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**'No-body' is my friend:
Cultural considerations of young children's 'imaginary companions'**

A thesis
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of the requirements for the degree

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Shilo Jane Bluett



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Abstract

The variegated relationships young children may have during their early childhood education (ECE) years have long been of interest to theorists and teachers alike. Relationships, and understandings of companionship, can take multiple forms. Our understandings of what these relationships may look like are frequently informed by complex social and cultural constructs; therefore, seeking to apply a one-size-fits-all interpretation is theoretically and culturally problematic, especially when the companions young children may spend time with may be unseen or unnoticed by surrounding adults.

A common Euro-western notion is that unseen companions are not real; hence they are generally referred to in the literature as being imaginary. In an extensive literature review, this thesis explores whether companionship with the unseen are one of many possible forms of relationships. Dominant Euro-western claims that such relationships are imaginary are considered critically before the analysis widens in theoretical scope to draw on various alternative cultural accounts. The analysis draws on the theoretical work of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Karen Barad, in particular. An additional exploration considers the author's own situated experiences of parenting a child who during her childhood years had companions that were unseen to the author. The final analysis, based on a small selection of carefully chosen autoethnographic accounts, draws on the significance of ancestral inheritance. Within this specific research context that inheritance comprises my daughter's Māori ancestry and our shared Celtic ancestry.

Ancestral inheritance provides reflexive companionship for the entire thesis. Examining inheritance sheds light on ways that traditional Euro-western claims of the imagined worlds of children, and consequently childhood, have produced a legacy of ideas which have subsequently held the term *imaginary* in place. These dominant worldviews are shown to fall short in their capacity to cover the diversity of lived realities of children and their unseen (to others) companion(s). Inheritance also denotes the culturally mediated birthright that may travel alongside a young child and how this birthright may provide insight and alternative cultural knowledge and understandings of various multiform relationship companions.

As a result of analysing several possible perspectives on the relationships under study, this thesis proposes the new term ***culturally compatible travelling companions (CCTC)***: companions who travel alongside children as ordinary, expected features of their lifespan. This shift in term acknowledges that diverse notions of companionship, and the forms this may take, are integral and salient constructions of each culture's historical and narrative accounts.

This is timely research, as currently nearly 64% of young children aged between birth and four years of age attend some type of Early Childhood Education (ECE) service in Aotearoa New Zealand (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2019). The national ECE curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) recognises the significance of young children's relationships and understands those relationships within the rich and complex cultural knowledge patterning that travels alongside a young child.

The aim of this research is to add to the theoretical understandings of the forms, functions and features of the multiple, complex relationship companions who may share the lives of young children, whether or not these companions are seen or discernible to those around the children. It suggests an alternative perspective to the dominant view and offers provocations for those who work alongside young children to think differently about whether these relationship companions are indeed only imaginary.

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To my gorgeous and knowing mokopuna Te Mananui who arrived earthside recently; *he purapura i ruia mai i Rangīātea e kore e ngaro*—a seed sown in Rangīātea will never be lost. You are connected to your ancestors who have come before you and to those who are yet to be. I can’t wait to see what exciting journeys await you. To the next precious taonga who is currently making the journey earthside; we are excited and delighted to meet you.

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either) exactly what I was talking about. You have always believed in me, encouraged me and been my rock. I will always be grateful to you for walking alongside me on this journey.

Glossary

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Atua | Can be ancestors, gods, demons, spirits, and any entity that may be thought of as supernatural (Mead, 2003). Atua are entities which have a continuing influence – therefore they provide continued companionship. |
| Euro-western | For this thesis Drewery and Claiborne’s (2014) term was selected to denote European cultural understandings and perspectives. |
| Io-taketake | The supreme being who is the founder/originator of all (Rameka, 2018). |
| Kaitiaki | Guardians and protectors. |
| Karakia | Incantations/invocations/blessings. |
| Karanga | A spiritual call by women that connects the living and spirit worlds. |
| Kaupapa | Platform, purpose. Māori-led initiative to advance Te Ao Māori. |
| Kawa | Protocol. Certain ways of doing things that have developed due to environmental, social and/or cultural conditions. Kawa can be iwi, hapū and whānau specific. |
| Kirituhi | Māori-style tattoo made by, or worn by, a person who is not Māori. Kiri means skin, tuhi means to decorate, to draw. |
| Māori | The indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand. Literally translated as the ordinary, usual, inhabitants of Aotearoa New Zealand (Williams, 1992). |
| Marae | Traditionally “the open space situated in front of the ancestral meeting house... [now used] ...to encapsulate all the surrounding buildings as well” (Morrison, 2011, p. 90). |
| Matakite | A seer – someone who is visionary and has the ability to engage in inter-realm communication. |
| Mokopuna | English translation is often “grandchild”. A more traditional definition taken from Eruera and Ruwhiu (2015) which |

better aligns to the scope of this research is “moko can be translated as tattooing or blueprint and puna mean a spring of water, therefore *the mokopuna is often referred to as the reflection or blueprint of its ancestors*” (p. 1, emphasis in the original).

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| Ngāti Hāua | An iwi (tribe) in the Waikato area. Their tribal boundaries include and extend around Hamilton, Cambridge, Matamata, Te Aroha and Morrinsville. |
| Ngāti Whakaue | An iwi (tribe) whose tribal area is the southern shores of Lake Rotorua and Maketū in the Bay of Plenty (O’Malley & Armstrong, 2008). |
| Playcentre | A parent-based co-operative sessional ECE movement which began in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1941. Playcentres are affiliated to the New Zealand Playcentre Federation which oversees a parent education programme to enable parents to meet the licensing requirements for each Playcentre. The philosophical focus is on child-initiated play experiences where children learn alongside their parents/whānau. |
| Powhiri | The formal welcome process where mana whenua (hosts) of a particular marae welcome those who are manuhiri (visitors). |
| Tāmoko | A traditional Māori tattoo put on, and worn by, Māori. |
| Tāne-nui-a-rangi | Son of Papatūānuku, earth mother, and Ranginui, sky father, and the ancestor of humankind. |
| Te Ao Māori | Māori world – worldview and approach to understanding and explaining the universe. |
| Taonga | Anything considered precious (tangible and intangible). |
| Te reo Māori | The Māori language. |
| Te reo Māori me ōna tikanga | Māori language and cultural practices. |
| Tikanga | What is right and true. Aligned to mātauranga Māori, tikanga is the obligation to do the right thing. |
| Tohunga | A skilled and highly revered expert. |
| Waiata | Song, chant, lament. Whakapapa and salient messages about people, places and things carried through song. |

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| Wairua | Spirit, soul – believed to be immortal. |
| Whaikōrero | Ceremonial speech which acknowledges, and connects, the living and spirit worlds. |
| Whakapapa | A culturally located system of genealogical relationships which identifies relationships with the past, present, and future and includes connections to the environment, and to temporal and spiritual realms (Te Huia, 2015). |
| Whakatauki | A proverb/saying that is known and used. They are metaphorical thus their meaning is often complex. |
| Whānau | Family – often used to describe “extended or non-nuclear family” (Morrison, 2011, p. 74). |
| Urupā | Burial ground. |

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Chapter One

Introduction to Studies of 'Imaginary Companions'

This thesis explores how the relationship which may exist between a child and an entity or entities unnoticed and/or unseen (to others) may be conceived of and subsequently conceptualised within the early childhood years in Aotearoa New Zealand in culturally diverse ways. It examines the notion, widely held in Euro-western contexts, that such companions and accordingly relationships are not real and therefore the status ascribed to them is generally that of an imaginary companion. The analysis of literature in this thesis will discover whether to date there has been a paucity of alternative perspectives and terms available that might interrupt prevalent traditional and classic Euro-western textual accounts of this phenomenon.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a complex and contested terrain. It relies on the integration of a multitude of voices in order to reflect an awareness and understanding of variegated childhoods and the complicated contexts and borders that young children occupy and influence (Haraway, 2008). Therefore, greater attunement to alternative voices, such as those that speak of unseen companions, could open possibilities for ECE to go further to honour the tangled and rich worlds that children are located within.

Recognising such worlds may transcend the boundaries of our own social histories and cultural narratives (Burman, 2013; Butler, 2004; Gannon, 2006; Haraway, 2016) and might include companions, and understandings of relationship companions, which may not always be immediately known or recognisable to those who teach within ECE. My intent is to draw on wider accounts to consider what else could be known about the entities who

share the lives of young children and to draw attention to the need for further investigation to occur. Of key significance is the desire to prompt teachers to critically consider whether the term *imaginary companions* remains fit for purpose and should continue to be applied within the multitude of complicated and diverse ECE contexts of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The various chapters of this thesis offer a series of discussions to query and disrupt problematic Euro-western notions which have historically held influence over the ways teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand might account for the variety of incorporeal relationships young children may have. Companions whose appearance is intangible do not take on what we might consider as an established and therefore easily recognisable physical human form. This thesis also calls into question notions of corporality and materiality (to be explored in further chapters).

I desire to query into, interrupt and challenge ECE's own historical, political, social and cultural narratives regarding which companions and relationships are noticed, privileged, and conceptualised as being of importance and, conversely, which are rendered invisible. Drawing on a wide range of literature, I seek to recognise and acknowledge accounts of alternative forms of life, including culturally mediated notions that allocate understandings to entities and the various relationships which may therefore exist.

Through this research I aspire to acknowledge and better understand my own cultural narratives and working theories of the worlds that surround me. There are rich and multifaceted cultural narratives that my tamariki (children) have inherited through their

predominantly Celtic and Māori ancestries. This research stems from my dual commitment, to myself and to my daughters, to investigate the ways in which stories of our forefathers and foremothers continue to inform and guide the ways we may experience our worlds and the ways in which we consider how those who have come before us continue to shape not only our lives, but the lives of those who are yet to be.

1.1 My Personal Journey with this Topic

I would like to preface this thesis by acknowledging that it has been a long time in the making. Its travels alongside me were noticed in 2008 and this is where its theoretical conception, in an academic context, began. I was undertaking a third-year social science research paper, a requirement for a Bachelor of Applied Social Science, following the completion of a Diploma of Teaching (Level 7) (ECE). During a literature search—to support the writing of a research proposal—I stumbled upon an article by Kelemen (2004) where she suggested, “interesting, ideas about imaginary companions, like ideas about gods, can be culturally transmitted, at least, within families” (p. 297).

This idea became the catalyst for my own familial inquiry into the place of such entities within my own whānau and the experiences of my own children. The focus for my 2008 research paper centred on the concept of imaginary companions from the perspective of Ngāti Whakaue (my children’s whakapapa). This work highlighted the myriad of storying which underpins and informs how multifaceted the concept of relationships may be. It also reminded me of the significance of ancestral storytelling and how salient messages

are encoded and decoded through intergenerational transmission. This writing has been lost so I have had to rely on my own recollections and reflections of the sentiments expressed within this piece of work.

I have had several experiences which have had a powerful influence on my life and on shaping my understandings of the various worlds around me. I distinctly recall times within my childhood when members of my family spoke of travellers from other realms. These were shared within the storying of significant historical characters as well as within narratives of my own family members. Various family members were spoken of as inheriting specific abilities which enabled them to traverse realms and engage in dialogue with entities identified as taking on an array of forms. When I recall these stories, I think of the roles afforded to these family members, for example, to assist wayward travellers as they journeyed between realms and cautionary tales noting the potential ramifications of opening realms when unprepared for possible consequences.

These conversations were a usual feature of my childhood and adolescent years and as an adult to hear similar storying and experiences provokes interest rather than doubt or concern. To hear children speak of companions which are unseen to me is therefore commonplace and rather than approach their dialogue with scepticism, I view the companions as important to, and for, the child. I see them as evidence of the expansive range of relationships which are continually present, whether we adults/teachers notice or not, as an integral dimension of our lives; ordinary, familiar and culturally resonant.

I have been involved within the ECE sector—in various capacities—since the birth of my first child in 1995. My introduction to the Aotearoa New Zealand ECE curriculum, *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa* (Ministry of Education [MoE], 1996, 2017) occurred in 1996 when she and I began attending Playcentre. Initially my engagement with *Te Whāriki* was minimal and required a superficial understanding of where to locate statements or aspirations to use to support observations I had made of young children and their play. As my experience and knowledge of young children increased so did my confidence and querying of how key sentiments expressed within the curriculum relate to and encapsulate the rich and tangled daily lives of our children in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The approximately 10 years I spent in various roles within Playcentre alongside my children inspired me to return to study and gain an ECE teaching qualification. I selected a field-based programme of study at the local polytechnic. Upon the completion of my ECE qualification I took on a lecturing role on the programme and I have continued in this role for the past 12 years alongside undertaking various qualifications which invariably dovetail into my professional role and teaching interests. My current role is as a lecturer on a Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) and this calls for me to critically examine the historical and contemporary landscapes of ECE curriculum, pedagogy and practice. It asks me to thoughtfully consider, continually agitate, and contribute new understandings to shed light on the various complicated philosophical tensions inherent within this particular discipline.

Aspects of my own experiences are invariably woven into the fabric and features of this thesis. As such it charts my story, and my travels, and reflects the pathways I took as I explored this troubled and intricate topic. Each chapter therefore presents the twists, turns, and the familial and theoretical stop overs visited as I have sought to shape what this topic may encompass and entail. Whilst it may at times, to the reader, appear to be a disparate and disordered collection of topics, when pulled together each chapter provides a salient thread to my narrative. Thus, this thesis is a textual cartography of my travels and stories, alongside the stories of those who have come before and those who are yet to be.

1.2 My Cultural Positioning

The cultural group I identify as belonging to is Pākehā. I am not indigenous to Aotearoa New Zealand and this term acknowledges that my ancestry is from elsewhere. This term has its own ideological trace and is thought to fundamentally refer to the paleness of the skin of the settlers who began arriving in increased numbers during the 1800s (Huygens, 2007). Although I was born in Aotearoa New Zealand, as were my parents and grandparents before them, my earliest known ancestors to this land travelled from countries across the sea in approximately the 1850s. Their travels are of significance, for their story is an integral backdrop to my own, and that of my children (and our descendants to come).

The earliest accounts of the arrival of my ancestors were recorded within various familial journals, documents and texts, sourced from my parents to enable me to identify specific

dates and significant events (G. Hathaway & M. Hathaway, personal communication, 12 December, 2014). The first known traveller to Aotearoa New Zealand drew from my paternal grandmother's side. Her paternal great-grandparents emigrated from Macclesfield, Cheshire, sailing on the barque vessel *Bangalore* that left Gravesend, England, on 9th May 1851 and arriving in Lyttelton, Banks Peninsular on 21st August 1851. Her maternal grandparents were from Tregullan, Cornwall. They arrived on the *Otaki* also from Gravesend to Lyttelton in 1875.

My maternal great-grandparents on my grandmother's side were born in Indian Queens and Nancegollan, Cornwall. My great-grandfather arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1912 and my great-grandmother in 1916. Ancestors on my maternal grandfather's side ancestors left Raddon Hills, Devon and arrived in Lyttelton in 1858 on the *Clontarf*. All my ancestors settled in the Canterbury and South Canterbury regions, where many of my family members currently reside.

I fondly remember the stories shared with me as a child of the various people, places and happenings of the past. The histories and stories of my ancestors have therefore been, and continue to be, inescapable travel companions. They have been woven around me and continue to exist through me. When I consider my cultural heritage, where I may be located prior to considering myself as Pākehā, I am drawn to my Cornish heritage. From childhood I have had a fascination with Celtic storying and therefore I have both familiarity and a sense of connectivity to this worldview and the creation stories which are often positioned alongside the notion of holding Celtic ancestry. These are stories I

recognise from my childhood and they have continued to inform how I conceptualise relationships and notions of the temporal and spiritual realms.

I have little knowledge of my ancestral homelands, other than through familial narratives and via the hybridity of my cultural practices. These are not the same as those of my ancestors but I assume I have retained some of their characteristics, and distinctive attributes and attitudes (King, 2011).

To identify as Pākehā recognises not only the ways in which my experiences reflect my own ancestry but also my experiences of living in Aotearoa New Zealand alongside Māori as tangata whenua.

It needs to be noted that my intent to use the term *Pākehā* is not accidental. As previously noted, there is scope within this term to reflect the myriad of ancestral heritages that someone such as myself, whose ancestry hails from various parts of Europe, may hold and experience. This creates a space for multiple identities and therefore multiple understandings of relationships. By positioning myself as Pākehā I acknowledge myself as tau iwi, representative of settler peoples who came later to Aotearoa New Zealand and whose histories hold a troubling and tangled trace which remains visible today (Campbell, 2011; Mikaere, 2011). My sense of identity has been, and continues to be, influenced by those who have come before me, alongside my relationships—tangible and intangible—to Aotearoa New Zealand.

The documentation of my journey, or rather of those aspects I have selected as appropriate and relevant for this specific academic pursuit, weaves together a range of

voices. In using the terms *Māori* and *Pākehā*, I recognise the historical and contemporary tensions threaded within those terms. Each carries distinct political, social, ethnic and cultural markers which imbue constructs and understandings of multifaceted identities which are continuously in motion, alongside conflicting perspectives of relationship roles and responsibilities (Barnes, 2013; Consedine & Consedine, 2012; Jones, 2012; Mikaere, 2011).

It could be said that my connection to this topic has a much earlier trace. I was born on Anzac Day, 25 April. This date is a public holiday in Aotearoa New Zealand to mark the 1915 landing of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, the Anzacs, on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey. The day commemorates those killed in war and honours those who have given and are giving service for Aotearoa New Zealand. It is estimated that 2779 of our soldiers lost their lives in the Gallipoli Campaign (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2017), approximately one sixth of those who landed. To be born on a day that commemorates the crossing of so many from the temporal to the spiritual realm continues to be an unsettling experience. As a child the day was often a sombre one; not so much for my family who always acknowledged it as my birthday, but more so by those around me. Ceremonies, documentaries and movies of what happened at Gallipoli have always been the constant backdrop to how the day is spent. This day is concomitantly one of death and of life.

I was christened Shilo Jane Hathaway in a Methodist church in Timaru, South Canterbury. Several possible suggestions have been made regarding the origins of my surname; firstly, it may denote a person who lived alongside a pathway by a heath, and secondly it may

derive from a rare old English female name which loosely translated means *war-warrior*. The origins of my first name (in the sense that this was the impetus) can be traced to a song initially released in 1967 by Neil Diamond and subsequently re-released in 1970 when Neil Diamond changed record companies and this same year *Shilo* featured as the album title.

Speculation about the meaning of the song's lyrics exists. In her biography of Diamond's work, Jackson (2005) interprets the song lyrics to denote a child's relationship with their childhood imaginary companion. This interpretation is shared by Wild (2008) whose reminiscences about the song includes the comment that, "While I personally never had an imaginary friend growing up, at least I had 'Shilo,' Diamond's great song about imagining a special pal" (p. xii). Not all agree with this; for example, Perone (2012) suggests the song lyrics depict a recollection of, and a desire to reconnect with, a woman whose past friendship, and love, had given comfort and solace in times of despair and loneliness. Regardless of the intended meaning I have always thought of the song as paying homage to an entity whose presence was not seen or shared by others and I continue to draw a measure of comfort from and feel affinity with this interpretation.

Whilst my name, and understandings of its possible origin, have continually travelled alongside me as a facet of my identity, it was not until the 1990s and early 2000s that a renewed interest in this topic emerged. The birth of my daughters signalled new journeys and pathways, which are acknowledged within the kirituhi I wear on my forearms (to be explained further in the following section). However, it is specific encounters with one of my daughters, identified within this thesis as *Hine* (M. Smith, personal communication, 19

October, 2018), that I consider to be the significant and noticed determinant for the interest in and subsequent creation of this research project.

Before I continue, I wish to explain the choice of the pseudonym given. Hine can be translated into English to mean girl and/or daughter. This name also pays reverence to the importance of Māori storying and how mortal man/woman came to be created. It is said that prior to the fashioning of man, Ranginui (god of sky, space and light) and Papatūānuku (earth mother) were engaged in such a tight embrace that their sons had no light and little space to move (Barlow, 1991). They sought to address their discontent by prying their parents apart; a task finally achieved by the eldest son, Tāne (Berryman, 2008; Walker, 1990). Subsequently Tāne has become a well-known character whose further exploits following his parent's separation are renowned within Māori creation stories and Te Ao Māori.

Tāne is synonymous with the creation of humanity. He fashioned the first female, Hineahuone, out of moistened earth and breathed life into her. From their union a daughter was born, Hine-titama, "Girl of the Dawn" (Hart & Reed, 1977, p. 16). When she reached womanhood Tāne took her as his wife and they had children together.

Discovering Tāne to be her father she fled in shame, descending to the underworld to be sheltered by her grandmother Papatūānuku (Hart & Reed, 1977; Walker 1990).

She took on the name Hine-nui-te-pō, "the Great Lady of Night or Death" (Hart & Reed, 1977, p. 16). She became the goddess of death and the kaitiaki of the world of shadows (Berryman, 2008) and is noted to be "the first to tread the path to Rarohenga, the world

beneath the world... [where she now] ...welcome[s] her children” (Hart & Reed, 1977, p. 18) as they cross into the spiritual realm.

The gifting of the name Hine by my external cultural advisor thus seems a good fit for the context of this thesis as it acknowledges the mother-daughter relationship alongside the interconnectedness between temporal and spiritual realms: the tangible and intangible.

1.3 The Story of my Kirituhi

As briefly mentioned previously in this chapter I wear two kirituhi, one on each forearm. Each is an assemblage of the powerful inherited life-forces and life-essences which dwell and pulsate not only within me, but also within my children. Thus, they are a tangible and intangible representation of our shared whakapapa and a reminder of our ancestral and spiritual legacies, those that “[slip] through time and space” (Williams, 2011, p. 187). The ancient and widespread practice of permanently adorning the skin with various inscriptions and symbolic patterns is worldwide, visible within various cultures and in a range of forms.

Inscribing the skin creates, and establishes, intricate genealogical connections to ancestors as well as places of significance. A kirituhi has a lifeblood and is a visible tracing of close relationships—past, present, and future. My kirituhi are significant to me and my whānau due to the legacies and messages they embody and as such have become a noticed cornerstone of my thesis construction and travel. They are a constant reminder of why I chose to undertake this thesis and why I feel compelled to speak of a different story.

I will introduce each in the order they came to be.

1.3.1 Kirituhi kotahi (first)

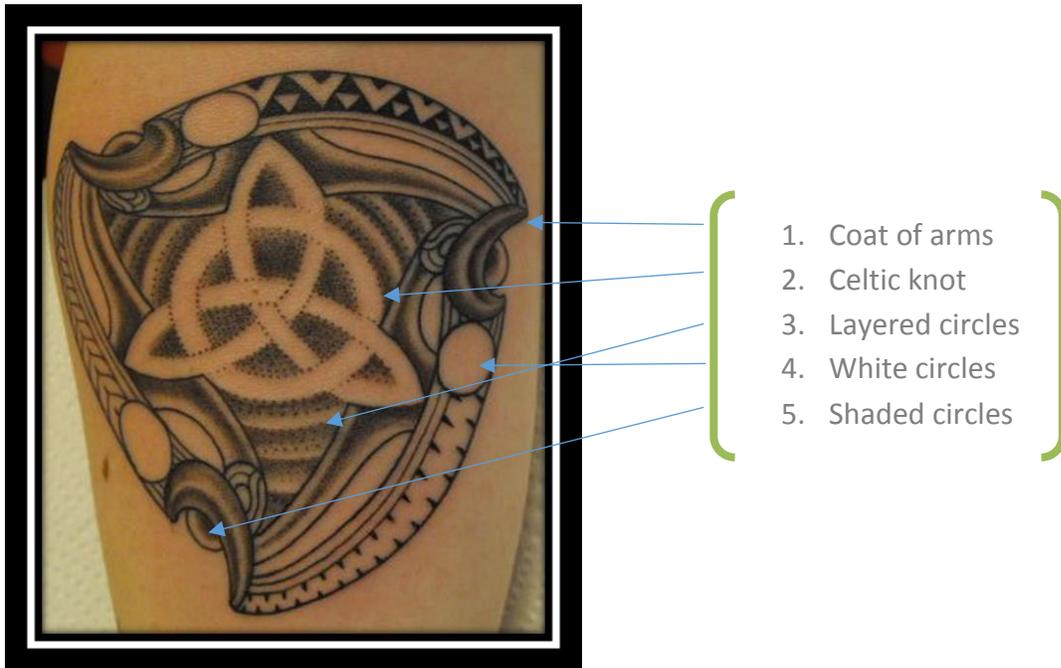


Figure 1 Kirituhi kotahi

This kirituhi was designed and put on by tāmoko artist Haze Kopa on 22 October 2014. Permission was sought from the artist to include his work in this thesis. The design's inspiration came from spending time with Hine and me and it emerged from the stories we shared with him, which he sought to preserve using culturally symbolic imagery and metaphor. The imagery evokes a sense of intimacy and compatibility between the traditional and contemporary, alongside an acknowledgement of the various identities and locations of those whom it seeks to recognise. Its conception and embodiment align

with the following whakataukī; *Taia o moko hei hoa matenga mou*—take your moko as a friend for life.

The first time I saw my kirituhi I knew it was mine, that it belonged to me. In the years I have worn it—or rather perhaps it has worn me—I have drawn immense comfort and calmness from it. It is not purely a decorative piece. It holds great meaning and significance to me, and for me. It gathers together the important storying of my ancestors, myself, my children, and those who are yet to walk within the temporal world. To me this design is a visual analogy not only of my shifting identity but also of the multitude of intense inter-related aspects which exert influence over who I am and who I am yet to be. My kirituhi makes visible five key features (refer to *Image 1*) which I speak to in the numerical order in which they have been identified.

My kirituhi represents a coat of arms. Traditionally, a coat of arms was used to identify warriors. This speaks to my surname at birth referred to above; *war-warrior*. An individual held their own coat of arms which could then be inherited; however, each generation would make changes to personalise the design (Chorzempa, 1987). To me, a coat of arms not only identifies the birthright of the wearer; their family lineage and heritage, it also provides a measure of protection alongside a “code of conduct”. By this I am referring to a visual and symbolic representation of culturally and personally held values and beliefs that shape and guide the way life is to be led. In this way a coat of arms is a culturally specific travel companion, just as a kirituhi is also designed to be.

My coat of arms has been personalised to connect the ancestral stories and lore of my children and myself. Their iwi affiliations encircle the internal design; providing structural support and symbolising each iwi and each daughter (however, no one side is representative of an individual daughter as their whakapapa is shared). Their iwi specific creation stories are an integral component of my kirituhi. These are interlaced within the very fabric which traces the unique cultural blend of my Celtic heritage and their Celtic and Māori ancestral heritage.

The centrepiece is a Celtic triquetra love knot. Knots made through a process by which alternating links are made “by breaking and rejoining some of the cords into a plait” (Parks, 2003, p. 14), are commonly recognised artefacts of Celtic visual imagery. Celtic knots are constructed via intricate internal and external weaving patterns in which physical and spiritual pathways are overlaid, interwoven and interlaced (Dunham, 2000). It is believed Celtic love knots appeared in or around the fifth century. However, this is a conservative dating based on uncovered manuscripts and religious text, so it is possible their origins are much older (Dunham, 2000; Fisher & Mellor, 2004). These patterns seem to have been inspired by the pattern’s weavers and appeared in basketwork, fishing nets and other everyday items. Delyth (2008) suggests the use of these multiplex designs “contributed to the development of abstract thought and mystical expression” (p. 14), specifically, to Celtic narratives of the universe and the various interwoven realms and companions that exist.

Celtic knots are an example of rich and sophisticated pattern making which symbolises understandings of the universe and the place of human life within each realm (Williams,

2011). Interestingly, Celtic knots remain of fascination within various fields, such as mathematics. Currently, the interest is in investigating ways such patterns and artwork can be understood, and replicated via digital technologies, as opposed to traditional hand-drawing (Browne, 2005; Silver, 2006).

For knot-making, a centralised primary grid is constructed in which external (defining the outside boundaries of the design) and internal (determining the internal points where the design will be located) perimeters are identified. Once these perimeters have been established, designated “crossings” are placed within the design. These crossings serve as locations and generate the points of contact and paths for the thread curves to follow (Kaplan & Cohen, 2003). Inflating the threads and calculating the overlap for the thread paths ensure the internal and external weave provides a visual image of a continuous thread path (Kaplan & Cohen, 2003; Silver, 2006).

The knot’s centrality denotes my ancestral heritage. It symbolises and embodies three key components. Firstly, the intertwining rings are symbolic of the never-ending cycle of life, what Fisher and Mellor (2004) refer to as “an infinite plane” (p. 2), alongside an acknowledgement of the endurance of love. Clearly seen is the fluid interplay between symmetry and harmony (Delyth, 2008). Secondly, the three central rings depict the triquetra. They simultaneously represent each of my three daughters as well as the three most powerful and enduring forces of nature; earth, wind and fire alongside the body, mind and spirit.

Dependent upon individual interpretation the points of the rings may be thought to symbolise a raft of meanings; such as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the past, the present and the future or the Celtic goddess Moregan (see Chapter Two) who is depicted as the maiden, the mother and the crone (Matthews, 1995). These three continuous circles with unbroken lines also depict unity within all dimensions of life. Unity encompasses the relationships between me and my daughters, my daughters with each other, and lastly, they represent relationships that exist across space and time forged by strength, spirit and being. I elected to have no space at the centre of the knot; therefore, the connections between the circles are tightly woven in a protective manner. The interlaced circle that draws each aspect together symbolises our love for one another, the love I have for my husband and the eternal interwoven dimensions and connections that are present for each one of us.

The layered circles include various shading effects to denote the intricate and inescapable multidimensional connections woven within the past, present and future. Shading emphasises that at times some aspects may be more visible and prominent than others. Nevertheless, there is a space and place created for what may be not be evident or seen at any given time. Layering highlights the salient place of ancestors whose presence continues to encircle and ripple through their present and future descendants. The gifts of our ancestors are acknowledged within these circles as close and affirming as they link the life-essences of all together, regardless of the realm each resides within.

White, unshaded, circles signify places of growth, learning and mystery. It is the place where the spirit flourishes and new knowledges may be encouraged and created. The

inclusion of mystery allows for esoteric knowledges that may not yet be known or may not be known within this specific generation. Here there is a state of potentiality, an awareness and appreciation of the quasi-corporeal.

Shaded (partially visible) circles are used to portray the delicate balance of what may be visible and what may be hidden. Dynamic in nature, they allude to what may be veiled and thus partially concealed; the notion there are knowledges and entities which may travel under cover. These may, at times, masquerade as something different. My interpretation of these semi-circular pieces is that through skilled guidance and interpretation these may, in time, be revealed and noticed by the wearer.

1.3.2 Kirituhi tuarua (second)

My second kirituhi was a Mother's Day gift from Hine in April 2017. I refer to this specific piece as a kirituhi due to the integral Māori features which are embedded within the design, although Hine refers to hers as a tāmoko. Her intent was for her and me to wear a symbol which signified not only our shared ancestry but also our mother-daughter relationship. She selected imagery which denotes a mother and daughter using a visually Celtic inscription style and added the word *aroha*, often referred to as meaning love, in te reo Māori. In doing so she has acknowledged and drawn together our ancestral heritages as meaningful for both her and me.

At this time my parents, Hine's grandparents, were on holiday staying with my husband and me. My mother expressed an interest in the design and significance of the kirituhi

Hine had chosen and decided to also have this tattooed on her forearm (her first tattoo). Hine gifted it to her as her Grand-Mother's Day gift. Now three generations of women in our family wear this kirituhi.



Figure 2 Kirituhi tuarua

This kirituhi was put on by tattoo artist Shine Fu (photo credit is to her).

The shared nature of this kirituhi denotes the interconnectedness of our stories and our lives. It also signifies what we share. It is our shared travel guide and companion, our guide to actively acknowledge and remember those who have come before and the stories they have shared and bequeathed to us to support our travels.

It is also cautionary, reminding us to take care of what is important to us. To care for our ancestral and cultural heritages and inheritances and to actively disrupt structures and devices which may put these at risk. The following sentiment expressed by Te Awekotuku

(2009) provides a helpful reminder of why our kirituhi and tāmoko are important travelling companions: “Dreams can be worn on the skin, and so can memories; past events, past successes, past ordeals, past lives...it is also about remembering those ancestral treasure that have been under threat... [it is the] ...active remembering...” (p. 2).

My kirituhi are not a disparate collection of whimsical designs unrelated to my sense of personal and professional identity. Rather they are a visual unfolding of my own travels (Naude, Jordaan & Bergh, 2017), which includes how I have approached and employed philosophical and theoretical inquiries within this specific research context.

1.4 My Kirituhi and Statement of the Problem

When I consider my kirituhi, and all that is woven and tangled within them, I notice their layering and the sinuous ways in which the imagery of both offers insight into the complexity of relationships. Embedded within each are knotty and messy tangible and intangible threads upon which multiple understandings are mapped and marked as significant.

It is these I draw on to inform, support and guide me. The storying of each accompanies me on my journey as I traverse the convoluted tenets of this research. Each design is a visual analogy and assemblage of the powerful inherited life-forces and life-essences that dwell and pulse not only within me, and Hine, but also within the entities this thesis seeks to learn more about. This recognises that our existence is not one dimensional. The intricate twists and turns within the kirituhi knot work and imagery are parallel to the

various worlds spoken of within various textual accounts as being inhabited by humans and non-humans (see further in thesis); an interconnected series of crossings and pathways (Silver, 2006).

