And I'm not the only one. I went to the health and safety person and I know when somebody is stressed, it has to be recorded. And I said "I'm stressed because of the job and the workload and I want it recorded." When I talked about it with my husband he said "Well, have I looked at all the possibilities? Is it me?" But I am the one who is in it, I know the way things are organised and I felt it. I know that I wasn't physically well.

Maria: So do you think we have to consider is it what we are asking of teachers that is too much?

Hannah: I know.

After stating the reasons for her stress and how inadequately she has been responded to by senior colleague, Hannah goes on to talk about a conference she went to and how her perception of herself changed after coming back from the conference.

Hannah: I came back and I knew I was a good teacher. I knew I was teaching kids who were difficult to manage. I am an individual and sometimes I am going to have difficulties in my job. I'm going to have difficulties in my job and I need support. I talked to a few other colleagues about release time and I thought "Am I being realistic?"

Maria: But also when you are acknowledging that you are struggling, why does that have to mean that you are not a good teacher? So when I'm hearing the story, I'm sensing that you lost touch with the idea that you are a competent teacher and you were having self doubt.

Hannah: Yes.

Hannah and her senior teacher are located in two different discourses of what it means to be a professional and how care for self and others might be practised. Hannah's senior teacher expects a professional to be mentally and physically tough and to be able to manage whatever difficulties the job

brings, even at a time when she is physically unwell. She does not question whether her expectations, or any expectations towards a colleague, are reasonable and possible to meet. The senior teacher internalises her colleague's inability to meet all the demands of her work as Hannah's fault rather than the impossibility of the job. Relaxing the demands of professionalism and taking up a position of self care and/or care for a colleague has no place in this discourse. Hannah, on the other hand, does not see the two positions of managing any difficulties and taking time to care for herself when things get too much, as totally irreconcilable. She believes there should be a legitimate space for self care within the discourse of professionalism. However, neither Hannah nor her colleague has such a strategy for managing different and contradictory discourses that would support both of them to navigate their differences without both or one person being emotionally bruised. They employ a strategy that is commonly used in similar situations, which involves the person in a position of power - in this case the senior teacher - asserting her view as dominant, and the person in a less powerful position - in this case Hannah - struggling and/or unable to stop the free reign and defining force of the dominant discourse. This struggle produces significant bodily responses for Hannah and taking up her identity as a proper and competent teacher becomes unsettled and compromised. She doubts her competency and even her husband tries to seek solutions to her problems in her, rather than in the conditions of her job and the institutional structures of her workplace. Hannah only validates herself as a competent teacher later, after returning from a conference.

The senior teacher's discourse of professionalism produces a manager, who has no sympathy for her colleague's tiredness and stress. It also enables the development of a workplace culture, which demands an almost robotic, always healthy and energetic employee, who can overcome any challenges on her own. In such a workplace there is no need to care for colleagues and requesting it can be seen as unprofessional and/or a sign of incompetence. The same discourse of professionalism produces an uncertain teacher subject, Hannah, who struggles with self doubt and needs extra support to believe that she is competent. Her agency to claim and reject positions is undermined. The discourse of professionalism that the senior

teacher is operating from dehumanises the relationship between her and Hannah. Though Hannah turns to her first, in the absence of a satisfying response, she also feels the need to turn to several others to share her feelings.

If Hannah and her senior colleague were skilled in deconstructive reflection, they might be able to have a different interaction, one in which they could both name the discourses of professionalism they prefer to position themselves in. They could then examine together the possibilities and limitations each of those discourses create for the culture of their workplace and the kind of relationships they allow them to have with each other. They could choose to align themselves with, and to position themselves in, the discourse that most supports what they each value about their respective roles and the culture of their workplace. They could contemplate how it would be possible to accommodate both professional efficiency and self care in the preferred practices of their school and the identity narrative of a competent teacher.

Deconstructive reflection

The following examples show the use of deconstruction on the spot as a way of managing contradictory discursive positionings and going beyond the 'either/or' irreconcilability of binaries. The first example demonstrates how facilitated deconstruction, inviting a teacher to evaluate the effects of his different positionings, can support this teacher with successfully integrating two seemingly irreconcilable positions into his identity narrative, reducing at the same time his stress level. The second example illustrates how a community of practice, a team of teachers, could accommodate its members when they are operating from different discourses as well as how the members of the group could manage their differences without the emotional costs of silencing one or several members.

7.6 Reconciling contradictory positions and supporting individual well-being

At the beginning of the following conversation between Leslie, Greg, David, Mike and I, Leslie could only see his pastoral care and subject teaching roles as 'either/or', irreconcilable positions in two different discourses about

the purpose of teaching and the roles of teachers. He was unable to successfully move beyond and incorporate his contradictory positionings into his identity narrative. This worried Leslie greatly and he experienced considerable self doubt. He even thought he failed as a teacher with some of his students. Deconstructive questioning helped him move beyond this contradiction. This conversation with Leslie can also be seen as representative of several other conversations where teachers struggled to reconcile multiple identity positions in order to produce a satisfactory identity narrative for themselves. Those teachers also talked about not coping and 'cracking' under the pressures of the many tasks that they had to perform.

Leslie: Out of my two major roles, one is a pastoral role and I'd like to learn how to build up my relationships to the students. Last year two students decided to go to different schools and they did so without coming to me to discuss. I felt it was a failure on my part. I could have got in earlier and maybe build a relationship and help ease the problem and help those young ladies to make a good decision for themselves. And my other position is a science teacher. At the moment I am still working to move personality from the lessons. I am there to teach science and the students are there to learn science. And this seems to be serving them well. So the focus I would like is to build up a rapport with the students so they would feel comfortable to come and discuss with me matters in a pastoral role. ... (I don't want to be removed for focus group discussions on a sports day. The school day has certain times for lessons so that opportunity for reflection should exist outside of that time.) ... When the students come in, all our relationship is directed to not their relationship between me and them but their relationship with their scientific knowledge. We are not there to deal with behaviour issues. If something does happen we have to remind them why they are here and what they are here to do. What do you think of that? Am I naïve? That's the way I can actually succeed as an effective teacher.

Maria: If I am allowed to link it back to the ideas that we were talking about before, I am noticing a discourse about what your job is as a science teacher. You said we are there to teach science so I am looking for what the idea is behind this. The underlying idea that is not said in this practice and that is producing you as a teacher and it is producing your students and it is producing you in a certain kind of relationship is that this is lesson time, science time so we are here to learn. That's one view of teaching. That's one view of your role as a teacher and how you should interact with a child. If you take that discourse, if you accept it,

you are going to behave in certain ways with students and not other ways, are you?

Leslie: Yes, I am behaving in a professional manner and I focus a 100% on the objectives of the lesson... And I don't feel it's my place to

Maria: You prefer the content?

Leslie: I do have another role, as I mentioned, and I see that in a different way. I am talking about the lessons.

Maria: There are also some teachers who have another idea about what their role as a teacher is even when they are teaching science...

Leslie: I suppose...

Maria: They think that before they can teach any content they have to establish a relationship with the child so when something conflictual or anything like that comes up they don't say that their role is here to pass on English or science. They give time to sorting out the relationship. That's a different idea about teaching. It's a different discourse.

Leslie: Was I right or wrong?

Maria: I think there's no right or wrong. They are different ideas and it depends on what your relationship is to those ideas, what your preference is.

Leslie: My mother is a teacher and she told me when I was in teacher training not to be a friend. I do care about my students but I don't believe that's my role.

Maria: I think that you are positioning yourself in one particular discourse about teaching. So that discourse defines your role in quite clear ways like probably there is not a lot of flexibility about what you allow yourself to do in the lesson. Your focus is on science.

Leslie: Maybe there's a better idea.

Maria: This is an idea you believe in, this is what you agree with. Is this idea serving you well with what you would like to do as a teacher all the time, is this serving your other role in the pastoral care role well? To what extent is it helping you to build the kind of relationships you want? To what extent does it undermine it? Are you going to keep your relationship with this idea or do you want to change your relationship with this discourse and maybe bring in another one? It's not for me to decide, that's for you to decide.

Leslie: We discuss personal stories. We discussed this morning how we had gone up to Ruapehu (a mountain on the North Island of New Zealand). We talked about geology. I am there to deliver as much information to the students as possible. I use these contexts but my focus is on delivering what I am there to do.

Maria: *You use the stories in the service of science. That is your major focus of the lesson.*

Do you allow any flexibility in that, to get away from it?

Leslie: *That would be saying one thing and doing another but that's my discourse.*

Greg: *I think all of us had that philosophy that we are there to pass knowledge. For us to carry out that philosophy effectively we have to have a relationship.*

David: *You could just have a great chat with them and a great relationship but that's not science.*

Maria: *But you might touch on science in a different way?*

Leslie: *I don't feel I have the time. To me it's a waste of time, a waste of time. I don't feel I should build a relationship. They have parents and that shouldn't be my space. I am delivering the information to them. If I ask would you like to discuss this or that ... There is no choice. They are there to learn.*

Maria: *Bringing it back to the workshop ideas. It is your views, your interpretation of the lesson that everyone is there to learn. But if you asked the students in a questionnaire, would there be different answers?*

Leslie: *When you say it like that I am sure there would be.*

David: *I keep other things out of the class, too. I focus on what we are there to do. We can't talk about other things. If we are consistent in that they actually learn.*

Leslie: *They are actually doing some work instead of having some great conversation about madness. We would be focused on learning objectives.*

David: *That sort of thing wouldn't come out in a lesson.*

Leslie: *But we can still use lesson times effectively and we are always out talking to the kids at lunchtime and we might meet them in town. We don't expect a university lecturer to establish a personal relationship but to give out information.*

Mike: *That's quite a good example of a teaching practice that doesn't care for the consequences of teaching, whether they take it on or not. Many students buy into that model. Should we just be lecturing? Is that the best model for our students?*

David: *I have a story. We were playing Hangman in the classroom and two students walked out. I went over and yelled at them. I said "What's the story?" and found out that a family member had hanged himself just a week before. I said sorry mate I didn't realize.*

Leslie: *Classic example of a relationship problem.*

James: *They come in and sometimes they need more time.*

Leslie finds it really difficult to reconcile his dual roles of pastoral care and content teaching. He takes up a position in a particular discourse of professionalism while he also tries to position himself in a discourse of care. The particular discourse of professionalism that is available to him challenges

the legitimacy of relationships and promotes subject knowledge over them. It requires him to separate the tasks of subject teaching and relationship building. It prescribes that he only performs them at separate times and in different places rather than allowing his two different roles to coexist and function together. The discourses of professionalism and care that Leslie positions himself in, produce a kind of 'caughtness' or an impasse. When he operates from the discourse of professionalism and delivers an efficient science lesson, he experiences discomfort about his pastoral role. When he allows relationship talk into the lesson, he perceives it as undermining of learning. So the different discourses work to simultaneously unsettle his sense of himself both as an efficient and competent subject teacher and a caring person. The contradiction only allows to validate one or the other of the qualities he wishes to live by but not both, thus inviting self-doubt along with the pathologising of himself and the internalising of the problem ('I am a failure'). Leslie's capacity to hold the tension of the two different tasks of content teaching and relationship building is significantly undermined. Leslie and his students are distanced rather than brought closer together in a spontaneous human relationship. The only strategy available to Leslie to resolve this dilemma is the 'either/or' positioning of himself: either choosing content teaching or care.

As part of the deconstructive reflection process that was applied to structure this conversation, I named and described the two discourses that Leslie was positioned in. I also invited Leslie to reflect on his relationship to the different ideas and to consider the particular student-teacher relationships and teaching practices that might be called into existence by each discourse. I involved Leslie in clarifying his moral position and in developing the ethics of his practice through asking him to take a stand on how those ideas reflected his preferred moral position. I resisted Leslie's position calls to me to become an advisor and solution provider. Rather, I wanted to support him with articulating and evaluating the different effects of his different positionings. By the end of the conversation there was a slight shift in Leslie's thinking. He qualified his colleague's neglect to find out what caused his students' walkout of his lesson as 'a classic example of a relationship problem'. A few weeks later he also came to tell me that he had stopped worrying about his multiple roles

and he had started to use the first five minutes of each lesson for attending to relationship issues. This change in his practice also made science teaching easier. Leslie created a new subject position for himself, one in which it was possible for him to hold the tension of subject teaching and pastoral care. I believe the limited amount of deconstruction that we performed together helped Leslie achieve this shift and it helped him transform how he understood himself, which allowed him to comfortably accommodate his seemingly contradictory positions. In the absence of deconstructive reflection, I believe, Leslie might have experienced stress and a reduced sense of well-being, similarly to Diana (7.1) and Hannah (7.5).

7. 7 Improving relationships by respectfully managing differences

Katie, Anna, Stephanie and Joe discuss in the following excerpt what they would prefer to incorporate into their focus group discussions. Joe and Anna are positioned in two contradictory discourses of professionalism and I try to facilitate their contributions in a way that prevents Joe's idea of professionalism from dominating to define the further interactions of the group. The same contradictory discourses of professionalism were brought up and discussed several times by different focus groups. This suggests that the topic of professionalism was possibly very significant for the research participant teachers at the time.

Joe: It's OK to discuss certain things here and take your feelings and raw emotions to a certain point but I think you should leave the rest. This is not going to be a time and place to discuss your uncomfortable feelings. It's not OK to take your feelings into teaching.

Katie: So are you saying if it happens we should like try to stop it and get someone else to ...

Joe: Is this obviously a place to be talking about that in terms of restorative practices in your research or ... is it appropriate to discuss that or should we...?

Maria: But there is also a person whose fitness or balance or maybe well-being has to be restored because there could be a breakdown in the well-being. We are not setting out to dig out these uncomfortable feelings and raw emotions. I am not going to ask questions purposefully to dig out these experiences.

Joe: What we talk about should be kept to what it is that ...

Stephanie: But I think what John is saying is that we should keep our professionalism separate from feelings.

Maria: My view is that the personal and professional are not separate. You can't be a different person in the class from what you are. What your major beliefs are can't be different in the classroom and at home.

Joe: It's fairly possible to explain your values and your teaching ethos, why you have done it and what makes you whole physically, emotionally, mentally but I don't think this is a time or place to discuss negative happenings that you have had that affect those beliefs. It is fine and very well for us to know what makes us believe in as a teacher but like I said it's not the time for your life to be discussed.

Katie: So what can we put in place if we don't want that to happen? What do we do as a group?

Maria: Well, you can either withhold those things, as John was suggesting but that again comes back to what your beliefs are about what is good for you in terms of reflection. Some people say that reflection should be what appraisal is: you only talk about normative issues, like how you comply with what the prescribed rules are of the profession, the curriculum and that's what you discuss. Or you only discuss professional practice and you are meant to be discussing how you can improve your practice all the time. But there are other views that say that there is a restorative purpose to these discussions, restorative in a sense that you restore your well-being so it's OK to talk about personal issues that are affecting your work. So that comes back to what you agree on as a group, what you want to make this forum for.

Anna: Personally for me, I am quite able to expose my fragile side of my professionalism, because I think that I need to resolve some of those so I want to restore those before I can move on in a professional sense. So as a group I am not sure how that would come out ... I can't predict how that will be but there are fragile parts of my professionalism.

Stephanie: I think it's a good point that you make Anna, in that you'll be stuck in that place until you can actually find something to move on.

Anna: I am here to talk about those things but not to stay in it. I want to expose them so that I can share with the group so I can get feedback, so it depowers the negative...

Katie: I respect what Anna is saying and what John is saying that try to keep it professional.

Anna: Definitely, but I want to be able to expose my fragile side with non-judgemental people. All I am saying is that I want to be able to do that in a way that feels safe.

Joe suggests that teachers should not discuss uncomfortable feelings and neither should they take their feelings into their teaching. As a woman, I read his contribution as representative of a gender discourse of professionalism, that qualifies and excludes emotions as unprofessional. My decision to introduce my stance about the inseparability of the personal and professional is informed by both Stephanie's support for Joe, as well as my previous experiences of women withholding their views and allowing a male colleague's ideas to dominate in meetings. I do not want Joe's position in the discourse of patriarchy to be the only available position in this group so I summarise his views as one possible idea. I also introduce another possibility, and describe a discourse of professionalism that allows the discussion of personal issues. I do not evaluate either discourse but invite the group to decide what they agree on. Anna then contributes her distinctly different ideas from Joe and asserts her wish to be able to safely expose her 'fragile side', in other words she claims space in the focus group discussion for personal issues that affect her work. It is not possible to know whether Anna had been able to put forward her different views and whether Joe's ideas would have dominated the group's ways of interacting with each other without my intervention of rendering both views as representatives of discourses, rather than of personal qualities. Stephanie's agreement with Joe right at the beginning suggests that the conversation could have taken a direction that would have silenced Anna's contribution. Nevertheless, this conversation demonstrates that a facilitator's familiarity with the notion of discourse and using this to inform her reading of the situation can create a space for admitting additional discourses or meanings rather than suppressing or silencing them. This focus group, on this occasion, could become a forum for comparing two very different views of professionalism, with Joe and Anna each being able to take up and stay with their preferred identity positions, unlike James' colleagues, Sarah and Katie, who did not get a chance to describe their views in detail (7.3).