Our skin, and the markers and inscriptions upon it, like notions of the companions who may share our lives, exists within embattled terrain (Martin, 2013). Patterson and Schroeder (2010) refer to this as a “meeting place of structure and agency; a primary site for the inscription of ideology and a text upon which...[we]...write...[our]...own stories” (p. 256). Therefore, each is the object and subject of public scrutiny, eliciting curiosity and appreciation, alongside also creating fear and/or castigation.

An interesting point made by Kang and Jones (2007) which is relevant for the context of this thesis is how inscribed bodies may be read. Here they note that:

...people cannot fully control the meaning of their own tattooed bodies; the social contexts in which they live shape the responses to and interpretations of their tattoos by others... [meanings attached to tattoos]...are “culturally written over” by the larger society...filtered through historical and cultural lenses that often impose unintended and unwanted meanings... (pp. 42-46)

Thus, the inscribed body, and imagery portrayed, whilst known and understood by the wearer are open to multiple socio-political and cultural interpretations. What the wearer intends can therefore be misconstrued, creating the potential for misunderstandings and assumptions to be made of the wearer and of the imagery and metaphor depicted.

Acknowledgement of culturally specific nuances woven within the imagery relies on the

understanding that there exists a multitude of alternative knowledges threaded within the construction of the piece.

Our bodies and our companions are culturally coded and decoded—replete with inscriptions and messages of agency and conformity (Patterson & Schroeder, 2010). Each may be viewed as marking the person or entity as located on the fringes of normative social perceptions and expectations (Martin, 2013). This is where the intersections of my kirituhi and this thesis are located, where the interplay of systems of knowledge create patterns of difference about what may be conceived and constructed as being present, visible and therefore viable.

Much like the potential for alternative interpretative structures and systems of knowledge and meaning making which can be applied to kirituhi and the wearing and reading of visual imagery on the skin, the same potential can be present when seeking to draw on notions which speak of the various forms the relationships young children may take. Each is filtered through various lenses which have the potential to uphold elaborate cultural patterns or conversely to write on and write over inherited messages which in turn can erase the ability to engage in active remembering (Te Awekotuku, 2009).

As previously alluded to, and which will be demonstrated in further chapters, to date there is a concerning paucity of alternative perspectives and terms that could be used to interrupt traditional Euro-western textual accounts of the nature and purpose of entities unseen to others. This scarcity of research means little attention has been paid to speaking against the dominant Euro-western preoccupation which continues to relegate

unseen entities spoken of by children to the imagined terrain of childhood. Therefore, it remains an under-theorised, and I will argue, undervalued and ignored aspect of a culturally critical account of childhood. It may be that as teachers we are not even aware of what is threaded within our own understandings and that which we then weave into our pedagogy and practice.

Just as theory is dynamic and ever-changing, so too are the travelling companions that may share our lives. How these companions appear, and contribute to our lives, may be determined by the theories we use to acknowledge and recognise their presence and the conditions which in turn produce understandings of their possible locations and travel trajectories.

Aotearoa New Zealand's ECE curriculum document *Te Whāriki* premises relationships and belonging as core ideological tenets. However, a key concern is who decides what a companion *looks like* and what a relationship must entail. Who decides which features and functions companions and relationships must have and require in order to be recognised within an ECE context? Who determines who may belong and what the designated features and characteristics are in order to achieve membership? Does the presence of unseen entities pose threat or opportunity and how closely should we as ECE teachers observe and adhere to pervasive theoretical explanations which continue to circulate and produce notions of the nature, purpose and place of entities within the lives of young children? What are the traps within these notions? What could we now need to be attuned to and draw attention to, to create pedagogical ruptures in order to shift outdated assumptions which invariably inform—as well as inhibit—our practice?

1.5 Significance of this Topic

The aim of this research is to look deeper into the knotty, tangled and complex social and cultural accounts of the companions who may share the lives of young children. The hope is to enable alternative critical dialogue in ECE about the entities who provide companionship and the roles and functions they may take as an inherent component of the lifespan. In doing so, I will look further into the ancestral and cultural inheritances which are integral to young children and travel alongside them to provide companionship.

These are timely conversations to engage in as young children's participation in ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand continues to experience a steady increase. MoE (2018) statistics published in Education Counts show that in 2018 64.4% of children (200,793 children) aged from birth to four years were enrolled in some type of licensed ECE service. Services they attend include state, private, special characteristic, kōhanga reo, homebased and parent-led services. Since 2005 the highest noted enrolment increase has been within teacher-led education and care services and homebased services. On average it is noted children attend between 20-24 hours per week in these services—with higher participation and attendance observed for children aged three to four years and conversely lower participation for children aged under one year of age.

Participation in quality ECE has been identified as beneficial in laying the foundation for future lifelong learning success (Kaye, 2017; Mitchell, 2010). There has been a continued sector-wide push to increase access and participation for Māori children which the

Education Review Office [ERO] (2016) advises requires the sector to be cognisant and responsive not only to Te Ao Māori but also to Māori aspirations. To be so requires teachers to have knowledge of differing accounts of what may be conceptualised as tangible and tangible and of that which may take on culturally resonant forms and features.

This has been a consistent challenge for the sector, especially due to the high proportion of teachers whose identified ethnicity is predominantly Pākehā/European (Rameka, 2012; Ritchie, 2003, 2018; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014; Stuart, 2011). The following graph from MoE (2018) data illustrates the current ethnic make-up of children enrolled in education and care services in Aotearoa:

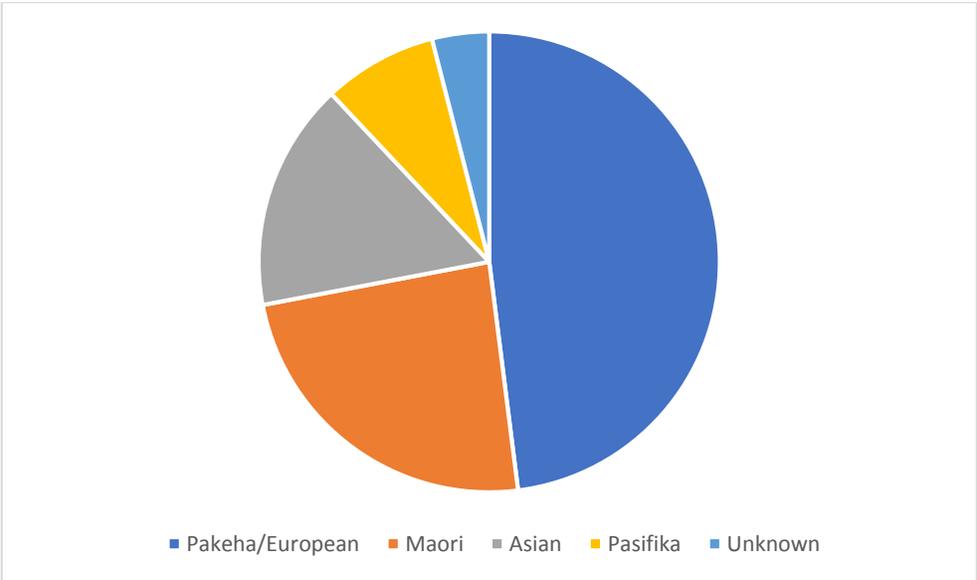


Figure 3 Ethnicity of children in ECE

Glynn (1998) asserts that often teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand are quick to recognise, and advocate for, language and culture inclusion of migrants and refugees within the

teaching and learning environment. However, he laments the fact that this advocacy does not always extend to te reo Māori me ōna tikanga. This is worrying as many young children spend regular hours in ECE services each week. These are the settings where all young children's ancestral and cultural identities need to be acknowledged, nurtured and seamlessly woven into all threads of their curriculum and their daily experiences. This calls for pedagogical approaches, and teacher responsiveness, to shift the hierarchical power base from the notion of the teacher as expert to the child as having important knowledge through which they can direct their own lives and learning journeys (Chaffey, Conole & Harrington, 2017).

As mentioned above, my own experiences provided the impetus for this research that explores ways in which teaching embodies much of the intangible which has historically been codified as sitting outside of Euro-western normative categories. As such, this thesis seeks to consider what may need to be thought about, and thought with, to better understand the various ancestral and cultural perspectives, understandings and rememberings which are integral to the lives of young children. This asks us to be open to what young children may know, what they may share with us, and in-turn what we may learn from them.

A number of concerns and provocations provide focal interest within the mapping of the thesis chapters. Each chapter offers a point of arrival, and ultimately departure, which provides opportunities to engage with the problematic legacy traces that normative constructions of the child and childhood ECE have inherited. These are the legacies which

continue to constrain differing accounts of relationships and notions of belonging within the ECE years.

To conclude this chapter, I now introduce my research questions. These are positioned within this chapter as they set the foundation for the subsequent chapters which all take a specific way into working through the problem at hand. Following the research questions, I offer an overview of the structure of this thesis.

1.6 Research questions

My research questions evolved from drawing on the key concerns identified within this chapter. Of primary concern is the paucity of differing theoretical approaches and perspectives of how entities, as the companions of young children, may be conceptualised. The questions arose from a growing uneasiness about which alternative knowledges might benefit from exploration and inclusion within an ECE context in Aotearoa New Zealand. These questions were formulated with the intention of primarily working on theoretical concepts with the addition of a small selection of my own accounts drawn on to provide companionship.

The following research questions were developed:

1. What are the indications (e.g., in research literature and the author's autoethnographic reflection) that young children have experience of non-corporeal companions that are outside normative developmental constructions of childhood?

2. How might aspects of ancestry and culture be expressed in experiences of non-corporeal companions, as experienced in an autoethnographic account (see Chapters Seven and Eight)? How can cultural narratives (in this case Celtic and Māori) inform understandings of 'imaginary companions'?
3. To what extent are such companions acknowledged in ECE settings in the international literature and in Aotearoa New Zealand?
4. What are the implications of this theoretical and autoethnographic analysis for ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand? Specifically, what implications require consideration for ECE teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand?

1.7 Structure of this Thesis

Chapter Two draws on key notions which provided the underpinnings for the construction of this thesis. Two principal perspectives are explored, firstly I introduce my and Hine's shared Celtic ancestral heritage and how this sits alongside this research to provide companionship. Secondly, the significance of the concept of ancestral travel for this specific research is explored.

Chapter Three investigates the theoretical perspectives that provide the overarching conceptual framework for this thesis. Carefully selected works of Derrida, Foucault and Barad are drawn on for the insights they offer to this multiplex and involute theoretical topic.

Chapter Four firstly investigates how young children can be the speakers of their own accounts of childhood. Secondly, a literature review of traditional Euro-western textual accounts of understandings of imaginary/imagined companions who may feature in the lives of young children is introduced. The literature used draws attention to what has, thus far, been committed to text about these companions within pervasive Euro-western accounts. The themes presented within this chapter highlight the claims Euro-western theory has made about the space these entities may occupy, which are agitated further as the thesis progresses.

Chapter Five introduces counter perspectives relevant to consider as alternative theory to set against the tricky claims asserted within Chapter Four. This chapter draws on a selection of Māori textual sources to locate entities within a culturally relevant context and to interrupt traditional Euro-western normative developmental approaches which have historically, and currently, relegated entities to the imaginary.

Chapter Six presents the research methodology chosen as significant for this thesis exploration – autoethnography. The complexity of autoethnography as a research approach is noted, alongside potential limitations relevant to observe for this specific research undertaking.

In Chapter Seven I introduce a small selection of autoethnographic recollections and reflections on becoming Hine's mother. These have been chosen to provide companionship to the complicated theoretical concepts introduced within the preceding

chapters. As such they appear within this thesis as secondary layering to travel alongside the theoretical tenets worked within this thesis.

Chapter Eight builds on from Chapter Seven by presenting additional autoethnographic accounts, including recollections of and reflections on Hine's early and middle childhood years and the companions I noticed who travelled alongside her. These accounts are analysed alongside key threads introduced in Chapters Two and Five to offer new insights into this phenomenon.

Chapter Nine presents inheritance implications within the Aotearoa New Zealand ECE curriculum. This chapter speaks of what may be tangibly and intangibly integrated into our curriculum document and the possible implications of this for teachers when seeking to consider understandings of young children's companions. Potential implications for ECE globally are alluded to, as the complexities identified are applicable cross-culturally.

Chapter Ten provides concluding comments that weave the threads of this thesis together, drawing on what has been learnt through the research journey. This chapter gives an account of what has been explored and discovered about young children's relationship companions within this specific research context and project.

Chapter Two

Thesis Background

Prior to introducing the conceptual framework upon which this thesis has been constructed I first wish to speak of significant perspectives which provide foundational support and inspiration for Chapter Three (Conceptual Framing). As mentioned in Chapter One, my ancestry primarily draws from parts of The United Kingdom generally referred to as Celtic. Within this chapter I introduced the two kirituhi I wear and explained the metaphors and meaning inscribed within each piece. I return to my second kirituhi now.

This kirituhi is a visual representation of the intertwined ancestral heritage Hine and I share and serves as a constant reminder—a companion—to denote that we are never alone. Affixed within this relationship is the layering of ancestry and ties which connect us to our past, present and future. It also signifies the importance of intergenerational relationships and how these need to be not only observed, but also nurtured and continued. These are intricate and intimate bonds which exist and move over time-and space; they are therefore not static, nor are they located solely within one world or realm.

My kirituhi tuarua draws on the interconnectedness of our ancestry and therefore our stories. It speaks of what we share and pays homage to those who have come before us and those who are yet to be. In this way it accounts for the multiplicity of forms that may be taken; corporeal and non-corporeal. It does not determine that one form takes precedence over the other in a hierarchical system whereby the corporeal is deemed to hold privilege. Rather it speaks of each as crucial; constant and accordingly intimate features of our everyday lives. Therefore, when I voice the notion of companionship

within this text the reference weaves together the web of relationships which are frequently denoted within traditional Euro-western text as corporeal and non-corporeal; often referred to within text as human and nonhuman.

Within this chapter I now introduce the following threads which have contributed to the framing and composition of this thesis as it continues to unfold. Firstly, I build on from Chapter One by drawing further on my and Hine's shared Celtic inheritance and how this has been noticed as a sustained facet underpinning the construction of this thesis. As previously recognised our shared ancestry has provided integral companionship and has thus influenced how I have approached and made meaning of this specific research project and context. Secondly, I introduce the next layering to the fabric by reflecting on how the concept of travel offers a significant thread for this thesis. The concept of travel, or travel in regard to the various companions who may share our lives, has been identified as a crucial and continuous thread to work with in structuring this thesis.

Specific mention of companions, in relation to young children, may not be directly indicated within all textual explorations of this chapter. Nonetheless the various themes worked through in this chapter have been selected as relevant components to the building of the thesis argument as they add cultural layers which further destabilise the ground upon which Euro-western assertions about imagined and imaginary companions (explored further in Chapter Five) have been promulgated.

2.1 Shared Celtic Inheritance

Literature, and shared familial narratives recount how ancient Celts were aware of the various ways in which history shaped understandings of identity. Strong links to ancestors, and ancestral storying, provide the foundation upon which notions of self and cultural collective identity are then overlaid (McColman, 2003). Thus, it seems Celtic peoples are not averse to sharing their lives with a variety of entities or companions. These feature in a range of storying, with travels and travellers across realms noted and accounted for. They are viewed as an intrinsic part of everyday life, whether the forms they may take are noticed or not (Rhys, 2017). As such, I consider these to be the spiritual and textual features which accompany Hine and me, and the relationship companions who may share our lives.

Celtic movement, or travelling, stories are highly revered as they underpin and uphold a sacred and sophisticated cosmogony and offer insight into locations that a myriad of entities may occupy, sometimes concurrently (M. Smith, personal communication, 18 March, 2011). Not only do these stories chart the unfolding of the universe, they also illuminate the intrinsic place of ancestral and familial overlapping systems of knowledge which may exist.

Therefore, these stories are recognised as a fundamental constituent of Hine and my shared ancestry. They enable us to engage in, as a previous passage from Te Awekotuku (2009) in Chapter One described, the act of “active remembering” (p. 2), to reclaim the stories and memories of those who have come before and to draw on these for wisdom

and guidance. When we do so we can take our place in our world/s knowing we can refer to the ancestral mapping we have inherited, and “remap and renegotiate the paths we choose to walk on in that map” (Penehira, 2011, p. x). From this we can inscribe our inheritance with a multiplicity of diverse contextual pathways.

Therefore, I now turn to explore the significance of our Celtic ancestry and how this provides a crucial thread of connectivity, not only to my and Hine’s lives, but also to the unfolding of this thesis research.

2.2 Tracing the Social Construction of Celtic Peoples

As previously noted, the histories and knowledge of my ancestors are inescapable travel companions. They have been woven around me and continue to exist through me. As I shared in Chapter One, their significance is visually acknowledged and symbolised within the kirituhi I wear. Due to this I view my ancestry as influential in shaping how my understanding that entities, regardless of the form taken, exist as an everyday occurrence; or as my mother would often say, “as part of the rich tapestries of life”.

However, as I came to consider my ancestral inheritance and how this could manifest within my thesis travel, I quickly realised more focused inquiry was required. Whilst I held a construct of myself as being of Celtic ancestry, I had never thought to query what this tapestry may encompass and what it may therefore mean to, and for, me and for Hine. What could being Celtic thus embody and what ancestral and spiritual birthright might be my legacy, and the legacy of those who follow me? How could the notions of being Celtic

invariably influence my approach to this research context and what was I hoping to reveal and reclaim? What could my use of the term *Celtic* also be seeking to conceal? As with the key foci of this thesis, the construct of being Celtic, and how this notion of identity is drawn on and mobilised for this research, cannot be overlooked and left untroubled.

I began by exploring text. Like all language and text, the use of the term Celtic comes with its own historic, linguistic and socio-political traces. It appears there is no definitive consensus on where the term may have originated; however, it has been suggested by McDonald (1986) that Celtic peoples were first recorded within the “ethnological bric-a-brac of the classical world” (p. 335). The assertion here is that Celtic peoples were located as “hovering on the edge of, and used in the self-definition of, the civilised world” (p. 335) as one of the four barbarian peoples, namely the Persians (inhabiting the East), the Libyans (residing in Africa) and the Scythians (occupying the Eurasian steppes) (Matthews, 1995). So, border-dwelling and border-crossing has always been noted of Celtic peoples; albeit within differing contexts.

Celtic peoples, referred to by the Greeks as “Hyperboreans or Celts” (Rolleston, 2010, p. 7), are present in artifacts and textual historical recordings which predate Christianity by approximately 500 years. James and Gonzalez (2003) suggest that Eastern Europe shows signs of early Celtic inhabitation dating from around 1000-800 BC, although there is archaeological evidence to suggest there may have been Celtic peoples in “Siberia and northern Mongolia... [around]...the second millennium BC” (p. 7). This movement mapping for Dooge (1996) is attributed to climate changes which seem to be recognised as a major contributory factor in determining migration patterns. It is thought that a

“widespread mini-glacial period” (p. 15) in approximately 500 BC forced Celtic people from the North and Central Europe into the “wide area of continental Europe and to the peripheral islands” (p. 13) in search of a less volatile climate.

Throughout history, and within my familial interactions, Celtic exploits and geographical locations appear to be known and spoken of. For example, Aristotle was aware that Celts “dwelt ‘beyond Spain,’ that they had captured Rome, and that they set great store by warlike power” (Rolleston, 2010, p. 8). Celtic feats were referred to within classical literature, such as in the writings of Plato, who portrayed them as a “warlike race... [who were prone to] ...drunkenness” (Plato, 348 BC/1962, p. 637). This view is scattered across classical narratives and Reynolds (1995) claims their legacy is therefore one in which a Celtic person is remembered as “some kind of swaggering ill-mannered unreliable boozy braggart” (p. 1). Some of these features were included within the various stories I heard during my childhood, and those I subsequently shared with my own daughters during their early years.

A further influence in premising the construction of what the term *Celt* may involve appears to have been the sacking of Rome in 390BC by Celtic peoples. James and Gonzalez (2003) describe this event as “a spirited attack” (p. 10), affecting Roman pride as well as delaying anticipated city growth and impinging on planned infrastructure. Consequently, this event is believed to have left an indelible fear and hatred for Celtic peoples, with future warfare instigated by Rome in a bid to restore Roman pride by becoming the victor of the century’s old conflict (Pinfold, 2012). There is therefore an

additional layering to the perspective of Celts as combative – a narrative which has continued to play out within various contemporary stories (see later in this chapter).

Much has been written about the “civilised” Roman society in direct contrast to the “primitive” or “barbarian” Celtic society. The inference here is that Celtic ways of life and their ways of meaning making were less sophisticated and therefore subordinate when compared to those of Rome and her people. Interestingly, Pinfold (2012) believes rather that each skirmish between the Celts and Romans was premised on “a clash of civilizations... conflict... [was]... based upon material wealth, territorial gain and extending influence” (p. 15). It appears that, following prolonged conflict, the Celtic peoples eventually experienced defeat at the hands of the Roman army during the 2nd century BC. This was influential in shaping subsequent settlement patterns and the locations which are now frequently attributed as being places where Celtic people inhabit (James & Gonzalez, 2003).

Literature suggests that prior to 1700 the word Celt, or Celtic, was not known or applied by those residing in the British Isles (Bowman, 2014; Clarke, 1998; Dietler, 1994; McCarthy & Hague, 2004). Campbell (2009) refers to the term Celt as a misnomer; a “nineteenth-century construct” (p. 20). Similarly, McCarthy and Hague (2004) posit that the origin can be traced to the Enlightenment period of the 18th and 19th centuries, a historical period when there was a desire to identify and “categorize” (p. 390), especially in relation to the geographic spaces people may occupy and as a means through which linguistic diversity could be attributed (Bowman, 2014).

The term Celtic is therefore generally considered as a “catch-all phrase” (Clarke, 1998, p. 5). It groups together a collection of tribes residing in Britain at the onset of the Roman invasion. What is important to observe here is that there is little literary evidence to show that the tribes themselves used this term to ascribe identity to themselves or the collective (Dietler, 1994).

Various alternative terms have arisen alongside Celt/Celtic throughout historical accounts, such as Keltoi, which translates as Celt in Greek (Dietler, 1994; James & Gonzalez, 2003), Celtae, Gauls as referred to by the Romans (Dietler, 1994) and Galli/Galetai (Alberro, 2008). The range of terms used, often interchangeably within texts, pose further confusion and make it problematic to determine which peoples are referred to within a specific text, where these peoples may have resided and the territories they may have made home via warfare and migration (Campbell, 2009; Gibney, 2004; Hague, 2002). These terms also generate increased uncertainty about what may be known about, or attributed to, those who may have been considered Celtic. This continues to remain knotty terrain especially when contemplating the multiplex intergenerational understandings about what such an ancestral inheritance may therefore encompass.

A further caution relevant to the context of this specific research is the difficulty of ascribing narratives to particular ancient peoples. Such narratives may be shrouded in romantic nostalgia, meaning what has come to be believed may not indeed be correct and is therefore misleading (Campbell, 2009). Another complexity to consider is the various social, political, cultural and gender discourses which have invariably shaped which stories may be afforded the status of truth, and which have conversely been relegated to the

fantastical and mythical (see later in this Chapter). However, Strum and Latour (1987) explain these decisions could be applied to all cultures, as narratives comprise stories. Whether these are falsifiable or unfalsifiable, they constitute a basis upon which collective remembering and continued intergenerational transmission occurs (Murray-Everett, 2016; Luminet, 2016).

Another common assumption to draw attention to is the notion that Celtic territories were historically inhabited by white Europeans. It seems that the perceived barbarianism of the Celts spoken of earlier meant they required their own racialised category of *other* in order to offer differentiation from the *civilised* Greek and Roman population (Dietler, 1994; Hague, Giordano & Sebesta, 2005; Rolleston, 2010). From this social and cultural construction, the territories they subsequently occupied are then generally thought to include the “non-English areas of the British Isles, namely Ireland, Scotland, Wales...the Isle of Man... [and]...Cornwall” (Hague et al., 2005, p. 154). Brittany also features as an area inhabited by those of Celtic ancestry (Bowman, 2014). The impact of this *othering* signals that presently the term Celt, or Celtic, is often used to refer to those who share an Indo-European linguistic similarity, or “‘family’ of languages” (Bowman, 2014, p. 105), most specifically “(a) the Irish, the Scots and the peoples of the Isle of Man, and (b) the Welsh, the Cornish and the Bretons” (Dooge, 1996, p. 13). Many of these geographical places are those occupied by my and Hine’s ancestors.

Celtic people are often envisioned and depicted within literature and imagery as “tall, pale-skinned, hairy, warrior peoples...the tallest of peoples” (Durham & Goormachtigh, 2014, pp. 1-5). In terms of colouring, Sheikh (2009) suggests, “of all the races on this

earth, the Celtic are extremely well known for having one of the most captivating hair colours known to man, red” (p. 2). Alas, this has not been an ancestral gift that I or my daughters received, although members of my Jackson family have been the recipient of this; my grandmother had red hair, as does her daughter and one of my cousins. So, traces of this seemingly Celtic characteristic have continued to appear within previous and current generations of my family.

The significance of red hair is further evidenced within Celtic storying, such as those of Moregan (appearing later in this chapter). She is one of three goddesses referred to as “the battle furies” (Stevens & Maclaran, 2007, p. 2007), noted for her fiery red hair and volatile temperament (presumed to be the effect of her hair colour). Whilst Scotland and Ireland are considered to have a higher proportion of the population with red hair, this trait is one that is possibly not originally Celtic in origin and may have been inherited from contact with Vikings from approximately 795AD or the Ashkenazic Jews, Hebrew for German, who are believed to have inhabited Italy and surrounding areas (Ostrer, 2001; Sheikh, 2009).

As previously mentioned, classical narratives depict Celts as possessing a penchant for drunkenness and warlike pursuits. However, within later narratives they tend to be described as rural, agrarian peoples. There is a thread of storying dedicated to portraying Celts as people whose lives were organised around a deep-seated connection with spirituality, with reverence paid to the deities of the land and a desire to live life in a harmonious way alongside nature (Hutton, 1991; Matthews, 1995; Trousdale, 2013).

Further culturally mediated characteristics adding weight to how ideas of Celticity may be conceptualised, and what it may mean to identify as Celtic, are offered within the following passage by McCarthy and Hague (2004). Here they put forward the notion that:

As a signifier of difference within northwestern Europe, Celticness was generally held to be marked not by bodily characteristics—central to most modern discourses or race—but by behaviour and temperament. Although genealogy mattered, Celtic identity was primarily cultural rather than biological... [and]...there has been considerable stability around what are supposedly the central characteristics of Celtic peoples. Celts are commonly depicted as emotional, passionate, heroic, struggling against overwhelming odds, wild, and drunken. They fight for land and family, not conquest or gain. In defence of their localities, Celts are supposedly antibureaucratic and prone to acting on instinct, reinforced by a penchant for “unprovoked violence” ...This is a discourse of difference, in which Celts are defined as everything that modern Western industrial capitalist society is not. (p. 391)

The authors make clear their determination that Celtic peoples sit outside of a privileged dominant Western paradigm. This is a position which will be investigated and problematised further within the following section as claims about heritage are always under question and therefore require more focused critique (Hall, 1994; Hunter, 2019; Jacobson, 1998). What follows in the next section is an exploration of particular propositions which sit within social and cultural constructs influencing possible markers of identity and claims to Celticity.

2.3 Troubling the Celtic Claim

A notable concern I wish to draw particular attention to is the social and cultural invention of specific terms, such as the construct of *race* and how this is applied to categorise difference. Whilst this has been alluded to previously, the key focus here is foreshadowed, as Jacobson (1998) asserted, by the question of “who does the making” (p. 3). Therefore, the question of what is made, and by whom, advances:

...a theory of who is who, of who belongs and who does not, of who deserves what and who is capable of what. By looking at racial categories and their fluidity over time, we glimpse the competing theories of history which inform the society and define its internal struggles. (Jacobson, 1998, p. 6).

When the term race is used it conjures up thoughts of assumed “scientifically quantifiable qualities” (Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014, p. 11). However, this is not the case. As a social and cultural construct, it is imbued with axiomatic political and cultural perceptions with power relations attached to it. Historical and contemporary accounts of race highlight that it is often used to position people in either a favourable or unfavourable light, determining inclusion or exclusion (Fanon, 1967; McCarthy & Hague, 2004).

McCarthy and Hague (2004) caution that there is no “possibility of any essential white identity” (p. 388). They suggest that definitions of whiteness have functionality within a capitalist society through class stratification, legitimising the colonial worldview whilst “divide[ing] and control[ing] the working class” (p. 388). The following quote taken from Witt (2009) sheds further light on this querying, explaining:

The Celts were the first European people north of the Alps to emerge into recorded history. At one time they dominated the ancient world from Ireland in the west to Turkey in the east, and from Belgium in the north, south to Spain and Italy” (P. Ellis 1990: i). But contrast this with the following: “the Celts are, and always were, a creation of the human mind” (Morse 2005: 185). The former statement is typical of traditional introductions to the ancient Celts as the “first Europeans.” The latter reflects a current trend in Celtic studies to revisit the entire question of “Celtic” identity. (p. 284)

As previously stated, the terms Celt and Celtic are relatively recent terms which McCarthy and Hague (2004) argue are indicative of “another racial discourse of modernity, and the people who claim it today are retroactively imposing cultural and genealogical continuities that have a basis only, it seems, in taxonomical practices” (p. 390). Thus, their standpoint positions Celtic identity today as constituted by desire and an affinity with a perceived way of life rather than as the basis for any specific ethnic claim. A similar sentiment is shared by Witt (2009), who suggests that being Celtic is located “in the eye of the beholder” (p. 286) and that as such a semblance of Celtic identity exists only as a contemporary social construct. This construct had no relevancy or meaning for ancient peoples who are now retrospectively referred to, and have characteristics ascribed to them, by the appearance and use of these terms.

Celticity, and being Celtic, is then viewed not as a racial identity but rather an attitude which Bowman (2014) coined as “‘Cardiac Celts’ – people who feel in their hearts that they are Celtic” (p. 105). She suggests that the “Celtic spirit” is ubiquitous, evident within contemporary spiritual and religious practices, music and art. Various authors share her view, especially regarding a resurgence and revival of things Celtic, and about what may

constitute Celtic ethnicity and identity (e.g., Hague, 2002; McCarthy & Hague, 2004; Stevens & Maclaran, 2007). However, this does not make the idea of a shared and understood Celtic identity any less tricky (Hague, 2002; Hague et al., 2005) nor does it offer a permanent sense of unitary political, social and cultural power to the collection of tribes who resided in the areas that are traditionally and currently identified as being Celtic.

Therefore, it can be surmised that to make a claim of Celtic identity is undoubtedly “powerful” (McCarthy & Hague, 2004, p. 392). In doing so a potential demarcation and deviation from “the mainstream... [whilst]...remaining within, Western culture” (p. 392) is proffered. On this subject, O’Flynn (2016) agrees with the notion of Celtic identity sitting outside white ethnicity and puts forward for consideration the theory that such positioning awards this identity a “degree of authenticity...lost by ‘mainstream’ white ethnicities” (p. 252). The above authors suggest that cultural essentialism concerning what constitutes Celticity invariably sit within entangled constructions which Wilson (2005) has argued do not encompass notions of privilege. Rather, Celtic identity has historically marked out its members as the recipients of “‘special hostility’ in comparison to other white ethnic minorities” (p. 156), an example being the Irish in the United States.

This raises the question of whether economic protectionism sits at the heart of the more recent Celtic revival as a political and cultural vehicle through which the local elite can protect their land and livelihood, especially in relation to British state interests. The premise here is that in drawing on the identity of being Celtic, a position emerges from which to challenge, resist and change previous and continued economic disadvantage

occurs. At the same time this position may afford a way to contextualise the historical loss of political, social, cultural and gendered power.

Another notable tension to attend to relates to a theme appearing earlier in this chapter, that of representations of gender, specifically, the propensity to associate certain characteristics with notions of Celticity. One feature is that of hair colour mentioned previously which may be thought of as denoting an ancestral connection of being Celtic. For O'Flynn (2016) contemporary examples of what constitutes Celticity for women include the high proportion of female dance performers in troupes such as *Riverdance*, who are portrayed as having long, flowing, red or blonde hair. The connotation here is that loaded notions of whiteness and Celticity are further applied and perpetuated through these gendered representations which refer to holding a "somewhat special... [category]...by comparison with other peoples" (O'Flynn, 2016, p. 251). In this instance the hair can be viewed as a particular contemporary racialised marker of Celtic identity formation.

Interestingly, I saw several Celtic-inspired dance and theatre productions within my adolescent and early adult years. As an adolescent I recall being drawn to the imagery of these shows, which coincided with my fervent obsession at that time with watching the British television series, *Robin of Sherwood* (later to be known as *Robin Hood*). The story arc of this series centred on pre-Christian pagan England with protagonists deemed to be outlaws who sought to preserve the old ways and champion the oppressed as Norman dictators sought to pursue, entrap and kill them. A strong connection to the supernatural realm was embedded across this series, with entities taking on various forms and

appearing to guide and enlighten the main protagonist, Robin of Loxley. I had not thought much about the main female character of this televised saga, Lady Marion of Leaford, until recently. Something I now recognise is that she was portrayed as tall, fair skinned, with flowing red hair; the physical exemplification of assumed Celtic markers referred to earlier.