This conversation provides a snapshot of how it might be possible in diverse communities to provide space for and explore very different power/knowledges or meanings without making one the dominant knowledge that silences the other completely. A better facilitation, which I was not able to

perform at the time of this discussion, could have enabled a different conversation, one that would have invited all participants to describe their specific views of professionalism and then would have asked them to explore and evaluate the effects, the advantages and disadvantages, of each view for their relationships and practice development possibilities in the focus group. Though we did not move beyond the first step of a possible deconstructive reflection process, the conversation achieved the inclusion of two very different and contradictory discourses. Thus it also allowed a glimpse of how it is possible to support the agency of different conversation participants by reducing the possibilities for one idea's domination over all others. This suggests that structured facilitation that purposefully incorporates different views into a discussion can be a relationship strategy for managing differences respectfully. After listening to each different contribution and getting a sense of the effects of different discursive positionings, the participants then can negotiate which discourse position they want to take up, reject or discard completely in their interactions. It is more likely that in this way they are able set the direction of their identity work, rather than others imposing it on them.

This chapter has demonstrated the potential usefulness of deconstructive reflection for teachers, both as a conceptual and analysis tool for theorising relationship problems and as a practical relationship skill for managing differences and reducing stress levels. A deconstructive analysis of the teachers' narratives provided new understandings of the different conflicts and concerns that caused considerable stress to the research participant teachers and/or compelled them to work hard at finding solutions. Deconstructive analysis of the narratives showed up contradictory and multiple positionings as one possible cause of both interactional trouble between teachers and students and teachers and other adults, as well as problems for teachers' own identity projects and well-being. In addition, deconstructive analysis exposed that the contradictions of binary and/or multiple positionings are likely to work in ways that produce an impasse in relationships and prevent the interaction participants from moving beyond and/or respectfully managing their differences. It also revealed the same contradictions as the possible culprits in undermining teachers' well-being by posing problems for teachers' satisfactory identity work. Multiple

positionings were shown as a potential problem for the process of producing coherent identity narratives because they either unsettled the meanings of categories or they made different positions seem irreconcilable.

Though deconstructive analysis was able to suggest different conversations and a different pattern of interaction for all conflict situations, the examples also showed that when teachers did not have it available as a conceptual tool and/or strategy, they could neither theorise their conflicts differently nor could they change their usual relationship practices, in spite of working hard to come to a different understanding. However, in those instances when even a few steps of a deconstructive process were used, these steps created spaces and platforms for relationship and practice changes and they were able to reduce teachers' stress levels. The different accounts in this chapter confirm Davies' (1990) theory of the inadequacy of the humanist notion of subjectification as well as its harmful consequences for teachers' agency. They prove the usefulness for school conflict situations of the poststructuralist notion of agency (Davies & Harré, 1991) and the importance of understanding discourses in the interests of moving between them as well as counteracting, modifying, accepting and refusing them (Davies, 2006; Walkerdine, 2003).

This chapter is an argument for the usefulness of the skill of deconstructive reflection for teachers. It shows that understanding the effects of discourses can be a strategy for reconciling and accepting contradictions and it can move both relationships and/or the identity project of a person past 'stuckness' or an impasse. After deconstructive reflection teachers can choose and reject positions so they are more likely to be in control of their own identity, rather than being vulnerable either to the uncontrolled productive forces of different discourses and/or others setting the directions of their lives. I have shown that it is possible to adapt deconstructive reflection to facilitate the kind of teacher discussions and reflection that goes beyond the binary of contradictory positionings, provides signposts for different action and opens possibilities for different conversations. Such a reflection also supports teachers' agency as it can help them understand and set the direction of their own and others' identity development as well as creating new subject positions for themselves. For these effects,

deconstructive reflection can also be a useful contribution to restorative practices because it can help resolve conflicts that result from contradictions and it can restore well-being when stress arises due to difficulties with a person's own subjectification.

In Chapter 8 I will argue for another possible use of deconstructive reflection in addition to exposing and overcoming contradictory positionings. In the deconstructive readings in this chapter several different discourses came up repeatedly, including ideas of professionalism and effective teaching. In Chapter 8 I will show how deconstruction can contribute to teachers' understandings of the hidden work of these or other popular educational discourses and the practices that support them and how that hidden work might not be as useful as believed.

CHAPTER 8 Deconstructive reflection: understanding the work of discourses

This chapter focuses on the unexamined work of some specific discourses that were popular among the research participant teachers as the sites of their preferred subjectification. The examples are also used in support of an additional argument for the significance of deconstructive reflection in schools and for legitimising its place in teachers' practice repertoire. The emphasis here is not on how deconstruction can help deal with the problems of multiple and contradictory positionings but on the potentially harmful constitutive forces that otherwise well-accepted ideas and teaching practices can set into motion with far reaching consequences for teachers' and students' uninterrupted and respectful collaboration. Deconstructive reading of the previous chapter's distress narratives revealed the work of particular ideas of control, care, professionalism, learning and gender, as significant and influential for the research participant teachers' identity work, well-being and relationships. These ideas were shown to shape the teachers' choices of practices, their perception of their role as well as how they took up their identity as a professional. In this chapter I want to show that in the absence of teachers' understanding, and knowing, as a result of such an understanding, how to intervene in the possible directions of the productive forces of these or other ideas, they are allowed to produce relationships and conditions that were contrary to both the teachers' original intentions as well as the professional and moral values they might espouse. The participant teachers used the different relationship and teaching practices that are introduced in the examples of this chapter to validate both their preferred professional identities as well as the personal qualities that they said they aspired to live by. They also saw these practices as ones that support the moral values of commitment and inclusion. However, I wish to expose how these very practices can curtail learning opportunities, prevent respectful relationships between particular persons along with undermining some teachers' authority to teach and others' agency to set the directions of their practice and identity development. Therefore I argue for the usefulness of unsettling these practices and the ideas that support them along with

increasing teachers' understanding of how they might collude with or be able to resist their productive forces.

The process of deconstructive reading that I applied to the examples in this chapter was the same as the one that I described in Chapter 7. However, its focus is slightly different. In addition to problematising and exposing some specific relationship and teaching strategies, that the teachers thought validated their claims to the position of competent teacher, I also want to shed some light on the complicity of these practices in producing problematic student-teacher relationships and vulnerable and stressed teachers. I wish to demonstrate how defenceless the teachers can become against the stresses of interruptions and disrespect in their classrooms, when they have no tools to consider the hidden rationalities that support the particular practices they prefer to employ. In addition I describe the discourses these practices help produce and reproduce along with the kind of teacher-student identities and relationships that they call into being. I illustrate how teachers can collude in the production and reproduction of the very conditions and behaviours that make their work difficult when they do not clarify their relationships to the moral orders those behaviours authorise. I argue that such clarification can be arrived at through deconstructive reflection, which can offer teachers ways to intervene in and/or to control to some extent the constitution of their identities against the hidden productive forces of these otherwise popular practices. The proponents of discourse analysis emphasise the importance of understanding (Davies et al, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2007) as the only available tool to protect us from the 'seeping into consciousness quality' of the constitutive forces of discourses (Davies, 2006). I wish to argue for this skill as one that is able to protect teachers from the various destabilising effects of the hidden, uncontrolled operations of the very ideas they espouse.

Though this chapter demonstrates another possible practical application of deconstructive reflection and its potential usefulness for teachers, I have to note that the analyses and deconstructive readings that follow were not arrived at with the research participant teachers in the focus group discussions, as in some of the examples presented in the previous chapter. I produced these readings during a later analysis of the stories that

the teachers shared with me. There is only one example that shows the potential of identifying the effects of different practices on relationships and institutional systems. I struggled to find a way of teaching deconstructive analysis to the research participants within the timeframe of the research project. I also struggled to convince them of the practical usefulness of discursively informed new understandings of their problems as catalysts of change. The majority of the teachers resisted using a theoretical framework in support of analytical discussions and they were unable to believe in their capacity to provide strategies that help solve their relationship problems. I organised the examples in two groups: the first set of narratives demonstrates the possible influences of discourses of relationship and modes of interaction. The second set of narratives shows some popular teaching discourses and practices.

Relationship practices

Establishing strong relationships with students is seen by most committed teachers as a necessary prerequisite of teaching, engaging and motivating them. Researchers argue that respectful teacher-student relationships can raise achievement levels. The inclusive philosophy that most New Zealand teachers believe in provides further support for the significance of relationships. Most teachers try a range of relationship practices in order to improve their connections with their students. It was no surprise that one of the main concerns that the research participants repeatedly talked about was their relationships with challenging students and figuring out how it might be best to establish better relationships with those students. They also described in detail the problems they encountered in their classrooms. The various practices of care and respect were the most frequently talked about topics that came up in the focus groups. The practices that I introduce in the following examples were seen by many research participants as a useful component of a caring teachers' repertoire. However, I wish to demonstrate how those very practices, while validating the teachers' commitment to students, can also produce unsustainable and/or flawed ideas about teaching and learning along with unreasonable expectations towards teachers. I also show, how they work to undermine particular teachers and might produce demanding student subjects.

Care

8.1 Going beyond the call of duty with students

In this first story I wish to unsettle and expose the possible hidden work of an extreme practice of care and I want to demonstrate how a committed teacher inadvertently colludes with reproducing hierarchical gender relationships and producing unreasonable expectations towards teachers. Darryl described to the members of his focus group how he establishes connections with those students who are difficult to teach and whose parents are uninvolved with teachers and the school.

Darryl: In the last two years I have played rugby with almost all the boys' dads. Automatically the rest of the team goes "Hard man of the game!". So they come to score and they already recognise you as the hard man, the captain of the rugby team. And by the way, my dad thinks you are really good, so I will think you are really good. That culture... Yeah, it's like a link into their homes because I'll ring up any one of their dads and say "Your boy has been..." and they say "What the hell has he been doing?" and I will say "No, no! He's got an award". And they automatically assume the worst... straight away.

Maria: You also said that you cannot be their friends. So are you saying that you have to be kind of authoritarian almost, at first, until you get to know them and build up the relationship because that's what the students know and that's what they expect of a teacher probably?

Darryl: Yes. If my boys were in trouble, they'd come to my house, knock on my door. That's where I got to with it. If they were in trouble and saw me on the street, they'd run up and say "I need your help". And there have been a couple of occasions like that where I had some of them sleeping at my house on my floor simply because they've had an issue and they'd ring up. So I say I'm going to have to tell your mum where you are, and I go over and talk to mum and she says "Is he alright there?" and I say "Sweet as". And I get them breakfast in the morning and we are all good. But I still don't have to be their friend. That's a case of if they make a joke in the classroom, while you're teaching at the blackboard, don't laugh at their joke if you want them to learn what's on the board, because they will carry on making other jokes and the teaching moment will be gone for quite some time. But you can get to know them, be polite and interested in what they do.

Darryl suggests that his authority to teach comes from the spontaneous human relationships that he builds with his students and their fathers. The

relationship strategy that Darryl employs to achieve strong connections is that he makes himself available both for extracurricular activities, rugby, as well as for emotional support outside school hours, when he opens up his house to students in trouble. These different relationship building activities help him provide access to both his students and their fathers to legitimate subject positions, at least in his interactions with them, which might not be so available to them at school. However, they also destabilise the boundaries between his personal and professional spaces. His students and their fathers validate him as the 'hard man' of the game, a position in a discourse of masculinity that is supported by Darryl's rugby playing and coaching skills. In return he is able to convince the fathers to accept his positioning of them as 'proper parent' through involving them in discussions about their children's schoolwork. Being accepted as hard man then makes it easier for Darryl to position himself as a teacher, both with the fathers as well as with their sons. He can communicate positive things about his students to the parents but he is also trusted by the students when they get into trouble. From the same hard man position he can then step into a position and practices of care, which would normally stand outside the category of hard man. Darryl models practices of nurturing and care to his students by providing accommodation and food in times of trouble. He even models respect for the boys' mothers when he informs them of the boys' whereabouts. So Darryl's extracurricular and caring practices, his additional time investment and his ability to involve otherwise hard to engage members of the community with the school, help him take himself up as a committed and conscientious teacher.

Though Darryl's flexibility and his conscious take up of several different positions in relation to his students establishes better connections with them and their parents, I want to draw attention to some of the possible other productive influences of the discourses that define his interactions. Darryl can name his simultaneous different positionings, as the hard man, nurturer and carer and teacher in the classroom and he knows not to fuzz any clarity about his different roles. He mentions that he cannot be the students' friend. He is also quite clear about what each of those positions might mean for his relationship practices with his students. Yet, I suggest, his practices of care and relationship building might set in motion additional possible constitutive

consequences for others, who also have a relationship with the same students, colleagues and the students' mothers for example. These effects work to exclude those other adults from the position of legitimate subject. It could be interesting to ponder how the students would take up a teacher colleague with young children or a female colleague, for whom the level of care he is able to provide might not be an available practice. It might also be worth considering what space his practices of care leave for the boys' mothers as carers and nurturers. Deconstructive reflection would place Darryl's relationship practices under closer scrutiny, also revealing how they reproduce a particular discourse of teaching that privileges and validates as proper subject a male teacher, who has the capacity to organise his life in ways that make him available after school in the same way Darryl does. Darryl's practices of care reproduce and support a gender discourse that validates males rather than females, as it is less likely that a female teacher or the boys' mothers are able to deliver what he does. This process also increases the number of criteria against which a good teacher might be measured along with the demands that can be placed on teachers by their students and their parents. Darryl's practices legitimise student and parent subjects who can now expect the kind of availability Darryl provides. Darryl's constitution of his identity as proper and good teacher also illustrates the potential ambiguity of this process. His validation happens at a cost to others and possibly to the profession. The ambiguous effects of Darryl's and the students' identity work to widen the spaces for potential misunderstandings, or discursive slips, between students and teachers and teachers and parents, which makes them all vulnerable to conflicts with each other. These effects destabilise and expand the meaning of teacher, making it more complex and including additional duties in the range of practices teachers can be expected to perform. The discourses of care that Darryl is able to step into blurs the boundaries between teaching and parenting and it increases demands on teachers. It is likely that those who cannot deliver the level of care Darryl does will be judged or might judge themselves as inadequate if Darryl's practices are used as the norm and to inform the meaning of the category of 'good teacher'.

8.2 The absence of care for colleagues

The second story shows how the practices of caring for students push practices of care for teachers underground. In the next segment Pamela and Tracey talk about a recent event when a teacher was assaulted. They feel that the restorative relationship principles that were put forward in the professional development workshops are applied to students in their school but not to teachers. This story resonates with some similar stories teachers told in other focus groups (7.5). One teacher, whose account is not included here, was sworn at by a parent. The parent was listened to and comforted after the event but no one thought it important to listen to the teacher, who ended up stressed for a week and turned to a counsellor in the end. In the following story Pamela and Tracey are concerned about their colleague who was assaulted by students.

Pamela: At the moment things are still in the air, even though we have one student that has finally left school now, but nobody has told them how they came to that decision and things like that.

Maria: No one has told the teacher?

Pamela: Yeah, the teacher concerned. The teacher was assaulted. The teacher was assaulted and right up until yesterday, he still feels like he is not being valued, he just about never came back this term.

Maria: So was it restorative practice? The other thing that I'm hearing is that maybe there is no clarity about what is restorative practice.

Pamela: You see we don't have much time to do that kind of thing for a start. When we come together it's usually about the business of school, and that seems to play a little wee part. I took it to management yesterday and told that the teacher wanted closure on things that have happened in the first term and what can we do about it.

Maria: Has the teacher been listened to? Has that happened or not?

Pamela: No, but another two teachers decided that they were going to listen to the kids' story, the student's story, but no one has taken the time really to hear the staff's story, and that's what I think, for me I felt that, yes, we've heard the kids story but what about my story?

Tracey: Yeah, well I actually rang him in the holidays, and he was not good. I think that is one of the biggest problems in that situation, that we are seen to be using restoring practices with the students but the staff has been left out of the loop.

Maria: It is about restoring satisfaction for teachers and not just for students, isn't it?

Pamela: But I'm like you, I'm feeling for the staff at the moment. Our students are not taking responsibility for their actions, they are getting their stories heard but they are not turning up to school anymore. So the consequences of all these things that have happened, there's been students thinking that oh well, there is no consequences so what's the point of coming to school.

This segment of a conversation also demonstrates some of the effects of unexamined discursive forces and practices of care. It exposes how the process of Pamela's and Tracey's colleagues constituting their identities as 'good teachers', by listening to the students and applying mediation strategies introduced in professional development, simultaneously pushes collegial support out of the dominant practices of their workplace. This 'good teacher' discourse that Pamela's and Tracey's colleagues position themselves in dictates that teachers listen to students in instances of conflict and that they put care for students before care for colleagues. When a teacher has to receive care it is done on a personal level but not in the public forum of the staffroom where all staff members could participate in supporting the colleague, who was physically assaulted. In other words, caring for a colleague in the above example seems to be driven underground, into the realm of off site, private interactions, which are invisible to most staff. Tracey had called her colleague in the holidays. So while the two unnamed teachers are able to validate themselves as legitimate teacher subjects, the same discursive forces that they use for their own constitution create a workplace, where support for adults does not come from the collective. Rather, it is left to individuals who have the courage to behave differently from the majority. The student subjects enabled by such practices do not have to be accountable. The teacher victim of their assault is objectified and dehumanised and his authority is undermined. Through their practice of listening to students but not colleagues, the two unnamed teachers also collude in normalising disrespect and violence towards teachers.

I also want to ponder another and very likely harmful consequence that the unexamined discursive forces of that this particular idea of care could set into motion in the above example. They obscure the clarity of what the criteria might be for respectful behaviours towards teachers. So similarly to Darryl's example (8.1) some teachers' validation in Pamela's and Tracey's school as legitimate subjects happens at a cost of undermining the authority of both

some colleagues as well as the teaching profession. This process is not without further costs for the possibilities of teacher-student relationships as well as for students' opportunities for learning to become responsible citizens. The teachers, who make themselves available to listen, set up a hierarchical pattern of relationship, in which no reciprocation of care is expected from the students. Consequently, the students have reduced opportunities to learn accountability. Again, the very practices that are desirable for a good teacher and that validate his/her as a legitimate teacher subject can also contribute to legitimising the kind of behaviours that pose problems for teachers in the first place.