I also had not made the connection that I attended one of the Celtic revival dance shows when I was pregnant with Hine, where she busily danced along in utero. Following this performance, and her enthusiastic participation, I chose her middle name; an ancestral link to her Celtic heritage.

Whilst the sentiments within this section may not weigh so heavily or perhaps be as noticed or spoken of, historically and currently within Aotearoa New Zealand, they do, however, remain present and need to be elucidated. I notice this especially when I think back on the various familial and social influences I experienced during my childhood, adolescence and early adulthood growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand. Making the claim to be Celtic thus comes with a complicated history beset with historical and contemporary messiness. For example, a claimant, such as myself, may seek to apply this construct as a marker of their identity in order to reconnect and remember ancestral knowledges and cultural pathways. However, tangled within this claim may simultaneously be the desire to create distance from the troubled historical legacy of Euro-western colonisation and the ensuing continued discourse encircling this. Concepts of whiteness and white privilege thus provide a foundational platform upon which genealogy, ethnicity and self-identification are consequently constructed. What is crucial to be cognisant of is that in

doing so notions of racism and white privilege can be further premised, concealed, as Hague et al. (2005) argue, “behind a veil of Celticity” (p. 157). This is a further knottiness for me to be conversant of as this thesis proceeds.

2.4 The Historical Legacy of Celtic Creation Stories

Just as there exists a multitude of narratives about the Celts and what being Celtic may thus entail, the same can be said of Celtic creation stories. In general, this storying tends to be aligned to the four great cycles of Celtic Creation, identified in chronological order as the Mythological Cycle, The Ulster Cycle, the Fenian Cycle, and the Historical Cycle. Each cycle offers a timeline of sorts and includes interconnected narratives which identify waves of invasion and ensuing immigration that occurred within countries and regions oft noted as Celtic. They also detail the travel and storying of the emergence of various peoples and entities, alongside the formation of various temporal topographies (Matthews, 1995).

Embedded within Celtic creation stories is the awareness of what McColman (2003) refers to as, “the mysterious places where the world we live in overlaps with the worlds of eternity and the gods and goddesses” (p. 1). These are spoken of as “thin places of Celtic land” (Sellner, 1993, p. 136) where one may experience a divide, frequently referred to as a veil, acknowledging the sinuousness of past, present and future realms. This is where the temporal, spiritual – natural and supernatural – are inextricably entangled and inter-reliant and where there is a knottiness of constructs detailing what may be considered as

real/imagined or superior/inferior in relation to importance and status (Stevens & Maclaren, 2007). For often within these creation stories the marvellous and mundane are taken together. This can be seen within the intrinsic fabric that is Celtic evolution storying.

Celtic evolution storying comprises three distinct phases of existence which are identified as the circle of Ceugant (circle of infinity), the circle of Abred (circle of re-birth), and the circle of Gwynvyd/Gwynvid (circle of the white) (Restall-Orr, 2007). Integral to each of these phases is the significance of the corporeal alongside the non-corporeal. As Restall-Orr (2007) explains, each of these circles is responsible for the following aspects:

...*annwn*, the Celtic underworld, the place of death and transformation within the magical darkness of the cauldron. Taking form, a spirit moves out of *annwn* to journey through the spirals of *abred*, where all creation exists, the elements, the plant realms, the animal worlds and human kind...Beyond the spirits of *abred* is the light of *gwynvid*, the realm of those who have broken free, the wise ones and the many gods. Beyond this circle is the perfect mystery of *ceugant*, the place of Oneness...*annwn*... [is]...the infinite darkness of space, the spiral of *abred* being our worlds that spin within it, *gwynvid* the guiding spirit within *abred*, and *ceugant* the spark at the essential still core (pp. 114-115)

These overlapping and interconnecting systems and spirals are imbued with notions of magic, spirituality and potentiality. They speak of the travel of various culturally resonant entities and how these are fashioned between worlds. Each circle is a constitutive component of a Celtic belief system noted as indigenous and unique to Europe which pre-dates that of Christianity (Myers, 2006; Rhys, 2017); however, arguably there are places of synergy with other indigenous belief systems (further explored in Chapter Five).

Those especially spoken of as having access to these circles and being an “intermediary between God and man” (Rolleston, 2010, p. 29) are referred to as Druids. Within Celtic narratives they are deemed to be the lore keepers, the holders of ancient wisdom and knowledge who provide advice and guidance to lay people, tribal leaders and those in sovereign power. Druids are noted as the seers, able to traverse realms and responsible for safeguarding the health and wellbeing of the people. They are the conduit of what may be taken as the corporeal and non-corporeal and their high-ranking role, gift of prophecy and ability to draw on Otherworldly realms meant they held the “earliest form of tribal leadership” (Matthews. 1995, p. 40). However, as Matthews notes (1995) it was not only Druids who were afforded the ability to cross from the temporal to the spiritual realm as:

The Celts conceived themselves to be potentially existent in all worlds, in the sense that they related to each part of their cosmology in different, intimate ways. It was considered easy to pass between the worlds of the created realms and the Otherworld. This proximity occasioned specific rituals of propitiation in which the very young were guarded from accidentally straying into the Otherworld. (p. 17)

Within Celtic creation stories can be seen the inclusion of an assortment of cautionary messages to warn the very young and vulnerable about the dangers of crossing unprepared and uninvited into “the *Sid*” (Gibney, 2004, p. 2), the Celtic Otherworld. Hutton (2011) and Rhys (2017) each describe the fear expressed towards fairies as an example of these warnings. They suggest that the stories told of fairies with maleficent intent, who were thought to snatch unaccompanied children and young people, acted as a way to ensure individuals did not place themselves in potentially dangerous situations.

Protecting oneself from physical danger was an integral part of survival; thus, the stories of the wild and wicked fairies who lived in particularly hostile landscapes meant children were less likely to frequent these places, safeguarding themselves from the possibility of harm. These are stories I recall from my childhood, especially those of the mischievous woodland fairies who take every opportunity to lead children astray. To me they were jointly of this world and of another, and I do not recall having any confusion or conflict about this notion. Their presence was spoken of in a similar way to any other companion I knew of (such as family members).

As the very lives of Celtic peoples are situated concurrently within each world, each is reliant on, and cannot exist without, the other. So accordingly, movement between worlds by multiform entities is a naturally occurring phenomenon that would not cause unease. This is especially the case as the path that leads to the “Otherworld... [and]...the realm of the ancestors” (Matthews & Matthews, 2004, p. 107) is noted as being “spread out on the surface of the earth” (Myers, 2006, p. 18), meaning the Celtic Otherworld is not located “elsewhere”, it surrounds the individual, rather than existing alongside the temporal world. In this way not only is access to other realms an established part of everyday life, but borders and terrain are inherently blurred, difficult to delineate and defend. This enables travel to occur and for ancestors to move easily between these spaces to provide companionship, guidance and comfort.

2.4.1 Otherworldly beings

As I have already alluded to, in Celtic literature gods and goddesses play an integral role within all facets of everyday life and within creation cycles and stories. Their capacity to shape-shift and assume “multi-form” (Matthews, 1995, p. 23) appears frequently within storying; for example, they take on the form of an animal, bird, human or a form found in nature, or are embodied within a pool of water or a grove of ancient and sacred trees (Dooge, 1996; Hutton, 1991; Trousdale, 2013). These abilities, however, were not only ascribed to gods and goddesses. In many stories, humans who shape-shift and traverse temporal and astral Otherworld realms are plentiful, especially priests, druids and those with “shamanic roles” (Trousdale, 2013, p. 19). These are the stories I heard as a child and adolescent which I in turn shared with Hine during her early and middle childhood.

Interestingly the Celtic woman is often viewed as the embodiment of a goddess (Matthews, 1995; Stevens & Maclaran, 2007), constituting strong, fierce, seductive and quarrelsome protagonists, feminine and hostile (Dörschel, 2011). If we are to use “myths as our maps” (McCoy, 1999, p. 2) then many traditional narratives speak of the various ways that the lives of women, the lives of the goddess and the temporal and spiritual realms are intricately entangled.

Women are conceptualised as endowed with abilities usually ascribed to the gods rather than humans, for example being attuned to realm movement and travel. The significance for this thesis topic could therefore be the notion that women are spoken of within these narratives as being particularly able to access, and more attentive to, encounters wider

than those within the temporal realm. Whilst this is arguably contested philosophical terrain, when I draw on my own familial narratives and my experience with Hine (see Chapters Seven and Eight), I feel comfortable with this possibility as it seems to sit well with what I have experienced.

In contrast to other classical polytheist spiritual belief systems there is no goddess of love within Celtic tradition; however, there are many goddesses of wisdom (Matthews, 1995) and most are associated with “sexual drive and fertility” (Stevens & Maclaran, 2007, p. 33). Stevens and Maclaran (2007) suggest that due to their “ancient beliefs in a goddess culture [p. 29] ...women in Celtic society occupied extremely powerful positions” (p. 31). For example, Celtic kingship is often written about in text as matrilineal (Matthews, 1995; Rhys, 2017) and ancient Celtic narratives illustrate the multiplicity of roles and responsibilities women held, such as the “strong appreciation of women’s leadership and their gifts” (Sellner, 1993, p. 137).

The land is considered female in Celticity, with contours and characteristics of the landscape and rivers named after deities and various parts of women’s bodies, often symbolising aspects of the lifecycle, such as birth, life and death (Oxenham, 2017; Sellner, 1993; Stevens & Maclaran, 2007). There is no shortfall of stories of the heroic deeds of women, such as Brigit, Boudicca, and others. However, some women writers on Celtic identity allude to tension arising from the fact that over time Celtic storying of women has been reduced to watered-down exploits due to the influence of Christianity and a desire to destabilise alternative belief systems which were seen as antithetical to Christian gendered values and beliefs (Bauer-Harsant, 1996; Bindburg, 2006; McCoy, 1999).

For McCoy (1999) the heavy influence of Christianity has impacted on oral stories, gradually diminishing female figures within written text and ascribing to them additional depositional traits, such as, more recently a “tinge of pettiness and viciousness attached to them” (p. 3). The point being made here is that slowly and incrementally the strength of woman has been distorted and eroded to reveal knotty flaws which may render her vindictive, a victim of men or to only be seen as strong when she acts in a manner usually associated with being a man.

Celtic goddesses are not only prominent mainstays of life, they are also noted as the portents of death. Goddesses are the rulers of the *Sid*, also known as “the Land of Women” (Kavangh & O’Leary, 2004, p. 121). As such, goddesses are often depicted as holding these dualistic and seemingly dichotomous roles simultaneously. Here Stevens and Maclaran (2007) highlight the juxtaposition whereby one goddess, viewed as bountiful and prosperous and a giver of life may appear the exact opposite as she is conveyed as a terrifying, violent and slaughter craving supernatural deity of war. In this way she is both the giver of life through childbirth and she is the taker of life, presiding over battle as a warrior goddess in her supernatural form, reminding those engaged in battle—conflict or challenge—that at times of peril when life hangs in the balance it is she who must be acknowledged and honoured (Matthews, 1995; Stevens & Maclaran, 2007).

These are the women whose stories I was drawn to within my adolescent years, especially those told of Moregan. What drew me to her initially was the writings of Marion Zimmer Bradley, especially her work *The Mists of Avalon* (1983). This is a retelling of the Arthurian saga with Moregan, here called Morgaine Le Fay, as the narrator. In this story she is a

central figure, alongside other female characters, embattled in the turmoil inflicted on Celtic England as Arthur, supported onto his throne as a pagan king, then seeks to turn the country to Christianity.

Whilst previous storying of Moregan has generally cast her as a sorceress who was instrumental in the downfall of a pagan way of life, in this narrative she is posited as a strong protagonist who fights to save a Celtic way of life despite being faced with seemingly unsurmountable odds (Bindberg, 2006). Within this depiction she has the gift of sight and prophecy and is noted for her ability to take on multiple shapes and engage in cross-realm travel.

What this story offered to me was an opportunity to consider different ways of conceptualising the various entities which may share our lives. It also signalled alternative ways of thinking about how companionship may be fashioned elsewhere, on differing ancestral and cultural pathways. I count her as being one of my companions during the various stages of my life and it is a version of her story (there are many) which now follows.

2.4.2 A story of Moregan

The Tuatha Dé Danann (People of the Goddess Danu) are said to be the fourth wave of invaders of Ireland within the Mythological Cycle (Rolleston, 2010; Ó hAodha, 2017).

Following them came the Celts. Battles raged between the two and on the conclusion of fighting the land was divided. The Celts were to rule the land above ground and the

Tuatha Dé Danann the terrain below ground, accessed by portals within the natural landscape, such as rocks, trees and groves (Ó hAodha, 2017).

One of the goddesses who emerged from this legacy is Moregan – also known as Morrigan, The Morrigan and, within the Arthurian saga, Morgan Le Fay specifically. I know her as Morgan; however, within this text I have elected to use her most commonly spoken name, Moregan. Moregan is referred to as a shapeshifting or shapemaking (Kavanagh & O’Leary, 2004) goddess of sovereignty, magic, prophecy, war, fate, death, land and rebirth (Matthews, 1995). Gibney (2004) lists among her most common shapes that of a blackbird; often seen scavenging the bodies of the dead on the battlefield.

She is found where armies gather, where war is imminent, where wisdom and warnings are needed and where courage and bravery require strengthening. She is not the giver of death, rather she is the conduit between the realms. She is the one who chooses the pathway a person will take as they embark on their journey into the eternal realm. One of the ways she is thought to have protected land and people was to blow a layer of fog over the land. In doing so she made both appear invisible to invading armies.

She is known by various titles such as “The Great Queen” and “The Phantom Queen”.

Sometimes she is spoken of as one goddess, at other times as a triplet of goddesses, appearing as one or all three, dependent upon the situation. It is thought the roles she takes on are synonymous with Ireland itself, mirroring the Irish cycles of history. The three forms she is commonly known to take are that of Anu the maiden of fertility, Badh the mother and Macha, the crone or crow; depicted in my kirituhi kotahi (see Chapter

One). She epitomises the cycles and trials of womanhood. She is revered, and she is feared, as is pointed out in the following passage from Myers (2006):

The Morrigan does *not* come to make you “feel better” for she is not a healer, or at any rate not the kind of healer we would find familiar. Nor does she come to tell you what to do, for she is not a lawgiver. She comes to revive your strength when you feel powerless, to tell your story when you feel forgotten. But after that, it is up to you to use your strength, to do something courageous, and create a memorable story. (p. 21)

The story that follows is only one of those attributed to Moregan. It is a cautionary tale and illustrates the fate that could befall you should you not heed her warnings and advice:

Cuchlainn was a 17-year-old warrior. Moregan appeared to him as a beautiful young royal maiden and tried to seduce him. In this guise she was the representation of sovereignty. He wasn't interested and rebuked her advances – and thus her mantle of sovereignty. Offended, Moregan attempted to kill him three times – appearing to Cuchlainn as an eel, a wolf and lastly as a red heifer. Each time Cuchlainn battled her; wounding her. Finally, Moregan appeared to him as an old, ailing and injured woman. This time Cuchlainn felt sorry for her and offered her milk to heal her. She returned the favour by gifting him a prophecy—a warning of a battle to come and his fate. Cuchlainn did not heed her warning.

When this battle came Cuchlainn's opponent was an enormous army. As he made his way to the battlefield a woman, Moregan, was washing bloody battle garments in a river. Cuchlainn asked what she was doing, only to recognise that she was washing his own clothes in the river—an omen signalling death to the wearer.

Whilst Cuchlainn survived this battle, several years later he was not so fortunate. He was killed in battle—just as Moregan had predicted. (Bauer-Harsant, 1996; Faraday, 2002; Gibney, 2004)

Numerous writers have analysed and debated the merits of Celtic storying (see Bauer-Harsant, 1996; Campbell, 2009; Gibney, 2004; Kavanagh & O'Leary, 2004). I do not wish to specifically step into this deep and complex anthropological discourse. Rather, I seek to briefly consider how this story speaks to my unfolding thesis argument, specifically here in relation to the features, functions and potentiality of travel and how travel may occur.

The myth-messages (Walker, 1990) transmitted within the above story of Moregan and Cuchlann are an example of the pivotal role ancestral storying plays and what it teaches us. Numerous themes are embedded within the story, many aligning with previously mentioned different attributes and abilities Moregan is noted and notorious for. One area of convergence I wish to pick up on is the gift of prophecy Moregan bestowed on Cuchlann. What is worthy of mention here is the guidance and wisdom I assume she seeks to impart to him. However, rather than acknowledging this as a gift, he disregards her. This is to his detriment as what follows seals his fate. While arguably an extreme example, the caution that is offered shows, however, the importance of recognising and being receptive to ancestral legacies and of engaging in active remembering of what has been bequeathed and has travelled intergenerationally and across realms. This calls for being especially cognisant of the companionship of those whose forms may differ from our own.

Another salient point observed which is relevant to this thesis is the ambiguity afforded between understandings of what the human/nonhuman may necessitate (Kavanagh & O'Leary, 2004). Texts sourced on Celtic creation stories (see Bauer-Harsant, 1996; Campbell, 2009; Delyth, 2008; Dörschel, 2011; Evans-Wentz, 1911; Matthews &

Matthews, 2004; Myers, 2006; Ó hAodha, 2017) clearly illustrate the ease with which travel occurs between realms and indicate that shapeshifting, and shape-making are customary features of this belief system. It is therefore difficult and problematic to attempt to disentangle the two, especially as travel between the realms is posited as an ordinary phenomenon.

So, whilst stories of differing realms and entities may be relegated to the imaginary within some cultural contexts, they are inextricably woven into the textual features of all narrative accounts—myths, legends, folklore and fairy tales—considered to be Celtic. They hold rich patterns of encounter which underpin and inform how meaning making occurs. This is further emphasised by Rhys (2017) who states: “...those who may think that the legends here recorded are childish and frivolous, may rest assured that they bear on questions which would not themselves be called either childish or frivolous” (p. 32).

Therefore, these stories do not exist solely within the imagination. They are accounts upon which Celtic ontology (the nature of reality) and epistemology (how we come to know reality) are fashioned. It is these accounts which provide culturally resonant companionship. It is also these accounts which, as a companion, travel alongside all facets of my and Hine’s life. These are the stories which push the travel boundaries and trajectories, those that put pressure on existing scholarly theories by asking them to accommodate alternative ways of considering how the universe came to be and the place of what is frequently delineated as the corporeal and non-corporeal.

So, Moregan is characterised as having strength and resilience and as being an agent of change-making. With this in mind the premise for this thesis as it proceeds is to draw strength from these shared ancestral and cultural narratives and to use them, as Myers (2006) asserted, “to do something courageous, and create a memorable story” (p. 21). This is what I now seek to do, taking into account the multiple pathways which have been instrumental in shaping how this particular story has been storied and the travels it has taken.

I now turn my exploration to the next noticed thread which has been woven into the fabric of this chapter and into the story I desire to tell: the concept of travel and how this has been put to work within the context of this specific thesis.

2.5 To Take up Another Way of Telling

As already identified within this chapter, the notion of travel is a crucial one within Celtic cosmogony. To take this further for the context of this specific research the concept of travel has been worked within this thesis in two key ways: firstly, as a metaphor to disrupt omnipresent Euro-western theorising about the companions who may share the lives of young children, and secondly to provide a mapping of sorts illuminating the varied paths and journeys I encountered during the creation of this thesis.

Travel offers an opportunity to create disruption. In the context of this research, it is the desire to call into question conventional Euro-western literature in which there is a “habit of associating the unfamiliar with the inferior” (Said, 1974, p. 5). The intent is to create

fractures to the terms and meanings which currently frame how the companions who may travel closely alongside young children are recognised and consequently understood in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Taking up alternative pathways to illuminate another way of telling can reveal and reshape perspectives and practices, producing a “cultural turn” (Knapp, 2005, p. 250).

This has the potential to revolutionise and generate movement in how understandings of internal and external conditions of travel can challenge dichotomous binary categorisations which have held out-dated ideologies in place (Anfeng, 2007). Critique, as an integral component of a deconstructive approach (see Chapter Three), can be a powerful travel companion as the trajectory of movement. In this case, the movement and re-turning to differing epistemological and ontological orientations can be advanced or impeded by the conditions which surround it.

Theories about childhood, children and the companions who may share their lives are continually influenced by conditions and structures (see Chapters Three and Four). Structures uphold theorising, relying on surveillance to quantify and validate the claims and assertions made within them. However, theories are always travelling; they can never be complete nor stable. Whilst they may appear to have particular inscriptions, histories, locations, characteristics and pathways—much like relationships and friendships—each continues to be imbued, moulded and remoulded depending on location and the historical, political, social, and cultural junctions, features and ruptures encountered (Foucault, 1980; Frank, 2009). Therefore, their existence and “meanings are always in motion” (Denzin, 2014, p. 37) and it is this mobility which signifies their capacity for

longevity alongside the encounters that occur. A determining aspect is whether they meet with support or resistance as journeying proceeds, and the ensuing travelogue which is then produced and consequently reproduced (Franks, 2014; Said, 1983).

Particularly difficult here is, as Mikaere (2011) highlights, that whilst theory development applies to all peoples, “no two peoples have answered the question ‘where do I come from?’ in the same way” (p. 25). Subsequently, the intent to encircle theorising that is presumed by Euro-western academia to sit outside of prescribed known and familiar frameworks creates tension. Said (1983) observed that a crucial concern here is the supposition that “what is ours is good, and therefore deserves incorporation and inclusion...and what is not ours...is simply left out” (pp. 21-22). This sentiment is a central thread and as such will be revisited within subsequent thesis chapters.

2.6 Suspicious Travellers

An important activity to consider from this chapter and for this thesis is how ancestral and cultural narratives travel. Who are deemed to be the “privileged travellers” (Frank, 2009, p. 62) and who, or what, may exist, dwell and travel within the shadows, the spaces and places where they are not noticed or where their presence is concealed, as an act of “smuggling” (Knapp, 2005, p. 251)? Not all who travel are afforded equal access or status. It appears that travelling, in general, raises suspicion amongst those who are non-travellers, creating positions of the *other* for those who are deemed to dwell inside and outside of stratified borders (Said, 1994).

A topical example is the marginalisation and “complex web of [spatial] exclusion... [alongside stereotyped] manifestations of deviancy” (Ryder, 2012, pp. 4-7) experienced by nomadic and traveller communities within The United Kingdom. The term *traveller* within this context denotes a person or ethnic group that has a nomadic way of life embedded within their cultural traditions (Francis, 2013). One such example is that of Irish traveller communities, whose presence Ó hAodha (2011) suggests is simultaneously defined and defiled. The difficulties faced by travellers, and traveller culture, appear synchronistic to that of the ancestral storying and entities I speak of, specifically the notion of perceived deviancy when a relationship is determined, by others, to sit outside the borders of normalcy.

Traditionally, traveller culture has been non-literate, meaning “the manner whereby their culture was defined [within written text] was more often than not beyond the control of Travellers themselves” (Ó hAodha, 2011, p. 3). Excluding the experiences and voices of those being written about strategically relegates their position to the fringe, placing them under scrutiny without providing any opportunity to assert a right of reply. The objects of the written text are then subjected to various outmoded half-truths which over time come to be influential and fundamental features of their lives, powerfully reshaping their stories and shifting perceptions and understandings of their status, nature and purpose. This is because, as Lloyd (2015) suggests, it is difficult to “map who belongs” (p. 125) and to ascertain and quantify what specific characteristics are needed and required in order “to declare membership” (p. 125) to a *recognisable* and *accepted* group.

The premise can be traced back to that which is considered known, familiar, and usual, and thus privileged. It presents a problem to attempt to definitively articulate what distinguishing features and markers are necessary to determine group membership and denote possible boundaries in order to clearly declare valid membership status.

Therefore, both travellers, knowledge which travels intergenerationally and entities, have problematic terms attached to their identity, such as abnormal, pathological or deviant, which further serve to undermine their validity as a usual aspect and experience of human existence.

Mapping who belongs, and how their lives are thus constructed, externally and internally, through the gaze of Euro-western development is a recognised and troubling constitutive device applied to ancestral knowledge and storying, children, and subsequently how notions of childhood and relationships are constructed. In turn, this imbues not only how young children's experiences are viewed and perceived but also young children's meaning making about the significant relationships in their own lives.

2.7 Final Thoughts

As previously indicated, this thesis charts my travels as I have navigated this research topic. Within this chapter two specific threads have been explored, the significance of my and Hine's shared Celtic ancestry and how notions of ancestry may travel. Each of these has been taken and worked, and each contributes to the overall fashioning of this thesis

as they speak of, and to, key areas of focus which provide the backdrop for where the thesis threads will travel to next.

Understandings of what being Celtic may entail have offered opportunities to think more carefully about the knottiness, and messiness, of this thesis topic. What has been noted here is that to claim Celtic ancestry is also to be cautious of what this identity may be conceptualised as encompassing. In making the claim, there is also an obligation to notice and respond to the external and internal weave of complexities inherent within this term and this notion of identity.

When I think of what being Celtic means to me, I am reminded that I have an inherited ancestry which calls on me to *remember*. This asks me to be attentive to the maps and messages that travel with me and to be courageous as I seek to share my story. It asks me to draw on ancestral creation stories in order to compose an alternative weave within which understandings of the companions who may share our lives, those often referred to within Euro-western textual accounts as corporeal and non-corporeal, are acknowledged.

So, whilst notions of entities and companionship have travelled extensively as an ordinary attribute of Celtic creation stories, I now query whether this has been the case in the early childhood scholarly domain. Here it appears understandings of companionship, and those who may travel alongside and share the lives of young children whether noticed by others or not, may not have always “travelled well” (Frank, 2009, p. 64). Therefore, it is timely to consider the political, social and cultural inheritances which have “evacuated” alternative

travel trajectories about companionship and to consider what else may be known and reclaimed in order to think differently about these relationships.

If we consider theory as dynamic and ever-changing, so too are the travelling companions that may share our lives. How these companions appear, and contribute to our lives, may be determined by the theories we use to acknowledge and recognise their presence and the conditions which in turn produce understandings of their possible locations and travel pathways.

The question that now needs to be asked is whether the presence of entities as young children's companions poses threat or opportunity? What are the traps within these notions and what do we need to attend to, to account for, and interrupt? What place do ancestral knowledges play within this dialogue and how can we draw on these to provide insight into past, present, and future relationship companions? What theoretical tools could be helpful to reveal new understandings of young children's companions and how could these be put to work to reconceptualise what is already thought to be known about them?

Chapter Three

Conceptual Framing

Knowledge is not made for understanding it is made for cutting (Foucault, 1984, p. 86)

...intra-actions enact agential cuts, which do not produce absolute separations, but rather cut together-apart (one move) ...Diffraction is not a set pattern, but rather an iterative (re)configuring of patterns of differentiating-entangling. As such, there is no moving beyond, no leaving the “old” behind. There is no absolute boundary between here-now and there-then. There is nothing that is new; there is nothing that is not new... (Barad, 2014, p. 168)

Approaching this research required a conceptual framing which would be able to accommodate movement and discern potential fractures whilst providing guidance for the complexity of the topic. This was no easy undertaking and led to multiple pathways being explored to consider what may offer the most appropriate goodness of fit at this time. To validate the research intent, new ways of thinking were sought to provide insight into alternative voices which have previously been overlooked and evacuated within the ECE context, namely those of young children and the entities who may share their lives. As previously identified, at the crux of this theoretical concern is what could be known about entities and the companionship they offer to young children.

To take this further, various philosophical and theoretical tools were explored as the thesis took shape. Initially these were informed by the threading approach embedded within my kirituhi, assisted by ancestral storying and travel as differing interpretations

were revealed and remembered (see Chapters One and Two). These provided the starting place from which further theoretical perspectives were then overlaid to provide a multi-faceted approach with each theoretical idea and concept then woven and worked differently depending on the problem at hand.

What I noticed was the knottiness inherent as each thread was considered alongside philosophical and conceptual supporting structures. Not all were identified as complementary; indeed there were some which appeared constrained and restrained when considered together. This revealed places and spaces of convergence and divergence, enabling me to contemplate this topic from a multitude of viewpoints, contributing to the opening up of differing trajectories enabling travel elsewhere (Denshire, 2014) to occur.

Each theoretical thread of focus has been instrumental in the framing of this thesis in order to provide a pattern of guidance. It is an intricate reconfiguration of various ideas which travelled alongside me as I sought to weave ideas together, being mindful of what may emerge within the creating and seeking to apply tension to support a more robust and engaging weave. However, not all have ultimately appeared within the final weaving and recognisable fabric and features of this text. It is important to acknowledge that whilst they may not be directly indicated, nonetheless each encounter led to transformation and offered new twists, turns and junctions to my argument building. This required me to pay attention to what each chapter sought to account for, because, as Haraway (2016) contends:

It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what worlds make worlds, what worlds make stories. (p. 12)

Here the approach Haraway is advocating is a *thinking with*, thinking alongside as we query what we may hold as established truths about people, about places and about things (MoE, 2017). It is to accommodate more than one perspective and to be cognisant that there are multiple ways into knowledge.

To borrow Haraway's wording, it matters what matters we seek to learn about and what troubles we wish to trouble. With this in mind, I now move to Derrida's deconstruction as a pathway into this precarious matter; recognising that, like meaning, matter is never static and how we act, and what we act on, invariably attributes to the reconfiguring of ideas and theories.

3.1 Taking a Theoretical Deconstructive Approach

The act of deconstruction was a central tenet of this thesis exploration. Generally, within an academic context the term *deconstruction* is linked with the writings of Derrida.

Derived from the French verb *déconstruire*: to dismantle, take to pieces, to undo in order to develop or improve (Gnanasekaran, 2015). It appeared as *destruction* within Derrida's original version of *De la grammatologie* (1967), which Spivak (1976) suggested signalled his nod to Heidegger's approach of seeking to unmake a construct.

Whilst there is a semblance of the negative embedded within the term deconstruction, Derrida was clear that his intention was not primarily be in opposition to or to be viewed solely as a strategy through which something is exposed as a lack requiring challenge and change (Derrida, 1991). Rather, deconstruction seeks to reveal the “internal disruptions within the text themselves” (Lumsden, 2007, p. 32). Taking a deconstructive approach demands a willingness to discern textual movement as:

...Unreason (writing, undecidability, madness, violence) unceasingly haunts Reason (speech, decidability, rationality, law) ... the crux...[is]...the deconstruction of x reveals a y which is simultaneously the condition of the possibility of x and the condition of the impossibility of x. (Koopman, 2010, p. 549)

Nash (1994) suggests that deconstruction asks, “What does it mean to know something?” (p. 66). The implication here is that what is known, and how it is to be known, are constituted “*within* a system of rules that govern what can count as a real object or process, or a ‘true’ or ‘false’ statement” (p. 66). To undertake a deconstructive move is to analyse textual ways of thinking to decipher what alternative meanings could potentially be derived.

In this way it is an approach seeking to “*dismantle in order to reconstitute what is already described*” (Rolfe, 2004, p. 275, emphasis in the original), to rupture and therefore interrupt “the hierarchical resolution” (Lumsden, 2007, p. 37). Deconstruction is “always occasional” (Thomassen, 2009, p. 386), in the sense that it is singular in application due to the very nature and purpose of undertaking a deconstructive/dismantling movement. Each move signals a “reinvention and a rearticulation” (Thomassen, 2009, p. 386), a

delicate relational interplay between the reader and the text at that specific given moment in time (Derrida, 1976; Güney & Güney, 2008).

Derrida, when posed the question, “What is deconstruction?”, responded, “Nothing of course” (1991, p. 275). What Derrida (1996) was alluding to is that deconstruction cannot be categorised simply as residing within pre-set paradigms or within “a set of theorems, axioms, tools, rules, techniques, methods” (p. 218). Rather, he was speaking to the invariable complexity of the nature of deconstruction which is “neither an analysis nor a critique... [suggesting it] ...is not even an act or an operation” (Derrida, 1991, p. 273).

Drawing on this, Rolfe (2004) offers the following definition of deconstruction which helps to clarify the stance adopted by Derrida:

The bottom line, the degree zero, of deconstruction, lies in this: ‘deconstruction is the active antithesis of everything that criticism ought to be if one accepts its traditional values and concepts’ (Norris, 1991, p. xi). Criticism traditionally seeks to establish the authorized meaning of the text, the original meaning placed in the text by the author...Deconstruction is the enemy of the authorized/authoritarian text, the text that tries to tell it like it is, including this one. (p. 275)

Derrida’s deconstruction is often referred to as a strategy containing multiple possibilities, undecidability and impossibilities that invariably seeks to render what has been/become known, and what has been/is written, as “out of joint... [as it]... does not work well” (Derrida, 1994, p. 23, a reference he took from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, “the time is out of joint” p. xxi). The notion of being out of joint introduces what Derrida (1994) called a ghostly trace: the spectres of the past (Derrida used the example of Marxism) could never be fully eradicated as they would continue to haunt Europe from beyond the “grave”. This

incessant haunting therefore applies to idealised notions which are inherited, through “a structure that repeats, a fatal pattern” (Fisher, 2012, p. 19).

Hauntology is the term Derrida coined to describe a feature of a deconstructive move in that it challenges perceptions of an absolute, a presence or an absence. In attending to how presence and absence keeps company with understandings of superpositions (see later in this chapter), Derrida muddies threads of paradoxical space-time enfolding and notions of being and non-being as hauntology. He concludes in attending to how presence and absence keeps company with understandings of superpositions (see later in this chapter) that existence in all possible states can occur simultaneously. On this subject Derrida (1994) explained:

If it—learning to live—remains to be done, it can happen only between life and death. Neither in life nor in death *alone*. What happens between the two, and between all the “two’s” one likes, such as between life and death, can only *maintain itself* with some ghost, can only *talk with or about* some ghost...So it would be necessary to learn spirits. Even and especially if this, the spectral, *is not*. Even and especially if this, which is neither substance, nor essence, nor existence, *is never present as such*...to learn to live *with* ghosts, in the upkeep, the conversation, the company, or the companionship...To live otherwise, and better. No, not better, but more justly. But *with them*...If I am getting ready to speak at length about ghosts, inheritance, and generations, generations of ghosts, which is to say about certain *others* who are not present, nor presently living, either to us, in us, or outside us, it is in the name of *justice*...It is necessary to speak *of the* ghost, indeed *to the* ghost and *with* it, from the moment that no ethics, no politics, whether revolutionary or not, seems possible and thinkable and *just* that does not recognize in its principle the respect for those others who are no longer or for

those others who are not yet *there*, presently living, whether they are already dead or not yet born. (xvii-xviii)

What Derrida was drawing attention to here is that whilst history haunts us, so too do our conceptions of what the future may entail. Fisher (2012) describes this as our “capacity... [and motivation] ... to conceive of a world radically different from the one in which we currently live” (p. 16).

A further tangled definition Derrida suggested for deconstruction is that it enmeshes “the very experience of the (impossible) possibility of the impossible” (Derrida, 1991, p. 43).

Bates (2005) offers the following interpretation of what Derrida was concerned with here:

...undecidability was never a synonym for mere indeterminacy, or some loose free play of meaning. Rather, undecidability was a way of explaining a very specific structural condition at the heart of language. Undecidability was what preceded and therefore made possible the production of any of the determinate meanings that then had to be “decided” for meaning to unfold in any particular reading. Deconstruction was, of course, the practice that demonstrated, over and over again, the fact that these decisions could be made otherwise—and that there was no way one particular meaning could be given some privileged status. Deconstruction did not do away with meaning, but instead revealed the structure of undecidability that made possible the generation of very particular, often opposing meanings. (p. 4)

As Derrida (1991) noted, “deconstruction loses nothing from admitting that it is impossible” (p. 272). McQuillan (2000) and Rolfe (2004) refer to Derrida’s use of the term *pas de méthode* as evidence of his relationship with the impossible. The French word *pas* can translate to “both ‘not’ and ‘step’” (McQuillan, 2000, p. 5); thus, its ambiguity allows

for a double meaning to exist. It can be both nothing, in the sense of a method or it can be “a methodological step” (McQuillan, 2000, p. 5) or stepping. In this way there is an opening up, a possibility of stepping elsewhere (Denshire, 2014; Rolfe, 2004).

To step elsewhere, or to create motion/movement is a fundamental intention of deconstruction. When Derrida (1991) claimed deconstruction “takes place” (p. 274) he identified the significance of the process unfolding, as opposed to the primary focus being on the eventual outcome. Most commonly, deconstruction has stepped elsewhere as a radical approach to and “sustained attack” (Jones, 2002, p. 140) on the authoritarianism Derrida saw as existing within Euro-western thought which underpins how these theoretical traditions are therefore organised and known about (Derrida, 1976). He called into question the Euro-western epistemological approach of seeking to construct stable conceptual distinctions, especially those organised in such a way as to create binary oppositions. The production and application of binary oppositions have been an ongoing systemic feature of Euro-western theorising and impinge on this specific thesis topic, namely in terms of the demarcation of superiority and inferiority by arranging ideas into oppositional categories such as reality/imaginary and truth/falsehood. The specificities and ensuing impacts of these pairings will now be explored further in the following section.

3.2 Derrida on Dualisms

Euro-western thinking relies on an organised and established system of logic founded on binary opposites designed to “govern differences” (Lumsden, 2007, p. 37) using pairs in which each has an opposed meaning attached to it (Rolfe, 2004). Some noticeable pairings relevant for this thesis are mind/body, reality/imaginary, visible/invisible, truth/falsehood and corporeal/non-corporeal.

It was Derrida’s (1967) assertion that to elevate the status or presence of one of the pairs using this system results in a perceived absence of the opposite. A concern he raised was the choosing of the negative within a binary pairing, such as “*ab-solute, in-finite, in-tangible, not-being*” (1974, p. 8). Of this arrangement he concluded:

...these *abs* and *ins* and *non* are more effective than any grindstone in planning down. At a stroke they make the most rugged words smooth and characterless...Such concepts cancel definiteness and determinacy, and it is their function to break the link with the sense of a particular being. (p. 9)

These pairings are problematic, as speaking of one of the pairs as positive conversely implies negativity or *othering*. An important strategy used by Derrida that is seminal to this thesis is the destabilisation of the favoured and privileged position of text, reversing and therefore disrupting what has been the resident and favoured hierarchy (Rolfe, 2004). In seeking to do this Derrida (1976, 1993) identified what was positioned as being in binary opposition and had been used to legitimise and justify subjugation based on ideas of superiority versus inferiority (Taylor, 2013).

Thus deconstruction “tangles with, and tangles up” (Burman & MacLure, 2005, p. 284) hierarchical binary pairings where one term has previously taken precedence as the privileged ideal “**presence**” (p. 284, emphasis in the original), and the other is therefore always othered; relegated to the subordinate position of “**supplement**” (p. 284, emphasis in the original). It re-turns consciousness to that which dwells at the margin, or what would have otherwise been viewed as incidental and minor in relation to that which is deemed as the prominent idea or paramount character (Dobie, 2012).

Rather than continuing this premise, the order is therefore reversed to locate that which had previously been textually positioned as inferior, or absented from the text, to a more prominent view, as opposed to making this the sole focus or centre. This is because whilst deconstruction moves what may have previously gone unnoticed into focus, it requires attentiveness, as when text is reorganised there is often an urge by the author to re-orientate a structure to move what may be considered on the margin, or periphery, to the centre.

However, the very dynamic of deconstruction means there can be no centre as “the centre of a structure is paradoxically within the structure and... [simultaneously]...outside it” (Odhiambo, 2009, p. 210). To create a new centre does not dismantle, rather it creates a new ordered hierarchy which is what deconstruction seeks to avoid. The treatises of Derrida were, and continue to be, primarily arranged to destabilise prevalent Euro-western beliefs on truth and meaning-making present within essentialism (Dobie, 2012; Jones, 2002). His approach was not to distort “the” or “a” structure; rather, he sought to restructure (Yegen & Abukan, 2014).

What this offers to the conceptual weave of this research is the possibility to go beyond what has previously been considered to be established and taken-for-granted conceptual constructions of what may constitute what is true and believable in relation to entities that may share our lives. This enables what has held a dominant position, in relation to the assertion of the corporeal as tangible and therefore privileged, to be challenged and disrupted. Doing so creates the potential for a differing way into this phenomenon to be explored. As previously cautioned, this does not reverse the pair ordering by replacing corporeal with non-corporeal, as the very term *non-corporeal* is inscribed with the trappings of this loaded pairing. Rather it opens a pathway to consider how the restructuring of ideas could make way for a different way of thinking about what these relationships may encompass.

3.3 Troubling Deconstruction

Critiques of Derrida's work are relevant to examine, as they highlight the often ambiguous and complicated nature of applying deconstruction within an everyday context. Braidotti (2013) suggests that the following implications are important to consider, especially in seeking to tackle humanist claims:

The difficulties inherent in trying to overcome Humanism as an intellectual tradition, a normative frame and an institutionalized practice, lie at the core of the deconstructive approach to the posthuman. Derrida...opened this discussion by pointing out the violence implicit in the assignation of meaning...The emphasis falls

therefore on the difficulty of erasing the trace of the epistemic violence by which a non-humanist position might be carved out of the institutions of Humanism. (p. 30)

Braidotti (2013) goes on to identify her respect for deconstruction which, she states, is paradoxically tangled with “impatience with the limitations of its linguistic frame of reference” (p. 30). Primarily, the point made here is that Derrida’s work can be difficult to decipher and his arguments unclear due to the nature of his writing style and his own engagement with the arguments he presented (Rolfe, 2004).

Despite this, Derrida and his large legacy of work, especially his rejection of Cartesian concepts and rigorous contributions to literary criticism, have remained relevant within a multitude of disciplinary fields (e.g., Güney & Güney, 2008; Isin, 2016; Yegen & Abukan, 2014). In response to criticisms levelled at deconstruction, Thomassen (2009) suggests that Derrida’s legacy should be “to put his work to work rather than... [search]...his texts for answers to contemporary events” (p. 387).

Therefore, to put Derrida’s work to work within this specific thesis requires acknowledgment of the significance of text and how a shift in text arrangement can create an alternative theoretical pathway. Rather than seeking to replace, or swap out, one for another, it calls for the strategy of stepping elsewhere to discover “premises and ideologies that lurk unacknowledged in the language we use...[thus]...new understandings surface” (Dobie, 2012, p. 151). It is an opportunity to dismantle authoritarian text; however, as Rolfe (2004) informs us, this requires an acknowledgement that “deconstruction is the enemy of...the text that tries to tell it like it is, including this one” (p. 275).

This thesis therefore progresses cautiously, seeking to take notice of ways that some key connected textual and theoretical threads have been instrumental in producing and normalising the conceptual ground Euro-western claims have stood on. Rather than continue to maintain this contested terrain, the intent is to gain further insight into the knowledges young children may hold about the various relationships they may have. Taking this line of inquiry could reveal and reclaim knowledge which has previously been considered as inferior or less believable.

It is these differing accounts which can inform and guide understandings of the child, their relationship companions, and their diverse experiences of childhood. I now set about on the journey of putting Derrida's work to work to see what may be revealed within the text I have selected to use, recognising that while what I write is a pathway into the topic and problem at hand, it is not the only, or definitive, way in.

3.4 What Foucault Offers this Research

Foucault's writing provides the next thread that I noticed within this complicated thesis weave. Derrida and Foucault often held vehemently opposing views, engaging in, at times, acrimonious debate, especially on where and how concepts of madness, dominance and rationality are located (Koopman, 2010; Lumsden, 2007; Nash, 1994). However, rather than focus on the places where they disagreed, I seek to draw on the advantages and tensions of their work which highlight that whilst pathways into the

phenomenon of the entities who may share the lives of young children are “fraught with peril” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 30), they also hold promise for new insight.

A postmodernist and poststructuralist thinker, Foucault revolutionised understandings of what knowledge may mean, and indeed, entail by illuminating and disturbing the intricate workings of the “power-knowledge nexus” (Gore, 1993, p. 134), identified as pivotal for this thesis due to the complex relationship dynamics inherent within this particular research topic and methodological approach (see Chapter Six). The French iconoclast’s arguments shifted over time and these were captured within his vast body of work as he re-turned and re-visioned previously articulated ideas.

For Foucault, “power, knowledge and the body are inextricably enmeshed” (Gordon-Burns, Gunn, Purdue & Surtees, 2012, p. 11). Each a producer and a product of one another. Knowledge emerges from this and becomes the foundation upon which notions of (absolute) truth and reality become known, directing how and where power may then be produced and operated, and by whom.

In Foucault’s view, power is inescapable; it exists everywhere and within everything. As such, it is not inherently negative or positive, but becomes so through relationships and structures (Foucault, 1980). It can be utilised by all or rather, as Sellers (2013), writing about the application of Foucauldian ideas within ECE contexts puts it, “it is accessible to child and adult” (p. 146). However, it often resides with the adult rather than the child (Stuart, 2011).

Foucault left a formidable legacy of ideas that remain as relevant today as when they were first circulated. His intent to trouble places and structures where power of being and power on being dwells created rupturing cuts; traces of which remain evident in current ECE discourse (e.g., Cohen, 2008; MacNaughton, 2005; Millei, 2005; Stuart, 2011). These notions invariably influence what may be considered to be knowledge and what may be considered to be true and believable, thus, worthy of replication within an educational context (Foucault, 1980; MacNaughton, 2005).

Truth, and the construction of what may be accepted as true, contains a multiplicity of paradoxical epistemological and ontological claims (Foucault, 1979). One cannot quantify what another's truth may be, or indeed speak what another's truth may entail, as a statement of truth comprises numerous entanglements (see further in this chapter), including representation and notions masquerading as natural and benign: power-knowledge in action.

Foucault drew attention to, and problematised, the construct of representationalism. His writings challenged how systems, mechanisms and apparatuses of power and control invariably produce the very subjects they seek to represent (Butler, 1990; Foucault, 2003). When attempting to decipher the relationship between subject and representation (in this instance, in relation to determining criminality) Foucault (2003) stated:

the indictment substitutes something else: the subject's resemblance to her act, or even the act's imputability to the subject. Since the subject so resembles her act, then the act really is hers and we have the right to punish the subject when we come to judge the act. (p. 124)

What Foucault is drawing attention to is the inextricable complexities interwoven within understandings of self, subject and unquestionable concepts of representation. The foci of his critique were primarily institutions, such as prisons, hospitals, asylums and the structures that operate to determine who should/should not be admitted into such places and how they should thus be treated. However, his analyses are equally applicable and relevant to consider within a variety of additional contexts, such as ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand which, over the previous two decades, has become a domain increasingly surrounded by surveillance and asymmetrical power relationships (see Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999; Sellers, 2013).

Taking the above into account, the following two central concerns have emerged from Foucault's work (1980) as relevant to this thesis: "What mechanisms hold certain knowledges in place whilst simultaneously destabilising all alternative knowledges? What are the consequences of instability for those knowledges which offer alternative insight?"

These queries ask that we attend to how some knowledges become privileged whilst simultaneously creating a position of otherness for those that have not been considered to hold similar features or value. What might occur were these established knowledges to be destabilised and what could be the benefits of doing so within the specific context of this thesis?

3.4.1 Subjugated knowledges

Taking this a step further leads me to Foucault's (1980) call to "return to knowledge" (p. 990) which gave rise to the term *subjugated knowledges*, those knowledges which he deemed to have been annexed due to pervasive dominant hegemonic discourse. Foucault (1980) offered the following definition of his orientation to this term:

By subjugated knowledges I mean two things: on the one hand, I am referring to the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemisation...Subjugated knowledges are thus those blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising theory and which criticism—which obviously draws upon scholarship—has been able to reveal.... On the other hand, I believe that by subjugated knowledges one should understand something else, something which in a sense is altogether different, namely, a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity. (p. 81)

What Foucault asks is for us to pay attention to sites of struggle where one voice seeks to drown out, and thus disqualify and silence, alternative ancestral narratives and textual accounts—to engage in rebellion and resistance against the various mechanisms which hold certain knowledges in place whilst simultaneously destabilising others (Foucault, 1982; Hartmann, 2003; Jackson, 2012). Of particular concern is the marginalising of assumed "low-ranking knowledges" (Foucault, 1980, p. 82), rejected due to the perceived absence of wisdom. Such rejection was, and continues to be, predicated through complex

structural aspects of asymmetrical and hegemonic power relationships (Hartmann, 2003; TKRI, 2013).

It is this forgotten, or hidden, knowledge that speaks to, and of, entities who take a form which is other than corporeal. This is “naïve” knowledge, relegated to the place of folklore and myth. Whilst Euro-western academic discourse has continued to surround, and encircle, notions of the body, what may be linked to the soul and/or spirit (other than understandings of God) remains in underground spaces; spaces where some know of them and speak of them, albeit in the shadows (McColman, 2003). Lončarević (2013). This highlights that when these localised knowledges are reclaimed, they provide important “counter-discourses...creating new epistemological space, because their relation to power could be different than that of dominant knowledges” (p. 66).

It is the making visible that which has been categorised using binary terms as *unnoticed* and *invisible*; the ancestral knowledges, languages, and notions of entities that are *no-body*, or *no-bodied*. That which, in its simplest and romanticised or whimsical form, is considered to be ethereal and wistful, rather than agential and capable of creating “ruptural effects” (Foucault, 1980, p. 81) which symbolise their struggle and presence.

However, any attempt to do so requires an understanding of how these knowledges became deposed and of the structures necessary to hold these in place in order for subjugation to continue. To not do so, Foucault (1982) warned, keeps us “trapped in our own history” (p. 780); reproduced via truths, tools and mechanisms which have continued

to hold these established hierarchies firmly in place, discounting the possibility of philosophical and theoretical travel elsewhere.

3.4.2 Regimes of thought and truth

Another Foucauldian concept drawn upon for this thesis is what he called *regimes of thought and truth* (1981). Dahlberg and Moss (2005) use the term *dominant discourses*, and Besley (2005) describes this as “specific truth games” (p. 77). These are a set of truths asserted within a specific discursive context which make assumptions about the ways in which something should occur (Foucault, 2003; MacNaughton, 2005).

Much time was dedicated to the concept of *discourse* which Foucault saw as instrumental in shaping how society is structured and upon which the foundations of hegemonic ideas are therefore produced and reproduced (Foucault, 1981). Foucault (1972, 1973) argued that each discipline contains explicit and implicit encoded structures and systems of thought which function as transmitters of assumed legitimate knowledge – discourse. For Foucault (1972), each discourse constructs its object and “work[s] it to the point of transforming it altogether” (p. 32). Seminal here is the idea that discourse belongs within the domain of *technical specialists*, those who are responsible for establishing what is constituted as knowledge and truth and what is therefore written, spoken and communicated (Foucault, 1981).

Those determined as technical specialists within ECE are primarily adults. They work collaboratively to define and defend childhood and what the nature, purpose and

experience of being a child may entail (explored further in Chapter Four). As such, a dominant discourse of what constitutes the normal, what is included and what is excluded becomes the premise on which understandings of truth are constructed, shared and upheld.

Foucault (1981) informed his readers that what further holds and advances these sentiments is:

We have three types of prohibition, covering objects, ritual with its surrounding circumstances, the privileged or exclusive right to speak of a particular subject; these prohibitions interrelate, reinforce and complement each other, forming a complex web, continually subject to modification. I will note simply that the areas where this web is most tightly woven today, where the danger spots are most numerous, are those dealing with politics and sexuality...In appearance, speech may well be of little account, but the prohibitions surrounding it soon reveal its links with desire and power...speech is no mere verbalisation of conflicts and systems of domination, but that it is the very object of man's conflicts. (p. 316)

This requires structures, rules and regulatory mechanisms in place to produce and reproduce dominant hegemonic discourses on normalcy. It is via regimes of thought and truth that understandings of knowledge considered to be important and therefore valuable and worthy, continue to be transmitted. Following on from Foucault's notions, Dahlberg et al. (1999) assert the following:

[Foucault]...does not understand truth and knowledge in essential or foundational terms, but rather as what comes to be defined or accepted as 'true' or as 'knowledge'. The issue is not the essential truth or falseness of a claim, whether it is right or wrong in some absolute or objective sense: rather, the issue is how

particular claims come to be treated in a particular time and place as if they were true knowledge. (p. 30)

Historically, knowledge positioned inside regimes of thought within the human science disciplines were therefore attributed the status of relevancy and thus were “*made true*” (Hobbs, 2008, p. 10). Conversely, subjugated knowledges, as low-ranking and thus inferior or marked as irrelevant, existed outside these demarcated boundaries, consequently exiled from language and text.

These explicitly and implicitly determine and include what is deemed normal, beneficial and hence worthy of replication. That which is assumed to be hostile (Hartmann, 2003) is discarded and therefore relegated to the margins. What has been excluded is therefore deemed to exist outside the articulated boundaries of what is constituted and constructed as a true and believable account (Cohen, 2008; Foucault, 1980; MacNaughton & Smith, 2008).

Foucault’s writings problematised locations, conceptual constructions of knowledge and power play within all functions and practices of our daily lives. He queried: “Which are the good regimes? Which regimes are legitimate? What historical regimes can be acknowledged and what regimes can we recognize ourselves?” (Foucault, 2003, p. 152)

Being cognisant of what is clearly stated alongside what is implied within existing structural mechanisms and functions of power requires attunement to recognise that “those who exercis[e] it have the capacity to create large-scale systems of thought that...[can]... exert considerable influence over people’s lives” (Oliver, 2010, p. 31).

MacNaughton (2005) advises teachers to struggle to “unmask the regimes of truth that

govern us precisely because it is we who hold them in place and reproduce them” (p. 39).

These are the truths which inform how we conceptualise the child and thus enact structures, systems and practices which enable these ideologies to remain intact and serve as our current professional knowledge and practice (Bae, 2017; Gunn, 2019).

Practices which are culturally decontextualised further serve to problematise ECE pedagogy and practice and further reinforce and entrench outdated regimes of thought and truth about the everyday lives of young children (see Chapter Nine for further examination).

A renewed interest in theorising about materiality has drawn attention to the plurality of differing perspectives which link interdisciplinary approaches. Of importance here is a shift in scholarship, a noticeable turn, that cautions that an overreliance on textual accounts is insufficient when seeking to query the complexity of meaning and matter (Lemke, 2015).

This provides an opportunity to therefore move beyond Foucault to consider what else could be relevant to think with and think through in order to create theoretical movement. For this reason, the work of Barad has been carefully selected to proffer a different pathway into this exploration. With some similar goals to Foucault, Barad is also concerned with the interrelatedness and entanglements of the body and power and how materiality comes to matter. Barad’s take is instrumental to this thesis due to the theoretical interests and tensions she raises which have additional implications for this topic.

3.5 Barad's Contribution to Deconstructing Theoretical Understandings

The work of Barad feeds into new materialist scholarship, constituting a deliberate turn to ask new questions about matter. Of key concern within new materialism is the critique of anthropocentrism and humanist, dualist, traditions which have dominated Euro-western scientific and postmodernist theory and thinking (Barad, 2003; Fox & Alldred, 2018; Monforte, 2018). As a movement, it creates a distinct pathway of thought away from widely held dominant views of the linguistic paradigm. It orientates itself towards a school of thought whereby the human and nonhuman (here I recognise the tension that arises through the use of these terms) are viewed within the various and complex social relations that act upon, and thus affect, them (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013).

My interest in Barad stems from her vast and diverse scholarly writing and contributions. Her work appears within a multitude of academic disciplines, most notably quantum physics, philosophy, poststructuralist, new materialist, queer and feminist theory. Within her writing she acknowledges the influence of Danish physicist Niels Bohr (1885-1962), whose ideas on atomic structure revolutionised quantum theory, and for which he won a Nobel Prize in 1922. Her continued fascination with Bohr's philosophy-physics work underpins much of her theorising; however, she acknowledges her orientation to, and travels alongside his writings: his ideas are "always already diffracted through my agential realist understanding of...[his]...insights" (Barad, 2014, p. 186).

Barad's writing posits a way of dislodging fundamental notions that have filtered through scientific and academic discourse. Rather than adopting an oppositional approach, for

example to the Cartesian position of the object/subject divide, she argues that taking either position is problematic. Her counter position is to raise the troubling question about the reason for the very existence of “two distinct and independent kinds of entities—representations and entities to be represented” (Barad, 2007, p. 46).

A point of difference she offers is the importance of interrogating how something is occurring rather than why. This has led her to consider that apparatuses, put in place to measure entities and to observe and track their proper/improper behaviour, cannot be considered separately as they inherently produce subject/object knowledge practices, therefore requiring further examination (Barad, 2014). What is clearly articulated within her work is the concept that something that is produced; for example, via representationalism; can also be cut through/cut apart to be dismantled. Embedded within this discourse is a strong recognition of the place of ethics, an ethico-onto-epistemology. She points out in this regard that just because something can be dismantled and ruptured does not necessarily mean that it should be (Barad, 2007).

Rather than present fixed positions or solutions, she writes of the *material-discursive*; highlighting the inseparability between matter and discourse. According to Barad (2010) there is mutual entanglement, “*differentiations that cut together/apart*” (p. 241, emphasis in the original). Phenomena, described as “the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting components” (Barad, 2007, p. 33), are thus produced via these complex, and at times unseen or taken-for-granted entanglements, or “entangled tales” (Barad, 2012a, p. 206). This will be explored in more detail further in this chapter.

Her work brings together multidisciplinary notions, entangling these in a cutting together/cutting apart fashion. She shifts boundaries and borders to spook and queer traditional scientific concepts by seeking to understand “the coming together of opposite qualities within... [by]...mitigating duality... [and]...tunnelling through boundaries” (Barad, 2014, p. 175). She warns that this task is not for the faint of heart; for example, tunnelling (passing through a potential barrier) doesn’t occur without indeterminate bleeding; bleeding into and bleeding apart (Barad, 2007, 2010, 2014; Martens, 2016).

However, her treatise on nature-culture is multiplex and not without criticism. Whether she delivers on her ambitious aspirations is not the central concern of this chapter or this thesis. Rather, I seek to employ and agitate some of the ideas present within her work to re-work and re-turn them within an ECE context and terrain in Aotearoa New Zealand.

3.5.1 Agential realism and entanglement

If Barad’s account of agential realism is correct, then the psychological “things” that we name as “thoughts,” “ideas,” “theories,” “knowledge,” or “observations,” and study as the products of processes hidden within the heads of individuals, are better talked of as emerging within material intra-actions occurring in activities out in the world at large. (Shotter, 2014, p. 305)

Barad’s theory of agential realism extends Bohr’s notions, which questioned Newtonian physics and the Cartesian concept of absolute, definitive boundaries. Her point of difference is to centralise the notion of the world as a whole, rather than comprising

separate parts, emphasising the importance of the entanglements that occur due to social, cultural and natural agencies.

Before going further into agential realism, I return to Barad's use of the term *intra-action*, as it is instrumental for considering the mutuality of entanglement. She uses the term *intra-action* rather than *interaction* to offer a new way of conceptualising relationships. Interaction assumes that each entity maintains a level of separateness; that is, it exists before an encounter occurs (Barad, 2003, 2007). Conversely, her use of the term *intra-action* describes a co-constitutive relationship whereby the ability to act, to be agentic, emerges from within this relationship rather than from outside of it (Barad, 2003, 2007).

Barad claims there is no ontological separability of entities; that is, entities are not viewed as pre-existing prior to their entanglement. Rather, all entities are always entangled; they cannot exist before their encounter/ing as they are already in touch and touching (Barad, 2012a; Warfield, 2016). It is through *intra-action*, she suggests, that human and nonhuman actors make and unmake phenomena (Barad, 2003). The term *e-motion-ality* is used here to suggest "all pretense of being able to separate out the affective from the scientific dimensions of touching falls away" (Barad, 2012a, p. 207). She goes on to say:

Hidden behind the discrete and independent objects of the sense world is an entangled realm, in which the simple notions of identity and locality no longer apply. We may not notice the intimate relationships common to that level of existence, but, regardless of our blindness to them, they persist. (Barad, 2012a, p. 213)

Barad draws attention to the significance of “response-ability...possibilities of mutual response” (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 55), as entanglements abound that are premised on concepts of this mutual responsiveness which enact the posthuman position:

Posthumanism...is not calibrated to the human; on the contrary, it is about issue with human exceptionalism while being accountable for the role we play in the differential constitution and differential positioning of the human among other creatures (both living and non-living). (Barad, 2007, p. 136)

Agential realism seeks to determine how understandings of reality are configured using an onto-epistemological approach which Barad (2007) explains as a rejection of “the notion of a correspondence relation between words and things...offer[ing] in its stead a causal explanation of how discursive practices are related to material phenomena” (pp. 44-5). Of specific importance is her claim that agential realism is not limited to the human, as agency is not something which resides within the individual nor can it be bestowed on another, whether they be human or those who have opposingly been termed as nonhuman. She argues that agency is:

...not held, it is not the property of person or things; rather, agency is an enactment, a matter of possibilities for reconfiguring entanglements. So agency is not about choice in any liberal humanist sense; rather, it is about the possibilities and accountability entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production, including the boundary articulations and exclusions that are marked by those practices. (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 54)

Her arguments acknowledge the potentiality of differing notions of entities and lay a foundation for reconceptualising entities as agential. There is no specific mention of entities that are often referred to elsewhere as non-corporeal. Rather, the nonhuman is

primarily identified as being entities which do not assume a human form but are nonetheless observable or believed to exist due to their material make-up.

Barad's ideas pave the way to consider agential realism within more than just the human realm; to re-turn understandings of the entanglements that may exist, especially within a cultural context. This is evident within her (2010) following statement:

Quantum entanglements are not the intertwining of two (or more) states/entities/events, but a calling into question of the very nature of two-ness, and ultimately of one-ness as well. Duality, unity, multiplicity, being are undone. 'Between' will never be the same. One is too few, two is too many...Quantum entanglements require/inspire a different sense of a-count-ability, a different arithmetic, a different calculus or response-ability. (p. 251)

The call for a different response-ability opens up new terrain for ECE to explore; for travel elsewhere that goes further than the theoretical truths and established regimes of thinking upon which understandings of curriculum, pedagogy and practice have been predicated. In such travel alternative conceptual pathways that are helpful to think with may be revealed, or in the case of ancestral knowledges and inheritance, remembered and reclaimed. This leads onto another key component of Barad's complex theoretical work, what quantum entanglements can offer to this complicated conceptual weave.

3.5.2 Quantum entanglements

Quantum physics is not generally considered a prominent theory which travels alongside those within the ECE context in Aotearoa New Zealand. Indeed, there may be some

teachers who would claim it does not have presence or primacy within conversations of pedagogy or understandings of the relationship companionships who share the lives of the young children they teach.

To see ECE theory, pedagogy, and quantum physics as positioned separately from one another dismisses what is already threaded through and what Barad (2012b) refers to as an “always already entangled” (p. 51) existence. To perceive they can be anything other than already entangled continues to perpetuate dualist, or side-taking, perspectives which reproduces notions of otherness. An example of such an otherness is the inscribing of life, or a life force/essence, only to an entity considered to be corporeal, relegating entities which do not conform to this expectation as something *other*. Thus, one is ascribed with *presence* and the opposite is determined to be identified as *absence* (Pinkus, 1996). To work from a space of designated otherness limits the potentiality and ability for different kinds of provocations to and engagements with these relationships to occur; therefore for new insight into what may matter as matter “further attention ...needs to be given to how meaning and matter are held together” (Orlikowski & Scott, 2015, p. 698).

Quantum physics attempts to decipher and solve the complicated mysteries of the universe. Much like the discipline of philosophy, it too has experienced a raft of perceptual turns in a bid to reveal and rationalise how the universe is governed and our place within its complex and interacting structures and systems (Hollin, Forsyth, Giraud & Potts, 2017). Unravelling what can be known about the fabric of space-place-time relationships typifies an ongoing quantum conundrum.

A central issue for quantum physics is that matter does not always behave the way we believe it should or could (e.g., Barad, 2010; Bohr, 1937; Schrödinger, 1935). Rather, it is a mysterious terrain where potentiality and possibility abound; somewhat similar to understandings of young children's companions. So, what specifically do quantum physics, and quantum mechanics, offer to discourse on these relationships, in particular to notions of entanglement and entangled travels? Do all entities need to be accounted for, in the sense of being noticed and recognised, in order to justify their *presence* and therefore their existence? How could quantum mechanics make sense of entities which appear and disappear within the lives of young children and which are generally unseen by anyone other than the child? These are the queries I pose to quantum mechanics.

3.5.3 Classical quantum physics – the first step

Classical quantum physics offers the first step into thinking about the occurrence, states and behaviour of matter. In quantum physics a particle is considered to exist within its own quantum state. Whilst in an independent state it is easier to decipher a particle and be certain of the properties it possesses. For example, particles and waves are supposed to retain their own individual properties (Barad, 2007). The classical approach to physics posits that in general events are causal and occur in continuous, predictable and known patterns whereby "particles necessarily possess well-defined positions, momenta and energies at all instants" (Dieks, 2016, p. 5). This is troubling when considering notions of young children's relationship companions, as cultural and personal narrative highlight the

multiplex ways in which these relationships may occur. There is certainly no ‘one size fits all’ formula or ability to decipher what these relationships may entail and where such relationship companions may dwell or be positioned, or when they may appear.

Capellmann (2017) suggests that a fundamental premise underpinning classical quantum physics is “‘Natura non facit saltus’ (nature does not make jumps)” (p. 5). This axiom appears in the works of Leibniz (1765), although arguably its origins are much older, with traces evident in the underlying principles of natural philosophy, science, and mathematics alike. Pesic (2003) claims that the crux of Leibniz’s axiom is concerned with notions of a “continuous and unbroken” (p. 35) universe whereby every being is ascribed with a unique and individual identity and “no two bodies can occupy the same place at the same time; if so, the identity of a body corresponds to its impenetrability” (p. 35).

These are complex ongoing arguments that natural philosophy and scientific discourse seek to queer, along with the principles invariably entangled within it. As such, it is included here as an example of a historical orientation to understanding what is assumed to be tangible and intangible. To jump, or leap, suggests that the evolution of the universe, and by extension all entities that dwell in it, may be sporadic and discontinuous, rather than smooth, gradual and continuous. These are the concerns quantum physics seeks to speak to (Barad, 2007).