It has to be noted that Pamela's and Tracey's identity work in the above example differs from their two unnamed colleagues, who listened to the students but not the teacher who was assaulted. They examine and step into a moral position, in relation to the effects of different discourses of care. Through discussing and evaluating the different responses to their colleague, they are able to move into the discourse of 'care for teachers' instead of staying in the discourse of 'care for students'. I suggest this is the point where Pamela and Tracey have moved beyond what might have been an easily accessible identity position for them in the staffroom or in different discussions with their colleagues previously. They are both able, even if temporarily, to take up their desired and preferred identity as teachers, who consider caring for colleagues an important and legitimate practice within their school, one that should be part of restorative practices. However, they are not able, as yet, to claim space for their preferred practice in the staffroom. Nevertheless, reflection and taking a stand in relation to different ideas of care makes them less vulnerable to the potential harmful consequences of unexamined care, such as failing to support a distressed colleague.

Respect

8.3 Demanding and earning respect

The following excerpt is from a conversation where teachers wondered about how and whether they could get more respect from their students. Respect, both for teachers and students, was another frequently talked about concern in the focus groups. The teachers told how they always tried hard to show respect for their students, several of whom seemed unable to reciprocate it. Instead these students did not observe the class rules; they misbehaved and

did not follow instructions. Paul and Linda remember a public speech given by a famous New Zealand sportswoman, to a big group of students from several different schools. They recall how this sportsperson 'picked' on students who interrupted her speech with fidgeting. She stopped her speech and told those students in front of everyone else to respect the time she had given up in order to be there. Paul and Linda believe the sportswoman's actions constituted shaming, which they do not agree with. The discussion goes on to Linda and Leila describing disruptive students and they present their, less assertive than the sportswoman's, methods of gaining respect.

Paul: *But she pointed out that it was her time with her family that they were to respect, whether they were listening or not and that to think of those things that she had given up to be there.*

Linda: *And it was also that treat others as you want to be treated too, you know, it's like if you were up here talking I would be listening to you and I expect that in return. I'm here doing a job, and that's what I say to my students. I'm here doing a job and I'm teaching you. If you come up to the front or if you're talking, I will listen to you and give you respect and that is what I'm asking back from you. Because I can't go into a class and demand respect just because I'm a teacher, and I've got to let them know, this is the deal, so it's a two way street...*

Leila: *I teach year 7 through to year 10. I spend a lot of time with these students and some boys hijack the entire class, they hijack the entire thing, and I've talked to them and set them aside and we'll discuss the problems, find a solution to the problems, and we'll have deals ... They say everyone picks on me. OK, why do they pick on you? None of the teachers like me. Why don't they like you? I don't know, they always pick on me. I never do anything wrong. OK, well, here I am, I say, I like you, I don't want to pick on you and I'm saying, let's get it sorted. And it's like yep, OK, let's make a deal, I won't pick on you and they'll say: we'll listen to you and do our work and take part ... So we'll be in class and they start up, so I say, hey guys, remember our conversation? They'll go yeah, yeah, yeah, and then we carry on and they start to lose it a bit and it's, guys, can you just settle a little bit and it's yeah, and we keep going and you know towards the end of the first period I go quietly up to them and say: I don't want to pick on you but I need you to listen and I need you to be focused. And then all of a sudden they'll look up at me and it's yeah, it's always me that you're picking on. I don't see you giving anyone else a hard time. They get straight into that 'it's always me, always pick on me' and they go on and on and on ...*

Leslie: *Far out, who is that?*

Leila: *Jim and Brad, and they'll go on and on. I had them both outside and I had a double period and I spent either half of the class dealing with these boys. ... I had them outside and I said, you both told me that I'm picking on you and they looked at each other like what, it's like what are you on about ? I said, well, you guys are both saying that the other one has done it and that I'm picking on you, when it's the other one's fault. ...I said right, you've got five minutes, I'm going back to the class and I came back out I came back out and it was all, yeah, pick on us, it's all our fault, you know, blah, blah ... and then they were picking on other kids in the class. I'm just at the end of my tether and I'm at the point where I don't want to do anything with them because for two terms, for every single lesson with one or both of them I'm dealing with*

Leslie: *That's a hard one, eh?*

Leila: *It's a really hard one and they sabotage the class and I've got kids sitting there looking at me like they're doing it again, what do I do? and the hardest thing is that they've been doing this probably for years so it's a habit that's ingrained in them and that's how they operate the class... they do, and I got to the point where I just lost it, I walked out of the class and I had to go and get help. ... and I said, yeah, get rid of them now and I went back into class and I'd never felt like that before in a class. Never. And these boys came up to me afterwards, brought back by the other teacher, and they said oh, we're sorry, and I said, are you? You say it every single time, so why don't I believe you? I haven't had them yet since then. I've got them again tomorrow and I'm willing to have them back in my class, just, only because what else would I do with them? **Well, it's their class** (emphasis by me). I'm just, the rest of the class is suffering and they don't listen, and they're arrogant, and they're rude, and they're immature. I have tried a lot with these boys and they've had a hell of a lot of my time, and I want to give the rest of the class a fair go and they're not getting a fair go. But part of me is thinking that they're like this because it is the only situation where they have power and they can and they have no say in a lot of other things.*

There are two different relationship practices that are described in the above example. The famous New Zealand sportswoman that the teachers remember gains respect assertively. She positions herself in a traditional discourse of teaching that automatically assumes and demands respect for authority figures, such as teachers. Her actions also support an attitude of acceptance, of necessary protocols for entering and conducting a relationship between persons who do not know each other but are placed in a relationship in order to complete a particular task. Such an attitude prescribes politeness

and a compliance with certain rules for occasions when one enters such a new relationship. Linda positions herself more aligned with this view to start with – ‘I am here to do a job’ - but then she shifts into another discourse, which is supported by a more recent view that requires the same authority figures to earn respect. She then adds that she cannot go into a class and demand respect just because she is a teacher. So she seems to believe in the idea that suggests that respect should be given to the person of the teacher rather than to the position of educator. Leila does not present a strong view on how she thinks she could gain respect from her students, though she seems more aligned with Linda’s ideas. Leila enters a long description of her frustrations and her ongoing hard work of negotiating and renegotiating different deals with two disruptive students. Leila goes out of her way to try again, give another chance and talk over transgressions of rules and sabotaging the work of others in the class again and again with these two students. She does this outside of the class as if to avoid humiliating the students. However, she rejects a position of authority over the students by saying it is their class and in spite of being at the end of her tether and sending the students out of her class she is willing to take them back the following day. She uses the students’ powerlessness in other areas of their lives as an explanation for their behaviours, which sounds like an admission of her powerlessness to change them.

Leila’s strategies of constant negotiations and forgiving validates her as a teacher with flexible boundaries, which is a more desirable identity than that of a traditional authority figure, which she believes the famous sportswoman represents. The constant negotiations also keep her working hard, which in turn helps her take herself up as a committed teacher who caters for the needs of challenging students. Leila’s two students do not honour the deals she makes with them for long. They seem to be able to set the directions of their relationship with Leila while Leila’s capacity for agency is diminished. The unexamined productive power of the ideas that support Leila’s ongoing negotiations and forgiveness calls into being an extremely hard working teacher subject, off-task student subjects and a classroom, where chaos and constant disruptions slowly become the norm instead of the students engaging with the tasks that the teacher sets. So Leila, during her validation of herself as a hard working teacher, also colludes in normalising chaos and reducing

students' working and learning time. By not examining her stance in relation to different ideas of earning and establishing respect, and/or the necessary level of collaboration between her and her students, Leila also reproduces the kind of student subjects and classroom conditions that cause so much of her stress. Leila's unexamined relationship to ideas of respect undermines some students' respect for her and costs her a lot of stress. Again, the same discourse or idea that is dear to a teacher, 'I cannot expect respect', is shown up to produce the very conditions that pose difficulties for this same teacher.

Another possible reading could position the students and Leila in a discourse of gender that requires a female subject who is able to show caring through displaying a constant capacity to negotiate as opposed to using other methods to invite collaboration, such as assertiveness, firmness or even threats of violence. The same gender discourse privileges as legitimate a male subject, who renders negotiation a female practice and consequently valueless as the main strategy for conducting relationships. Negotiation undermines the toughness or the sense of being in control that this male subject has to project. Leila's male students in the above example are able to read their interactions with her from a position in such a discourse, where the forgiveness, the renegotiations and the repeated chances that Leila gives to the students are rendered as female practices, similar to those of a mother or auntie, who might not have to be feared as she is unlikely to dish out physical punishment. Consequently, those practices do not have to be honoured or reciprocated.

Such reading of the interaction will produce Leila as a teacher with very little or no authority at all as she is seen as the same as or similar to a female parent. The teacher-student relationship that this discourse calls into being is non-productive for learning and the constant disengagement that the students display is the source of stress for the teacher and a distraction for other students. The defining discourse in Leila's interaction with her students is not the discourse of teaching and learning as usual, where the teacher is accepted and respected as authority who can pass on knowledge or something useful to the students while the students submit themselves to this discourse, even if they are bored. Instead, a form of patriarchy that undermines both a female teacher's teaching authority as well as her capacity to exercise restorative negotiation becomes the dominating discourse and thus it defines the kind of

teacher and student identities that are possible to perform. The non-authoritarian ways of interaction that Leila employs repeatedly in her classroom are dismissed and not validated as possible and useful practices of a competent teacher because they are rendered practices of care that belong to the women's domain in families. As such they look displaced in the school context and they also displace a female teacher's professional authority.

Teaching practices

The next three examples centralise teaching practices that are seen to support the different practical applications of the philosophy of inclusion. The various adaptations, modifications and differentiations of both programme content and teaching strategies, similarly to the relationship strategies introduced in the previous section, were talked about in most focus groups. The practices that I introduce in the following examples were also seen by many research participants as a useful component of a competent teachers' repertoire and a support for validating a teacher as 'good' or a legitimate subject. I chose to include excerpts from discussions that focussed on the two most frequently mentioned ideas: how to make learning fun for hard to engage students and how boys and girls could both be engaged successfully. Again, I wish to demonstrate how the very practices that the teachers thought validated their commitment to students, can also produce untenable ideas about teaching and learning along with unreasonable expectations towards teachers. They are also shown as complicit in calling into existence the relationship problems and conditions that cause stress for teachers.

Catering for different needs: adaptation and differentiation

8.4 Fun

In the following segment Jacob talks about how he tries to modify, adapt and 'engineer' his English program to get some productive work out of his students. He tells about how he actually mixes English with sport and physical activities. As he thinks his students would not be able to sit for a long time, he uses physical activity as part of his literacy program. Leanne talks about similar 'action packing' of her literacy program as her goal is to cater for 'the much more tactile kids'.

Jacob: *I've tried to engineer my whole English program from the day I got here to incorporate things that would draw positive experiences. We do sport and recreation as part of their English group so we go and play a sport and do something and we come back and write about it and do the literacy part of it. I thought it was pointless for me to sit down, because, you know, sitting down with those boys and giving them texts and read this and try and analyse it, just doesn't work. I've tried it with other teachers, I've tried it with bigger groups. I found that taking them out of the classroom and doing other things with them and doing other stuff like that gives them something to reflect on so they can use that as part of their literacy program...*

Helen: *Did that work?*

Jacob: *Well, it's worked pretty well. I think I've got a lot of backing from people for using those strategies...but I think that sitting them down and introducing them to something new like that...*

Helen: *It's quite a contrast from what you're doing at the moment.*

Leanne: *I've often thought that if you do lots of practice and then come back ... I mean I've been trying it just in my English lesson, where kids are saying what do we write, and I'm not a person to just transfer knowledge all the time. I'm a constructivist teacher, and so I'm trying to provide experiences for them so that when they come back they'll want to write. We did this 'Fear Factor' type of stuff in class the other day and I made up all this goo and I blindfolded them and next week I'm going to take them out and do bubbles and everything, but that's actually helping them. They get a bit high in the first five minutes when we get back into the room, but then they all have got something to write about. But they need to do it. It's just their attitude sometimes, like lots of kids know this stuff in their head, but it has to be instant, they want to write about straight after it's happened, not a week or to think back to last month. I just find that kids are much more tactile these days, I mean they expect it. If you want good stuff out of them you've got to do good stuff with them first.*

Helen: *And then, they get excited and you can't shut them up so these strategies... I'm going to give it a whirl and see how we go.*

Jacob: *That is part of the problem. I find when there is something that they want to contribute or there is something that pops into their head that they want to get out before it disappears... I think that's some of the problem with some boys because you make them hang on. I'm talking to other kids, everyone is nice and quiet and when you get back to them they're like, oh, I can't remember what I was going to say, never mind. And you feel real bad. You think this person had*

something to contribute and they waited with their hand up but while you were going around, they've forgotten what they were going to say and you know, I think that is a step back for them.

Jacob and Leanne both position themselves in the discourse of 'learning has to be fun and/or entertainment' and they both introduce activities that traditionally do not belong to an English lesson. Leanne models her English lesson on the popular TV programme, Fear Factor, while Jacob uses physical education activities to engage boys and get them to write. Jacob also introduces the educational discourse of boys being different from girls and as such requiring different teaching methods. He uses this gender explanation for justifying his modification of the lesson. However, while both Jacob's and Leanne's adaptations validate them as competent and committed teachers, and they help them grab their students' attention, those very strategies seem to render both the idea of the English lesson, and the very skills that the students are there to learn, ambiguous. The way the literacy task is organised requires students to quickly shift from physical activity to the more settled, quiet, cognitive activity of writing recalling events from memory and describing them with words. This could easily produce misunderstandings and/or confusions about what could be legitimately expected in an English lesson. In addition, the time that the students can spend practising the skills in which they are lagging behind is also reduced. The teachers' good intentions might actually undermine rather than support the students' learning.

The practices the two teachers employ produce student subjects who might expect entertainment on every occasion and who are unable to view learning as a complex activity that can be done in many different ways. They might not be able to view it as hard work or the discipline required to perform repetitious practice in order to acquire a new skill. These student subjects might also have a sense of entitlement, to fun and they might resist any hard work. They might also have the expectation that a challenging task at hand could always be done differently and in a more exciting way. In other words, it can be turned into something else than what it is. Such student subjects then can become disadvantaged when a task would require them to engage in repeated, monotonous practice, similar to what is required to learn ballet or music for example. The train of consequences that are set in motion by the unexamined idea of learning as fun influence not only the students' learning.

The teachers' strategy that achieves short term engagement can be costly for them as well on the long run. It supports a teacher subject who has to be flexible to change methods constantly but more importantly, s/he has to work hard to make everything interesting and easily manageable to the students. The learning as fun idea might also create an expectation that there could always be another, more exciting and easier way for learning a challenging skill and that the methods of delivery can be constantly reinvented. Consequently, teaching and a teacher who cannot provide such reinvention and excitement could be rejected or resisted as boring. The socially available, and currently very popular, discourse of fun thus can produce conflicts and it can make teachers and students vulnerable to relationship problems through creating unreasonable expectations that teachers are not always able to meet, and unrealistic ideas about what learning can be.

In addition to pondering some of the effects of the discourse of fun, I also wish to present a different reading of the above example. I want to pay some attention to how the discourses of child centredness, children's rights and consumerism might also shape Jacob's and Leanne's interactions with their students. Jacob mentions that he feels bad when a student in his class is made to wait for his turn, because Jacob is talking to someone else. Jacob's bad feelings and guilt, I suggest, are called into being by those ideas of child centredness that also promote careful attention to children's rights. I would also say that consumer discourses of customer entitlement to immediate service might also play a part in how certain teacher and student identities are produced in this interaction. The student customers expect good service from the teacher and the teachers willingly go out of their way to provide this service. The underlying ideas that hold the practices of the above discourses in place require an adult subject who places the child's interests at the centre of attention and as the underlying principle of every interaction with a child. The same ideas produce a student subject in this instance who expects the adults to be at their beckoning at all times. James says the student who had to wait for his turn forgot his contribution by the time he was given an opportunity to contribute, but one wonders if he might have withdrawn it deliberately as a 'punishment' for not getting immediate attention. The student is thus prevented from practising the social skill of patience and turn taking in spite of

demonstrating an absence of this capacity as he demands immediate attention. The intersection of the discourses of fun, child-centredness and child rights, consumerism and gender produces a kind of self-centred, selfish student subject who has to get both the teacher's attention immediately, otherwise they forget their contribution, as well as an exciting way of delivering a hard and challenging task, one that makes it seem like other than what it is – fun as opposed to hard work.

The above discourses undermine the students' capacity to enter their relationships with their teachers with the kind of learning attitude that will support them with maintaining a respectful relationship with their teacher along with a focus on learning tasks. Instead the discourses support student expectations of fun and the right to immediate attention that are likely to position them in conflict with their teachers and as resistant to the teachers' calls for listening to instructions, paying sustained attention to explanations, maintaining focus during practice and preserving a degree of classroom order where people can be heard. The teacher subject produced in this intersection has to be adaptable and flexible but might still feel bad, almost guilty, that s/he had not been able to provide the appropriate circumstances for his/her students to learn the skills they are there to learn. So s/he works very hard to constantly adapt what s/he is doing and grapples to understand why the hard work does not always produce the desired results and the kind of student-teacher relationships that would make it possible to complete the tasks of English. This story, similarly to the previous ones, shows the different, positive and negative consequences of the very ideas that many teachers prefer to take up their identities from. The teachers are unable to counteract their potential to produce relationship problems because they do not have strategies to name them as well as to evaluate who they benefit and/or disadvantage and how they might or might not support the tasks at hand.