If we consider the universe to be gradual and continuous, we believe it consists of knowable dynamic variables arranged in an orderly fashion where any configuration changes happen in predicable ways and abide by deterministic laws that relate to past and

future (Barad, 2007; Capellmann, 2017; Landsman, 2017). This offers a strange sense of stability to the universe which belies the possibility that entities other than those which behave in observable and predictable ways share our lives (Hollin et al., 2017).

Uncertainty enters into classical physics when two or more particles become connected; a new relationship has been introduced. However, there is a sense of stability, as the act of observing and measuring one of the particles will invariably offer information about the other one—as the observer knows they are measuring one part of an entangled pair/relationship (Barad, 2007). It is crucial that the observer possess knowledge of the system in order to determine the individual properties of what is being observed (Bohr, 1928). In this instance uncertainty can be more easily addressed and reduced as the observer is provided with information to assist them in understanding the individual properties of one particle within the entangled relationship. This better enables them to understand, and make sense, of the other particle as it travels within an entangled state (Zinkernagel, 2016). Phenomena exist as separate entities and thus their travel takes on a definite traceable trajectory.

3.5.4 Quantum mechanics – the second step

The deterministic nature of and exact solutions offered by classical physics were put under strain as scientists put forward alternative explanations and disputed Newtonian physics and the Cartesian division of absolute, definitive, knowable properties and boundaries (Barad, 2007; Capellmann, 2017). Quantum mechanics highlights the inherent

randomness and unpredictability of how quanta can, and may, behave. Phenomena not seen, or recognised, by human detection within classical physics assume space and place in quantum mechanics. Here the measurement used is integral to understanding the phenomena being observed. Our understanding thus relies on the ways in which we approach our observations, for example on the apparatus that are used to provide measurement alongside what may be happening at that point in time.

Meaning can only be derived from what we see, what we understand, and what we know at any given time (Barad, 2007; Bohr, 1922). The complementarity principle, originally proposed by Bohr, claims that a complex relationship exists between the observed and the observer, which Zinkernagel (2016) explains as:

...the attribution of certain properties to quantum objects can take place only on experimental contexts which are mutually incompatible. Thus, for example, an experiment which can determine the position of an electron cannot be used to determine its momentum. Complementary properties, such as position and momentum, are both necessary for a full understanding of the object but...the object cannot possibly be attributed precise values of both properties at the same time. (p. 3)

Entities can therefore hold several properties viewed as incompatible or contradictory or that appear to be mutually exclusive. Simply put, the complementarity principle holds that whilst entities may contain certain complementary properties, not all of these can be observed nor can they be measured simultaneously (Barad, 2007; Bohr, 1937). Bohr's complementarity includes notions of impossibility alongside indivisibility, which Plotnitsky (2006) describes further:

Since it is impossible to consider the quantum objects independently of this interaction, this “indivisibility” makes it impossible to isolate quantum objects from their phenomenal enclosure. Bohr sometimes speaks of “closed phenomena” in this sense...any attempt to “open” or “cut through” a phenomena can only produce yet another closed individual phenomenon....phenomena become individual, each of them—every (knowable) effect conjoined with every (unknowable) process leading to it—unique and unrepeatable. (p. 35)

What this offers to this specific thesis exploration is the idea that paradoxical patterns are an inherent feature of the universe. There is a multitude of theoretical positions able to encompass all that may be known about the various entities which may share our lives and the forms these may take, and we must look further to move past narrow Euro-western constructs as our primary contributory account (to be explored further in Chapters Four and Five).

3.5.5 A diffractive account

Diffraction...a modification which light undergoes especially in passing by the edges of opaque bodies or through narrow openings and in which the rays appear to be deflected; also: a similar modification of other waves (such as sound waves) or of moving particles (such as electrons) (Diffraction, n.d.).

From the Latin *diffringere* – *dis* (apart) and *frangere* (break) (Barad, 2014, p. 171)

Barad’s (2007) diffraction is premised on the quantum physics understanding of “the way waves combine when they overlap and the apparent bending and spreading of waves that occurs when waves encounter an obstruction” (p. 74), which, she states, takes place for any type of wave (sound, light and so on) if the conditions are right. Diffraction “is a lively

affair” (Barad, 2014, p. 168). It questions, challenges, breaks through and breaks about, pushes through, pushes apart and pushes together notions of sameness and separability, creating patterns and new directions in order “to figure difference differently” (p. 170).

Diffraction incorporates motion, interference, pathways, crossing and travel trajectories. In this way it recognises that how phenomena travel and their length and speed invariably inform how an entanglement will occur. It also highlights the ways in which new interference patterns may be created following an encounter (Martens, 2016). Using the term, Barad (2014) refers to whether phenomena (in this instance she is primarily referring to waves of light) “arrive in phase (crest to crest) or out of phase (crest to trough) or somewhere in between” (p. 172). It is the encounter that determines how difference appears.

Barad’s diffraction is congruent with that of Haraway, a pioneer in this field. Both argue against an over-reliance on reflexivity which, like reflection, seeks only to reproduce what is already there or what is already known. Reflection “only displaces the same elsewhere” (Haraway, 1997, p. 16); or as Barad (2003) describes, “[is]...the infinite play of images between two facing mirrors” (p, 803). She goes on to explain, “the epistemological gets bounced back and forth, but nothing more is seen” (p. 803). This creates circular reasoning that replicates what was believed/thought to be there, what was believed to be the story, in the first place.

Barad’s (2014) quote at the start of this chapter offers further insight into her theory of diffraction. Here she identifies the ways diffraction diffracts; it breaks “apart in different

directions...[disrupts]...an absolute boundary...that positions the self on one side, and the other – the not-self – on the other side” (p. 169). Her theorising offers possibilities to trouble “the space behind the mirror” (p. 169), to fracture through diffraction notions of sameness and difference as being absolute binary opposites.

Diffraction, in a theoretical sense, enables the reading of, reading through, reading together and crossing over of a range of previously considered oppositional and/or dualist perspectives. This approach is “thinking the ‘social’ and the ‘scientific’ together” (Barad, 2003, p. 803), calling “for a rethinking of the notions of identity and difference” (Barad, 2014, p. 172).

What diffraction also makes way for is the opportunity to consider how an entity may well exist in more than one form or state. It emphasises the potential for differing notions and approaches to a conundrum can get “along well together” (Duke University, 2014). This calls into question, and looks to deconstruct, positions and ideas which have previously been viewed as improbable binary opposites. This leads us to consider the contribution that “superposition” makes, and how this concept may be “good to journey with” (Duke University, 2014) when seeking to trouble how the entities who may share the lives of young children can exist in more than one possible state.

3.5.6 Superpositions – holding more than one position simultaneously

The term *superposition* is used to describe a particle/entity that can exist in all possible states simultaneously (Barad, 2010). A famous example is the 1935 experiment

undertaken by Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger, commonly referred to as Schrödinger's cat. Whilst this is a historical and, to some, outdated and seemingly irrelevant experiment, his work nonetheless carries a trace of ideas which have been influential in considering how an entity could be considered simultaneously alive and dead. His was an experiment of thought, one which demonstrated the very nature of entanglement alongside offering the perception that two dichotomous physical states, alive and dead, could concurrently exist. Fundamentally, these states are considered oppositional; however, his experiment called into question understandings of definitive states of being and reality.

What Schrödinger sought to deconstruct and queer was the notion that each of these states are not necessarily binary opposites. Referring to his investigation, Barad (2010) explains:

...it is not the case that the cat is either alive or dead and that we simply do not know which; nor that the cat is both alive and dead simultaneously (this possibility is logically excluded since 'alive' and 'dead' are understood to be mutually exclusive states); nor that the cat is partly alive and partly dead (presumably 'dead' and 'alive' are understood to be all or nothing states of affair); nor that the cat is in a definitive state of being not alive and not dead (in which case it presumably wouldn't qualify as a (once) living being). Quantum superpositions...tell us that being/becoming is an indeterminate matter: there simply is not a determinate fact of the matter concerning the cat's state of being alive or dead. It is a ghostly matter! (p. 251)

The Schrödinger's cat paradox highlights the murky and complex weirdness of trying to determine absolutely what may be alive or dead, what may be considered and constituted

as real or unreal. Barad (2014) suggests a re-turn, encompassing understandings of a “double movement... [whereby the turn is to] ...superpositions, not oppositions” (p. 176).

It is thus deconstructed as an undoing.

To blur the boundaries and borders by trying to carefully and clearly demarcate what, and/or who, may be bodied or un/no-bodied and how states of being are thus ascribed offers a new way of re-turning to entities. If there is disclarity when attempting to determine a perceived state of being for Schrödinger’s cat, so too is there an indeterminate matter of the mattering of entities deemed to be outside of what is considered as corporeal, whose presence may be either, neither, or both simultaneously, *alive/dead*.

3.5.7 Superposition – and the body of Christ

Re-turning to social and cultural narratives offers potential for examining understandings of being simultaneously alive and dead. Not all cultures determine there to be clear cuts, or slices, between more than one state(s) of being. Indeed, various cultural, historical and religious figures and deities are ascribed as holding more than one location at any given time (see Chapters Two and Five), thereby offering examples of the “bleeding” within entangled realms consisting of time, space and place spoken about by Foucault and Barad.

An example offered from Christianity is the body of Christ who is determined not to currently, in this time, inhabit a physical, material, body. Whilst a corporeal body is conceived of as not existing within the temporal space, he thus dwells within multiple

locations simultaneously. For those who hold that his presence is real he is not determined to solely, or merely, dwell within an imagined realm. Thus, he is concurrently ascribed *presence* and *absence*, often with no discernible conflict.

Christ is an example of a form of transmitted knowledge transcending the early childhood years as adults continue to engage in dialogues with an entity. Additional entities spoken of in a similar fashion, such as guardian angels, also tend to draw little or no attention or social castigation (Gleason, 2002; Singer & Singer, 2005). Experiencing an epiphany or message is generally considered a positive and encouraging sign, rather than one that creates alarm or concern for the recipient, or wider audience.

For many, these entangled relationships are considered everyday aspects of human existence, akin to hope and faith. However, they are also a significant illustration of how multiple forms of life are conceptualised, with little dissension over the “weirdness” of life and death existing concomitantly, and posing little cause for ideological conflict, especially for those who believe in this phenomenon (Rose, 1998). In this way each notion is invariably tangled—and entangled—with the other.

3.6 Entangled Entities

The notion of entanglement is a core thread introduced within this chapter and entwined throughout the rest of this thesis. As such it features within the metaphoric exploration of my kirituhi and my own ancestral inheritance and that of Hine (see Chapters One, Two and Five). As noted, Derrida, Foucault and Barad consider entanglement in their writings,

albeit with differing intent and emphases. Each has grappled with, and travelled with, the provocations and implications that entanglement may reveal within their theoretical trajectories. A point of convergence is that entanglement signifies the complex inter-relationships which can/may occur within and between entities, those spoken of within their writings as human and nonhuman, as well as the material.

A key point to raise which is pertinent for this specific research context going forward is that not all teachers in ECE may be conversant with the idea that young children's companions may be entities that they share their lives with. There is nonetheless intra-action of some kind occurring. We may not directly engage with these entities; however, we will intra-act with this phenomenon, for example through the discourses that are produced and circulated and the subject positions ascribed to the child and to their companion and the subsequent boundaries then applied. What is important to consider here is that the notion of intra-action calls for different kinds of boundary making to occur, recognising that previous dualist dichotomies, such as subject/object and real/imaginary, are no longer good to think with and that new understandings need to be generated from within these relationships.

No theory is neutral or impartial and the use of entanglement as a concept presents its own problematic linguistic features and traces. One important example of received textual knowledge in a Euro-western context which is a prime example of such ideological traces is that of dictionaries. These denote conceptual understandings of specific words and identify various contexts in which they may appear. Turning to a dictionary as a pivotal and visible trace highlights that the terms *entangle/entanglement* are synonymous

with notions that an entity facing entanglement is, i) involved in the action of being entangled with something else, ii) in a complicated, difficult, or comprising relationship or situation that is hard to escape, and iii) is faced with a physical barrier designed to impede or trap, primarily within the context of warfare/conflict.

To entangle, or be entangled, is to be involved in some type of relationship. However, as the above definitions caution, this relationship may be complicated and/or arduous and could possibly involve some type of ensnarement whereby entangled entities are thus entrapped or encircled, making escape, if desired or warranted, difficult or problematic in nature. This speaks of an entanglement in which there is a troubling power structure that puts strain on the relationship dynamic.

Along with this is another noteworthy aspect to consider, the Euro-western orientation towards the magical aspect of entities and how stories of their travels and entanglements may be spoken of differently within culturally mediated narratives. Whilst a positivist scientific account of reality might balk at the idea that an entity could magically appear and disappear at whim or by their own volition, ancestral storytelling often suggests just this (e.g., McColman, 2003; Mead, 2003; Sellner, 1993; Walker, 1978; Wirihana, 2012).

This raises questions about why some entities, or companions, might travel unnoticed, whether by their choice or due to their presence not being noticed. Is it that some entities may not want to be “seen” or that there are humans who are unable/unwilling to see and ascribe existence to entities who do not travel in corporeal, and known, form? Is

it that their matter—how they occupy space (Barad, 2007)—is perceived not to matter in the same way that as that of an entity determined to be corporeal?

What happens if matter matters differently for young children? How can what they speak of be acknowledged as iterative, intra-actional, generative and responsive? (Barad, 2014).

How can children's storying provide a cutting together/cutting apart where understandings of differentiating entanglements do not cause risk or harm for the child as the speaker?

3.6.1 Entangled apparatus – how do we determine what we know?

How matter is determined to matter relies on the collection of information to determine specific facts using a system of observation and measurement. These facts are useful for making positivist claims about what can be known of and about the world(s) that surrounds us and the relationships and entities we may encounter and engage with.

I will begin by revisiting Foucault and his treatment of how power produces bodies: bodies of knowledge and understandings of materiality concerning how a body is systematically made and remade. Foucault used various terms to elucidate how history, order and power feed into discourses of the ways in which bodies of ideas and bodies of people are made and subsequently regulated through an ensemble of measurement structures and devices. According to Foucault (1973), certain periods of history have produced general conditions of knowledge which come into place due to a series of *epistemes*, taken from the Greek meaning to know or to understand. Epistemes are unconscious and unspoken

assumptions which govern which things we do and do not consider to matter (Foucault, 2005). These are the truths which form the basis for all discourse, whether they are consciously known to us or not (Leiden University, 2017).

Foucault (1977) used the terms *dispositif*, apparatus, and *les dispositifs du pouvoir*, apparatuses of power, to group together dominant strategic knowledge structures. These structures, he claimed, provide a “rubric of normalization” (Foucault, 2003, p. 49) through which power is subsequently exercised. An apparatus is multi-layered, consisting of convoluted inter-related elements, such as discourses, laws, institutions, philosophical propositions and curricula (Foucault, 1977).

As previously stated, Foucault was particularly cognisant of the vast ways in which power contributes to the strategies and techniques produced and applied to ensure aspirations of the norm and normalisation are circulated, enacted and replicated. The observed, the observer, and the apparatus used form a dynamic triadic entangled relationship through which meaning is derived. Measurement, logic and the systems employed occur within all facets of life and may travel seemingly unnoticed alongside us as companions of sorts. So, what do these have to do specifically with children and the matters of which they speak?

An apparatus is determined to be any device or mechanism of power seeking that is used to wield control over an individual, a process or a body of knowledge (Foucault. 1977, 1982). Barad (2007) explains that apparatuses are more than a mechanism of abstract observation, they are powerful discursive “*boundary-drawing practices—... [through which] ...specific material (re)configurations of the world—...come to matter*” (p. 140,

emphasis in the original). The phenomenon being observed is therefore defined and bound to the apparatus, and meaning making subsequently occurs by, and through, those who constructed the apparatus (Barad, 2007; Pratt, 2019).

A boundary-drawing practice reliant on apparatuses of normalcy that is crucial to consider as this thesis proceeds is the concept of the corporeal. The concept of the corporeal body; the object as opposed an idea; relies on “recognizing the human body and its constituent parts” (Vergara, 2015, p. 130). It necessitates the ability to recognise a form/structure determined to be known, stable and consistent. To assist in this process, fixed markers shape and are applied to constitute what is known of, and thought about, the body. These are powerful and pervasive assumptions of how a body is deemed to be presented (and present), its features and contours, and how it functions (Foucault, 1979).

Knowledge about corporeality, such as the forces which create understandings of a body that is believable or true and true to a recognisable form, derives from complicated social and cultural constructs and mechanisms of regulation. A body which holds a form we do not recognise becomes a false or a troubled body, a body “invested with an entirely new affective dimension” (Orbach, 2006, p. 92). If a body is identified as holding an unstable or inconsistent form, it is therefore located outside of the fixed social and cultural boundaries and markers of corporeality: an “excluded body” (Witz, 2000, p. 1).

Orbach (2006) talks of “the problematic of having a body” (p. 91). What is meant here is that the carefully constructed categories at work are continually being put under strain –

they are never as they seem to be. Orbach suggests that, in the desire to apply fixed markers, we are:

...striv[ing]... to create something unique, distinctive, and fluid out of those very categories. We do not escape these categories even when we play with them. They mark our imaginative worlds, and an appropriated alternative embodiment is both the source and the means of fantasy. (Orbach, 2006, p. 91)

In their own ways, each of the key writers drawn on for this chapter has been intrigued with how an apparatus may act in a multitude of ways, often producing asymmetrical power relationships. These are the systems within which children are invariably positioned. They encircle and entangle the daily lives of children, making assumptions of the stories they share and their relationships are understood, based on adult logic and the subsequent rubrics of what may constitute normal that are then produced around them and subsequently through them. Children themselves become the unwitting gatekeepers of what is deemed to be of value and thus worthy of reproducing. This occurs via the language they use to speak of, and about, their lived realities.

Language is an efficient discursive apparatus through which our experiences, ideas and actions are understood. Efficient, in the sense that what is written and spoken comes to carry weight as dominant notions of truth and reality are constructed, classified and categorised. This construction of what is “true or false, normal or abnormal, right or wrong...shape[s] our understanding of what is possible and what is desirable” (Dahlberg et al., 1999, p. 31). This is further affirmed by the current definitions which structure and stabilise how these notions come to be taken as absolute truths. A critical example is the

important issue at hand for this thesis, the Euro-western textual predilection to assign the companions of young children who may not be seen by others to the category of principally existing within an imagined, and therefore an imaginary, location.

Dahlberg et al. (1999) assert that, “power operates through many devices which do not rely solely on rational discourse or overt coercion” (p. 29). The textual landscape of knowledge and language drawn on by Derrida, Foucault and Barad (albeit distinctly different for each) draws attention to the complicated relationship between what is spoken and what is written and to the question of whether what is meant, or intended to be known, can possibly be known. This necessitates a deconstructive dismantling of terminology about devices and systems which provide the oft messy and tangled threads with which young children’s lives are conceptualised, primarily by the adults around them. For example, we need to deconstruct how currently circulated terms employ a representative framework upon which meaning is made and assumptions are reproduced. When particular terms appear as favoured and privileged, they efface, and thus erase, diffractive cultural understandings and nuances. If they are not disrupted, they continue their travel trajectory, maintaining carefully constructed binary borders opposing the potentiality for alternative conceptual pathways.

If we are to consider multiple ways into this specific research problem, then the dominant Euro-western normative apparatuses which have held together and premised a particular perspective cannot go unchallenged. This calls for a rethinking of what have been considered usual and therefore acceptable relationships during the early years with an

emphasis on restructuring the established network of intertwining structures which have entangled these regimes of truth and apparatuses of power together.

3.7 Final Thoughts

This chapter has introduced entangled theoretical notions upon which this thesis will now build. As identified, the perspectives taken are winding and multifaceted. They provide a varied and probing foundation to draw on and guide the ways in which querying understandings of the child, and their companions, is undertaken. This is especially relevant to those entities, as companions, which may not behave in ways that Euro-western textual assertions believe or expect they can and therefore should.

Radical rethinking about what it is to make knowledge offers possibilities to create ruptures into existing pervasive structures for thinking about this phenomenon within the early childhood years. In doing so, options to think differently about the realities that children are encountering are generated, enacting the potential to employ and take further theoretical insights which may not previously have been central to ECE discourse. Fresh approaches are imperative to grapple with the knotty problems of how else we can be perceptive to the world(s) that surround us and to reconceptualise the variegated forms relationships may take.

What each theoretical argument offers are new pathways which can be taken into this research topic in order to think differently—diffractively—about how entities may feature in young children's lives and why. Drawing on key tenets selected from the writings of

Derrida, Foucault and Barad offers alternative travel into established and emerging understandings relevant to consider for children, childhood and teachers within an ECE context. Each contributes a different way into the problem, offering opportunities to disrupt notions that may be accepted as customary and therefore esteemed.

Drawing on these tenets this thesis now moves to explore the next pertinent theme, the child's right to speak their truth and how their companions may be treated within Euro-western textual accounts. These accounts are considered to have been instrumental in shaping and holding in place established regimes of thinking and truth. Claims made within this discursive space can hinder or help aspirations for young children to be agentic speakers of their own truths and to be the tellers of their stories of childhood and relationship companions.

Chapter Four

What is Said of the Child and their Companions in Traditional Euro-western Literature?

Literature written of and about children and childhood offers insight into how Euro-western configurations of the child, and subsequently the experiences that the child may have may be portrayed in any historical period. As such, this provides a powerful discursive apparatus upon which pedagogy and practice are therefore premised and appraised. This chapter now briefly speaks to this and then introduces another entwined twist to the thesis fabric to consider what has been committed to text about the various perceived and analysed accounts of young children who may share their lives with companions whose form is not noticed or seen by others.

These threads have been instrumental in, as Foucault (1981) described, creating “the areas where this web is most tightly woven today, where the danger spots are most numerous” (p. 316). For this thesis, a specific on-going danger, or site of peril, is identified as the text which continually weaves normative patterns of which knowledge and which relationships may be thought of as valuable and which are consequently positioned as less important and therefore often evacuated from dialogue, text and curriculum.

4.1 Social Constructions of the Child and their Right to Truths

As a theoretical construct, the terms *child* and *childhood* invariably carry historical, political, social and cultural ideological traces and are therefore continually being shaped

and inscribed with meaning, often by those who are deemed to be located outside of this discursive space. As Foucault (1984) described, devices operate on many levels and as such they shape powerful normative discursive structures upon which the lives and status of young children are subject to surveillance, scrutiny, regulation and marginalisation. It is these devices and the ensuing constructions of the child, and childhood, which have given rise to “the invention of the modern child” (Cannella, 1997, p. 26), a demarcated landscape within which children are therefore required to live.

There is an assumption that adults/teachers know what a child is, as they themselves were obviously once children and that this experience gives them insider knowledge based on their recollections. Working this assumption affords them the right, and the insight, to speak on behalf of those who are currently identified as being located within this space; those who are viewed as in the process of *becoming* future adults (Callaghan, Andenæ & Macleod, 2015).

To imagine, or suggest, that there is a neat division or demarcation between childhood and adulthood relies on the concept of clear delineation of borders or boundaries. This is contested terrain. As Barad (2014) has called into question, there can be no absolute boundaries and Farley and Garlen (2016) further propose that, “the boundaries that differentiate children from adults shape the subjectivities of both” (p. 221). Therefore, each adds onto, and simultaneously erases, features of the other through a delicate interplay of intricate, and often asymmetrical, covert and overt power relationships (Foucault, 1984; MacNaughton & Smith, 2008).

It is important to acknowledge the role adults play in not only creating and holding the notion of boundaries in place, but also in fiercely attempting to encircle and defend them, which Cannella (1997) states occurs by:

...discuss[ing]... what children are like, what they need, and who we want them to be. We label them as becoming more independent, competent, or self-reliant...we have assumed that our beliefs and actions regarding them are warranted and result in benefits to them. We have created the ultimate "Other," a group of human beings not considered able or mature enough to create themselves...We have not discussed the possibilities that younger members of society may not all benefit from living within our constructions of "childhood". (p. 19)

Of particular interest for this thesis are the sophisticated and subtle ways adults seek to produce and reproduce recognised conditions of childhood. In order to better understand the various relationships which may exist for young children, and the powerful discursive structures and systems which function around them and through them as they are constructed as both object and subject, it is pertinent to consider the omnipresent ideas which invariably inform and entangle (see Chapter Three for specific exploration on the concept of entanglement) this child-adult dichotomy. It is important to look further into what ghostly theoretical traces may haunt (Derrida, 1994) constructions of the child, childhood and subsequently adult, notions of the proposed features and functions of young children's companions and subsequently how companionship may be experienced.

Generally, the loudest voice, focus, and interest have been concentrated on dominant Euro-western societal changes within specific historical periods. These chart a timeline of historical shifts which illuminate where the child and childhood may be located, and

therefore determined to belong, within the intricate territories and borders of pervasive lifespan development theories. Although as Claiborne (2011) observes, recognising this does not ask us to simply reject and dismiss traditional theories as being irrelevant and out-dated; rather, it is an approach of “de-centring’ such theories, whereby their place as being *the* voice of “unquestioned authority” (p. 3) is interrogated and destabilised.

To apply pressure in order to “figure difference differently” (Barad, 2014, p. 170) enables new encounters and patterns to be created. This does not seek to completely replace (which may bring about a new set of problems); rather, it makes ruptures and cuts into pervasive notions of sameness, opening up ways for new ideas to be worked together (Barad, 2003). In working together there is the potential to explore which additional philosophical and theoretical accounts it could be beneficial to travel with.

4.1.1 Current conditions of childhood

MacNaughton, Hughes and Smith (2007) propose that the following four core tenets underpin current understandings of child and childhood, and subsequently the features and functions of the various relationships they may experience. Firstly, children are perceived to be “possessions” (p. 41); their biological immaturity places the onus on parents, teachers and policymakers to decide what is in children’s best interests. Secondly, “children are subject to adults” (p. 41). Their inherent innocence, and subsequently the childhood they experience, must be protected via policies and procedures to ensure they can travel through pre-set developmental stages. In doing so

they will ultimately mature into moral and socially responsible adults. Thirdly, children are “participants” (p. 41) only when adults view them as being competent and capable of taking an active role in decisions that relate to them and their lives. However, their lives remain shaped by age and stage development discourse. Fourthly, children are viewed as “social actors who shape their identities, create and communicate valid views about the social world and have a right to participate in it” (p. 42). Within this last model, the child’s voice plays a pivotal role in all aspects of their lives and this is reflected within policies and curriculum in genuine and authentic ways.

These perspectives seem to draw on, and further advance the core tenets promulgated within dominant traditional Euro-western discourses of childhood. There appears to be minimal deviation from, and rather there seems to congruence with, Barad’s (2003) work on reflection and Foucault’s (2005) concerns on resemblance. As noted in Chapter Three, Barad’s (2003) take on reflection is a bouncing around, and bouncing back, of epistemological reasoning. Rather than creating new ways of thinking, reflection mirrors what has already been established; it moves what is already assumed elsewhere.

Within Foucault’s (2005) writing on epistemes, he used the term *resemblance* to denote how thought is ordered and discourse is produced through relations of resemblance. This was especially applied to thinking within the Renaissance period in which, he argued, knowledge was attained through the making of relational connections, or resemblances, between objects. A point Foucault (2005) raised that relates to the grouping and understanding of phenomena was that “...it was resemblance that organized the play of

symbols, made possible knowledge of things visible and invisible, and controlled the art of representing them” (p. 17).

The continuation of these inherited traditional problems is thus reflected and resembled within the four models of MacNaughton et al. (2007). This shows the strength of these established claims and how these remain an inherited companion of ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand.

4.1.2 The agentic child

As a more recent construct of childhood, the agentic child perspective positions the child as knowledgeable, capable and powerful. Childhood is viewed as an important time and children are viewed as empowered and autonomous social actors who make sense of their world through active engagement and self-initiated experimentation (Sorin, 2006; Sorin & Galloway, 2005).

Within this perspective, the child is not only shaped by the culture of the childhood they experience, they, as powerful social contributors, in turn “help shape the nature of the childhood they experience” (James & James, 2001, p. 30). Therefore, children are not simply acquiescent recipients of knowledge; rather, they are influential co-constructors of all that occurs around them (Prout, 2000; Walkerdine, 1999). They learn alongside adults which therefore requires that their lived experiences be “given serious consideration” (Sorin, 2006, p. 19). Most noticeable here is that rather than having to fit into adult

preordained and neatly constructed notions of idealised childhood, the child has a lead role in determining and deciding what their experience of childhood will encompass.

This position more closely aligns to Barad's (2003, 2007, 2012a) work on agential realism and intra-action. What this position attends to is that knowledge is created *within* this intra-action; there is a closeness, a touching, which calls into question the idea that there could ever be absolute borders between what a child and an adult may know. It is also a theory which offers the potential to draw on a wider range of relationships, and therefore relationship companions, as although "[w]e may not notice the intimate relationships common to that level of existence, but regardless of our blindness to them, they persist" (Barad, 2012a, p. 213).

4.2 Young Children as Fearless Speakers of their Entangled Truths

For young children to be agentic calls for an acknowledgement of the various entanglements that may exist. As aforementioned, a particular and extant concern is how traditional unquestioned truths about these entanglements may function explicitly and implicitly as the normative matrix upon which theory, text and practice are thus constructed and applied (Barad, 2007; Foucault, 1977).

As previously emphasised, knowledge and truth remain tricky and paradoxically puzzling terrain. There are no easy and smooth pathways and travel here. However, in the context of this thesis, a central path to guide travel is the pivotal tenet that young children have the right to speak of their own truths about relationship companions that travel alongside

them, regardless of whether these companions are noticed by those around them. Referring to young children having the *right* is to take an oft-cited child-rights-based approach to ECE that recognises young children's voices as integral to all that occurs within the learning and teaching environment (e.g., see Te One, 2008, 2009, 2010; Te One & Dalli, 2010). This right is a touchstone (Foucault, 1984) upon which theory, pedagogy and curriculum are premised.

For young children, it is their worlds, stories and lived experiences, their "travel elsewhere" that sit at the heart of the curriculum. Burman and MacLure (2005) refer to childhood as a "troubled 'field' from which researchers are always partly exiled by virtue of having grown up" (p. 288). Drawing on this statement problematises the notion that we as adults have the ability to lay claim to any truths about the lived experience of the young child (Burman, 2008), especially when seeking to talk with them of the presumed forms their relationship companions may/should (from our understanding and/or own experience) embody.

Entangled invariably within the child-adult/child-teacher relationship are power/knowledge structures and systems upon which interactions are predicated.

MacNaughton and Smith (2008) claim:

Ideas about what are right, normal and proper relations and ways of being with children for oneself as an adult have a long and shifting history that influences if and how we listen to and respond to children...How we see and understand the child in relation to the adult in specific institutional roles and contexts informs whether and how we consult young children. It guides the ethics of our consultations with children. For instance, if we see the adult as more knowing and

more capable than a child, then we as adults will consult a child quite differently than someone we see as more knowing and more capable than ourself. (p. 32)

This asks us to ensure that there are spaces for young children to say something, and reply to, ideology and pedagogy “which threatens the majority” (Foucault, 2001, p. 18). In doing so they engage in an openness, a fearlessness, of dialogue that offers insight into their worlds.

The young child whose voice differs from that of the adult may take on the role of a “messenger” (Goodnight, 2007, p. 2) of a different truth, a truth, or truths, which present a “challenge...[to]...the *status quo* and its structured relations of power” (Huckaby, 2008, p. 771). However, to speak differently offers hope, hope “for a different kind of recognition... [that invites] ...the child to be a teller of a different kind of truth” (Burman, 2016, p. 277). Thus, the child who speaks differently is the protagonist who seeks out a new orientation to ECE discourse and pedagogy, ushering in a re-turning and re-versing (of power relations and of text) of cultural, social, and political constructions of the entangled, compatible travel companions who may share their lives.

To follow, I draw on a discursive form used by Foucault (2005, 2012), *parrhesia*, to explore the relationships between the practice of truth-telling and the ability “to gain access to the reality of *this* world...to act as things demand and to hold in suspense dominant regimes of power and thought” (Vansieleghem, 2011, p. 336). This has been chosen as a pathway in and as a means to re-turn to an orientation of how agency may be enacted and subsequently reconceptualised within the specific framing of this research topic.

4.3 The Young Child as a Parrhesiastes

Much was written by Foucault on the Greek term *parrhesia*, meaning frankness in speaking the truth and the act of engaging in truth-telling (e.g., Foucault, 1984, 2001, 2005, 2012). In literature about Greek antiquity, *parrhesia* largely appears in the context of someone engaging in the act of truth-telling within a range of complex political and social contexts. *Parrhesia* exists within multi-layered discursive contexts, inextricably tangling power exchanges alongside, as Walzer (2013) highlights, a “focus on human subjectivity within the conditions of truth telling” (p. 18).

Rather than offer an exhaustive account of Foucault’s lengthy treatise on the concept of *parrhesia*, I will now consider how aspects of his work could extend into the ECE context in Aotearoa New Zealand. Whilst the concept of *parrhesia* is generally absent from ECE jargon and professional day-to-day dialogue, it nonetheless is relevant to take into account when considering how the act of speaking a differing truth—one that has previously been located outside of traditional Euro-western boundaries and privileged text—can entangle and pose risk to the speaker (notions further problematised within later sections of this chapter).