8.5 Males need males

The following discussion introduces another popular teaching discourse that is based on the belief that boys and girls learn differently and consequently they might need different teachers and teaching methods. Leslie, Lisa and Darryl start our conversation with describing how some of their male students, who often get into trouble, prefer the identity of 'tough man'. They

wonder about the most effective ways of teaching these students and also whether they would respect female teachers' authority.

Leslie: *He's right into that tough man thing eh? Because I was sitting next to him watching the basketball and he was going (about some players) oh, he should smash him, and then he's all about fighting and who's tougher. His whole thing was about who was tougher, and that because he'd done kickboxing he'd be able to smash him, and that guy would be able to smash him, yeah it is quite interesting.*

Lisa: *Ok, and now we're going to do airy fairy drama and talk about feelings and Little Red Riding Hood... (laughs)*

Leslie: *And it gives them power. If they know that they are tough, that's their sort of power that they have, I think, that's sort of the image that he wants to be, a tough guy. That's his aspirations and his goals, one of them, so he can have a bit of power and intimidate others and have his own way.*

Lisa: *Yet the minute you get him and you really have a hard conversation with him, he bursts into tears.*

Darryl: *So he'd make a great role model, eh?*

[Laughter]

Lisa: *Yeah, Brad, he never gives, he will never give anything of himself but Jim (the student who was observed at the basketball game) will give something of himself. And you can get through to him if you say, this is what I'm feeling and why I'm feeling this way. And you can sort of get through to him like this, the other one is just like ... I don't know.*

Leslie: *Some kids are always going to be hard work, eh? From a historical perspective, you know maybe they've had a real rough time, they've had stuff done to them and it's really hard, you know or stuff that hasn't been done, they've been left there or whatever, or they're just angry at the world and they've got that f... you attitude, and it's really hard to break through to those people.*

Lisa: *I just really admire Joe for the fact that, the way he has got through to them.*

Leslie: *I haven't taught them but I walk past them and stuff and you know the hard work that goes into them.*

Lisa: *I mean I had half of them last year but Joe has got a way with them.*

Leslie: *Sometimes the male sort of guy, they chuck you the ...*

Darryl: *He's a sportsman, he can smash them... (referring to Joe, whom these teachers see as a colleague who can get through to the boys discussed).*

[Laughter]

Leslie: *Not always, but you see it at some schools eh? They give all their problem kids to the males because they think that they can deal with them easier or put up with it or...*

Maria: *And is it not so?*

Leslie: *Well maybe in the old days because, you know, in the old days you could bash, well not bash but...*

Darryl: *.the strap...*

Leslie: *Yeah, the strap, and it was more sort of ..., now you can't touch them so I don't think being a male ...might be a little bit, and sometimes those kids maybe respect a male a bit more maybe...*

Lisa: *Some of them need that male influence, need that male role model, and for some of them it will be the first male teacher that they've had...*

Maria: *I find that some students are very much into some sort of a patriarchal way of relating to women, you know that women are worth less than men, so it is harder for women teachers. I sometimes enviously walk past male colleagues' classes and everyone is sitting there quietly, I don't know what they are doing, and I'm just thinking that I could never achieve that ...*

Darryl: *I mean it is such a fine line. To be restorative you also need to keep the authority. I mean for the thing stuck on the back... (Darryl is referring back to a previously described event, when Jim, one of the students who is being talked about, stuck a sticker with a message: "I am a fagot" on another student. Another male teacher, Kent, stuck the sticker back on him). If Kent didn't have the authority to stick it back, then it would be nah, I'm not doing that so it needs to be, it's a fine line...*

Leslie: *Because I wonder if it would have worked if Lisa had done it.*

Lisa: *Yeah, because just the fact that, I mean I was just thinking of just putting it on his back without him knowing and letting him walk around with it, but then you know, he'd blame someone else.*

Darryl: *But then you wouldn't get the same reaction ...*

Lisa: *And just the fact that I didn't go up to him and yell and scream, I just went up to him and was like, did you do this? That's really not cool and I'm really protective of my boys and I'm going to go talk to your teacher about that...*

I want to focus on Lisa's and Leslie's comments in the reading that I present of the above excerpt. Lisa admires her male colleague, Joe, for getting through to the students she is talking about. Leslie confirms Lisa's validation of Joe as competent teacher by commenting on the hard work Joe puts into the boys. Though Leslie and Darryl acknowledge that it is probably easier for male teachers to get through to the kind of tough students that Brad and Jim are,

Leslie is the only one who wonders whether it is good practice to give difficult students to males. Lisa does not position herself and is not positioned by her colleagues as a teacher who might be able to change the boys' tough man behaviours. Darryl doubts if a shaming strategy that a male colleague employed would have worked similarly well for her and Lisa herself tells how she only thought of using the same strategy but ended up abandoning it. Darryl reassures her that she would not have had the same reaction. The teachers are actually talking about who gets produced as competent teacher or the teacher who is given authority in the process of positioning. It is possible to identify the defining power of a gender discourse that privileges males over females in this story. The 'boys need a male role model' discourse positions the male teachers in the school as if they had more purpose for being there than their female colleagues. It renders female teachers unnecessary, less competent and less effective while male teachers become indispensable. Anything a male teacher does is noted and praised as competent because it is thought to be beneficial for male students. Lisa, on the other hand, does not get recognition for her hard work with such boys. The idea of 'male teachers are better for boys' ranks female teachers as second class yet there are no discourses about 'female teachers are better for girls' that would classify male teachers as less dispensable. Lisa herself and her colleagues all collude in reproducing and strengthening the gender discourse that privileges male teachers. Lisa voluntarily gives up her position as competent and effective teacher in relation to the particular boys talked about. Thus she also unintentionally collaborates in weakening her own authority.

The teachers' failure to intervene in the constitutive force of this discourse helps produce student subjects who are not expected to engage positively with female teachers as well as a school where it is easier for a male teacher to be validated as competent. Gaddis (2006) considers respect for women and the nurturing skills they might teach to boys important for reworking identities of masculinity that promote risk taking behaviours and the exclusion of boys from legitimate identity positions who do not fit the categories of 'tough' masculinity. He suggests that referring students to males and making females, mothers, grandmothers and female teachers, redundant around their care, as the males need males idea dictates, reinforces the

toughness. It breeds destructive resistance rather than the desirability of more gentle interactions. If Lisa, Leslie and Darryl had a strategy to reveal these harmful effects of the gender discourse as well as their different positionings in it, they might be able to work together to reduce its power in ways that would make it easier for all teachers in the school to produce themselves as competent teachers. Clarifying their position in relation to this discourse and identifying its potentially harmful effects could point these teachers towards different action, for example Darryl and Joe having conversations with boys, in which they explicitly support the authority of their female colleagues.

Gender

Though the practices that are exposed in the next example would fit under the previous topic of catering for different needs, I present this example separately because I want to specifically focus on how different ideas relating to gender, when they work in tandem with ideas of respect, can disenfranchise experienced female teachers with undesirable consequences for students and the school community.

8.6 Girls and boys need different programmes

In the following conversation Hillary and Linda are talking about a group of students, whom the teachers in their school have identified as demonstrating significant behaviour difficulties. These students, both boys and girls, often get into trouble in similar ways. They find it difficult to control their emotions and they resort to verbal and physical aggression as a response to disagreements and conflicts. Hillary and Linda talk about how the boys and the girls in this group of students have been divided up and how they are participating in different programmes. Linda provides the programme for the girls but the boys are taught social skills by two male teacher aides. These teacher aides are funded by an independent organisation, which runs mentoring programmes and lunchtime activities in several schools. Hillary and Linda are both experienced teachers respected by their colleagues and both of them are in a senior position. They are concerned about these students and they agree on the importance of teaching respectful ways of relating to them. They do not agree with the boys' programme as they think it does not meet the criteria of good teaching. On

the contrary, they both believe it reinforces 'street behaviours'. However, in spite of their experience, expertise and positions in the school hierarchy they do not feel they can exercise agency in critiquing that programme.

Linda: I'm talking to five girls as a group and I'm going to talk to them individually as well and explore the problem. We named the problem as trouble and how trouble has followed them around and when it is present. I could take four of these girls together and one separately because they have quite different needs. The group is quite mixed as far as their ethnicities are concerned. Their needs are different but they are having a terrible time during lunch break and I'm actually modelling the situations. Their play was interrupted by boys with the skipping rope and I'm going to say to them "what are you going to say to these boys?" I do a lot of modelling like that. I try to choose a focus and the natural focus is what they have a problem with, so when they go out when I'm not here they can actually use strategies. We had some degree of success but then on Friday one of the girls said really blatantly that she was spat in the face by two boys. Well, I spoke to those boys and we got an apology and they said they would never invade the girls' space again. I thought the boys were quite sincere, they apologised face to face. We had a restorative type of conversation and two boys did really well but the third boy said that he didn't really care about what he was doing because it was his right so to speak, and he said "I don't care. I do it because I want to do it". So I've been meeting with the girls every morning at quarter to nine to make sure they know what to do. Walk away, use a nice statement and talk to someone. But I brought the values programme, particularly tolerance and respect, to those two lessons and I want staff to put them into practice in the classroom. There's no point in me doing it when actually we can do something as a whole school.

Maria: Is it only the girls that you think need these skills to handle the situation? What about the boys' part in this?

Linda: I have very little input into the boys' group because a male teacher aide does the pastoral care of the boys.

Hillary: Two of them actually. We have the mentoring programme and this particular group are taken out during lunch hour. They are taken out to the field to play soccer or rugby or whatever with this particular teacher aide.

Linda: The boys in this lunchtime group are the ones who get into trouble with the girls. The teacher aide who runs this group, he talks to them in the street language of this particular area.

Maria: Are they not learning other ways of relating to other people?

Linda: The lid has just been put on.

Maria: Are you finding that satisfactory or do you have some other ideas about how to work with those boys?

Hillary: The outside provider's programme and the men working with the boys is perceived to be working really well. It's not our basket, or I don't know, I wouldn't be allowed to be questioning it because I haven't got enough expertise.

Linda: I think it has lots of potential, the girls' group. But with the boys it's really more difficult the way their group is run and I don't think that you could convince the person that's running the group because you won't be able to convince him. He will perceive it (the girls' programme) as a softer approach.

Maria: If restorative practices were taken up by the whole school and we would get into reflecting on the programmes in the school... we could be asking what kind of relationship skills are we wanting to teach to boys that don't perpetuate disrespect for women. What do we do to do that? But because we are working with two groups maybe people would need to sit down together and reflect on what the common ground is here.

Hillary: *But respect is paramount isn't it? I sometimes felt, and this is a tremendous generalisation, that our government is throwing money at the deficits or problems that are in our communities. ... So people are working in individualised groups to solve their needs and wants and problems but you are still not helping them understand that we've all got to live in this world together. ... We need to teach children respect and that's quite clear for me here. There are some kids that come in and it's really easy, they've got it. Then there are some kiddies who haven't seen a lot of respect or haven't got that sense of belonging. They've moved around a heck of a lot in whatever dimensions and you get other people who get excited by annoying others.*

Linda: *The thing is teachers have got to look at their classroom as a family. This is the family. This is where we're all stuck together.*

The school management's decision to provide different programmes for boys and girls is most likely supported by the popular discourse that suggests that boys and girls learn differently. However, I believe this discourse receives significant support from the discourse of respecting cultural and gender differences as well. Many of the agencies and trusts that provide supportive programmes in NZ schools represent, and are specifically set up to support, ethnic minorities, such as Māori or Pasifika students. There are also organisations that cater for refugees and provide useful information to teachers about students from Africa, the Middle East and Asia. These organisations play a very important role and fill a significant gap in the programmes that different student groups need. However, many schools and teachers have not developed collaborative ways of working with these organisations. On the contrary, under the pressures and demands of their jobs, teachers and school managers are happy to receive what these organisations offer but they fail to develop a partnership that is based on mutual accountability. In the absence of formal processes, it is likely that different discourses, ideas and philosophies will shape the interactions between schools and programme providers, like in Hillary's and Linda's example. Hillary and Linda are unsure if they can assert their expertise and they believe they wouldn't be allowed to question the boys' programme. Though they both doubt that the separation of boys and girls is justified, and they line up several professional arguments for both groups having to learn the same skills, Hillary believes it is 'not their basket' and she hasn't got enough expertise to challenge or critique what the boys are doing, in spite of noticing that street behaviours are reinforced in their group. So Hillary's and Linda's professional arguments do not travel beyond their private

conversations and they only share their frustrations with one another. They believe it would be impossible to convince the male programme leader and they also feel powerless to change their colleagues' opinions as the programme is believed to be working well.

A possible deconstructive reading of Hillary's and Linda's actions could name the discourses of respect for cultural differences and patriarchy as the major forces that silence these two women as professionals. These discourses work to override their decisions that are based on professional arguments by enabling decisions based on cultural respect and gender. The two women are European and the organisation that runs the programme claims to specifically cater for Māori and Pasifika students. The male teacher aide is not European. The two women do not feel they can call a male teacher aide of a different ethnicity to account, despite their management positions and possibly because they do not want to be seen as culturally insensitive and disrespectful of other ethnicities. They unwillingly collude in reproducing a gender hierarchy, in which authority is attached to being a male while they undermine their own authority as leaders in the school. They also give up their agency to participate in the decision making processes of the school. By not being able to intervene in the work of these discourses Hillary and Linda also collaborate in producing a school where expertise counts less than, at least on some occasions, than being a male and other than European and where accountability cannot be enforced even when someone teaches antisocial behaviours to the students. By allowing the teacher aide to continue what they perceive as harmful influence on male students and excusing him from presenting professional arguments for what he does, Hillary and Linda also unintentionally contribute to the de-professionalisation of teaching.

There are further consequences set into motion for the students. The boys' opportunities for learning to collaborate and interact with females are limited and the daily interactions of males and females, both among students and among staff, are significantly reduced. The group of boys, who have few or no interactional strategies of respect, are coached to take males seriously but not females. One of the boys, who invades the girls' space, 'does not care' and does not show any willingness to consider the effects of his behaviours

on others. While Hillary and Linda, in the process of taking up their identities from the discourse of respect, might feel validated as a respectful person and a decent human being, they are unaware of the potential costs of this process for their professional authority and the students' learning. They are also unaware how they maintain and reproduce the very problems that undermine their well-being and that cause stress in their daily work.

Understanding discourses and developing preferred teacher identities

I proposed at the beginning of this chapter that identification and clarification of teachers' relationships to the discourses that they take up their identities from can help them control their identity development and challenge and counteract the negative effects of unhelpful discourses. I suggested that such clarification is desirable if they do not want to leave themselves vulnerable to and defenceless against the unwanted consequences that the productive power of different discourses can set into motion. The last example in this chapter shows a possible application of deconstructive reflection in teachers' daily work. Pamela and Tracey, who also featured in example 8.2 as the teachers who were more in control of their identity development than their colleagues, perform another clarification of their moral positions in relation to male and female ideas of professionalism.

8.7 Professionalism: the place of care and feelings

Some women teachers in one of the focus groups thought it was important to claim space for the practices of a kind of professionalism that welcomed emotions. They considered care and emotions central to their role as a female teacher. Pamela, Tracey and Lily were positioning themselves as carers right from the beginning. They also linked their notion of care to cultural practices of Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand. Māori students often call their teachers 'whaea' and Pamela points out how the term refers to the significance as well as the honouring of women's roles and jobs in Māoridom. Pamela and Tracey consciously take up their personal and professional identities as women who consider the tasks of caring and nurturing very important.

Maria: I think personal care is also a purpose of these focus groups, restoring your well-being and satisfaction. So I see these groups as a form of peer supervision with trusted colleagues with whom you can discuss emotions and when you are reflecting on your practice you are talking about your own values and beliefs, as well as who you are as a person.

Pamela: Whaea is a wonderful term for women in Māoridom. It is someone who cares, nurtures. You wouldn't be called it without respect. It's also really humble.

Tracey: In the Māori world it also reminds us of connections with different women, aunties for example.

Tracey: We talk about those with colleagues and friends. When this happens and someone cries it's absolutely fine. That's being real and there's nothing to loose by being real, there's everything to be gained from being real. It is part of being nurtured and to show your emotions and for me that's fine.

Maria: There are many discourses of what professionalism is about and there are many discourses of professionalism that would say a professional doesn't show emotions. Once I was told by a male colleague that I was too emotionally involved with students and that I should stay professional at all times. If we had some men in this group do you think they might have a different idea of what professionalism is?

Pamela and Tracey: They would.

Maria: You both agree that emotions are important for you and they are part of your practice and part of who you are.

Pamela: I am also a person. If I can see someone needs a cuddle, I like to be able to get up and give one. That's what I miss about teaching in a secondary. When you teach new entrants you can cuddle them. That's just me. If you don't feel like that or you don't want it I appreciate being told.

Tracey: Men are often stuck with that professional idea that it is unprofessional to show your emotions. They are so busy holding that back. I think it's really important as women that we honour that side, that we honour emotions and to show the men that it's really important.

Pamela: Most of the men go to women. That's why the word whaea is so important. Some men naturally squirm about the idea of reflection or talking.

Lily: It's a shame because men can be nurturers as well. I used to go to my father. We had a wonderful relationship. We don't have enough male teachers who nurture.

Tracey: They are not available to talk at dean level. They see the emotional side as unprofessional so they put people in a pastoral care situation who don't show emotions. They will be able to deal with situations without emotions. There are

some females that operate under patriarchal ways as well. Unfortunately they have adopted those ways.

Pamela and Tracey are not afraid to include the expression of emotions in their professional practices. Pamela considers physical touch to be a practice of nurturing, which is unfortunately less available to her in the secondary school setting, where she works. Both teachers introduce discourses of gender that separate men's and women's roles quite clearly. Lily offers as an example her relationship with her father and suggests that the position of nurturer is also available to men. The discussion moves to naming the wider discourses of patriarchy by Tracey. She considers that it is cultural ideas of professionalism that stand in the way of men's caring practices rather than men being incapable of care per se. She describes the impact of the discourse of professionalism that excludes emotions on the practices of pastoral care in her school. Tracey suggests that both pastoral care and nurturing practices are seriously undermined by the discourse of professionalism that prescribes an unemotional stance and privileges a professional identity that keeps emotions out of interactions. By naming the dominant practices of their school and taking a stand in relation to them through describing their own preferred practices, it is possible for Tracey and Pamela to expose, at least partially, the processes that they are concerned about and that they find unsatisfactory in their school. The conversation also reveals something about how inadequate pastoral care might be called into existence in their school, as judged by both these women teachers. An unemotional idea of professionalism stands in the way of the kind of pastoral care that both men and women teachers would like to have but seem unable to realise in practice on a daily basis. We haven't got as far as discussing how to challenge these unhelpful gender practices but we have got as far as naming practices of gender and discourses or ideas of professionalism along with describing the two teachers' moral positions in relation to those ideas.

Pamela and Tracey arrived with intensive emotions to the focus group discussion, which they said had been invited by an injustice that happened to one of their colleagues. However, the intensity of their emotions was reduced by the end of their discussion and clarification of their relationship to different ideas of professionalism. Pamela commented before leaving "I feel so much better. Now I can go back to teach". I suggest that it was both the reflection

these two women performed as well as arriving at a better understanding of themselves and how different discourses affect relationships that was able to reduce Pamela's and Tracey's feelings of pain and hurt. The reflection and clarification moved the discussion from personal disappointments and frustrations towards considering the wider context of education – in this case, albeit somewhat indirectly, the values and beliefs that are promoted by certain discourses of professionalism. It was easier from such a discussion for Pamela and Tracey to consider what kind of relationships those values allow between students and teachers and what kind of identity they might make available to teachers. It was also easier for them to act agentively and position themselves in their preferred discourse of professionalism. Naming discourses helped Pamela and Tracey to protect themselves from the unwanted constitutive forces and emotional costs of those discourses of professionalism that they rejected. In no way I am trying to propose that reflection should aim for the elimination of intensive emotions and emotional responses from teachers' professional lives. Rather, I am concerned about the possible physiological and emotional effects of unexposed and unexamined discursive forces on persons' bodies and stress levels, when teachers feel they are being positioned subordinately in one of the dominant discourses in their school. When a response to such positioning is clarification of one's relationship to different ideas, like in the above example, its effects on teachers' bodies are probably less negative. This example represents the kind of conversations and discussion with colleagues that I was aiming for and that I wanted teachers to learn to have among themselves, without a facilitator. It is a conversation where discursive knowledge is called on to clarify identity and moral positions.

In this chapter I exposed some of the otherwise hidden processes of teachers' identity work. I showed that unexamined discourses, when teachers use various relationship and teaching strategies to validate themselves as competent and good teachers without reflecting on and understanding the effects of those strategies, can produce and reproduce the very conditions and relationship problems that cause stress for teachers. I showed up the discursive forces and teaching strategies that teachers use for validating their preferred identity as ambiguous because while they work to support the

productive and respectful teacher-student interactions of some teachers and students they also simultaneously undermine other teachers' authority, especially women, and/or exclude them from the positions of legitimate subjects, (8.1; 8.2; 8.3). The relationship strategies and discourses of care and respect make teachers' job more complex and they expand the range of the tasks that the teachers have to perform in order to confirm themselves as competent teachers. This in turn might blur the boundaries of what could be reasonable expectations from a teacher and might increase the demands students and parents could place on them (8.1; 8.2; 8.3).

This multi-directionality and ambivalence of the discursive forces that shape teacher-student interactions is shown as potentially costly to the teaching profession. It reduces teachers' agency to make decisions (8.5; 8.6), destabilises their expertise (8.6) and makes teachers vulnerable to others (8.2; 8.3; 8.4; 8.5; 8.6). Students are not exempt from having to suffer some negative consequences either. The unexamined ideas and practices that teachers employ with good intentions can also produce the opposite of what they set out to achieve. They can destabilise inclusion by reproducing the theory and practice divide, by reducing learning time and by maintaining the possibilities for off task behaviours (8.4; 8.5; 8.6). The reproduction of a patriarchal gender hierarchy that privileges male teachers and undermines female teachers' authority and possibilities for being validated as a competent teacher is a further subversive effect of the hidden constitutive forces that are available in the research participant schools. So the teachers in the examples of this chapter are shown as defenceless and vulnerable in an uncontrolled process of their own subjectification. As they do not have a strategy to intervene in this process they are either called into practices that are against their best intentions (8.2; 8.6) or they experience considerable stress because they are unable to change problematic student behaviours or relationships with their students (8.2; 8.3; 8.4; 8.5; 8.6). However, the examples of two teachers illustrate that naming, and reflecting on the effects of the practices and ideas that shape the interactions in their schools can help achieve clarification of identity, which in turn produces calmness and a capacity to accept differences without internalising them as problems (8.7).

Though the skill of the kind of deconstructive reading that I presented of this additional set of teachers' concern and distress narratives was not learned by the research participants, I have provided at least some glimpses of how teachers might be able to incorporate this skill into their daily practice and professional discussions with colleagues. I argue for a legitimate place of this skill in teachers' practice repertoire for two reasons. Firstly, the research participant teachers, who did not understand either the processes of their own identity work or the multiple and contradictory effects of the practices and discourses they used for their validation as legitimate subjects, were more likely to suffer from stress. They were also more likely to engage in or collude with relationships and practices that undermined teacher-student or teacher-teacher collaboration and that worked against their values of inclusion and respect. Secondly, deconstructive reflection revealed the ideas of care, respect, differentiation, fun and gendered notions of learning as complicit in producing the very conditions that can prevent teacher-student collaboration and their complementary positionings in relation to each other. These are ideas that are not the exclusive property of the research participant teachers. Rather they are socially available cultural norms that are legitimised by institutionalised practices, school systems and organisational structures, research activities, policies and resource allocation but popular culture also. That is why they are able to act as hidden rationalities and that is why they can repeatedly sabotage teachers' and students' respectful interactions. If teachers wanted to rework, intervene with and/or change the direction of these hidden rationalities they will need, in addition to their interactional strategies, a conceptual and analytical tool that can help them expose these invisible processes. Deconstructive reflection can be such a tool.

CHAPTER 9 Developing moral agency

In this study I set out to investigate the contributions of a discursive approach to relationships in the classroom and to the bigger project of improving the learning environment. Such a project is justified by the changes of the education systems of the English speaking world in the last few decades. Shifts towards a more inclusive and child centred system, widening the role of schools and adding social and citizenship skill teaching to subject related skills and knowledge require relationship strategies that can facilitate participation and contribution of all and can manage complexity and diversity. In NZ, teaching the key competencies of participating and contributing, relating to others and managing self, which are now mandated by the curriculum, also requires interactional strategies that support the moral development of students. Restorative practice (RP) has been credited with the potential of managing difference and providing the relationship practices of inclusive communities because its underlying principles of respect, collaboration, participation, communication, accountability and empowerment resonate with what inclusive policies set out to achieve (Drewery, 2010; Moxon et al., 2006; Zehr, 1990, 2002). I proposed that a discursive approach to relationships can help teachers produce and reproduce conversations that are based on the same principles and that could change teachers' responses to difficult or problematic situations.

9.1 Conversations that open possibilities

The first objective of this study was to explore in what ways teachers found a discursive conversation theory and the conversational practices of careful language use, curious questioning and repositioning useful for changing their practices. The findings demonstrate that conversational moves utilised in counselling can also enrich teachers' interactional repertoire. The teachers found ways to incorporate these practices into their daily relationship management with both students and adults. The examples provided by the teachers revealed that seemingly insignificant conversations can have very tangible, actual relationship consequences on teachers' and students' well-being. It does matter and makes a difference for teachers' relationships how they carry out their interactions: whether they have the

capacity to open possibilities for continuing or they shut down dialogue while also undermining agency. The new skills that the teachers learned transformed some of their unsatisfactory relationships with students or other adults into more satisfying ones.

The first new skill that the teachers learned was to use language more carefully. This was not a specific conversation strategy but applying a constructionist and discursive theory of conversation to inform interactions. It required teachers to accept that ways of speaking produce identities and relationships and that language has a constitutive power, with different positionings in discourses affecting agency differently. The theory was encapsulated in the slogan 'what we say matters'. This theory of conversation increased teachers' sensitivity to the effects of their ways of speaking and it helped them pay more conscious and ongoing attention to the methods of their engagement with others than before. They tried to influence the potential outcomes of their interactions in ways that minimise any harmful effects that they might inadvertently produce. Several teachers noted that the theory helped them to purposefully set out to enter into and to stay committed to maintaining *dialogue* with others. Changing difficult students, building better relationships with students and colleagues, accepting differences and managing conflicts with less stress were perceived by the teachers to be the positive relational outcomes that staying in dialogue could produce. Laura (6.1.1) considered ongoing dialogue to be a long-term strategy of changing difficult students. Linda (6.1.2) and Wilma (6.1.3) believed it helped create the kind of relationships with students that supported teaching and learning. Laura (6.1.9) and Wilma (6.1.10) thought that being cognisant of the productive significance of conversations made it easier for them to enter into conversations with different colleagues. Jane (6.1.8) and Lynn (6.1.12) were able to stay in the job and carry on after conflict. Wilma (6.1.11) found it easier to sit down with colleagues and discuss an issue calmly. Lynn (6.1.12) felt strengthened in her ability to speak up and share her perspective and Linda (6.1.13) found it easier to request conversations to sort out differences.

The second skill, genuine curiosity or asking questions from a not-knowing stance, required the research participant teachers to change their

customary patterns of interactions and to introduce more hesitance into their usual ways of certainty. Out of all the conversational skills introduced curious questioning was the one that was most often discussed and mentioned as useful by the teachers. There were four different effects of curiosity that the teachers identified and provided examples for. The first effect was an increased capacity to change the teachers' usual pattern of interaction from wanting to fix problems to letting others work out their solutions. Jane (6.1.2, 6.1.4, 6.1.5), Hannah (6.2.2) and Laura (6.2.3) noted that when they gave up their usual stance of 'fixing' other people's problems, it increased both students' and colleagues' capacity to make their own decisions. The teachers and students questioned and talked to from such a stance were more likely to work out their own solutions instead of accepting advice from others. The teachers also noticed that when they were able to give up responsibility for others in this way they felt an increased sense of well-being.

The second effect of curiosity was an increased tolerance for differences, either through accepting that people will have different interpretations of an issue or through getting on better with colleagues who do not share the same views. Jane (6.2.6) found it easier to listen to contradictory accounts of the same event, while Laura (6.2.7) was able to see diversity within her team as an asset rather than as a problem. Diana (6.2.10), Dora (6.2.13) and Wilma (6.2.14) thought their capacity to accept different others was increased. The third effect of curiosity was its support for validating rather than suppressing different meanings and identities. Lynn (6.2.8) and Dora (6.2.9) believed that they were more able to listen and to allow others to share their views than before. Mike (6.2.17) and Dora (6.2.18) were able to suspend judgement and they were prepared to look at alternative identity descriptions for their students. Lastly, curiosity proved effective in conflict management. Claire and Pania (6.2.11) found that their improved capacity to suspend assumptions enabled them to sort misunderstandings between students. Darryl (6.2.12) managed to prevent a conflict between a teacher and a student from escalating. Questioning from a not-knowing stance thus facilitated the *expression of difference* as it made it

easier for the teachers to normalise it, which in turn enabled them to support others with articulating and voicing their views.

The third conversational skill, repositioning, is the on-the-spot use of discourse knowledge and an understanding of the effects of different positionings in discourses. It required the teachers to shape and change their responses in ways that could put others in agentive positions or minimise the constraining effects of unhelpful positions. Participants noted two possible outcomes that repositioning could produce with students. It supported change and it increased collaboration. Change could be achieved in two ways through repositioning. With difficult students it helped offer the identity position of a good student through noticing and validating their positive behaviours as opposed to totalising them and acknowledging only their problematic acts. Dora applied repositioning in this way (6.3.3). Darryl (6.3.5) used it to effect change on a larger scale, with a whole class of students through inviting them into a position of evaluating their unhelpful behaviours and introducing a new discourse and other ways of relating. Dora (6.3.4) provided some evidence for the potential of repositioning for improving collaboration between teachers and other adults, such as parents, after a conflict.

The interactions that the teachers carried out with a conscious awareness of a constructionist theory of conversation and/or applying specific moves informed by this theory helped these teachers build relationships with others, both students and colleagues, who are different. Difference is something to be expected in schools. Moreover, teachers, and students to an extent, cannot simply choose to sever connections with others they find difficult. They have to stay in relationship, often for years. I am not suggesting that it is only constructionist theorising that can help them achieve that. However, I find it significant that the teachers noted major differences between their usual ways of communicating and the conversations that utilised their new skills. Notably, they did not feel obliged to solve or fix problems for others and they felt they had an increased capacity to deal with or tolerate differences.

9.2 Reflection that supports change

The second objective for this project was to investigate the usefulness of the discursive theoretical framework and specifically the skill of deconstruction for informing reflection. Deconstructive reflection was hypothesised to provide new understandings and perspectives on problematic teacher-student and teacher-adult relationships. In the following, I first discuss the findings about deconstruction as it was used in the reflective conversations that were part of the focus group discussions. I will then present the contributions of deconstruction as a data analysis method.

The findings suggest that there can be several positive effects of *the informal, practical use of deconstruction* in reflective conversations that invite the clarification of different ideas, conceptualisations of teaching and positions in discourses, and when teachers have opportunities to tell others about their concerns. Separating problems from persons and locating them in the realm of discourses, as opposed to internalising, was one of the effects of using discourse knowledge, which in turn also enhanced the teachers' well-being. When the teachers clearly distinguished between different ideas, ideologies, values and practices, whether they named discourses explicitly or not, it changed their emotional responses to the situations that caused distress, anger, hurt or concern for them. They arrived, as a result, at a different sense of themselves and a different perspective on the relationships that they experienced as problematic. Diana (7.1) was able to clarify her multiple positions of counsellor, friend and teacher that she took up in relation to a parent. Hannah (7.5) was able to accept as legitimate her own self care as opposed to feeling obliged to act as 'superwoman' and to continue to work when she was ill. Her feeling of inadequacy was also transformed. Leslie's (7.6) clarification of the relationship between his pastoral and subject teaching roles and becoming aware of different discourses moved him past the impasse of feeling he can only choose one of his roles, while he has to compromise the other. He found a more satisfying way of performing both his roles and felt less self blame for a student leaving the school.

In the instances when there was less discussion about the potential consequences of different positions and practices, and the teachers did not

directly or firmly reject discourses or positions that undermined their relationships, they were still able to clarify their preferred practice. In addition, they were able to justify or argue for its place in their work, which, I suggest, can be a significant strategy of the development of identity and ethics. James and Helen (7.2) distinguished different approaches to control. Jack and Stephanie (7.3) expressed their preference for practical, action packed learning, while Pamela and Tracey (8.2) critiqued the absence of care for teachers, when one of their colleagues was assaulted by students. Hillary and Linda (8.6) were able to voice their misgivings about the different programmes girls and boys were taught in their school. Though some of these teachers opted not to follow a different line of action after performing such clarification of their positions, for example Pamela, Tracey, Hillary and Linda decided not to challenge the decisions of their colleagues, they nevertheless articulated their preferred practice, in front of others. Such articulation was also experienced by them as the validation of their preferred identities. During the act of telling these teachers managed to take up a speaking position and they could experience themselves as legitimate, agentive subjects as opposed to feeling silenced or denied access to a position of agency (Drewery, 2005; Weingarten, 2000, 2003).

Teachers who appeared to have greater clarity about both their identity as a teacher and their relationship strategies, experienced less stress and perceived their relationships as satisfying. Their interactions played out in the ways they had planned. These teachers could avoid being called into positions that they resisted. They were aware of their multiple positions and they were clear rather than ambiguous about the time, place and purpose of their various positionings. They experienced themselves as agents and as having authority to carry out their different tasks as they preferred rather than allowing themselves to be directed by others or circumstances. Dora (7.1) knew when she was prepared to behave like a parent in relation to a student and when to reject it as a way of interacting with him, unlike her colleague, Diana, who struggled to reconcile a variety of positionings in her relationship with a parent. Darryl (8.1) was in control of his positionings instead of allowing others to position him. He decided when he was willing to offer the kind of care parents provide, allowing his students to come to his

house when they were in trouble, but he was also able to reject the position of being their friend. Leila (8.3), on the other hand, did not take a stand in relation to two different ideas of respect. She did not decide when she thought it appropriate to start a relationship from a position of respect and when one should earn it. She spent her time constantly negotiating and renegotiating the rules of her interactions with some of her students. Their possibilities for collaboration were reduced and they failed to accomplish what they were there to do together: teaching and learning.