I take as my starting an exploration of the following Foucauldian-inspired summary offered by Vansieleghem (2011) who contends that *parrhesia*:

...does not refer to the truthfulness of the subject matter of what someone is saying or defending, measured by certain abstract principles or ideals, and evaluated as true or not according to those principles and ideals...It relates to the person’s exposure to what is the case at that particular moment, and to one’s

presence in the present. Being present in the present then involves not so much *discussing* particular subject matter as *practising*—say, being genuinely engaged in—the subject matter we are speaking about... (p. 330)

Foucault (2012) noted that the act of engaging in parrhesia “involves some form of courage...which consists of the parrhesiastes taking the risk of breaking and ending the relationship to the other person which was precisely what made his discourse possible” (p. 11). Walzer (2013) suggests that the commitment of the speaker to speak their truth supersedes their desire to (1) maintain a relationship with, and (2) to use speech to enhance their relationship with, those who are listening.

Foucault’s interest in parrhesia did not extend to his enquiring whether or not a young child could be a parrhesiastes. His examinations, however, made visible several core tenets which could, when cut through, be equally as useful when considering the ways in which young children engage in the activity of truth-telling within an encircled and entangled power relationship, such as the young child-adult/child-teacher.

Firstly, Foucault asked, “Who is able to tell the truth?” It is important to note that not all who speak, or who speak differently, are parrhesiastes. Foucault (2001) was clear to distinguish between “chattering...which consists in saying any- or everything one has in mind without qualification (p. 13) and parrhesia. Those who engage in parrhesia speak from a position of wisdom and knowledge rather than in order to pollute a space with meaningless noise (Foucault, 2001, 2008).

Returning to the attribute of courage, Foucault suggested that one characteristic proof of parrhesia is courage, as when truth is told there is invariably a risk that comes from

speaking a different truth, especially within an asymmetrical power relationship.

Traditionally a truth-teller “must be one of the *best* among citizens” (Foucault, 2001, p. 18). What he meant here was that a parrhesiastes speaks his truth because he believes “it is his duty to do so” (p. 19). The complexity lies in traversing and negotiating the space between “exercising a frankness of speech” (Beaulieu, 2010, p. 137), by sharing what one considers to be the truth, and seeking to avoid any harm that may come to the speaker in speaking so (Foucault, 2001; Huckaby, 2008; Milchman & Rosenberg, 2010). Harm, as previously noted, includes the fracturing of relationships and the possibility that the listener will elect not to remain present or will choose not to listen (Walzer, 2013).

A point Foucault (2001) was clear to make was that one cannot engage in parrhesia unless one is free to do so. Historically, the premise was that those who hold citizenship, have a noble birthright and whose reputation, personal and familial, is therefore sound can speak truthfully. It is difficult to find your voice, and have your voice noticed, if you do not feel a sense of citizenship and belonging and if your sense of identity, personal and familial, has been, and/or continues to be, marginalised. Foucault was highlighting the social and cultural status required in order to enjoy the rights, roles and privileges of full citizenship; again, rights, roles and privileges which are widely spoken of as principal touchstones for ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand.

It could be argued that for young children whose ancestral and cultural narratives have been relegated to folklore and/or the imaginary, there is little opportunity to engage in full citizenship, or participation. Their knowledges and truths are subjugated and at the margins of their daily lived life and within the curriculum that encircles and entraps them

(Foucault, 2001, 2008). They are also vulnerable in the sense that there is a relationship of dependence between child-adult/child-teacher which invariably means that the child's truth can come under scrutiny and reproach from the more powerful *other* (Foucault, 2001; MacNaughton & Smith, 2008).

Another important characteristic of a parrhesiastes is that they *live* their truth. What is meant here is that a truth-teller is believable when "there is conformity between what the real truth-teller says with how he behaves" (Foucault, 2001, p. 136). There is synergy, as what is said and what is actioned are mutually entangled in a way that each aspect cannot exist separately. This requires the parrhesiastes not only to have the courage to "tell the truth to *other people...*" but to be "...courageous enough to disclose the truth about *oneself*" (Foucault, 2001, p. 143).

Foucault (2001) argued that the "*parrhesiastes* primarily chooses a specific relationship to himself: he prefers himself as a truth-teller rather than as a living being who is false to himself" (p. 17). Taking this approach, the young child who encounters pressure to censure their entangled relationship companions is placed in a position where they are not able to be true to themselves. They are unable to share an integral aspect of their lives for fear or dread of the responses they may receive. For young children, being true to themselves is the courage to reveal what they wish about the significant relationship companions who share their lives, regardless of whether these companions are noticed and seen to others.

Foucault was clear that, like all interactions, parrhesia is a game-contract exchange.

Parrhesia only works when those who are engaged play their part to ensure that there is a code of conduct, a contractual understanding, of the game at play. Whilst this makes parrhesia sound superficial, Foucault (2001) contends that it is the opposite, as those who are willing to speak their truth can only do so if harmful consequences are mitigated and the listener is prepared to hear it spoken, as in the following example:

...from the ancient Greek perspective, a grammar teacher may tell the truth to the children that he teaches, and indeed may have no doubt that what he teaches is true. But in spite of this coincidence between belief and truth, he is not a *parrhesiastes*. However, when a philosopher addressed himself to a sovereign, to a tyrant, and tells him that his tyranny is disturbing and unpleasant because tyranny is incompatible with justice, then the philosopher speaks the truth, believes he is speaking the truth, and more than that, also takes a *risk* (since the tyrant may become angry, may punish him, may exile him, may kill him). (p. 16)

For young children, the risk is not to their life, in the sense that they are not in immediate physical harm, unlike the above-mentioned philosopher who speaks out against tyranny; rather, the risk is that they will not be believed. The risk is that what they have to say will not be seen as telling the truth and that what they speak of will be relegated to the imaginary rather than be evidence of their lived and usual reality. This is where entrapment and violence to the child occurs; where what is said may be used against the child to discredit *their* truth (Foucault, 2012).

Foucault's final concern was to problematise the relationship between power and truth.

As parrhesia is described as having a "bottom-to-up" (Yegen & Abukan, 2014, p. 179)

orientation, it privileges the voice of the less powerful. Thus, the young child who speaks differently of their world and whose truth offers a critique on the perceived or known world of the adult/teacher is using parrhesia. The adult/teacher who offers a critique on the world of the young child is not, as they risk nothing in the relationship or through their speaking, as their position and power within the relationship and exchange is already assured.

Whilst a young child may not neatly fit into the traditional characteristics identified by Foucault, it is clear that to engage in parrhesia and to thus be a truth-teller means that the speaker is charged with the duty of ensuring that those who are more powerful do not abuse their power or act towards themselves or others in tyrannical ways. If, for Foucault's sovereign, the person who holds ultimate power over himself, his citizens and his city, we substitute the teacher (who arguably holds a similar position within the ECE environment), then the onus is on the teacher to observe the counsel of those who may have previously spoken from the margins of subjugated truths. As Tamboukou (2012) observes, "*parrhesia* is not just about having the courage to tell the truth, but also to listen to it carefully" (p. 861).

This asks us to contemplate what we can notice, recognise and respond to (Carr & Lee, 2012) within an ECE context and what could be selected as pertinent to dismantle in order to conceptualise differing notions of truth. How can complex and complicated understandings of truthfulness be considered in order to think diffractively (Barad, 2007, 2014, see Chapter Three)? How can we be attentive to the child's right to their truth/s?

In order to further inform this line of inquiry, the focus now shifts to another troubling site, what is said within traditional Euro-western textual accounts about young children's companions and how this further contributes to the concept of childhood as embattled terrain.

4.4 Euro-western Textual Terms in Use

An initial review of literature was undertaken to identify key terms currently in use within Euro-western texts to denote a relationship which may exist between a child and an entity/companion whose form is not noticed or seen by others. The following five terms were discerned to appear most frequently within the text: *invisible character* (Svendsen, 1934, p. 988), *imaginary other* (Taylor & Mottweiler, 2008, p. 47), *fantastical friend* (Gleason, Sebanc, McGinley & Hartup, 1997, p. 3), *friends we can see through* (Wigger, 2011, p. 9) and *imaginary companion* (Taylor, Cartwright & Carlson, 1993, p. 276). Of these, imaginary companion seems to be the widely favoured term (e.g., see Gleason, 2002, 2004a; Gleason, Sebanc & Hartup, 2000; Hoff, 2004; Kastenbaum & Fox, 2007; Taylor et al., 1993; Trionfi & Reese, 2009). Taken together, the words that are used seemingly imply that such a companion(s) exists only within the imaginary, or the imagined, world/s of childhood rather than as an integral aspect or cultural account of human existence and experience.

I have elected to use imaginary companion (IC) as the designated term, albeit tentatively, noting that whilst the above terms are not synonyms there are places of convergence in

that each suggests that there is a component of the imaginary. As a result, and because IC seems to be the most widely used term, this will be my term-in-use for the remainder of this chapter. There is also deliberateness in selecting the term *companion* rather than friend, as I do not automatically assume that all relationships of this nature are friendly and benign (Hallowell, 2007). Thus, there is scope to consider the knottiness inherent within the concept of relationship and how each may regard and behave within this dynamic.

Drawing on the selected literature to inform and guide textual references regarding companions who may share the lives of young children, the following five foci have been identified to provide the framing for this chapter. These are included as a textual portrayal of what has been/is being produced and circulated by adults as the primary noted technical specialists on this topic, those who are influential in shaping what explicit and implicit encoded systems of knowledge (Foucault, 2003) may be produced about young children's companions. As such, they construct knowledge which "is bound by time and culture" (Harper, 1995, p. 348). What is extracted from each of the selected foci provides the theoretical basis for further critical exploration and disruption within the ensuing chapters.

Firstly, examining traditional understandings of ICs provides an overview of selected literature which has travelled alongside to develop awareness and interpretations of how these relationships may be noticed. This exploration includes literature which draws attention to the potential correlation between ICs and a young child's theory of mind.

Secondly, the features and functions of ICs are then considered, including the roles companions may take on and the responsibilities they may fulfil. Aspects such as problems which may occur when seeking to determine the presence of an IC, how that presence may be determined, and possible reasons for these relationships ceasing to exist or ceasing to be noticed are explored.

Thirdly, the next section highlights the difficulty of attempting to demarcate between what may constitute reality – and therefore truth—and what may be thought of as imaginary and accordingly fantastical and less believable. How young children may be positioned within literature provides further insight into how they may consequently discern and distinguish between these binary positions.

Fourthly, the focus is to identify whether relationships may be perceived as helpful or harmful for a young child. This further problematises the scope of Euro-western theorising about young children's relationship companions. Inherent here are two key reoccurring themes; firstly, that these relationships add value to the lives of young children, and secondly and conversely, that these relationships may be indicators of atypical development which troubles and puts strain on constructions of what may constitute healthy and normal child development.

Lastly, factors that may influence the creation of ICs are explored to shed light on the continued knottiness of the concerns at hand. This section identifies several key notions promulgated within the chosen literature which have been noted as significant

contributory features in the presence, and noticing, of entities as young children's relationship companions.

4.5 Traditional Understandings of ICs

The creation of an imaginary companion is simultaneously a typical and an atypical pathway through development in early childhood (Gleason, 2004a, p. 204).

Literature highlights that there is no definitive understanding of what ICs are, why they may be present, and whether they are a phenomenon existing only within childhood (Gleason, Sebanc & Hartup, 2000; Taylor, Carlson, Maring, Gerow & Charley, 2004).

Studies suggest that ICs are fairly common, with approximately 20%-30% of children believed to have a relationship with an IC during their early and/or middle childhood years (e.g., Giménez-Dasí, Pons & Bender, 2014; Gleason et al., 2000; Pearson et al., 2001; Taylor et al., 1993; Taylor, 1999).

In 2001, a large-scale study of approximately 1800 children aged between five and 12 years calculated that 39% of children aged five to seven years had an IC (Pearson et al., 2001). However, when the definition used to identify presence and prevalence includes additional characteristics, such as personified objects and characters children may impersonate (Aguiar, Mottweillier, Taylor & Fisher, 2017; Taylor et al., 2004), the number of children who have, or have had, an IC could be proportionally higher, perhaps as high as 65% (Taylor & Mottweillier, 2008).

Euro-western literature tends to group ICs within three principal categories determined by their assumed creation. Firstly, ICs have been described as a healthy expression of a creative mind (Singer & Singer, 2005; 2013). Secondly, ICs have been described as a mechanism through which children can work through challenges and problems they may be currently facing, including the absence of peer friendship (Giménez-Dasí et al., 2014; Singer & Singer, 2013; Taylor & Mottweilier, 2008). Lastly, ICs have been described as a possible indicator of pathology (Bender & Vogel, 1941; Hart & Zellers, 2006; McLewin & Muller, 2006). These three themes are interwoven within this review, as frequently the literature sourced alludes to one or more of these categories in overlapping terms.

Svendsen's (1934) definition often appears to be the starting thread to draw on for Euro-western notions regarding the purpose, function and value of ICs. Many authors researching and writing about ICs refer to her definition as having established the seminal foundational construct upon which the work of others has subsequently been formulated (e.g., see Gleason, 2002; 2004a; Gleason et al., 2000; Hoff, 2004; Kastenbaum & Fox, 2007; Trionfi & Reese, 2009). Svendsen (1934) defined an IC as:

...an invisible character named and referred to in conversation with other persons or played with directly for a period of time, at least several months, having an air of reality for the child, but no apparent objective basis. This excludes that type of imaginative play in which an object is personified, or in which the child himself assumes the role of some person in his environment.

Of an IC she concluded, "...the imaginary playmate is a visual or auditory idea that becomes as real and vivid as a visual or auditory percept, but that the child nevertheless always recognises its unreality" (Svendsen, 1934, p. 988).

However, ideas about the perceived nature of relationships between a child and an IC appear to have been fashioned within text prior to Svendsen's preceding definition. One such example is Vostrovsky's (1895) writings, which although not circulated or referred to as widely, nonetheless provide insight into perceptual understandings of how imaginary, or imagined, companions may be thought to manifest within young children's play (Kastenbaum & Fox, 2007; McLewin & Muller, 2006). Of these relationships, Vostrovsky (1985) expressed the following, "Children are apt to be more or less secretive in regard to these fancies, while older persons who have had them feel, often, a strange reluctance about bringing them to light..." (Vostrovsky, 1895, p. 394, cited in Kastenbaum & Fox, 2007, p. 128).

She also characterised adult responses to the child's IC, saying, "We cannot imagine it with her. The shadows are only shadows to us. If we dared, we would take her away from them. We fear the shadows and the shadow people. We fear she may dream too long" (Vostrovsky, 1895, p. 394, cited in Kastenbaum & Fox, 2007, p. 128).

Relationships that appear shadowed or veiled are not new concepts. Adams' (2010) work identifies a multitude of relationships that young children may have with entities who are not seen by others and suggests that these "have walked alongside children for many years" (p. 40). Examples of such entities have often appeared within a range of historical literature by notable Euro-western writers such as Mark Twain, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Edgar Allan Poe, and in A.A. Milne's work (Adams, 2010; Bender & Vogel, 1941).

It is suggested by Swartz (2014) the “earliest concepts of imaginary companions were often classified as spirits or supernatural entities and treated accordingly” (p. 21). ICs created by children within play are described alongside children’s experiences of interactions with those who are deceased and come to children in spirit form, or they may be depicted as an unseen reality, such as Christ (Adams, 2010; Wigger, Paxson & Ryan, 2013). These entities are viewed as fulfilling numerous functions within the life of a young child and appear to be context specific, for example, linked to play, to a particular place, to a person who has passed on or to cultural and familial narratives. These are often noted as present in spaces, such as the storying of fairies and entities, which Atran (2002) refers to as “mythical episodes” (p. 88), a way to “fit...personal experiences into the story’s episodes” (p. 88).

A study by Mills in 2003 sought to investigate whether the categories applied within a Euro-western context, such as the presence and recall of an IC, could be cross-culturally comparable and applicable to children in India who shared previous-life identity remembering. Here she notes the socio-cultural context around the child as primarily influential, observing:

During the time the phenomena are happening, the child is learning how to process the experience: in the US the child learns to call it and relate to it as make-believe, and in India to call it real previous life memories. (Mills, 2003, p. 64)

From this she deduced that:

...children are learning cultural concepts of what is real and what is make-believe, through linguistic and social interaction ... As the child learns the culture’s

encoding of experience, schemas of the self are built up that replace or overwrite the earliest episodic memory...In western psychology this reflexive ability is called having a theory of mind... (Mills, 2003, p. 66)

What Mills (2003) draws attention to is that the culturally mediated frames of reference applied to this phenomenon are crucial. Not only do these provide the patterning for understanding understandings of how world(s) are made and remade (Barad, 2007), they also denote how children may think about and make meaning of these relationship experiences.

4.5.1 Theory of Mind

Theory of Mind (ToM) often appears in the literature on ICs (e.g., Gleason et al., 2000; Taylor & Carlson, 1997; Taylor et al., 2004; Wigger et al., 2013). ToM refers to a child's awareness and understanding of their own thinking processes and the thinking processes that may be employed by others (Drewery & Claiborne, 2014). Simply put, it is "how children... [come to] ... think about the thinking of others" (Wigger et al., 2013, p. 2). The value of play and imagining what others may be thinking and feeling is integral to understanding how the social and cultural worlds within which children are embedded are structured and thus function (Drewery & Claiborne, 2014; Flavell, 2004).

Understanding a child's own insights about the mind led Taylor and Carlson (1997) to examine children's "understanding of the distinction between appearance and reality...and between mental and physical entities" (p. 436). Children with ICs may be more easily able to use fantasy play experiences to "help them master the relationships

between mental life and the real world" (Taylor et al., 1993, p. 285). This includes the possibility of holding a belief about the world that may be false linked to engaging in extensive pretend play experiences within the preschool years (Roby & Kidd, 2008; Singer & Singer, 2005; Taylor & Carlson, 1997; Taylor et al., 2004; Trionfi & Reese, 2009). Roby and Kidd (2008) concur, claiming that "children with ICs perform better than children without ICs on tasks measuring socio-cognitive skill of perspective-taking (theory of mind) and language" (p. 533). Taylor and Carlson (1997) hypothesised that "individual differences in fantasy lead to individual differences in theory of mind, it is possible that children who have an early grasp of false belief might become more engaged in fantasy play" (p. 452). Therefore, it is premised that an understanding of false belief "develops children's understanding that mental representations do not always constitute an accurate reflection of the external world" (Taylor et al., 2004, p. 1174).

Taylor et al. (1993) proffer that it is more likely to be "the nature of the child" (p. 280) as opposed to the "type of friend" (p. 280) that is the more significant contributing factor in high fantasy play involvement observed of children with an IC. Further exploring the binary construct of fantasy/reality in Euro-Western thinking raises the supposition that two distinct perspectives may exist. Firstly, within the context of everyday life, fantasy and reality can be differentiated and, secondly, it is possible to hold a set of beliefs whereby fantasy worlds exist separately from each other (Bouldin & Pratt, 2001; Skolnick & Bloom, 2006). Here Sharon and Woolley (2004) claim that "the distinction between fantasy and reality is basic to human cognition, reflecting a fundamental ontological divide between the non-real and the real" (p. 293). This is an area touched on by other researchers (see

Bouldin & Pratt, 2001; Taylor et al., 1993); however, there appears to be a scarcity of robust research and critical discussion on whether children themselves demarcate boundaries between the two.

4.5.2 Possible correlation between ICs and ToM

In seeking to investigate further young children's ICs and the potential correlation to ToM, Wigger et al. (2013) interviewed 36 children aged between two and eight years who they identified as having ICs at the time of the study. They asked a number of questions in a bid to determine what types of knowledge may be attributed to children's ICs. Of particular interest were the following queries, "What do these special friends know? Does their invisibility or status as pretend limit their knowledge in the mind of a child? Or do these friends have special Godlike abilities that allow them to know what people cannot?" (Wigger et al., 2013, p. 2).

The conclusions drawn from this study indicate that most three-year-old children who participated "did not disentangle other agents' knowledge from what they knew themselves" (Wigger et al., 2013, p. 10). Knowledge was therefore attributed to all, human and nonhuman. Each child participated in three theory-of-mind tasks delivered in a pre-set order. Each task was designed to gather information on "knowledge of each of four agents: a friend 'others can see' or visible friend (VF), the invisible friend (IF), a dog, and God" (p. 6). Conclusory findings showed that for the younger children in the study, IFs and God were perceived as similar in relation to the knowledge held. They were

considered to hold more knowledge than VFs and a dog. For the children in the study who were older than four years of age, God was not perceived as an IC, but rather as an entity “knowing things other agents did not” (p. 9).

Apparent here is the causal relationship between a developing ToM and an understanding of what may be known to, and known by, others. This is therefore deemed influential in determining what knowledge may be assigned to others, especially those considered to be nonhuman. However, this research determined that for all participant age groups, IFs were ascribed a system of knowledge. Although children over the age of five years specifically treated God as the holder of “superknowledge” (Wigger et al., 2013, p. 10), they attributed to other agents (the VF, IF and dog) only limited knowledge.

Whilst further investigation into this area is required, the findings suggest that IFs are somewhat qualitatively different in nature to God. However, these findings require caution as:

There still could be cognitive connections between invisible friends and an invisible God. The fact that children are able to imagine and engage invisible agents at all is perhaps a sign of how primed children are to sense agency in the world around them, whether seen or not, and be in relationship with it. (Wigger et al., 2013, p. 12)

Interestingly, Wigger et al. (2013) consider that children’s responses within this study demonstrate the possibility that mental processes of knowledge construction are not reliant on the possession of a physical body. Thus, the authors surmise, IFs are located in “ambiguous cognitive territory” (Wigger et al., 2013, p. 12). They transcend the

conceptual sphere of what the child considers may be known by those who take physically discernible forms and as such these “invisible entities – whether generated individually or easily learned – know things that ordinary humans cannot” (Wigger et al., 2013, p. 12).

4.6 Features and Functions of ICs

Ideas about what the term IC may encompass and the role/s ICs may play in children’s, and their families, lives vary (Bender & Vogel, 1941; Gleason, 2004a; Taylor et al., 1993; Singer & Singer, 2005; Trionfi & Reese, 2009). As previously noted, investigations into ICs have largely been guided and influenced by Svendsen’s (1934) definition. However, over time additional aspects which have broadened the definition were included, such as objects that “children personify and animate” (Gleason et al., 2000, p. 419) and characters children may elect to impersonate within their play experiences (Aguiar et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2004). Taylor and Mottweilier (2008) suggest that the current orientation to ICs can encompass any (and more) of the following identified forms:

...imaginary versions of real people, fictional characters from books, and invented people of animals custom designed to meet the particular needs of their creator. Most imaginary companions—characters we create and interact with and talk about on a regular basis—turn out to be invisible. Sometimes animations of toys or other objects take on such a life as well. Indeed, almost any sort of object can serve as the incarnation for an imaginary other... (p. 47)

This undoubtedly widens the perceptual concept of ICs and appears to have shifted the focus from an IC being considered as an entity in its own right to its becoming an entity

determined to be controlled by the child through the processes of personification, animation, and impersonation. Therefore, in this view, the child may be externally expressing internal desires, thoughts and conflicts in a self-chosen way which may be determined as confirmation of their perceived immature imaginative ability.

Research by Gleason et al. (2000) identified clear relationship differences between ICs and personified objects. They suggested that IC relationships are more egalitarian and friendship orientated whereas personified object interactions place the child in the role of nurturer and protector. Each is viewed as fulfilling a differing role and function for the child, with an IC providing companionship via a peer relationship and a personified object providing a means through which the child is able to take on roles of caregiving, i.e., the child has opportunities to replicate social roles through imitation (Berger, 2018).

These findings appear to more closely align to some of the troubling traditional and current Euro-western discourses of the child and childhood examined in Chapters Three and Four. As previously noted, many of these rely heavily on outdated notions of the child who is positioned as passive, rather than agential and therefore capable of creating ruptures to established Euro-western assumptions of the relationships young children may encounter and have experience of. They appear to reflect those of the adults (those who take up the position of technical specialist) around the child, or the relationship qualities adults expect young children to replicate within their relationships (Foucault, 2005). Reframing the lens to include intra-action would suggest that rather than young children appearing to mirror adults who are around them there is the possibility to

consider how different kinds of relationship dynamics are occurring from *within* these entangled encounters (Barad, 2007, 2014).

4.6.1 Problematising a “one-size-fits-all” approach

Which definition is used is influential in determining whether a child may or may not have an IC and indeed how many children may have an IC (Majors, 2009; Mills, 2003; Trionfi & Reese, 2009). An apparent difficulty in gathering research data and interpreting findings appears to be linked to the apparatus and subsequent framework applied by the researcher, as they are invariably entangled.

Taylor’s (2003) commentary on definitions, elicited from her past research studies on children, parents and adults retrospectively recalling their experiences, determined that ICs may exhibit a range of characteristics. Drawing on various findings, she suggested that the form an IC takes can range from “a little boy or girl about the same age as the child... [to]...playmates that are not regular children” (p. 2). The differentiation here is the magical or special powers the IC may possess or the irregular, such as nonhuman, form they may take. The broadness of definition meant that a range of entities were identified, and categorised, as an IC within these specific research contexts.

Taylor and Mottweilier’s (2008) research investigated how understandings of the perceived magical and therefore fantasy status of ICs could be further elucidated.

Drawing on spontaneous statements made by children within interviews they deduced that “Exactly how common [the appearance of an IC] depends upon what we call

imaginary companions...and where the information about them comes from (are our sources parents, or children, or adults who remember childhood imaginary companions?)” (p. 49).

As referred to earlier in this chapter, Mills’ (2003) research took a different way into this topic by exploring whether there could be cross-culturally comparable categories between children in India who remember previous-life identity and children in Virginia, United States, who were identified as having imaginary playmates. Within her study the subtleties of language and culture were found to be invariably influential in category determination. The following examples taken from her study findings further illuminate how problematic the strict adherence to pre-determined category assignment and application can be:

When I asked psychologists in India, and informants from the general populace, if they were aware of any children with imaginary playmates, the answer was universally, ‘no.’ ...[it is]...clear that...[a]...proportion of children in India talk to companions that are not called or considered ‘imaginary’ but ‘invisible.’ In India the prevalent assumption is that the child is relating to a very real but imperceptible being that exists on a spirit realm and/or as part of the child’s previous life memory. (Mills, 2003, p. 67)

Her findings raise queries about how borders, and border-crossings, are noticed and responded to within variegated cultural and social contexts. Noteworthy here is that the inclusion of wider cultural accounts raises the possibility that experiences with entities may not have assigned specific, or inflexible, category markers. Therefore, these relationships are not determined to *sit outside* of the usual features of childhood and

lifespan development. Rather, these companions are known of, and accounted for, as inherent relationships which show the interrelatedness of the temporal and spiritual realms.

Gleason et al. (2000) acknowledge the “paucity of descriptive studies” (p. 419) and observe that the range of definitions used by researchers has somewhat compromised the ability of researchers, and research itself, to identify the “developmental significance of imaginary companions” (p. 419). Embedded within this language is the tension that surrounds how to solicit data, and who may be the best reporters of this data (Gleason, 2004b, 2005; Taylor et al., 1993). If, as Gleason (2002) claims, many children may engage in solitary play with ICs and may not share their ICs with parents or caregivers (or any adults), accuracy in relation to the numbers of children who may have ICs, and what this relationship may entail, is somewhat difficult to obtain.

A further site of tension may arise because some adults have not themselves experienced an IC. If adults seek to draw on, and subsequently replicate what they know, they may not be attuned to what young children say, or to what they don't say. This can further problematise whether an IC, from a perspective other than the child, is deemed to exist (Gleason, 2002).

4.6.2 IC abandonment

A seemingly undertheorised aspect of children's experience of ICs is discerning if these relationships are ephemeral or long-lasting (Gleason, 2004a) and the specific features or

conditions that may influence stability, duration or a “transitory existence” (Taylor & Mottweilier, 2008, p. 50). Some researchers have been interested in exploring whether an IC is abandoned by a child or whether they simply become less obvious to those around (Benson & Pryor, 1973). For example, as the young child, who may have engaged in what Vygotsky referred to as “private speech” - the process where internal dialogue is shared aloud - starts to internalise their private thoughts and speech, the presence of an IC may be less noticeable (Arnett, 2012; Drewery & Claiborne, 2014).

Whilst the presence of ICs may generally be relegated to the early childhood years, Gleason (2002) and Singer and Singer (2005) discuss the way that adults continue to engage in monologues with invisible others in ways viewed as socially and culturally acceptable. Gleason (2002) points out that ICs often exist within “adults’ social networks...albeit in qualitatively different and culturally dictated ways” (p. 980). She believes that whilst children may talk about their ICs, adults’ ICs tend to be represented more within daydream form. This suggests that there appears to be a similarity in how children create ICs and how the “imaginary social relationships of adults” (p. 980) are therefore constructed. This point is further taken up by Singer and Singer (2005) who argue:

While many adults may think of children’s make-believe, invisible friends as the erroneous trivialities of the youngsters’ limited grasp of reality, are they not, after all, foreshadowing of our adult religious or other forms of spiritual consciousness? Think of how many adults carry on extended interior monologues with their deity or with patron saints, guardian angels, deceased parents, ancestors, and mentors. (p. 101)

Several studies conclude that ICs can be conceptualised as appearing in a variety of forms across the lifespan (Bender & Vogel, 1941; Firth, Cotter, Elliot, French & Yung, 2015).

Whilst the form may differ, they are acknowledged as integral companions and therefore play a similar companionship role. An example of this is found in research undertaken by Seiffge-Krenke (1997) where adolescents' use of a diary was found to function as a form of IC.

4.7 The Reality-Imaginary Dichotomy

Various authors assert that caution needs to be taken when attempting to apply a universal approach to exploring understandings of what may constitute reality and fantasy, the role of the imaginary, and the place of imagination (MacNaughton, 2003; Mills, 2003). According to Davis, Meins and Fernyhough (2011), the ability to imagine is a function seen in typically developing humans with one of the earliest manifestations observed being the pretend play of a young child.

Euro-western research studies surmise that pretend and imaginative play activities generally emerge around 18 months of age for children whose development is considered to be typical (e.g., Berger, 2018; Piaget, 1962; Singer & Singer, 2013; Weisberg, 2013). The ability to engage in sustained play experiences is therefore viewed as a positive sign as it supposedly enables a young child to interact with the world/s around her. Singer and Singer (2013) argue that this is important in order for the child to internalise and imitate

increasingly complex movements, including the ability to use substitution whereby a secondary object is used to represent the original object.

That toddlers show some understanding and ability to interpret and distinguish pretence and pretend sequences from reality could be attributed to two key factors: firstly, the verbal language cues adults use around them assists them to decipher “physical differences between pretense and serious actions” (Weisberg, 2013, p. 76); and secondly, changes to non-verbal language, including exaggerated gestures, and changes to speech patterns and pitch signal a shift from real to pretence (Lillard et al., 2007; Weisberg, 2013, 2015). Implicit here is the child’s continued exposure and experience in order that they distinguish an understanding of the two contexts.

Most of the literature indicates that children have an emotional investment and connection to their ICs which is predominantly positive (Taylor & Mottweillier, 2008). Further, Taylor et al. (1993) assert that ICs do not exist in the child’s head but are “projected into space” (p. 276). According to Gleason (2002), relationships with ICs differ from those that are *real* [my emphasis] due to the nature of the term *relationship*. She describes a relationship with another as including each person’s individual contribution, as well as the interactions generated within the relationship. Relationships are in turn observable to others and meld the social history of each person.

The proposition that the child’s imagination may be “linked with lies and deceit” (Spencer, 2003, p. 108) raises concerns for adults trying to decipher whether the narratives young children share are indeed representative of the truths known, or considered of

importance, to adults (Foucault, 2005; Mills, 2003; Wigger et al., 2013). There is a desire on the part of adults for young children to be able to discern between cultural and familial stories of make-believe and stories of reality, and for adults to be able to determine when a young child's narrative may be an indicator of a false belief (Berger, 2018; Woolley, 1995).

Klausen and Passman (2006) point out that due to the intense nature of children's imagination, over time occasions of pretence and memories of real events become blurred, making it difficult for children to differentiate between imagined and real events. However, often the demarcation between the two is not clear. For example, muddying can be caused by adults' attempts to have young children believe that some things are real (e.g., God) whilst others exist within a magical or mythical other world (e.g., Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy) (Atran, 2002; Bouldin, 1998; Wigger et al., 2013).

The difference between the two appears to be that the magical other world is occupied by the constructs and culture of adults who have historically been responsible for its creation and who currently sustain and monitor these established notions via a range of complex complicated discourses (see Chapter Three). On the other hand, other aspects of the child's imagination are not readily available to nor able to be surveyed and controlled by adults, leaving those aspects at the mercy of adult interpretation as to their realness and truthfulness (Keleman, 2004).