Discourse knowledge could also help a teacher to manage differences. When teachers were positioned in contradictory discourses of professionalism (7.7, 8.7), one that drew a demarcation line between the personal sphere of one's life and one's professional activities, they were able to attribute their differences to discursive positions as opposed to locating them as problems inside the other. This in turn allowed these teachers to continue their discussion (7.7) or to accept different others (8.7). Joe and Anna could carry on arguing their different views about whether personal issues should be included in the focus group discussions or not (7.7). Similar differences often stall communication and prevent participants from going beyond the binary opposition of their respective positionings. Tracey and Pamela (8.7) did not get upset about their male colleagues and their practices of pastoral care that were contrary to Pamela's and Tracey's beliefs and educational philosophy. They attributed their differences to their different discursive locations, of male and female ideas of care, instead of fuming or feeling powerless, which can be a response in similar situations. In summary, the skill of deconstruction enabled the development of teachers' capacity to act differently after reflecting on their relationships.

9.3 The place of discursive relationship practices in teachers' interactional repertoire

The discursive theory and practices of relationship that were introduced to the teachers in this study, and that are already used in therapy, have been shown to broaden teachers' repertoire. Teachers found various ways of incorporating them into their relationship management strategies that they used in their classrooms or in their interactions with colleagues. More importantly, the skills enhanced teachers' capacity to change their

usual ways of speaking and/or their responses to students and adults or to difficult situations, which in turn was also experienced by them as more satisfying. The teachers highlighted two effects that they perceived the discursive approach was able to produce. They thought their ability to initiate, to maintain or to continue dialogue with difficult others or after disagreements improved. They also noticed their increased tolerance for or understanding of differences. Commitment to dialogue and facilitating the expression of difference are effects that restorative conversations aim to accomplish. They are also effects that are central to the successful implementation of inclusive policies and to teaching social and emotional competencies to students (Cremin, 2007; McCluskey, 2010). The findings provide evidence that discursive relationship practices have the potential to achieve these outcomes. They can be used proactively, as a daily relationship management strategy rather than only called upon as responsive strategies. Discursive conversation practices can provide an alternative to restorative chats, which follow a script. However, they do not provide the same certainty and clear structure as a script does. While they help devise responses to the unique characteristics of a situation, they are less orderly than a script. A comparative study could explore whether these two approaches suit distinctly different situations and what additional outcomes they might achieve.

A more significant finding of this study is demonstrating how the conversation theory and skills provided support for developing what I now name as teachers' *moral agency*. Based on the process of how teachers accounted for their use of the new skills, I define moral agency as the kind of relational decision making about the directions of practice and life that at the same time considers the possible implications of practice on others (Drewery, 2005). It is exercising ethical agency during decision making by trying to reduce harm to others (Linehan & McCarthy, 2000, 2001; Sampson, 2003; Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004). It is working to position self and others in speaking rather than silent positions (Davies, 1991). It is also a process of ongoing evaluation and justification of practice, deciding whether it is congruent or not with one's values and beliefs, which I also consider to be a process of developing and performing identity. This study has shown that

both the theory of conversation that the teachers were introduced to and deconstruction supported such a process and thus the development of the teachers' moral agency. When the teachers gave examples in the focus groups of how their awareness of the productive power of language helped them maintain dialogue and accept differences, they made identity claims simultaneously to considering and evaluating the potential relational outcomes of the practice of careful language use. They justified and argued for the use of this practice by connecting it to what they valued as a teacher, which included a commitment to changing students, seeing the big picture and a long term role for themselves, as well as being prepared to work through conflicts and rise over differences. During the reflective conversations that used deconstruction the teachers clarified their stance on different practices and discourses. They articulated their preferred practices or rejected the ones that did not affirm the identity they wanted to take up.

The process of developing and exercising moral agency in this way was able to achieve some additional outcomes. It changed the way the teachers made sense of themselves and/or their practices and relationships. In turn, the changes in meaning making and understanding situations increased their capacity to either adopt a different, less stressful, emotional response to a situation or to modify their practice. These effects support a claim that exercising or developing moral agency can also be restorative practice. It can help restore both individual well-being and a sense of emotional calm after a conflict situation, but it can also restore dialogue, the capacity to repair relationships and to carry on with them after a breakdown or when parties have different perspectives on the world. In the busy lives of schools, where time is of essence, and the pressures of exams and assessments distract attention from the actual effects of conversations on teachers' and students' lives, it is important to have interaction strategies that keep those potential effects in teachers' conscious awareness. It can make a difference if teachers know how to be more vigilant to the process of their own and their students' subjectification in ways that allow everyone to take themselves up as legitimate subjects and to have access to positions of agency. It is also important that teachers have access to processes that help them restore their own well-being.

Drewery (2005, 2009, 2010) suggests that the ways we speak can be either productive of relationships or damaging of them. There are ways of speaking that can either create distance or separate people or both, as opposed to bringing them together. There are also ways of speaking that position persons agentively, in charge of the narratives of their lives. Discourse knowledge can provide the necessary ongoing sensitivity to the effects of ordinary and seemingly insignificant interactions that can either go peacefully or escalate into resistance and conflict. It can change the trajectory of an interaction and it does not require extra time but a different attitude and stance to relationships. I concur with Drewery (2005) who says

I would not argue that speaking more carefully would fix all our problems, but I do think that exercising more care in how we speak, both in our everyday conversations and in our professional practices, would go quite a long way towards encouraging peaceful coexistence among persons, particularly but not only between persons of difference. I certainly do want to suggest that constructionist theory of language, and positioning theory in particular, has the potential to revolutionize the terms of our understanding of human interactions, especially in everyday conversations. (p. 321)

This study has shown that ways of speaking informed by discourse theory are worth exploring further as relationship strategies of managing difference, supporting dialogue and restoring teachers' well-being through the process they provide for the development of moral agency.

9.4 Limitations of a discursive approach to relationships

Adding the practices of a discursive approach to the teachers' relationship management skills presented some problems as well. Firstly, the theory and the conceptual tools that teachers had to familiarise themselves with are complex. They require time and practice to acquire before they can inform interactions in a useful way. Secondly, promoting these conceptual tools, in other words theory, as useful, goes against currently dominant discourses of professional learning. These discourses privilege the view that professional learning can only be useful if it provides quick and practical solutions to problems (Lincoln & Canella, 2004; St. Pierre, 2000, 2002). It is even better if these solutions have immediate, tangible effects in the classroom, which is understandable given the stresses and pressures of teachers' work. A ready-made script or a prewritten series of questions that can be applied as a formula for every situation is part of these

expectations. The stance of not-knowing, repositioning and deconstruction cannot be scripted and generalised in this way. They require teachers to listen differently in every situation and to listen *for* what is not so obvious: the meanings others make of an event or the discourses that they are positioned in. Such listening makes it possible to formulate some pertinent questions that help students and other adults to articulate their views, to change their positionings or to clarify their stance in relation to a discourse. Thirdly, a discursive approach places equal emphasis on skills of reflection and conversation. Not all teachers perceive reflection to be a skill or to be beneficial for practice.

Several participants commented after a reflective conversation that it was just talk and they expressed their preference for skill practice. They did this in spite of spending most of their time on sharing distress narratives and noting how such sharing made them feel better. The teachers were familiar with both long standing traditions of reflective practice in teaching (Bernstein Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993; Bintley, 1993; Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983, 1987) as well as its still popular forms from the 1990s such as critical friends (La Costa & Kallick, 1993; Loughran, 1996) and problem solving teams (Porter, Wilson, Kelly & den Otter, 1991). However, they thought that reflection was something that teachers did in their own time anyway rather than in professional learning sessions, which were meant for practising new skills and strategies. Most participants seemed to align themselves with a specific school of thought within educational research, which privileges technical solutions to classroom problems and agrees with the recent push for evidence based practice (Lather, 2004; Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Canella, 2004; St. Pierre, 2000, 2002). They did not agree that responding to problems is inseparable from teachers' professional identity and values and beliefs about teaching and learning, in other words clarifying pedagogy and teaching philosophy as opposed to simply being a matter of technical solutions (Clough, 2002; Davies, 2003, 2005). Since I carried out my research the Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration on teacher professional learning published by the NZ Ministry of Education (Timperley, 2008; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007) has reconfirmed and reinstated the importance of reflection. In a foreword to the above publication Professor Russel Bishop,

who has done extensive research on the importance of teacher practice change on improving achievement levels for Maori students (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop et al., 2007), names teachers' sense-making of their practices as one possible way of supporting their transformation. Bishop suggests that teachers need to reflect on the beliefs, values and understandings they hold about their students in order to find 'explanations and practices from alternative discourses that offer solutions instead of problems and barriers' (Timperley et al., 2007, p. xviii).

A discursive approach to relationships can further complicate teachers' work through the confusion that it might produce for students. In particular, teachers employing a not-knowing stance or asking deconstructive questions represent a collaborative rather than an authoritarian or teacher-directed paradigm so they differ significantly from what students might recognise as their usual ways of interacting with their teachers. If students are only familiar with adult-centred relationship practices that are based on external control and behaviour management, then invitations to share their views or to occupy a moral position and to reflect on their actions or discourses might be perceived by them as strange and confusing. The conversational moves might also differ from the cultural practices and relationship paradigms familiar to the students. In NZ most Pasifika students are required to operate within a hierarchical paradigm and to accept their elders' views as truths. A young person voicing his/her opinion or taking a stand might be seen as outright disrespect towards adults. However, doing this respectfully is part of the aim of the theory.

The use of new and unfamiliar conversational moves can also produce discursive slips or misunderstandings. Both teachers and students might misjudge what would be the most useful relationship paradigm in a given situation. Students might expect to be invited into an expert position in relation to everything that is discussed in a lesson, including subject knowledge. They might become resistant towards teacher explanations, instructions and modelling of new skills. Teachers themselves might miscalculate when curiosity is appropriate and when it might not be. So it is important that teachers clearly distinguish between expertise about one's life and expertise within a subject of study. It has to be evident to teachers that

they are not expected to give up their authority and position of expertise in relation to subject related skills. They most likely will know more in Maths or English than their students and questioning their knowledge in those areas could make it impossible for them to be taken seriously as teachers.

These potential difficulties with the discursive approach raise questions about the methods and processes of its introduction to teachers. A mixture of workshops and focus group discussions seems to be a viable option. However, a facilitation that more evenly balances the practice and reflection functions of focus groups might have been better received by the teachers and it could be a better process for future introductions of the skills. It could ensure that the teachers have opportunities to practise all the skills introduced, including the complex skill of deconstruction, which was not learnt by all participants. It is especially important to have a more controlled facilitation and to separate the different functions of skill practice and reflective conversations if focus group discussions are utilised for multiple purposes, as they were in this study. The sessions could be divided into sections, which can prevent the therapeutic use of the groups from overriding and limiting skill practice. In addition, facilitation that establishes clear links between deconstructive reflection and the changes teachers might make as a result, whether they are different understandings of self and relationships, less harmful emotional responses or interacting differently with others, could reduce resistance towards reflection and the complexity and difficulties of the theory and theory in general. Currently popular discourses of teacher professional learning promote a notion of learning similar to what the discourses of fun do and that students so readily step into. They create expectations of an instantaneousness of acquisition along with a resistance towards anything that requires hard work, and theory is perceived by some to belong to this category. Facilitation that can pinpoint the practical benefits of theory can better overcome the current theory and practice divide. These issues were not adequately addressed in this study.

9.5 Deconstruction that supports new understandings

In addition to exploring the potential usefulness of deconstructive reflection for teachers, I also utilised *deconstruction as an analytical tool* to make sense of the research participant teachers' concern and distress

narratives. The objective of this analysis was to arrive at different understandings of teacher-student conflicts and to identify some of the influences that undermine relationships that are conducive to teaching and learning. I found two distinct contributions of the deconstructive readings in the teachers' concern and distress narratives. First, deconstruction provided a possible conceptualisation and explanation for some of the relationship problems that undermined the teachers' well-being, and at times jeopardised teaching and learning in their classrooms. Second, the readings revealed specific discourses as complicit in producing relationship problems and/or positioning teachers and students in opposition to each other.

9.5.1 Conceptualising relationship problems

I found that multiple positionings could pose problems for both teachers' personal well-being and their relationships with others. When teachers were positioned in several contradictory discourses simultaneously, they found it difficult to reconcile those. They perceived their job to be unmanageable. Leslie (7.6) found it hard to interact with students when he was required to alternate between two different relationship paradigms: subject teaching and pastoral care. Diana (7.1) was overwhelmed by the demands and expectations of her to be a parent's counsellor and friend, in addition to acting as her child's teacher. Hillary and Linda (8.6) could only condemn practices that they viewed as harmful for their students in confidential, private discussions. They felt unable to do the same from their position of experienced and highly qualified teachers of their school. Their contradictory positions in discourses of gender and respect (not being sure whether they can critique the practices of a male colleague from another ethnicity) produced confusion for these teachers, which in turn limited their agency to act. Their confidence to challenge what they deemed unprofessional practice was compromised.

Discursive slips (Walkerdine, 2003), when teachers' and students' understandings of their respective positions were not complementary or they were operating from different discourses, hindered their collaboration. Their expected responses did not match what the other could or was willing to provide. James and Helen (7.2) operated from a discourse of internal control rather than from the discourse their students positioned themselves

in. The students' discourse supported compliance that is achieved through external control or even physical punishment. Consequently, they expected their teachers to control them and they refused to voluntarily behave according to the unwritten rules of interactions. Jack and Stephanie (7.3) and Jacob and Leanne (8.4) struggled to include activities that were not judged to be practical or fun by their students, as the students' ideas of learning privileged hands-on and action packed ways of acquiring new skills. Different understandings created different expectations, which in turn produced frustration with or resistance towards the other.

9.5.2 Exposing problematic discourses of teaching and learning

The second contribution of deconstruction was the identification of some specific discourses that can be construed as complicit in producing teachers, students and parents in opposition. Deconstruction also uncovered how these discourses might undermine teacher-student collaboration and/or how they might prevent them from performing their respective roles by producing oppositional teacher-student or teacher-parent identities (Bansel et al., 2009). Several of the teachers' narratives revealed how the productive power of these discourses produced relationships that were contrary to the teachers' intentions (7.2, 7.3, 8.1, 8.4) and how they also erased the hard work that the teachers had put in, compelling them instead to question their competencies (8.3, 8.6). The discourses that I identified as problematic include care, professionalism, pedagogy and gender. The research participants positioned themselves in these discourses as part of the process of taking up their identities. From the available positions within these discourses they were able to validate themselves, and to be validated by others, as teachers. However, when the teachers relied on these discourses for their identity work they were unaware of the ambivalence and the harm that they might produce for their relationships and their jobs. Their resolve to take up their identities from these discourses was strengthened by the validation the discourses provided for the moral values of inclusiveness, fairness, commitment, care, hard work and meeting the needs of children. These are values that are central to what many teachers consider to be part of the identity of a 'good teacher'. Uncovering and exposing the ambiguous

and deceptive productive power of these particular discourses is also a significant finding of this study.

When the participant teachers positioned themselves in a discourse of *care* that supported their availability to listen to students and their parents and/or to be surrogate parents even, they interpreted this as performing their usual pastoral duties. However, there are some potentially damaging effects of this discourse that I believe need unsettling and exposing. First, this care discourse raises questions about where the boundaries of care might lie for each individual teacher, and whether teachers can be expected to provide services similar to counsellors or social workers. The examples demonstrate that when the teachers were unable to identify the point beyond which they could not manage the provision of care expected of them, their personal well-being suffered. Diana (7.1) and Hannah (7.5) found the expectations of them too much, or could only fulfil them at the cost of their well-being. Extreme practices of devoted care, such as the one Darryl was able to provide (8.1), while validating a teacher as good teacher, might also create unreasonable public expectations of the profession of teaching. As a result teachers might be pressured to blur the boundaries between their professional and personal spaces, similarly to how Darryl did by opening his home to students in trouble. Very few teachers are able to do what Darryl did without feeling under duress. Second, clarification of what constitutes reasonable and manageable care has implications not only for individual teachers' well-being and personal relationships with parents or colleagues but also for the teaching profession as well. Teachers' different stances on care indirectly affect their colleagues as they shape what comes to be seen as the norms of professional conduct. Teachers might want to consider whether they want, or if they think it is realistic and practically manageable to have, a profession and a group of professionals, who fulfil multiple roles of teaching, counselling and social work.

Discourses of *professionalism*, or which particular idea of professionalism became dominant or was promoted by the majority of staff in the participant schools, could negatively impact collegial relationships. Those who aligned themselves with alternative ideas of professionalism, ones that were suppressed or frowned upon by some of their colleagues, felt

restricted in performing their preferred practices. Pamela and Tracey (8.2, 8.7) and Anna (7.7) inferred that their idea of professionalism, which allowed the sharing of emotions, was in opposition to that of their male colleagues, who preferred to render the telling of personal issues and the displaying of emotions inadmissible into professional discussions. Extreme ideas of professionalism demanded that Hannah (7.5) coped with any challenges without support and that she carried on, demonstrating her commitment to the job and that she was a 'good teacher', even when she was sick. The same idea limited and drove underground the exercising of care for a colleague, who was assaulted, while it was expected towards a student (8.2). I think that it is a kind of corporate and male idea of professionalism that shaped the interactions in the above examples. Such view of professionalism can work to de-personalise teachers' relationships with their colleagues. One effect of this discourse in schools might be that it can complicate and contradict the positive relationship building initiatives that many schools are involved with and that the curriculum and researchers centralise as significant for improving achievement and for reducing the use of disciplinary measures. If teachers accepted this discourse, it could restrict their personal connections with their colleagues, which might also undermine their opportunities for being role models for their students when it comes to teaching relationship and citizenship skills.