How children may make distinctions between worlds is discussed by Skolnick and Bloom (2006). They explored children's beliefs around fictional characters in their lives and looked into the intersections between such characters to investigate "within-world and across-world types of character relationships" (p. B9) in a bid to consider whether fictional characters may occupy a shared fantasy space or indeed may exist in multiple fantasy spaces. Their findings highlight the complexity of the child's task of understanding the 'rules' around fantasy and reality and the ways in which characters deemed fictional may indeed create their own fictional world within a storyline. Children's ability to create story lines within their pretend play experiences demonstrates their developing capacity to understand the ways in which events can be organised in sequence (Singer & Singer, 2005). This faculty to delay gratification, a Freudian proposal, is discussed by Singer and Singer (2005) as "a crucial feature of effective human functioning" (p. 105).

The concerns raised by various authors show a continued predilection for advancing specific Euro-western claims. There is an established threading of binary border-making and border-taking, a deliberate orientation toward trying to determine the stability and conversely the instability of what the child knows and says (Derrida, 1978). Thus, the companions of young children become messily bound within particular historical and current constructs. These constructs are mobilised within discursive devices, determining which truths are considered valid and simultaneously assessing the truthfulness of the child and their companion alongside these claims (Foucault, 1984).

4.8 ICs – Helpful or Harmful?

Within the literature sourced it is apparent that the context-specific nature, features and scope of ICs make it problematic to definitively determine how and why an IC may enhance or be detrimental to a young child. This is especially difficult as studies into the creation, role and purpose of ICs within the preschool years are, as Gleason et al. (2000) observes, “widely scattered in the developmental and psychoanalytic literature” (p. 419). However, an overarching focus appears to be why some children create, and maintain, a relationship with an IC and why some children do not (e.g., Gleason, 2002, Gleason, Jarudi & Cheek, 2003; Hoff, 2004; Kastenbaum & Fox, 2005; Taylor & Carlson, 1997; Taylor et al., 2004; Trionfi & Reese, 2009).

Numerous researchers in this field identify the multitude of ways that IC relationships are thought to be beneficial for children (e.g., Aguiar et al., 2017; Gleason, 2002; Hoff, 2004; Majors, 2009; Singer & Singer, 2005; Swartz, 2014; Taylor et al., 1993), with Aguiar et al. (2017) claiming that, “in typically developing children, the creation of an imaginary companion is believed to be a healthy activity” (p. 341). Singer and Singer (2005) concur, promulgating the opinion that “children who show these phenomena appear to be less aggressive or impulsive, more self-contained and more capable of divergent, potentially creative thought” (p. 100). They are believed to be “more sociable, less shy and have more real friends” (p. 277), according to Taylor et al. (1993). It is also suggested that these children frequently exhibit creative and divergent thinking and often show an inclination for participating “in more family activities” (Taylor et al., 1993, p. 277).

For Taylor et al. (2004), understanding belief and emotion contributes favourably to the success of a child's social interactions with others. In this way, having an IC not only supports a young child to explore complex social relationships within their relationship with an IC, it also provides an opportunity for others who are comfortable with the presence of an IC to interact and engage in sustained, and often, elaborate play alongside the child as the IC becomes included as an integral part of the child's world (Swartz, 2014).

Some authors conclude that IC roles vary depending on the emotional and mental health of the child. Previous studies have shown that children whose development is progressing on a (perceived) normal trajectory generally have between one and three ICs who are often younger than or close in age to themselves (Taylor, 2003). The inclusion of ICs for children within the first two categories mentioned in 4.2, namely (1) a healthy expression of a creative mind; and (2) a mechanism through which children can work through challenges and problems they may be currently facing, including the absence of peer relationships, is believed to be linked to increased prosocial abilities and problem-solving skills (Majors, 2009; Singer & Singer, 2013).

However, for children within the third category in which ICs are described as a possible indicator of pathology, it is believed they may show signs of high stress, worry and anxiety. Here several authors raise the possibility of a correlation between the creation of an IC and Dissociative Identity Disorder (Aguar et al., 2017; Bender & Vogel, 1941; Hart & Zellers, 2006).

This is contentious and tenuous philosophical and theoretical ground, with the assertions being made around the child and their companion, regardless of whether they encapsulate the child's experience. Assumptions are made truth as they are explicitly and implicitly twisted into the discourse about companions. In doing so, they become part of an intricate system of surveillance designed to monitor markers which fall outside of the established truths. What then develops is a closer woven web where anything that is deemed to put pressure on the weave or to disrupt the accepted patterning introduces a new element of risk that needs to be mitigated in order to maintain the current conditions of power (Foucault, 1981; Mikaere, 2011).

4.8.1 Why ICs may elicit concern

Taking a historical Euro-western orientation such as Vostrovsky's (1895) presents notions of ICs being aligned to psychopathy. The creation of such relationships was perceived as evidence that the child was displaying personality and/or social inadequacies. Past research predominantly categorises the creation of ICs as linked to childhood loneliness and a desire to enter a social relationship that offers companionship that may otherwise be found in other close relationships. The premise here is that the child seeks to create an imaginary relationship, hence the wide circulation of the term imaginary companion, to compensate for the apparent lack of a real physical, and thus tangible, relationship with another person and/or peer (Gleason, 2002; Gleason et al., 2000).

These sentiments are further echoed in the following summary of Bender and Vogel's 1941 study which offers historical insight into problematic notions of the child-IC relationship. Four examples of specific statements from their text are:

Imaginary companion is a psychological mechanism used by the child to supplement deficient environmental experiences and emotional inadequacies, especially unsatisfactory parent-child relationships, and depriving or distorting experiences with reality...

The form and content of the phantasies are specific in each instance for the problems of the individual child. When the child relates the phantasy, we are given a clear insight into his problems and needs, even if all the details of the situations which called forth the mechanism are not known...

The imaginary companion is the representation of varied psychological mechanisms including personification of the id-impulse, ego-ideal, super-ego, aggressive and guilt trends, feelings of rejection and inferiority, etc....

Therapy based upon rearrangement of the environmental situations and insight into the basic psychological trends is sufficient to cause the phantasied companions to disappear... (pp. 64-65)

Benson and Pryor (1973) referred to the "narcissistic value of the imaginary companion" (p. 466) in relation to psychoanalytic development. They suggested that the role of the IC changes when it ceases to be a narcissistic creation of the child's imagination and becomes seen as an object that has "real impact in a real world" (p. 466). The writers, when investigating the circumstances in which these friends had been created, referred to ICs as transitional objects, a psychoanalytic term in the field of attachment. ICs were thus

seen to fulfil a role of support for the child as they grappled with unresolved conflicts occurring within their relationships, especially parental and sibling relationships.

From a traditional psychoanalytic perspective, ICs may be viewed as a manifestation of incomplete ego development (Bender & Vogel, 1941; Hart & Zellers, 2006). Hart and Zellers (2006) suggest that fantasy becomes the mechanism through which the child can thus “cope with events, such as the birth of a child or the death of a loved one” (p. 7).

From this perspective the child has the opportunity to explore a range of differing roles and identities which may enable them to make sense of a particular event or situation and help them work through their fears and anxieties (Aguar et al., 2017).

The term *dissociative identity disorder/multiple personality disorder* appears in some studies and research findings relating to ICs. Authors who make links between childhood ICs and possible mental health concerns are Hart and Zellers (2006) who suggest “children with Dissociative Identity Disorder/Multiple Personality Disorder symptoms may have numerous characters that can have complex roles and responsibilities” (p. 7). They suggest that these ICs tend to “be of different ages and frequently have the qualities of real people. These imaginary companions are often older, and can be God-like or diabolical” (p. 7). There is some discussion around ideas of ICs “having lives of their own and coming and going as they please” (p. 7). Whilst it is suggested that this is more likely a characteristic found in the children who have Dissociative Identity Disorder, it appears to also be a factor of the ICs of children whose development is considered to be typical.

These assertions are premised on outmoded humanist beliefs that the child is somehow lacking in close, intimate and fulfilling peer relationships or developmentally. Each perspective within this section advances the notion that relationships with an entity who may be unseen to others could be an indicator that more focused adult attention and intervention may be required. This is in order to assist the child to reach their full developmental potential by addressing areas where the child may be deemed to be in deficit (socially, emotionally or cognitively). Within the perspectives there remains a paucity of critical commentary about whether these concerns may be shared cross-culturally or whether they are concerns that Euro-western theory has created itself.

Another area alluded to by authors pertinent to consider is how the hearing of voices may be viewed as evidence of potential pathology. Longden, Corstens, Escher, and Romme's (2012) work provides an illustration of how the hearing of voices is traditionally viewed as hallucinatory. From a psychiatric perspective, pathology is thus implied. However, according to Harper (1995) and Lakeman (2001), this provides only one explanation. Linking a wider range of perspectives, such as the notion of spiritual guidance and a spiritual connection with the hearing of voices, can be beneficial and useful for those diagnosed with mental health concerns, as those who hear voices are then provided with "more of a choice in how to understand their experiences" (Harper, 1995, p. 354). Whilst it appears to be acceptable to hear and respond to voices in some circumstances, such as hearing the words and experiencing visions of a prophet, other experiences generally elicit concern and scepticism from others, who may perceive them as hallucinations and indicators of diminished mental health (Alguira et al., 2017; Altran, 2002; Lakeman, 2001).

Aguiar et al. (2017) suggest that further exploration is required, as the presence of an IC “is unlikely to be evidence of a budding mental health problem or a response to maltreatment” (p. 342). There appears to be a wide continuum to consider when making a correlation between an IC and atypical child development. Changing societal attitudes are instrumental in changing the ways ICs have been historically, and are consequently currently, viewed (Pearson et al., 1999). Attitudes of the past, such as an IC being unwelcome and perceived as a “red flag” (Aguiar et al., 2017, p. 342) signalling a potential problem, have shifted as more has become known and understood about child, adolescent, and adult mental health.

In 2008 Taylor and Mottweiler observed that whilst an IC may be viewed from a deficit perspective, such as those noted previously—especially for a child who may be withdrawn or showing indicators of stress—the inclusion of an IC in their lives could instead be seen as beneficial. For example:

...the imagination is a powerful coping resource...Children can walk confidently past a scary dog when there is an invisible tiger at their side; they can talk to an imaginary friend about traumatic events involving family members and know that their secrets are safe. (Taylor & Mottweiler, 2008, p. 49)

Research seems to suggest that for young children the introduction of a companion, such as a soft toy or doll, can provide a medium through which prior, and current, exposure to stressful events and situations may possibly be mitigated. Studies, such as those conducted by Sadeh, Hen-Gal and Tikotzky (2008) on the introduction of a Huggy-Puppy for young children in a sheltered camp during the 2006 Israel-Lebanon war and research

recounted by Singer and Singer (2013) on the use of a doll and doll house to storytell through a traumatic event, illustrate the potential benefits of personified objects as a helpful intervention and as constituting a therapeutic approach for children. Within these scenarios, objects were introduced as an intended strategy to reduce stress and trauma responses.

These examples have been included here to show how adults may also contribute to the concept of alternative companionship through the introduction of a medium such as a toy or doll. These examples highlight that companionship comes in a range of forms, and that companionship other than that which takes a human form may offer and provide a comfort. However, this specific type of companionship encounter is not the primary focus of this research context.

4.9 Factors That May Influence the Creation of an IC

As previously referred to (Chapter One), according to Kelemen (2004), “ideas about imaginary companions, much like ideas about gods, can be culturally transmitted, at least, within families” (p. 297). The familial and cultural context plays an integral role in the intergenerational transmission of understandings of ICs and thus how they are spoken of, and their meaning interpreted, for a young child (Mills, 2003).

Spencer (2003) asserts that, “culture and history are part of our imagination; they constitute the Big Narrative, the story we are all part of” (p. 109). In this way, the stories of our past are intricate and important cognitive components overlaid with affective

domains. It is fundamentally important to appreciate the value of imagination in an era in which, as Hart and Zellers (2006) suggest "...a modernist-rationalist milieu still dominates the educational and developmental landscapes and relegates non-rational experiences like imagination and intuition to secondary significance, immaturity, or even a sign of pathology" (p. 8).

Imagination is therefore envisaged as offering a metaphorical bridge, to connect what is known about through own personal experience and what is unknown or not yet known about. Thus, what is considered to be tangible and intangible creates possibilities for new ways of knowing and doing (Hart & Zellers, 2006; Papastathopoulos & Kugiumutzakis, 2007). Adding to this, Papastathopoulos and Kugiumutzakis (2007) further state:

In the history of psychology, imagination has been considered mainly as a private psychological state, a compensatory way of fulfilling individual wishes, an escape from reality, "a thing of the mind", irrational, unsharable, a-social, even part of an "autistic" way of thinking (p. 219).

The terms *intercultural and intracultural influences* are used by Gleason (2005, pp. 412-413) to refer to the various factors identified as instrumental in shaping a child's understandings of ICs. Influences mentioned include the parents' gender, how they view and engage in pretence, and the expectations they have of their child's behaviour. Often, especially for young children, research studies rely on the parent/caregiver to notice and recognise the presence of a child's IC(s). It is possible that the proportion of children who have an IC could in fact be higher than reported due to the reliance on adults noticing the

presence of an IC to determine its presence. It could also be that a parent/caregiver chooses not to acknowledge the presence of a child's IC(s).

Previous investigations allude to a possible correlation between the creation of ICs and birth order (Gleason et al., 2003; McLewin & Muller, 2006; Singer & Singer, 2005). First-born children and children whose "siblings...are...far apart in age" (Gleason et al., 2003, p. 721) appear more likely to have an IC and children who have an IC and siblings often seem to prefer to spend more time with their IC (Gleason et al., 2000). However, this does not appear to be a universal finding (e.g., Carlson & Taylor, 2005; Gleason et al., 2000; Gleason et al., 2003), especially when considering young children's variegated cultural and social contexts.

These authors widen the scope to consider ways that cultural patterning can further be taken into consideration. However, there is no mention of the ways in which this patterning may be handed down intergenerationally via ancestral inheritance. This raises questions around how companionship may be understood in relation to the temporal and spiritual realms and whether intracultural experiences may see this phenomenon as co-constitutive, therefore, "always bringing into existence phenomena in an entanglement" (Pratt, 2019, p. 1).

The speculation I make here is that to date most of the research undertaken has been premised on the view that young children's relationships with companions unseen to others fall within the categories of imagined/imaginary. This has invariably narrowed the scope of consideration about which additional theoretical conceptions could be relevant

to explore further, restricting the taking of alternate theoretical travels to draw on wider cultural and ancestral accounts of the existence of companions and how they may travel alongside young children as an ordinary form of companionship.

4.10 Limitations of Current Research

Academic studies and literature regarding ICs have, in the past, been the most easily accessible texts upon which to base theoretical understandings of the form that entities may take and the various functions they may serve within the daily lives of young children. However, as this chapter has highlighted, current research provides insight, albeit limited, into wider, and deeper, cultural variance and experiences of possible IC relationships (Mills, 2003; Taylor & Mottweiler, 2008).

As this chapter has argued, the child, their right to truth, childhood and understandings of reality are powerful social constructs which inform and uphold theories and their travel. These discursive devices seek to “explain phenomena” (Harper, 1995, p. 348). Whether they effectively do so remain disputed terrain as they are grounded within a distinct context and hold in place fixed regimes of truth which speak of a certain worldview (Foucault, 1981). As such, they construct knowledge promulgated on specific notions which due to continued circulation have been deemed as truths (Dahlberg et al., 1999). This positioning has led to a lack of consideration about whether these relationships spoken of by a child could be fashioned outside of the child and be evidence of relationship opportunities which are temporal and spiritual, which cross perceived

demarcated borders between the real and imagined (Derrida, 1978). What now needs to be asked is whether these textual references encapsulate all that may be known about the companions who may share the lives of young children.

Viewing ICs as symptomatic of pathology leaves an absence of space for differing cultural voices to be heard. This is pertinent to examine further, especially regarding the messages that the experient may receive from these interactions, particularly if the hearing of voices is a culturally accepted way to receive wisdom and guidance from the spiritual and ancestral realms, such as those spoken of by Mills (2003).

An exhaustive literature search drew my attention to a paucity of perspectives. ICs were not considered to be anything other than created by the child, with the exception of Mills' (2003) exploration of previous-life identity remembering in India and the possible correlation to ICs in the United States. That she used the term *remembering* when concerning culturally located takes on entities and relationships is significant, as this term is one which has appeared within previous chapters of this thesis. Remembering will continue to be a salient thread of this thesis weave which needs to be continually worked through.

Alternative accounts of entities are needed in order to consider that there could be other possibilities. The inclusion of diverse accounts would be beneficial to go beyond what has historically and currently been thought about, offering new conceptual pathways for children, parents/whānau and teachers.

4.11 Where to Now? What Pathways Could be Revealed and Reclaimed?

Euro-western devices and constructions of the child and childhood give insight into a historical and contemporary genealogy of surveillance and control (Foucault, 1980). This not only limits and devalues the child as an agentic and contributory member of the society and culture in which they live, it also silences their ability to convey their own lived experience of their lives.

Knowledge, and what is considered as worthwhile and important to know, is transmitted culturally and intergenerationally (e.g. Kelemen, 2004; Mead, 2003; Pere, 1982, 1991). Children are integral “social actor[s]” (James et al., 1998, p. 207) “who shape their identities, create and communicate valid views about the social world” (MacNaughton et al., 2007, p. 42) rather than passive recipients of knowledge (Burman, 2001; James et al., 1998; Walkerdine, 2009). Thus, children themselves have much to contribute to their everyday social, cultural and political contexts and the landscape of childhood itself (Rameka, 2012).

To bring children into the picture requires alternative theoretical and critical perspectives to unravel the interconnected threads which have been woven into the tangible and intangible landscape of ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand (see Chapter Nine). It asks us to be concerned with how and why we may imagine and locate the child and childhood and challenges us to trouble and destabilise the dialogue which exists within these spaces and places and to sketch a different, diffractive, theoretical path (Barad, 2007, 2014; Braidotti, 2013).

4.12 Widening the Scope of what Companionship may Entail

To pass down the perspectives explored within this chapter without any interruption would further uphold cultural and ancestral inequities for children who speak differing stories about the forms and features of their lives, especially in relation to the companions who may travel alongside them. Therefore, it is imperative that a wider, and more diverse, research scope is taken in order to closely consider what other stories are spoken and how these need to be taken into account.

By taking a differing, diffractive, (Barad, 2007) theoretical approach to the study of ICs, additional sites and sources of knowledge could give rise to deeper and more contextually located and interpreted understandings and dialogue of companionship. This is especially relevant within an Aotearoa New Zealand context in which indigenous understandings of corporeality may be at variance with Euro-western views. As Pihama (2015) argues:

Theory...has rarely been Māori friendly. In fact theory often provided the justification for ongoing perpetuation of violence against Māori. Theories of racial inferiority, deficiencies and cultural disadvantage have been central in the denial of Māori people's access to land, language and culture... (p. 8)

In order to address this gap, this research aims to investigate what other stories may be spoken of and about entities who may share young children's lives. Included in this further investigation is a specific focus on the inclusion of culturally specific textual narratives, such as Māori creation storying (Chapter Five) which is followed by my autoethnographic accounts and theoretical explorations (Chapters Seven and Eight).

Chapter Five

Disrupting Established Euro-western Text

Constructs explored in Chapter Four accentuate the failings of Euro-western theorising not only to adequately grasp cultural variations, such the view of childhood as a powerful political, social and cultural construct, but also to explore the problematic consequences of evacuating childhood accounts of childhood companions. What Euro-western perspectives do highlight is the continued uncertainty and instability regarding the term IC; specifically, the forms, features, and functions these entities may take and how they are understood and noticed, and by whom.

Peters and Mika (2017) point out that the terms we use carry their own “contentious... [and]...tainted past” (p. 1230) sets a challenge, that of ensuring that these terms no longer go unproblematised. Leaving terms like IC in place limits our ability to be cognisant of historical and current limitations and restrains our ability to respond to a wealth of differing epistemological and ontological narratives which may be present. To offer an alternative voice to this discursive context, this chapter introduces literature specifically selected to provide insight into Māori storying of entities thereby speaking up for an alternative genealogy of childhood that draws on the voices of those who are viewed as technical specialists (Foucault, 1981) within this specific culturally located space (Rameka, 2012).

This chapter takes a wider approach to introduce an important thread underpinning ECE pedagogical pattern making. Arguably (see Chapter Nine where this is examined further) this is a crucial tenet underpinning the basis for all conceptualising of the Aotearoa New

Zealand ECE curriculum *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017) due to the unique cultural, social and political context of Aotearoa New Zealand. This chapter shifts the focus from Euro-western sources to consider various published accounts of Māori cultural and ancestral perspectives on entities who may share our lives. Drawing on themes revealed within Chapter Four, the following troubling concerns are now introduced and subsequently addressed in this chapter. They have been selected with the intention of speaking back to, and therefore resisting, the attempts of Euro-western literature to be the loudest and the privileged voice in deciphering and determining the nature, function and purposes these entities may fulfil within the lives of young children:

- i. ICs exist as entities conjured up within the child's imagination. They are constructed by the child as a relationship partner whose presence is seen solely by the child.
- ii. ICs are difficult to discern by others. However, the fundamental feature they have in common is that they are imaginary/imagined by the child who is noted as their sole creator.
- iii. ICs primarily exist within the childhood years. Although accounts of their presence in adolescence and adulthood have been recorded, these tend to be spoken of using differing terms, for example, as part of a recognised and organised system of faith and devotion or as a possible indicator of mental health concerns and/or evidence of potentially pathologised relationships.

More than one account may be required to further illuminate what Maori cultural and ancestral perspectives may encompass and the significance of the role ancestral storytelling plays in informing and guiding the myriad of relationships which may be present within the lifespan. Therefore, the literature appearing within this chapter has been carefully chosen with the following aims in mind:

- i. There will be an examination of literature that bespeaks differing relationships to those which have been made visible and accepted within text from authoritative traditional Euro-western normative constructs of entities who may not be seen by all. This is knowledge which has been subjugated from text and therefore made absent from the textual characteristics of ECE curriculum, pedagogy and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- ii. Literature that offers an alternative perspective on what such relationships may entail and how they may manifest as a feature of usual and close relationships will be examined. This requires drawing on tangata whenua perspectives to consider the significant contribution Te Ao Māori can offer to this discursive space.
- iii. Literature that considers the intergenerational transmission and travel of entities via narrative storytelling will be highlighted. This is necessary in order to acknowledge how an understanding of alternative epistemological and ontological frameworks can offer further scope when thinking about, and thinking with, ideas of relationships and what notions of companionship may encompass.

5.1 Chapter Positioning

Ideas about the various realms which may exist are entwined within a cultural milieu. Therefore, understandings of entities are inextricably linked within all facets of existence, evident from storying of the primordial age to current cultural storying being produced and shared. As such, Te Ao Māori offers an orientation to an unfolding of the universe and the existence of multifaceted and multiform entities.

Pohatu (2003) stresses that Māori “function in unique ways, within an Order that has clear patterns, systems and codes developed from cultural logic” (p. 6). As indicated within my positioning in Chapters One and Two, I draw from differing ancestral narratives. Hence intricate patterns of cultural transmission and encoding sinuously woven within Te Ao Māori may not be immediately known to me. I may not be aware of the subtleties; however, I acknowledge their existence and that they may be recognised and acted on by others.

Māori, and what being Māori may thus entail, is a multi-layered cultural, social, and political construct applied to tangata whenua of Aotearoa New Zealand during colonial settlement (Orange, 1987; Peters & Mika, 2017). Prior to colonisation, iwi, hapū, and whānau constructed the culturally applied system utilised to identify whakapapa, incorporating understandings of self and collective identity, roles and responsibilities (Walker, 1990).

Durie (1995) asserts that “far from being members of a homogenous group, Māori individuals have a variety of cultural characteristics and live in a number of cultural and

socioeconomic realities” (p. 464). There is no one way to be Māori. For that reason, a “one-size-fits-all” approach to conceptualising and interpreting Te Ao Māori should be avoided (Durie, 1998; Jenkins & Harte, 2011; Mead, 2003; Peters & Mika, 2017). In the following passage, Rameka (2012) highlights the inherent knotty entanglements to be mindful of:

Contemporary ways of knowing and being Māori are the result of individuals and groups weaving specific combinations of realities, understandings and experiences. This weaving of combinations of Māori realities, understandings, experiences and identities, by individuals and groups, emphasises the point that there is no one Māori way of knowing and being which can be generalised across all Māori communities. (p. 14).

One such way this can be seen is within creation stories which contain a culturally symbolic system upon which knowledge is assembled, organised, and transmitted. Each of these stories therefore signals crucial messages of wisdom, guidance, caution and hope. I am aware it is beyond the scope of this thesis, at this time, to explore the multitude of iwi-, hapū- and whānau-specific stories which add contextual richness to culturally located storying. Hence due to the constraints of this thesis, at this time only an overview of selected aspects will be explored within this chapter’s narrative. I am also aware that what I have chosen to include as a component of my travel of this topic is only a fraction of what may be known, or considered to be relevant and important, to include. Primarily this is due to my own cultural positioning (see Chapters One and Two); subsequently the literature sourced for this chapter sits outside of my own ancestral and familial narratives and experiences.

Based on the statement in the previous paragraph, what is included is not, by any means, a definitive account. Here, much like my kirituhi spoken of earlier (Chapter One), the central features identified and deemed appropriate to include at the time appear within this text. This does not exclude alternative threads; rather, it sets in motion the desire to be open to the numerous potentialities which may, in time, be revealed via continued exploration. I too am traversing new terrain; therefore, not all pathways relevant to this phenomenon may be noticed or recognised by me at this time. However, this does not restrict future travel which may further open up alternative ways of thinking.

Within this chapter, and in this thesis, I have made decisions about what to insert, which contrarily creates exclusion in terms of what does not appear within this text (produced for a specific academic outcome) at this time. I note the limitation of my own understanding. This may lead me to determine, incorrectly, what features and conditions I believe are best included in order to construct this chapter, and thus my overall thesis layering. I also acknowledge that what I have access to, primarily in the form of published accounts, speaks only of a small portion of what may be known to Māori of the entities I seek to explore (M. Smith, personal communication, 18 March, 2011) and my existence within the geographical location of Aotearoa New Zealand is entangled within the historical and contemporary effects of colonisation for Māori as tangata whenua.

A direct result of colonisation has been the silencing of alternative pathways and ancestral storying relaying the presence of multiple entities and multiform relationship partners. Therefore prior to considering the specific themes selected and presented from sourced text relating to Te Ao Māori, it is fitting to firstly address the ongoing impact of

colonisation in Aotearoa New Zealand as colonisation, and colonial logic, has been the primary device through which continued subjugation has occurred. The result is that differing approaches to conceptualising relationship companions who may share our lives has been controlled and thus relegated to a place and space of less importance, and subsequently annexed due to pervading dominant hegemonic discourse (see Chapter Three, section 3.4.1).

5.2 Historical Legacies of Colonisation as a Travel Companion

History is littered with examples of conquest and the ensuing atrocities committed against indigenous peoples as power and control is exerted over all aspects of their lives and domains through colonial structures, processes and actions. These have been instrumental in erasing indigenous knowledges, those that speak of alternative universe creations and entities which provide companionship and may take on a variety of forms and functions within the spiritual and temporal realms.

One such example, which set in motion catastrophic events, involved Christopher Columbus whose misguided navigation led him to Guanahani. His subsequent harsh and callous treatment of the indigenous Taino and Lucayan peoples demonstrated the insidious nature of colonisation and the continued fate that has befallen indigenous peoples (Jackson, 2007; Tomlins-Jahnke, 2011). The Taino and Lucayan were decimated as Columbus took their lands, displacing, enslaving and exterminating the people.

Columbus' right to do so was sanctioned via the *Inter Caetera* Papal Bull issued in 1493 by Pope Alexander VI. Consedine and Consedine (2012) refer to the Roman Catholic Church in this era as a "secular world power" (p. 67), a key player in the process of colonisation and subsequent dispossessing, and frequently extermination, of indigenous peoples. Hence this decree was a forceful instrument of hegemonic ideological discourse, advancing the demarcation between those deemed worthy to exercise self-rule and those who should become the unwitting subjects of the might and worldviews of others (Jackson, 2007; Tomlins-Jahnke, 2011; Walker, 1990). Under this decree permission was given to "...invade, search out, capture and subjugate the Saracens and pagans and any unbelievers and enemies of Christ wherever they may be, as well as their kingdoms, duchies, countries, principalities and other property...and to reduce their persons to slavery" (King, 1997, p. 32).

Under Papal authority, the Catholic Church offered support to invading European nations on the understanding that the church would be awarded the "right to convert 'the natives' to Christianity" (Consedine & Consedine, 2012, p. 67). This constituted a two-pronged attack, in which exploration and exploitation occurred under the endorsed premise of spreading enlightenment through the spreading of the gospel (Davis, 2004).

European settlement in Aotearoa New Zealand was sporadic during the late seventeenth and earliest part of the eighteenth century, with the majority of those visiting or settling being missionaries or traders (Orange, 1987, 2004). As with other indigenous countries, the arrival of missionaries had an undeniable impact on Māori; as elsewhere, a key

intention was the collecting and salvation of Māori souls (Smith, 2007) which Mead (2003) states precipitated the “repudiation of culture” (p. 2).

The conversion of whānau, hapū and iwi to Christianity became more widespread by the 1830s as the economic prosperity of the settlers increased. Walker (1990) suggests that the following was a notable contributory factor to this as “...the new God of the Pakeha was [perceived as] more appealing because it seemed his Pakeha followers were blessed with greater power and wealth than the Maori in form of ships, weapons and an amazing quantity of goods” (p. 86).

Historically noted as instrumental in the collection of Māori souls was the Catholic Church; however, the Catholics were not alone in vying for Māori religious conversion. Another noteworthy contender was the Church Missionary Society (CMS) who desired to put Māori on the path of righteousness and morality and to ensure women and children were saved from assumed wanton wickedness and depravity (Fitzgerald, 2001). To enact this vision required a collective motivation to advance Christian efforts, namely the re-education of children so they would in turn transmit this “good” and civilised idealist knowledge into their families and communities (Fitzgerald, 2001; Sommer, 2011).

Fitzgerald (2001) highlights that the first CMS mission was largely unsuccessful and a new approach was deemed to be required. The new strategy involved moving the teaching of the gospel from the traditional pulpit into a formalised Euro-western schooling format. This new plan of action was deemed a more advantageous mechanism for indoctrination,

thereby removing “indigenous children from the... [perceived detrimental] ...influence of their family” (p. 5).

At this time two significant documents were to further provide the socio-political backdrop for relationship and future nationhood building in Aotearoa New Zealand: *He Whakaputanga o Te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni* (The Declaration of Independence) 1835 and *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* 1840. It is via these documents that Māori and the Crown came to inhabit the same geographical space; however, dramatically differing agenda and worldviews about sovereignty, decision-making, people, places, materiality and entities were evident (Consedine & Consedine, 2012; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014).

He Whakaputanga o Te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni, signed by British Resident James Busby and thirty-four Northern Chiefs in October 1835, clearly identified and upheld established Māori iwi sovereignty; it was conscious of the centrality of Te Ao Māori (Orange, 1987; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014; Walker, 1990). This document acknowledged the pivotal place of a Māori cosmic worldview, underpinned by traditional philosophy and theorising (see later in this chapter). Within this worldview, all potential forms of existence were entangled together as deliberate constructs and forms of life were seen as always touching and therefore complementary (Henare, 2001).

The sentiments expressed within *He Whakaputanga* were further echoed in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (1840). However, the documents written and presented in English, namely The Treaty of Waitangi (which is not a direct translation of Te Tiriti o Waitangi), stipulated that a shift in sovereign power and in worldview was to occur in favour of the Crown (Orange,

1987; Walker, 1990). Inherent in the now dominant worldview were distinctly different orientations towards what forms of relationships and therefore types of companionship were to be accepted and actively encouraged and within what contexts.

The approach by the Crown toward relationships with Māori was briefly one of tolerating Māori until they could see the errors of their 'savage', 'uncivilised' and "child-like" (Tully, 1995, p. 65) ways and turn to Euro-western ideals and ways of knowing, thinking and acting (Smith, 1999; Walker, 1990). The aim was for Māori to see the benefits of subscribing to a superior worldview that offered a more sophisticated take on the creation of the universe and the types of entities that could therefore be counted as dwelling within (Henare, 2001). Crucial here was the advancement within Euro-western accounts of what types of entities were believed to inhabit the spiritual and temporal realms and how these could be engaged with. There was thus an un-doing of what was assumed to be naïve ancestral knowledge in favour of a presumed account of the universe which offered a more believable notion of truth (Foucault, 1980).

It was not long before encroaching European settlement put pressure on Crown representatives to make explicit the transfer of power from traditional iwi authority to British sovereignty (Orange, 1987). This transfer of power included the subjugation of Te Ao Māori as inferior to Euro-western theorising and voided promises and commitments articulated within He Whakaputanga and Te Tiriti. Consedine and Consedine (2012) make clear the political, social and cultural ramifications that became apparent as power over Māori was assumed:

...there was nothing unusual about the dispossession of aboriginal peoples by European powers. Despite solemn commitments by the British at Waitangi and some legal protection what happened in New Zealand was normal for the times...Britain bought Maori under its colonial authority. That meant British governors imposed a legal process intended to deny, ignore and de-legitimise the tribal and kinship system...making Maori structures and systems illegal...As in all colonised countries, the colonised people (Maori) were unilaterally assigned a place in the new system defined by the coloniser (the British). (p. 201)

The new system categorised Māori as second-class citizens (Best, 1922) and relegated their knowledges to the realm of the inferior and whimsical. Māori, it was asserted, required the guidance of more intelligent, civilised and pious masters whose higher-ranking knowledges should therefore be accepted and assimilated. This is a problematic viewpoint similarly expressed within Chapter Four, in which those peoples determined to be subordinate and therefore considered of low importance and ranking were perceived as occupying a status comparable to that of a child. Māori survival was deemed to be dependent on those who viewed themselves as their superiors and protectors.