The discourses of *pedagogy* that the research participants positioned themselves in, prescribed ways of interacting with students and methods of delivering the curriculum that drew on different notions of control (7.2), respect (8.3), fun (8.4), gender (7.4, 8.5, 8.6) and the binary of theory and practice (7.3). These discourses were shown to call into being student subjects who have, and in a way were encouraged to have, warped ideas about what constitutes and what can realistically be expected of a teaching and learning interaction. These student subjects are allowed to believe that learning can be pure entertainment and that there is no need for sustained attention or (at times boring!) repetitious practice. They cling to a false illusion that learning and becoming fluent in the use of a new skill can just happen without having to trade in hard work or experiencing some discomfort that might require some internal discipline to overcome. In the

meantime, the teacher subjects in this discourse work harder and harder and they go out of their way to come up with novel and exciting ways of presenting the material so that their students' needs are catered for. There is no clear definition of what the students are expected to give in return. Leila's students (8.3) kept negotiating the rules of their contributions, wasting their own and others' precious learning time. Leila thought the students had greater authority over their class than she had ('it is their class'). There were students in her class who made their teachers earn respect, which the teachers accepted, instead of considering if a way of interacting that starts from a position of respect, showing 'unconditional kindness' towards others (Sampson, 2003), might be more useful. Jacob (8.4) believed his students had a right to immediate attention, which was withheld from Pamela's and Tracey's colleague when he was assaulted by students. These discourses of pedagogy can produce a teacher subject whose agency and authority to teach is seriously destabilised.

Finally, the discourses that I identified in the teachers' narratives about *gender* promoted differential treatment for boys and girls. These discourses authorised teaching approaches that at times deprived boys of opportunities to practise different ways of interacting that might be deemed feminine (8.6). They supported the reproduction of 'machoness' and violence as was the case with the programme that the boys were taught in Hillary's school by a teacher aide (8.6). These discourses also limited boys' time to practise exactly those skills that they struggled with, such as sitting and writing from memory, which was considered too theoretical and less desirable than the more practical, action packed, 'Fear Factor' type activities (7.3, 8.4). The discourses that authorised differential treatment for boys and girls provided greater authority and agency to male teachers and they enabled them to get away with shaming a student by sticking a note ('I am a faggot') on his back, which the student had used previously to humiliate another student. However, the same discourses also worked to deter a woman teacher from doing the same, as was the case in Lisa's example (8.5).

In addition, a gender discourse positioned experienced female teachers in a position of limited agency while providing a greater space for a young male teacher and teacher aide for making decisions about what might

be the best approach for students, as was the case for James and Sarah (7.4) and Hillary and Linda (8.6). Gender discourses produced a divided student body and they confined some boys and girls to segregation (8.6), instead of providing opportunities for them to interact with each other. Given that the majority of teachers are female in NZ, it is worth investigating whether gender discourses make it easier for male teachers to have the necessary authority to teach and if it is harder for female teachers to be accepted and taken seriously as teachers. It could also be explored if practices of gender differentiation are helping or hindering boys' learning of the skills in which they are lagging behind as well as how they might collude with and validate aggression and disrespect for females.

9.6 Reflections on this study

9.6.1 Limitations

I have already indicated the problems that might arise when introducing a discursive approach that has a complex theoretical component in addition to new practices. I suggested a more controlled facilitation method from what was used in this study to overcome potential imbalances between theory and practice. Here I want to address some of the limitations and questions arising from having both primary and secondary teachers in the study, the selection of participants for each focus group, my multiple positionings in relation to the participants and the discourse analytical approach to data analysis.

In the specific examples, I did not indicate whether the teachers taught in primary or secondary schools, because in some instances it might have made them recognisable due to the small number of participants. There were no differences between primary and secondary school teachers in the themes of the distress narratives they shared with their groups. Both primary and secondary teachers repeatedly talked about issues of care, professionalism, pedagogy or teaching approaches and gender, which shows not only that these topics mattered to the participants at the time but also that these aspects of their work are important to them as teachers. However, there was a difference in the number of examples that primary and secondary school teachers provided for their use of the conversational theory and skills. Two thirds of the conversation accounts were from primary

teachers. There can be a number of explanations for this difference. It can indicate either that a collaborative paradigm of interaction might be easier to implement in a primary school or that the participant primary teachers might have had more cognitive energy to pay attention to the minutiae of their interactions, given that they did not have to prepare students for exams. It can also be that these teachers were more willing than their secondary colleagues to change their practices. Separate studies of primary and secondary teachers or a comparative study could better reveal the differences in the uptake and the uses of the skills by primary and secondary teachers.

Both schools' senior managers made it compulsory for all teachers in their schools to participate in the workshops but participation in the research was voluntary. In the area school where restorative practice was the major professional learning initiative for the whole year all but five teachers volunteered to participate. However, there were significantly fewer volunteers in the primary school, which had several other professional learning initiatives going on at the same time. Surveying or interviewing teachers who had chosen not to participate could have provided valuable insights into teachers' initial reactions towards the discursive approach and it could have revealed what deterred them from continuing with it. The different volunteering ratios confirm the findings of other studies that time made available for professional learning improves teachers' attitudes towards and engagement with new initiatives (Adair & Dixon, 2000; Buckley & Maxwell, 2007; Kane et al., 2007, 2008). When teachers do not have to divide their attention between several different trainings, they are more likely to take on a new initiative.

The allocation of teachers into focus groups was done according to their positions in the primary school and the year levels that they taught in the area school. This grouping, though requested by the teachers, was often changed in the area school, when teachers had other commitments and/or found different times of the day more suitable. They simply joined another group on those occasions. However, the groupings that were done according to positions of seniority in the primary school were seldom changed. The teachers there wanted to stay with their original groups for all sessions. This

indicates that participation in groups can be affected by power relationships, the quality of collegial relationships and/or the culture of support that exists within a school. If focus groups are used for both skill practice and reflective conversations, it is important to ensure that teachers feel comfortable with their group members and they can take risks when they practise new skills or share personal narratives. I allowed the teachers to be in charge of their group allocation, which might have addressed power relationships. However, it also limited sharing experiences with the whole staff. If skill practice and discussion was carried out on separate occasions from sharing distress narratives, then teachers could alternate their groupings in order to gain insight into how their colleagues use the skills with different students of different year levels.

9.6.2 Multiple positioning of researcher and participants

My relationship with the participants during the study can be best described as multiple positioning. I acted as a professional learning facilitator, a researcher and at times as a supervisor and/or a counsellor. This had implications for the findings as well as for the research process. The deconstructive readings of teachers' narratives are only my interpretations. I did not produce a collaborative reading with the teachers because the timeframe of the research would have made it unmanageable. A research process that has built in time for this purpose might have ensured that the teachers learned the skill of deconstruction better. The usefulness of the new understandings that I arrived at after subjecting the teachers' narratives to further discourse analysis was not explored with the teachers either. Their potential support for practice change and/or improving well-being could be investigated by further studies. A research design different from discourse analysis, such as collaborative action research (Heron, 1996; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Sagor, 1993) could better ensure that deconstructive readings are shared with participants and their responses are incorporated in the data analysis and discussion. This could be part of another project.

The positioning of the researcher both as professional development provider and as analyser of data provided the most significant challenge of the research design. I was required to shift between a position of advocacy for the skills and a position from which I could perform a dispassionate

analysis of the data. When I introduced the skills to the teachers in the workshops, I demonstrated their potential with examples from my own teaching and counselling practice and I spoke with authority about the usefulness of the skills. Such authority was necessary for being taken seriously by the teachers as a professional learning facilitator. However, during data analysis I had to try and put this authority aside and to stay cognisant of the differences between my personal experiences with the skills and those of the teachers. Performing these two roles made the writing of the research report more difficult. My multiple positioning could also have affected the data generation process. I have no way of knowing whether the teachers only shared positive outcomes with me and remained silent about any problems, misgivings or resistances that they experienced about the relationship skills. Two different persons facilitating the professional development workshops and the focus group discussions could have overcome this problem.

9.7 Reflection and moral agency

The thesis has shown that conversation skills informed by discourse knowledge can have beneficial effects for both teachers' wellbeing and their relationships. They can offer an alternative to multi-step, restorative chats through their potential to develop teachers' capacity for dialogue and to enhance their understanding and control of the various discourses that might place them in opposition with students and with colleagues. Future studies could explore whether ways of speaking informed by discourse knowledge achieve the same relational outcomes as restorative chats and if teachers appreciate their non-scripted approach. A more important finding about the conversation theory and skills was the support that they provided for teachers' moral agency and the wellbeing enhancing effects that moral agency was able to produce. However, the concept of moral agency was formulated by the researcher after identifying patterns in teachers' reflections on their practices. The well-being enhancement and practice change potentials of moral agency, both as a concept and the processes that are able to develop it, are worthwhile to investigate further.

9.7.1 The complexity of teachers' work and relationships

The identification of multiple, contradictory positionings and discursive slips as a potential source of stress for the teachers provides evidence that the participants had to deal with a high level of complexity on both a personal and relational level. The teachers were seen to shift between several different roles. The discursive slips between students and teachers, their different understandings of their respective roles, produced resistances, disruptions and they hindered teaching and learning in the classroom. The reflective conversations revealed complexity on a wider school level and they showed that in both schools there was a wide range of ideas about what different teachers considered central to their job. Teachers on the same staff had different and often contradictory perspectives on teaching approaches, notions of professionalism and care and gender. The findings about the ambiguities and hidden work of the very discourses that the teachers took up their preferred identities from, and the ways these discourses produced effects that were contrary to the teachers' intentions, provide arguments that these complexities are difficult to manage. The ways these discourses were exposed to place teachers and students in opposition, producing students who find it hard to engage in learning behaviours and teachers who inadvertently collude in this process, call for strategies that can help deal with such complexity. When the teachers had no such strategies, their well-being was undermined and they were searching for a clear sense of their professional identity. These findings raise several questions about and have implications for how today's heterogeneous school communities can perform their different functions of subject and relationship skill teaching. In particular, they offer contributions to debates about developing students' relationship competencies, the conceptualisation of school culture and the benefits and role of reflection in teachers' work.

These various aspects of complexity form the basis of my arguments for regular *relationship building conversations* in the classroom that involve students in improving the learning environment. Teachers already engage in many restorative or other conversations for these purposes but it is up to individual teachers whether they wish to serve justice to teaching relationship and citizenship skills or they privilege subject knowledge,

especially in secondary schools. Many of the relationally focused conversations might come about as a reaction to ongoing disruptions and disobedience rather than as proactive and planned activities. The new emphasis on key competencies in the NZ Curriculum provides an opportunity to formalise and legitimise relationship building conversations as part of any subject lesson. The kinds of conversations that I propose are responsive in a way because they are conducted after a series of disruptions, disrespect or unsatisfactory interactions. However, they are also planned and informed by analysing patterns of interaction relying on a conceptual framework, such as the one a discursive approach provides. This is not to say that other theories of relationship could not be applied for this purpose. If a discursive framework is used to explain relationship problems in a particular class, then repeated occurrences of misunderstandings or discursive slips or students and teachers operating from different discourses of teaching and learning could justify the timetabling of a relational conversation.

Restorative practice provides processes to conduct such conversations. Braithwaite's (2001) youth development circles or various formats for class meetings (Moxon et al., 2007; The Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003; Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2006b) could be used for this purpose. However, I wish to argue for a discursive approach to class meetings as a form of relationship building conversation, which is a model that I am currently involved in developing at Aotea College (Kaveney & Drewery, 2010; Kecskemeti, 2010; Kecskemeti & Kaveney, forthcoming). This model of class meeting utilises the same discursive conversation skills that I introduced to the teachers. Deconstructive questions and invitations to students to reflect have a distinguished role in these meetings. Teachers listen for the hidden ideas and beliefs that maintain unhelpful interactions and with a well placed question they invite students into a moral position supporting them to take a stand on and/or to explain their views on those practices. This conscious facilitation of students' moral engagement with what is happening in their classrooms is a way of actively involving them in creating a culture that is more conducive to learning. It can also be used to teach new relationship skills to them. In addition, teachers use the meetings to identify the themes or discourses that are repeatedly circulated in a

particular class. They then evaluate their teaching practices and decide which of their specific responses maintain or collude with unhelpful ideas and they also formulate together totally different responses to these situations. The potential of such a discursive approach for creating a better learning culture, contributing to students' moral development as well as for supporting teachers' clarification of their practices and professional identity is worth investigating. One of my colleagues has already researched the potential of class meetings for developing students' key competencies (Gray & Drewery, 2010).

The diversity of the ideas that different teachers and students were shown to have about their respective roles, and the range of perspectives different teachers within the same school had about care, professionalism, gender and pedagogy, provide an argument for rethinking the notion of *school culture*. I believe it might be too ambitious to aim to reconcile the many different perspectives that are present in a school and to try and establish a uniform culture. The proponents of RP note that it is a different paradigm of relationship from behaviour management and the introduction of RP requires culture change (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005, 2006; Cremin, 2010; Drewery, 2007; McCluskey, 2010). While I agree with this proposition, I also wish to propose a specific conceptualisation of school culture. I suggest that culture change in schools is not about having a single paradigm of interaction after eradicating what is considered punitive or behaviour management or something other than restorative or collaborative practice. It is more about changing the dominant paradigm of relationship while also retaining a variety of paradigms. In any school community there will be a range of different approaches to or theories of relationship that teachers might employ. It is likely that each approach will have benefits and will be able to produce positive relational outcomes. Behaviour management can also be useful when it is not practical to have a longer conversation. Smyth's and Hattam's description of school culture (2004) are relevant for my argument. They suggest that

School cultures are produced through a complex interweaving of socio-cultural, political, economic and organisational factors, together with a constellation of class/race/gender factors. School cultures are not the prerogative domain of any one group – teachers, students, parents, politicians, the business community or policy makers. Rather, school cultures emerge out

of and are continually constructed and re-constructed through the ongoing struggles between and among each of these groups as they vie to have their particular view of schooling represented. (p. 157)

If we conceptualise school culture as the dynamic interplay of multiple knowledges or discourses, then it might be more realistic to aim for exploring the differences between these knowledges and to understand what purposes each discourse, approach or paradigm can serve better than the other. Such exploration and understanding can be supported by the skill of being a discourse user (Davies, 1998; Drewery, 2005) and by utilising deconstructive conversations with students and among teachers. Deconstruction can help to go beyond binary oppositions. It can provide a critical approach to examine any paradigm and to better understand its advantages and disadvantages for different persons. As such, deconstruction can also be a tool of managing differences and complexity.

9.7.2 Reflection that develops moral agency

Deconstructive reflection used as a process of developing moral agency was shown to support the participants with clarifying and articulating the correlations between their practices and values. The process reduced their stress levels and enabled different action because it helped them change their emotional responses and their understandings of problematic situations. These effects of deconstructive reflection form the basis of my argument for formalising it as a significant strategy of improving the learning environment. Representatives of critical pedagogy consider a discursive approach to reflection to be a method of social change. They credit it with the potential to increase accountability, critical consciousness and moral engagement with the profession (Giroux, 2004; Freire, 1970; McLaren et al., 2004; Pring, 2001). Several proponents of qualitative inquiry believe that a discursive approach can generate critical, professional and public debates about the context of education and the purposes of schooling (Denzin, 2005; Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston & St. Pierre, 2007; Lincoln, 2005; St. Pierre, 2002). I propose a less ambitious and more mundane use for deconstructive reflection: it can enable teachers to do their job on a daily basis without their well-being undermined. Teachers utilising deconstructive reflection as a tool of managing the complexity of their classrooms can contribute to achieving this objective.

Two matters need to be addressed before instituting formal opportunities for teacher reflection: the provision of time and the function and processes of reflection. In regards to time there is currently no consensus in NZ between teachers, The Ministry of Education, the School Trustees Association that oversees teachers' registration and teachers' unions about the status and role of reflection. The teaching profession does not have mandated and timetabled access to reflection time, either informally or more formally, such as the supervision that counsellors and social workers have. Provisionally registered or beginning teachers have a lighter teaching schedule and they are encouraged to meet with their mentors, who are usually more experienced colleagues. However, it is not a requirement to spend this time reflecting on and/or clarifying practice. In this age of increased complexity it would be important for unions, teachers themselves and ministries of education to consider what support teachers need in order to be able to manage the complexities of their jobs and to avoid burnout.

The second unaddressed matter is the actual functions, methods or processes of reflection that teachers themselves would consider helpful for dealing with the complexities of their work. In the absence of legitimised supervision or reflection time, it is not customary among teachers to clearly distinguish between possible functions that reflection could have in the way counsellors attribute normative, formative and restorative functions to supervision (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993; Nolan & Hoover, 2004). It is not enough to advocate for timetabled reflection. If teachers want their unions to advocate for their right to this, they also have to decide if they want to use it for restoring their well-being, and if so, how.

9.8 Relationship management in complex school communities

In this age of complexity and diversity, ideas about what kind of relationship practices support inclusion, citizenship education and the teaching of key competencies will impact on whether and how schools are able to create the relational resources that will help teaching and learning to take place (Smyth, 2004). With heterogeneity becoming the norm in schools that are serious about inclusion, teachers and students bring a range of understandings of their respective roles into their interactions. They might

position themselves, or are positioned by others, in different discourses of relationship and schooling. These differences have been shown to place teachers and students in opposition or to require more time spent on negotiating the rules of interactions by this thesis and others as well (Bansel et al., 2009; Dalley-Trim, 2005). Cremin (2010) suggests that complex, diverse and multiple communities demand different responses from the past. Drewery (2010) sees the way forward in changing the epistemological paradigm, from Modernism, which promotes a fix-it approach, to something significantly different: a paradigm which does not locate matters of disengagement and underachievement within students and teachers and does not view relationship problems 'as a failure of students to control their own behaviour, or a failure of parenting, or a failure of teachers to control their classrooms' (ibid, p. 10).

Many schools already utilise different responses, such as mediation, social skill teaching and restorative practice, which are based on a collaborative, relationship-centred paradigm as opposed to managing the behaviours of individuals. In the ongoing quest for different approaches and epistemologies it is also important to stay realistic about what is possible or with Drewery's (2007) words 'what it is reasonable to hope for'. No new approach can be a panacea for everything (McCluskey, 2010). It is more likely that new responses and epistemologies will not eradicate the old but will co-exist with it. Though behaviour management, external control and shaming might be seen as contradictory to inclusion, participation and managing differences and power, it is not yet possible to completely abandon them. There are situations when children, in the absence of skills of negotiation and internal discipline, might learn better with the guidance of an adult who performs external control. It is most likely unrealistic to expect that all students and teachers in a school will negotiate and be able to respect everyone's views like the stance of curiosity suggests. Shame might also be a useful emotion for deterring students when they do not have a well developed capacity for arguing and articulating their moral positions. It is more realistic to accept that teachers and students will operate from several paradigms of relationship conduct, including ones that are teacher-centred and deemed authoritarian and ones that are seen as collaborative and child-

centred. Realising the objectives of inclusion and citizenship education is not simply a matter of shifting power from teachers to students.

Therefore, I believe, the most pressing task for educators, researchers and policy makers involves not only deciding what new responses and epistemologies will serve schools' current projects better but also working out how to manage the contradictions and the complexity of the old and the new. The plurality of views is likely to present more challenges for relationships than a homogeneous system, where teachers and students both operate within one particular idea of schooling that everyone agrees with or is forced to accept. A discursive approach, and more specifically deconstruction, can be more useful to manage plurality than advocating for or against any paradigm. Derrida (1998) says that deconstruction is the process of putting a word 'under erasure' by placing a line across it but keeping it visible. Davies (1998) suggests that a line across a word or concept indicates there are problems with it but we cannot yet live without it. Similarly, a deconstructive approach to relationships in schools would call for problematising punitive responses, behaviour management or shaming in a similar way and exposing those characteristics of the practices they promote that are contrary to the principles of respect, collaboration, participation and contribution. However, I suggest, deconstruction also supports both a critical and ethical stance to relationship practices in general by inviting teachers to evaluate their practices in ways that at the same time keep them in touch with their values and beliefs, in other words with their philosophy of teaching.

Accepting a discursive approach to relationships requires us to rethink the meanings of both restoration and community. The notion of restoration has been developed and changed significantly since its early introduction into schools. It is no longer seen only as rebuilding relationships between wrongdoers and victims and all those who have been affected by an offence. Restoration is more about emphasising the primacy of relationships and the processes that support dialogue, the expression of difference and moral engagement (Cremin, 2010; Johnstone & Van Ness, 2007; McCluskey, 2010). Cremin (2010) proposes an ambitious, transformative notion of restoration, which requires the transformation of our understandings of

ourselves, the ways we relate to others and discourses of schooling. I believe, a discursive approach to relationships has a contribution to make to these transformations, however, in the current education system, it can more easily realise Drewery's (2010) developmental notion of restoration. Drewery says that the restorative philosophy

offers a basis for living peaceably in a diverse society. I do not see conflict as problematic, but rather as inevitable in a society that is dynamic and constantly changing. After all, peace is not about everyone agreeing – it is about having processes for getting through when we do not agree – even, when we do not understand the other at all (p. 13)

I believe that in order to realise the vision of peaceable living in complex school communities it is important to develop the capacity and skills of its members to manage both their differences and the complexities of their individual identity development, their relationships and the socio-cultural context. On a personal level it means navigating the complexities of one's own identity work and having skills and processes to deal with contradictory positionings. On a relational level it means having the skills to notice when persons do not have access to speaking positions and to reposition them or to clarify the ambiguities that discursive slips might produce. On a cultural level, it means being aware of the power differentials that different discourses reproduce and to challenge those. Developing these capacities and skills is also restorative practice because the persons who have these skills can restore their own emotional calm and relationships after momentary breakdowns. They can restore dialogue and they can open possibilities for carrying on differently with their relationships.

The notions of positioning and agency offer a way to manage differences in interactions and to pay attention to positioning self and others. These notions support the production of ways of speaking that do not 'compel the other into the frame of reference of the speaker – a colonising stance –' but rather 'offer terms that do not require the submission of one speaker's terms of reference to those of the other – a respectful stance' (Drewery, 2010, p. 12). The potentials of positioning theory and the concept of agency for changing teachers' ways of speaking have been well established (Corcoran, 2005, 2006; Davies & Hunt, 1994; Laws & Davies, 2000). However, their larger scale contribution to teachers' practice repertoire, on a whole

school level, and for developing teachers' capacity to manage differences and restore relationships, is still worthwhile to investigate.

Individuals who have skills in managing differences and complexity are able to create different communities from the ones that rely on shaming as a deterrent and regulator of behaviours. The notion of shaming suits a community that is very different from Western democracies. It is a community that is hierarchical, with everyone knowing their places (Cremin, 2010). The main difference between a community that operates rituals of shaming and a community that can offer 'peaceable living in a diverse world' is in the ways they deal with difference and power. Shaming presupposes a relatively homogeneous community or the homogeneity of moral values. Even if there are minor differences among individuals in their judgements of these moral values, the focus is not on exploring these differences but on achieving compliance with ways of living supported by the moral values privileged. I repeat that I do not think a paradigm different from shaming should question the importance of complying with rules. However, having processes to address power is necessary for the peaceable co-existence of diverse interests, worldviews and agendas.

Braithwaite (2002) cautions that restorative processes can turn into shaming machines if facilitators operate from a position of judgement and moral supremacy. Cremin's (2010) concern that RP, but any other paradigm of relationship, can become the dominant mode of interaction that suppresses other ways, is also justified. A discursive approach offers both a theory of power and a practice, notably deconstruction that can challenge discursive power (Davies et al., 2002, 2004, 2006, 2007; Derrida, 1998; Foucault, 1972, 1980, 1995). As such it can increase teachers' vigilance and capacity to prevent restorative practices from becoming the norm, or a form of disciplinary power that suppresses other relationship practices. Deconstruction as a strategy can reveal how discourses work in invisible ways to produce and reproduce particular power relationships and how they position teachers and students in opposition. Davies (2005) views deconstruction as a tool that increases critical competency and awareness of the cultural context of education.

A skilled teacher practitioner who takes such a developmental approach to relationships and restoration uses discourses in order to manage complexity: of their own identity work, of their relationships and of the social context. S/he is able to turn the gaze on discourses and to create new possibilities, new discourses and subject positions, from them (Davies, 2005). Using discourse knowledge in this way is a different epistemology from individual psychology that locates problems inside individuals or from a humanist approach that can achieve stable identity narratives. The contradictions inherent in discourses work against such stability. To turn the gaze on discourses is also having the capacity to critique and to become citizens

who can understand the constitutive work that discourse does and who can work creatively, imaginatively, politically, and with passion to break open the old where it is faulty and envisage the new. Even more urgent is the task of giving them some personal tools for withstanding the worst effects of neo-liberalism, for seeing both the pleasure and the danger of being drawn into it, for understanding the ways in which they are subjected by it. They need to be able to generate stable narratives of identity and to understand the way neoliberal discourses and practices work against that stability. (Davies, 2005, p. 13)

Withstanding is a defensive term. It conjures up meanings of endurance and survival, and it could be interpreted as a pessimistic view, even if it was not what Davies had intended to convey. I think a discursive approach or discourse knowledge can make a significant, positive contribution to relationship practices in the classroom through its potential to support the development of teachers as moral agents. An awareness of the power of discourses can help manage difference, resist and challenge power imbalances and it can transform those patterns of relationship practice that undermine teaching and learning.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Information sheet for participating schools and teachers

As you know from our previous contacts, I am doing research as part of my doctoral studies at the University of Waikato. This sheet, I hope, will support you with making an informed decision about your participation in my research. I have included here information about the purposes of my research and the processes that I will ask you to take part in. I have tried to answer any questions that I have anticipated you might have in relation to the use of data and protecting the confidentiality of participants. If I have left out anything that you want to know, please feel free to contact me and I will provide further information.

Locating my interest in the topic

My study proposes to investigate the usefulness of restorative practices in the classroom and schools. I believe that a restorative approach has potential for improving relationships, teacher satisfaction and student participation. I also think that it can provide a useful theory to both existing practices as well as for developing those practices further. I have a longstanding interest in restorative practices of relationships both in my personal and professional life. As the first child of a loving family, who attended both low and high decile schools in Hungary, and later as a teacher, resource teacher, counsellor and counsellor educator I have experienced and witnessed in different ways how the quality of relationships can support and/or undermine both a student's and a teacher's satisfaction and participation in the school. The level of satisfaction that is produced by different relationships can greatly influence learning as well as the potential life directions of both students and teachers. My personal experiences as a student and as a teacher have taught me that our identities, the persons that we can become are shaped in and by relationships. The people we are in relationships with can either enable or obstruct our access to our preferred categories of identity. These experiences supported me to view relationships as central to education and they compelled me to search for frameworks that offer ways of doing relationships in a caring way. There are many researchers as well as teachers who agree with the above claims. Some of them link student participation levels to good teacher-student relationships while pointing to "interactive trouble" as a possible reason for high drop-out, suspension and expulsion rates and underachievement. I have concluded that it is worth further researching therefore what kind of relationships work and improve teacher and student satisfaction, how to go about introducing those relationship practices into schools and what kind of changes they might produce in both the relationships and the culture of a school. In undertaking doctoral research I also want to build on the work of the Restorative Practices Development Team of the University of Waikato who examined the potential of using restorative conferencing to reduce suspensions and expulsions. I would like us to further develop the ideas of that research by applying and testing them on a broader scale; to all relationships within a school and specifically to the area of prevention rather than responding to breakdowns in relationships.

Processes that a school and individual teachers are asked to participate in

Taking part in this research will require involvement with, and commitment to, meetings over a year (**see Proposed time schedule below**). The overall involvement is four workshops for the whole staff and an additional 16 hours (about 4 hours per school term on average) for interviews, reflection and focus group meetings for individual teachers who volunteer to commit themselves to the development and testing of the ideas introduced. This is a very significant contribution and for the research to proceed the whole school's consent to participate needs to be secured first along with scheduling dates according to the research timetable. Only when a school signs the Consent form for participating schools (Appendix 2), after consultation with staff and the Board of Trustees, can individual teachers be invited to consent to participate.

Proposed time schedule for research

Phase 1: Getting consent (Term 4 2005)

Calling for expressions of interest October, 2005	Meetings in schools November, 2005	Consultation with staff November, 2005	Informed consent November, 2005	Organising project timetable November – December, 2005
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Phase 2: Baseline data – Current perceptions of restorative practices, inclusion and exclusion (Term 1 2006)

Interviews February – March 2006	Reflections on existing practices March 2006	Joint analysis of baseline data April-May 2006	Focus groups June 2006	
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Phase 3: Introducing restorative relationship and reflection practices (Term 1-2-3-4 2006)

Workshop 1 March 2006	Workshop 2 May 2006	Workshop 3 July 2006	Workshop 4 September 2006	
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Phase 4: Developing restorative relationship practices and a theory of inclusion (Term 1-2-3-4 2006)

Reflections and analysis of newly developing practices May-2006 July 2006 September 2006	Further reflections one-to-one with researcher and/or with colleagues June 2006 August 2006 October 2006	Focus groups June 2006 August 2006 October 2006		
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Phase 5: A new theory of inclusion and a new code of relationship practices (Term 4 2006)

Interviews October 2006	Reflections November, 2006	Joint analysis of data November 2006	Focus groups December, 2006	
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Recording/taping of classroom interactions, interviews, reflections and focus group meetings, use of recorded data and safeguards for confidentiality

I will ask participating teachers to record a range of interactions that we could then analyse together and in groups. One of the purposes of the research is to test the usefulness of a critical framework for developing relationship practices that are restorative. We would together engage in both the theorising of existing practice and establishing criteria for relationship practices that are restorative, thus developing the theory of restorative practices together. As a result of this joint analysis we may also come up with new relationship practices and we may achieve changes in the existing relationship practices as well as the discipline system and culture of your school.

The interviews at the beginning and end of the research and the reflection and focus group meetings will be taped and partially transcribed. I will give teachers the transcripts to read and they can change or delete any parts that they don't want used in the final report or subsequent publications. I will take care that teachers', students' and the school's identity is not obvious and names are changed in my report. I will adhere to the ethical guidelines set down by the University of Waikato Ethics Committee.

As teachers are exposing their practices to both me, the researcher, and to some of their colleagues in this process I would like to reassure participants that I am putting in safety measures that address teachers' potential vulnerability. The

materials shared with me and the focus groups can only be used for research purposes but they won't be given to members of the management of the school for competency or any other purposes. Teachers have got the right to select the interactions that they want to share with me and their colleagues for analysis.

I understand that it is easier to share best practice, however, I will be asking volunteering teachers to share interactions that they might find problematic as this could enhance the development of both theory and practice. I undertake to acknowledge teachers' vulnerability in this process and to negotiate one-to-one with each participating teacher any additional safety measures that they suggest we should implement to make this process as comfortable as possible. I will be available through the research to be approached privately should participants have any concerns or should they feel unsafe. The representatives of the schools and individual teacher participants are also free to approach either of my supervisors, whose contact details I will include in the end of this sheet. I also suggest that individual participants choose a trusted colleague as a support person during the duration of this research.

I would like to emphasise that the examples that teachers provide are not to be used to scrutinise their practice but to investigate the usefulness of ideas for articulating and developing practice. When we analyse and discuss taped (or recorded in writing) interactions in a focus group with colleagues, I undertake to negotiate and sign with the members of the group any confidentiality agreement or contract about additional safeguards that the members of the group or I deem necessary. It is only interactions that teachers give permission to transcribe that could be used as examples in the final report and any subsequent publications.

Voluntary participation and the right to decline

I am aware that the decision to opt into the professional development programme and the research will be a whole school decision so participation in at least the 4 professional development workshops might not be optional. However, I accept that maybe not all teachers on the staff might want to become individual research participants. I undertake to negotiate with the management of the school that teachers who do not want to participate as individuals can undertake some other professional development and/or activity that requires similar time commitment to that given by the research participants.

Teachers have the right to decline answers to any questions in the interviews and also to withdraw from the project up to the end of Term II, 2006. As your school will opt into this project as a whole school, I will schedule the dates for the professional development workshops, interviews and focus groups with the school.

I will obtain individual teachers' consent only after I have received the signed 'Consent form for participating schools' from the school.

I am happy to provide further information about my project as well as to answer any questions that you might have.

Thank you for giving your time to considering the information provided above.

Maria Kecskemeti

PhD Student

Department of Human Development and Counselling

School of Education, The University of Waikato

Appendix 2: Consent form for participating schools

..... School is prepared to participate in the doctoral research conducted by Maria Kecskemeti that investigates the use of restorative practices in the classroom and the school. The purposes of the research have been explained to us. We have read the 'Information sheet for participating schools and teachers'. We are aware of the time commitment that our school has to give to the project and we are willing to make this time available for both the whole staff and individual teachers. We understand and agree to how data collected during the project will be used and how teachers', students' and the school's confidentiality will be protected. We are aware that the interviews, reflection and focus group meetings are going to be audio and/or video taped and then transcribed and that examples of interactions agreed to by teachers will be used in the final research report and/or any subsequent publications. If teachers agree that video and/or audio taping classroom interactions would be a useful way of developing restorative practices we will obtain informed consent from parents according to the policies of our school.

We accept that signing this Consent form means commitment to participating in Maria Kecskemeti's research project for a whole academic year but individual teachers could withdraw from the project up until Term 2 of 2006. The school will receive a copy of the draft final research report to edit prior to it being submitted to the University of Waikato and/or used for any subsequent publications.

Principal:

Name in clear print:

Address and phone number:

Deputy Principal:

Name in clear print:

Address and phone number:

Chairperson of the Board of Trustees:

Name in clear print:

Address and phone number:

Date: _____

Appendix 3: Consent form for individual teacher participants

I am prepared to participate in the doctoral research conducted by Maria Kecskemeti that investigates the use of restorative practices in the classroom. The purposes of the research have been explained to me. I am available for interviews and engaging in reflection and focus group meetings with Maria Kecskemeti and some of my colleagues. I am aware that our interviews, reflection and focus group meetings are going to be audio and/or video taped and then transcribed.

My rights have been carefully explained to me including the right to abstain from answering questions, to choose classroom interactions to share with others and to withdraw from the project without explanation before the end of Term II, 2006. I will receive a copy of typed transcripts to edit prior to them being used for the final report or any subsequent publications. I give my consent to selected data being used in any research report being subsequently published.

Signature:

Name (in clear
print)

Address

Phone
number

Colleague in
support

Date