This created, and held in place, powerful and pervasive assumptions of white, as superior, and black as, conversely, inferior (Fanon, 1967; Foucault, 1980). Embedded in these constructs is a complex interplay between dualist, demarcated white/black locations where each exists as a specific racialised condition emerging from, and reliant on, the other (Anaru, 2011; Fanon, 1967; hooks, 2015). Further problematisation occurs because, as Fanon (1967) explained, “not only must the black man be black, he must be black in relation to the white man” (p. 110). The insinuation here is that the black man must

therefore be something, or someone, “other than” whilst he had never been considered as “equal to”.

Māori knowledges were thus displaced and disposed, conveniently absent from the colonial mind-set and ensuing mechanisms of power (Pihama, 2015). Māori became ensnared in and encircled by epistemological and ontological structures and systems which sought to subjugate their knowledges and erode their sense of collective, iwi and individual identity and ancestral knowledges. What was further apparent is that children; from the colonial perspective; were to play an integral part in the transmission of new attitudes and beliefs designed to overthrow Māori pagan practices, ignorance and superstition. They were destined to become powerful instruments of the colonial machine fulfilling a role as “missionaries to their countrymen” (Fitzgerald, 2001, p. 175).

Through the mechanism of colonisation, disruption to traditional philosophical theorising occurred. The implication for this specific research topic is that there was a desire to erase and replace Māori ancestral knowledges and therefore knowledge of what kinds of relationships and companionship were deemed to be usual and ordinary features of life. The discontinuation of intergenerational transmission of these knowledges has therefore created ruptures in ancestral storying, which speaks of entities behaving differently to those promulgated within pervasive Euro-western textual accounts.

5.2.1 Troubling inherited colonial legacies

To set in motion colonial aspirations required idealised colonial constructs be mobilised within curriculum, pedagogy and practice. Traces remain, although they tend to exist overtly for Māori and covertly for those whom this system has continued to privilege, as they often struggle to identify and name the characteristics embedded within it (Mikaere, 2011; Smith, 1999). It is here where the great evils of colonisation continue to lurk, striking at the very core of people, histories and knowledges.

From a Māori worldview, the natural world is not something to be mastered and objectified; nature is considered older than humankind (Barlow, 1991; Mead, 2003), and for the potential of humankind to be awakened and enacted, the principles of nature and naturally occurring phenomena need to be observed (Tomlins-Jahnke, 2011). In this specific context, I am speaking of nature from a Te Ao Māori stance which, authors such as Edwards (2012) tell us, explains “respective relationships of entities in the universe” (p. 49). Harmsworth and Awatere (2013) describe Te Ao Maori as providing “...a natural order to the universe, a balance or equilibrium, and ... when part of this system shifts, the entire system is put out of balance...The traditional Māori world view acknowledged...a dynamic system built around the living and non-living” (pp. 274-276).

Matthews (2011) asserts that Māori “core values and attitudes ... have not changed, but have adapted and evolved through interaction” (p. 169). The entanglement occurring here is with Christian ideological tenets, and in this instance, Matthews is referring primarily to Catholicism. However, his view may not be commonly shared, especially by

those outside of the Catholic Church. Whilst there may be some shared and complementary places and spaces where Māori epistemology and Christianity align, the documented narratives of the ways in which Christianity was useful as a vehicle for colonisation cannot be ignored.

Indeed, prior to the arrival of missionaries and large-scale Euro-western migration and settlement in Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori were already conversant with an ideology of faith keeping and respecting the atua. Rangiwai (2018) offers the following, indicating that this faith system was premised on such aspects as:

...an ancestor with continuing influence; or a god, demon, supernatural being, deity, ghost, strange being, or an object of superstitious regard (Moorfield, 2011). While the word atua is commonly translated as 'god'...this is a misconception of the original meaning...[as]...missionaries took the word atua and used it to describe the Christian God, capitalising the 'a' in 'Atua' to signify...superiority. (p. 181)

Māori were familiar with the ways in which the spiritual and temporal realms intersect and had a range of practices and rituals to ensure balance and spiritual harmony. This worldview meant that when European contact occurred, Māori, although considered and positioned as heathens (e.g., Best, 1922), were better equipped to engage with a belief system that differed to their own, unlike those holding firmly established views promoted by "secularised humanists of the European enlightenment and their successors" (King, 2003, p. 140).

A continued legacy of colonisation has created what Smith (2007) terms a "culture of collecting" (p. 67). She writes of the myriad of ways in which collecting is enacted on a

personal and commercial level in Aotearoa New Zealand. At a personal level, there is the desire to covet, and possess, items of interest and intrigue. These may be items of rarity or items commonly found in nature. This “collector” culture objectifies; it turns items, such as natural resources like stones, shells and leaves, into “things” to be removed from their natural environment in order to be studied and displayed. From the commercial perspective, collecting commodifies resources; it creates things to be used and exploited for personal and commercial gain. Land, water and knowledge all fall within this domain.

This culture of collecting and of creating collectors is evident within ECE, existing on both a personal and commercial level. Teachers collect information about young children and their families and use this to classify, name and ascribe identities (McNaughton, 2005; Sellers, 2013; Stuart, 2011). The information collected is then aligned to learning outcomes in a bid to produce a known and knowable child, a child who can be measured using a set of pre-determined categories located within a familiar Euro-western normative apparatus.

The child who has relationships which fall outside of these predetermined categories poses a threat to the preordained and measurable learning outcomes. Such a young person is unable to assume the ascribed identity of the known child: the child that can be neatly positioned by adults into a specific age, stage or determinable construct of early childhood. Rather, this child presents to others, who are willing to move beyond the rigidity of conscious and unconsciously held understandings of childhood, as a ‘knowing’ child (Rameka, 2012).

Which alternative stories may speak back to pervasive authoritative Euro-western textual accounts of the child, their childhood and *their* companions? What may the Māori child know that offers a differing account? What may be inherent within their birthright that conveys additional entanglements and speaks to, and for, entities who may take on various forms and offer companionship within their early childhood and later years?

These are the explorations that this chapter now makes to offer insight into other ways in which ICs can be conceptualised and why the inherited Euro-western notions are no longer good to think with nor good to journey with (Duke University, 2014). I also return to the key concepts introduced within my kirituhi kotahi in Chapter One, as this has been identified as my significant travelling companion within this specific theoretical context. This piece was created to symbolise the potential synergy of Celtic and Māori approaches to acknowledging different realms and movement within them. The key tenets identified appear in Figure 4 below.

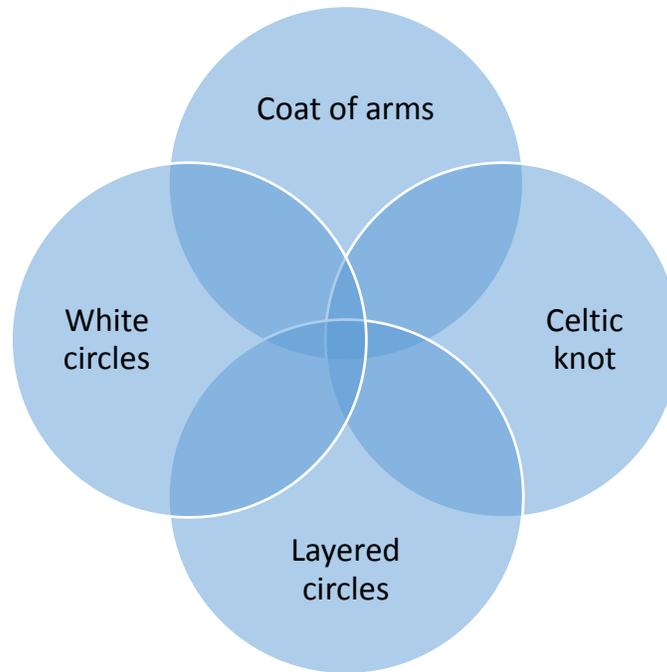


Figure 4 Kirituhi kotahi tenets

5.3 Acknowledging Ancestral Guidance

The coat of arms depicted within my kirituhi kotahi provides an overarching framework denoting the importance of the way each generation builds onto the preceding generation. Therefore, this is the birthright of the wearer and it provides a measure of ancestral and cultural protection. The pattern symbolises a specific travel companion, connecting ancestral stories and providing guidance for the inheritor.

Each Māori child inherits their kaihau-waiū, or birthright, from the gods and their tūpuna. Mead (2003) describes their kaihau-waiū as “property or attribute gained through the mother’s milk, that is, through birth” (p. 40). The strong connections to their gods and

tūpuna are identified within the term used for children, *tamariki* which Pere (1991)

explains thus:

Tama is derived from Tama-te-ra the central sun, the divine spark; ariki refers to senior most status; and riki on its own can mean smaller version. Tamariki is the word for children. Children are the greatest legacy the world community has.

There are many gifts that little children have. (p. 4)

As such a child inherits, and is a recipient of, the knowledge and learning of those who have come before. This is acknowledged in the following proverbs taken from Riley

(2013):

āe, he moku ngā mate o mua

“Oh yes, the evils of old were very slight”. A call to take account of the lessons of the past

E kore e taka te parapara a ōna tūpuna, tukua iho ki a ia, “he cannot lose the spirit of his ancestors; it must descend to him”. This is explained as, “He cannot lose the ‘atuatanga’, the good or evil spirit of the ancestors, or peculiar manners, but they descend to him”. “He cannot fail to inherit the talents of his ancestors”... (p. 5)

In traditional Māori society, children were to be cherished, nurtured, protected and given the freedom to develop their spirit and *kaihau-waiū* in culturally located and meaningful ways (Jenkins & Harte, 2011; Rameka, 2012). The roles of the family and the community were fundamental in ensuring each child was assisted and supported to receive the full legacy entitlement of their *kaihau-waiū* (Robinson, 2005).

The ability to understand, and therefore to realise the potential embedded within, one’s *kaihau-waiū* relies on “proper enculturation” (Mead, 2003, p. 60). For this to be realised,

a child must develop a strong sense of identity as Māori. This includes being conversant in te reo Māori me ōna tikanga in order to be able to maximise the taonga embedded and inherent within their kaihau-waiū (Bevan-Brown, 2005; Mead, 2003).

Kaihau-waiū is not static, nor can it be said to be enduring, in the sense that it remains constant without interference. Whilst it is inescapable, each Māori child is endowed with a kaihau-waiū reflective of their social status; therefore, its potential for self-actualisation relies on the value placed on it by the holder themselves once they reach adulthood (Jenkins & Harte, 2011; Mead, 2003; Robinson, 2005). In this way it is reliant on a wealth of culturally located knowledges, relationships and conditions in order to not only survive but to thrive.

What the concept of kaihau-waiū offers to this exploration is that each Māori child is born with strong and inescapable connections to the spiritual realm. This challenges earlier social constructions of the child and subsequently childhood posited within Chapter Four in which notions of what a child may know are inexplicably entangled with what adults believe to be valid about them.

5.4 Māori Creation Stories

Every culture relies on philosophical narratives to explain how worlds came to be and offers a framework upon which notions of existence and patterns of behaviour are understood and subsequently transmitted intergenerationally. As my kirituhi conveys, Celtic storying comprises overlapping and interlaced systems of meaning which are

inherent within the weft and warp of complex and sophisticated cosmogonic pattern making. This pattern making was primarily expressed within intricate knot-making which Delyth (2008) spoke of as contributing “to the development of abstract thought and mystical expression” (p. 140).

Similarly, the weaving together of underlying themes is a central tenet of Māori creation stories. Each story is cloaked in subtle metaphors providing each child with a “woven whariki of memory” (Livermore, 2016, p. 55) to draw on and add the next layer of meaning to. The stories are inscribed with a multitude of in-between states of being that elucidate a range of intricate entanglements and potentialities. Such in-betweenness is an overarching component of Māori storying, exemplifying understandings of the universe and identifying places of established crossings which serve as points of intra-action. This worldview is suffused with understandings of continuity that give rise to enduring cultural cognisance of how established temporal and spiritual pathways are dynamic, receptive to new stirrings and alternate travel trajectories. This is seen within the three key cycles of existence which follow on from the identification of Io-taketake “(Io-The Source of Truth)” (Whakaatere & Pohatu, 2011, p. 2) as the supreme being who is the founder/originator of all (Rameka, 2018). These cycles, or phases, Walker (1990) described as:

Te Kore (the void), Te Po (the dark), and Te Aomarama (the world of light) ...Te Kore signified space, it contained in its vastness the seeds of the universe and was therefore a state of potential. Te Po was the celestial realm and the domain of the gods. This was the source of all mana and tapu. Te Aomarama is the world of light and reality, the dwelling place of humans. (p. 11)

According to Reilly (2004), Io created the framework of Te Kore, Te Kōwhao (the abyss) and Te Pō over a 27-night period through the process of genealogical recitation which Keane (2011) recounts as:

Te Kore Whakapapa

Te Kore

(the void, energy, nothingness, potential)

|

Te Kore-tē-whiwhia (the void in which nothing is possessed)

|

Te Kore-tē-rawea (the void in which nothing is felt)

|

Te Kore-i-ai (the void with nothing in union)

|

Te Kore-tē-wiwia (the space without boundaries)

|

Te Pō-nui

(the great night)

|

Te Pō-roa (the long night)

|

Te Pō-uriuri (the deep night)

|

Te Pō-kerekere (the intense night)

|

Te Pō-tiwhatiwha (the dark night)

|

Te Pō-tē-kitea (the night in which nothing is seen)

|

Te Pō-tangotango (the intensely dark night)

|

Te Pō-whāwhā (the night feeling)

|

Te Pō-namunamu-ki-taiao (the night of seeking the passage of the world)

|

Te Pō-tahuri-atu (the night of restless turning)

|

Te Pō-tahuri-mai-ki-taiao (the night of turning towards the revealed world)

|

Te Whai-ao (the glimmer of dawn)

|

Te Ao-mārama

|

(the bright light of day)

Te Kore, Te Pō and Te Aomarama chart the unfolding generational development of the universe with Te Kore, the first phase, considered synonymous with the concept of nothingness, the notion of there being “a vacuum in nature” (Ministry of Justice, 2001, p. 12). For Marsden (1992), the phenomenological phase of Te Kore “is the realm between non-being and being” (p. 135). It is “where the living and dead things are gathered together” (Whatahoro, as cited in Reilly, 2004, p. 2), the place where all things are already entangled.

Te Kore contains multiple possibilities alongside a multitude of knowledges and ways of orientating oneself. It encompasses an “acknowledgement of the unknown” (Kent, 2011, p. 162). All things hold the capability to flourish and accordingly all things are viable. Here nothing exists but all has the potential of existence and, as such, is considered synonymous with procreative storying (MoE, 2009; Mahuika, 2012). It is here the creation of the earth and sky alongside Ranginui and Papatūānuku as primordial parents occurred (Kereopa-Woon & Waitoki, 2017). Te Kore is noted as being the place from which all things were created; therefore it is here that the potentiality of all entities dwells.

Accordingly, there is the potential to consider that the companions of young children may be fashioned here, rather than primarily within their imagination (as premised within Chapter Four).

The second phase, Te Pō, illustrates the various stirrings of movement happening within this period of darkness. Mahuika (2012) refers to it as “a multi-layered realm of night” (p. 32) and Kent (2011) speaks of this realm as “the world of the unseen” (p. 152), a place where dreaming occurs, and shape starts to form. Thus, it is conceptualised as dynamic

and a place where the layered concept of differing realms of darkness through the many forms of nights provides a fertile space for growth and development to unfold (Lilley, 2018; Rameka, 2015).

Te Aomarama is noted as the third genealogical phase and signals the emergence of light, new knowledge and understandings. Royal (1998) described it as follows:

...all traditional whakapapa leads back to Ranginui and Papatūānuku who represent a represent the physical venue within which the phenomenal world exists...Ranginui and Papatūānuku, and Te Ao Mārama, represent a philosophical orientation to the world. Mātauranga Māori was traditionally created with the view that the earth was Papatūānuku, that the sky was Ranginui and that the world in which we currently reside is called Te Ao Mārama. (p. 3)

Herein lies the potentiality of all entities as companions, companions in the space of being/becoming. They are interlaced within the integral fabric of the above-mentioned cycles of existence, possessing the capacity to emerge into something for the future. Within each of these cycles there is an abundance of differing qualities and graduations reflective of connectivity, which has evolved and come to be over time (Reed, 2002; Walker, 1990). Interdependence is emphasised, not only between Te Kore, Te Po and Te Aomarama, but also between each phase and the creation of mankind (Reilly, 2004).

Central to Māori cosmogony is the way it continually reflects “concepts of ebb and flow between material, psychic and spiritual realms” (Palmer, 2005, p. 44). This denotes the intricate and inescapable multidimensional connections woven across and between worlds. Crucial in the shaping of these ebbs and flows, alongside Te Kore, Te Po and Te Aomarama, is *te kete o te wānanga*: the three baskets of sacred knowledge obtained by

Tāne-nui-a-rangi upon his ascent into the heavens. The three baskets comprise *te kete aronui*, containing secular and esoteric knowledge, *te kete tūāuri*, containing ritual and everyday knowledge, and lastly *te kete tūatea*, containing occult and survival knowledge (Graham, 2009; O'Connor & Macfarlane, 2003; Reed, 2002).

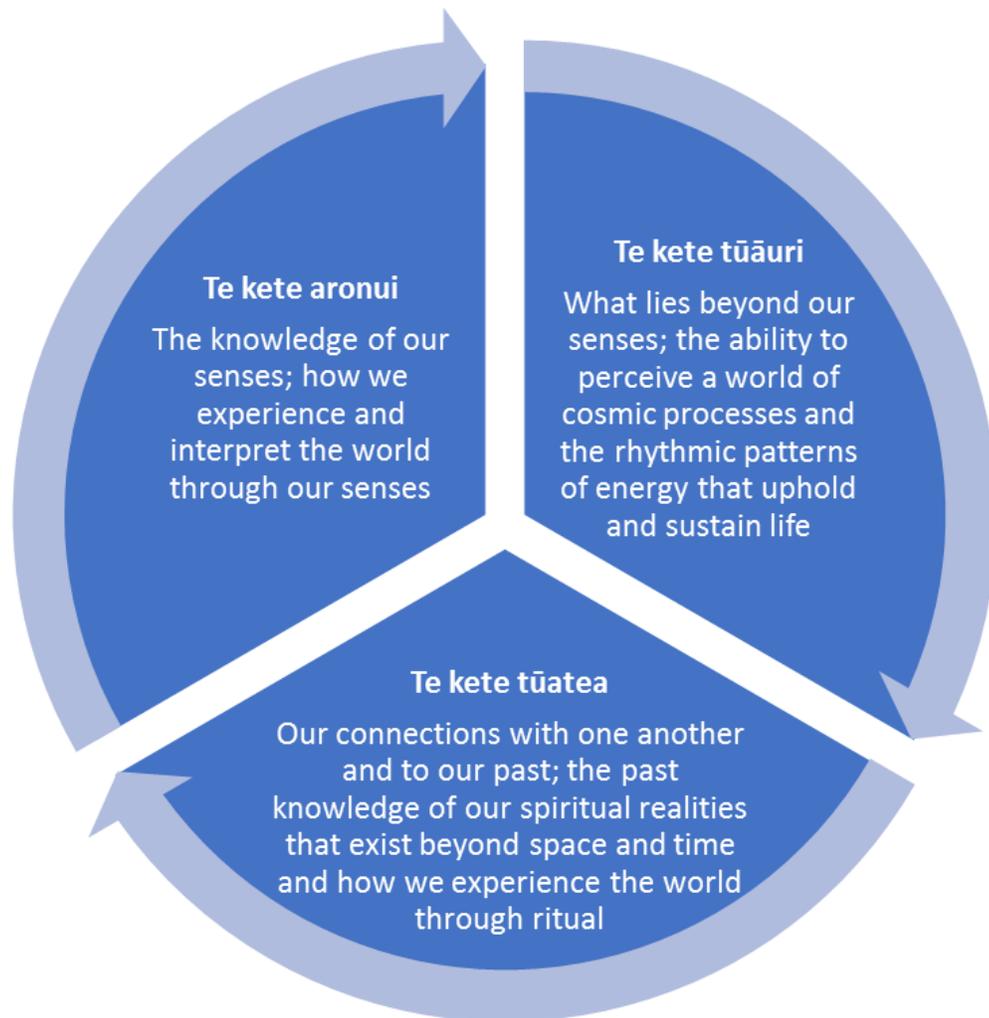


Figure 5 *Te kete o te wānanga* (Adapted from Gibbons, 2010, p. 6)

Returning to ideas of how the universe came to be fashioned, from a new materialist perspective (see Chapter Three) Diamond (2013a, 2013b) suggests that when Tāne separated his parents they became responsible for the following dimensions:

Papatūānuku transformed to Te Kauae Raro (things terrestrial, *te kete aronui*, *te kete arotohu*) and Ranginui became Te Kauae Runga (things celestial, *te kete tua atea*, *te kete tūāuri*, quantum physics)...*Te kete aronui*...is the physical manifestations where cause and effect can be deduced...This is classical or Newtonian physics...*Te kete tūāuri* is the knowledge held within the creative space before they manifest into the physical world...It is the patterns of energy that occur...[and in]...scientific terms this may be seen as the space of quantum physics, of unlimited potential and possibilities... (2013b, pp. 3-4)

The argument Diamond puts forth is that just as *te kete aronui* relies on knowledge and understanding of sensory perception so, too, does Newtonian physics. Interactions within classical physics are contingent on order, stability, predictability and logical deduction (Barad, 2007; Diamond, 2013a). It is how cause and effect are thought of and interpreted based on how phenomena are experienced and subsequently conceptualised.

The second point Diamond (2013a) makes is that there is relatedness between *te kete tūāuri* and quantum physics. The correlation here is the queerness which sits outside of sensory and logical discernment. These are the phenomena which reside in the celestial realm: the spaces where potentiality dwells and knowable properties and boundaries are blurred and crossed (Barad, 2007; Capellmann, 2017; Diamond, 2013a).

In Māori terms, the creation of life, the birth of a child, and development throughout the lifespan, are likened to the creation of the universe and to Tāne's struggles and success in

obtaining the three kete of knowledge (Jenkins & Harte, 2011; Rameka, 2018). The powerful forces that created, and are present within, the patterns of movement of the universe, are also embedded within humans (Barlow, 1991; Best, 1922; Mead, 2003). Just as the worlds unfolded and were accordingly revealed, humans, too, each contain multiplicities, places and depths of nothingness, of dark and of light that give way to polymorphous capacities and accounts (Durie, 1998; Makereti, 1986). These notions will be revisited later in this chapter.

The knowledge contained within the kete were traditionally identified as being accessible to those who were worthy of receiving such specialised forms of knowledge, namely tohunga (Mead, 2003; Walker, 1990). The type of knowledge imparted to tohunga was status dependent; only some tohunga may have access to the most specialised and powerful knowledge contained within the kete. However, this was also dependent on tribal practices (M. Smith, personal communication, 27 February, 2015).

Historically, myths and legends played a prevailing role within Māori creation storying. It was suggested by Walker (1978) that the genesis of change, arguably still current today, occurred post-Christianity when Māori became increasingly displaced due to the introduction and “mythology of a new culture” (p. 20). He further lamented the historical legacies of this loss, saying:

This is unfortunate, since an analysis of Māori myths will show that even today Māori will respond to the myth messages and cultural imperatives embedded in their mythology...The myth-messages now need to be spelled out to the modern Māori. (p. 20).

However, a noted way that these oral myth-messages can continue their circulation and replication is via pūrākau “(traditional Māori narratives)” (Wirihana, 2012, p. ii).

Embedded within this term are four interconnecting components which Wirihana (2012) identifies as “pū (*source*), rā (*light*), ka (*past, present, future*), and ū (*from within*)” (p. ii).

At its heart, pūrākau is a sophisticated system of codified knowledge and philosophical thinking which draws on the past and present in order to construct meaning (Hikuroa, 2017; Lee, 2009). Therefore, they are more than “just ‘stories’” (Hikuroa, 2017, p. 6), as they seek to explain, and validate, complex accounts of all phenomena and the junctions where all worlds may meet (Mikaere, 2011).

An important point raised by Lee (2009) is that pūrākau have been adapted and amended over time in order to present a cohesive telling of narratives. They may formerly have included multiple narrative storylines and tribal differences of interpretation and emphasis. Problematic here is the desire to present a narrative as a fixed and polished definitive account of pūrākau, which may contain additional embellishments not previously included within intergenerational retellings of these accounts.

Lee identifies several notable Aotearoa New Zealand historians (e.g., Elsdon Best and A. W. Reed) who have been instrumental in the reshaping and rescripting of pūrākau. In doing so there is an inclination for those who sit outside this cultural context to alter, or even amalgamate, narratives which would then appear more palatable for a non-indigenous audience (TKRI, 2013; Ngata, 2014). This shows a desire to offer a simplified truth, a means through which the complexities or intricacies which may not have been perceived by the reshaping authors as being worthy of retelling. Hence there is a distinct

possibility that pūrākau in circulation today may no longer contain easily recognised or visible references to such relationship companions.

Thus, the remembering of relationship with atua, ancestors or supernatural beings, who provide companionship may have been effaced from pūrākau. This has implications for entities as in meeting with conditions of resistance their ability to travel and provide culturally harmonious companionship is subsequently constrained.

5.5 Spiritual Entities Within Creation Pūrākau

Within my kirituhi there are layered circles which emphasise the significant place of ancestors whose presence continues to entangle and ripple through past, present and future relationships. According to traditional Māori creation pūrākau, the closeness between the material, psychic and spiritual realms meant that the presence of entities, such as those conceptualised as “spirits” caused little consternation (Barlow, 1991; Best, 1922; Mead, 2003). This can be seen within the earlier exploration of Te Kore in which it was noted that all things gather together within this realm.

There are numerous pūrākau providing further examples of the various places in which spirits may dwell and the wide-ranging forms they may take. Spirits may be spoken of as appearing as ancestors long passed away or may be thought of as ancestral apparitions or even a manifestation of the gods (Mead, 2003; Ngata, 2014; Valentine, 2009). They may also be travellers who are believed to be making their way to a new destination, such as those spoken of in the following account from Reed and Calman (2013), “[there are] ...the

weird stories that tell of onlookers seeing parties of travellers in the distance, making their way northwards [towards Cape Rēinga]. The travellers would disappear as the onlookers drew near, then reappear behind those watching” (p. 11).

Many pūrākau recount the journeys of an unseen being wandering the earth and this being’s encounters with humankind. They also relay the narratives of humans who travelled into the otherworld and returned to tell of their adventures and lessons learnt. Therefore contact with spirits, and spiritual entities, was not discouraged and the literature is interspersed with evidentiary examples of the many rituals and ceremonies designed to bring forth the gods and unseen beings that dwelt in sacred places and whose presence could be seen within the natural contours and features of the land, flora and fauna (Hemara, 2000; Mead, 2003; Reed, 2002). Two such examples can be seen within the following passages taken from Makareti (1986):

The old people told [children]...stories of the patupaiarehe, the fairies who moved past in the mist of early morning, or in the mist after the rain, the fairies who sometimes came down from their homes on the tops of the historic mountains. (p. 151)

Albinism also occurred among the Maori, but very seldom. I knew of one case when I was a child. She came from Ngapuhi. She always spoke of her father as an atua, a Turehu, one of the fair-haired people who live in the mist. Her mother was an ordinary Maori. The girl used to hold conversations with her Turehu father, and unseen being, during the night, a thing which terrified me. These Turehu (albino) children are supposed to be born of an ordinary Maori mother and a patupaiarehe father, and are named Turehu...The patupaiarehe spoken of to me by my kuia are

supernatural children of the mist...They are fair, and are clothed in flimsy white like the web of the pungaiwerewere (spider). (p. 123-4)

Makareti's recollections provide powerful insight into varying storying accounts of relationships. The entities she spoke of within these pūrākau serve as an important structure upon which knowledge of relationships can therefore be conceptualised and organised (Mikaere, 2011; Walker, 1990). Her writing emphasises that for Māori "a belief in spiritual beings... is both a way of life and a view of life" (Henare, 2001, p. 199).

Pūrākau such as these are thus infused within all aspects of philosophical thought and serve as a culturally located explanatory model upon which understandings of relationship companions are premised and queried.

These pūrākau are integral to the fabric of mātauranga Māori, often loosely translated as Māori knowledge. Mātauranga Māori includes two key terms which are relevant to consider in relation to this thesis focus. Firstly, *mātau* which is "being able to do" (Williams & Anderson, 2015, p. 9), and secondly *ranga* "to weave" (p. 9). This denotes a specialist type of weave, and therefore weaver, who could draw from, and in turn articulate and add on to, a complex set of epistemological and ontological bearings and chartings (Williams & Anderson, 2015; Williams, Savage & Witehira, 2015). The weaver's work helps to keep mātauranga Māori intact and also enables this body of specific cultural knowledge to continue reclaiming ancestral pathways which may have fallen into disrepair and forge future pathways unimpeded by the problematic historical legacies of colonisation and subsequent subjugation (Hona, 2015; Mikaere, 2011; Sadler, 2012; Smith, 1999).

For Royal (2012), mātauranga Māori primarily denotes “knowledge arising from atua māori or non-Christian gods, which was the preserve of tohunga māori, the non-Christian priests” (p. 32). Therefore, as an intricate cultural knowledge system created at the beginning of time it is endowed with wisdom and lessons which have provided a strong legacy upon which new ideas and innovations can be overlaid (Mead, 2003; Sadler, 2012; Walker, 1990). Diffractive in nature, it has changed over time as new situations, new land and new people have created alternate ways of interacting and seeing the world. In this way it is responsive, following the cyclic nature and ebbs and flow of movement spoken of within Te Kore, Te Po and Te Aomarama (Mead, 2003; Royal, 2005; Lilley, 2015) (see earlier in this chapter).

These sentiments are important to draw on because, as Durie (2003) asserts, “Although it is often positioned in the past, and is sometimes valued because of its antiquity, indigenous knowledge has applications to modern times in so far as it provides frameworks for understanding and exploring current and future worlds” (p. 277).

The frameworks within pūrākau offer pathways that show how beliefs, values and practices expressed in Te Ao Māori remain relevant to observe today. They offer wisdom to draw on when seeking to understand the complex relationships of young children and how these relationships may be fashioned ‘elsewhere’. However, elsewhere differs from the imaginary terrain that Euro-western textual accounts of these companions frequently assume it to be. Rather, elsewhere draws on the notion that there is always already a connection that exists between all things, whether this is noticed or not.

5.6 The Significance of Whakapapa

The notion of connectivity is integral to the concept of whakapapa. Whakapapa not only delineates the relationships that exist between all things, it is also a complex and culturally grounded analytical tool which has “the ability to explain phenomena within a cultural context” (Sadler, 2012, p. 91). These are the inherited ancestral and spiritual legacies which “[slip] through time and space” (Williams, 2011, p. 187). Like the layered circles in my kirituhi, what may not be visible to the human eye is of equal significance to what is visible. This is a space of potentiality to consider the presence, purpose and function of entities as residing within all forms of life (Mikaere, 2011; Pohatu, 2015).

Whakapapa is the means through which traditional history is validated, as it forms “the basis for the order of life and acted as a marker in tabulating the chronology of human history, and that of the universe” (Haami, 2004, p. 15). According to Barlow (1991), whakapapa is integral to Māori identity and as such it “is one of the most prized forms of knowledge” (p. 174). An example of the important place of whakapapa is exemplified by the way in which Maori introductions to someone unknown are made. Firstly, topographical features are identified, such as the person’s mountain, river/body of water, iwi and marae, followed by key ancestors, parents and, lastly, oneself (O’Connor & Macfarlane, 2002). Each aspect is significant, and each is required to locate the person within the various realms of their existence. Introducing oneself last recognises and acknowledges the person as an embodiment of complex and intricate relationships fashioned prior to their birth. Therefore, it is the intangible, that which may not be immediately visible, that takes precedence.

As a sophisticated organisational system whakapapa, “to place in layers” (Rameka, 2012, p. 11), identifies the creation and oneness of all things (Barlow, 1991; Hemara, 2000; Mikaere, 2011). When applied to genealogy, it is “to lay one generation upon another” (Barlow, 1991, p. 173). Through whakapapa Māori can trace their links to the creation of the universe and the gods, and can identify the descent from the heavens of their tūpuna into the temporal world (Hemara, 2000; Mead, 2003; Rameka, 2012). As previously indicated, it is a close weaving together “of the realms of humans, into the realm of the dead and the realm of the gods” (O’Connor & Macfarlane, 2002 p. 230).

Here, whakapapa relies on mātauranga Māori, via the provision of an overlapping system of cultural beliefs, values, practices and personal relationships which underpin Māori identity through this process of continued layering (Jahnke, 2011). As whakapapa exists in all things, it entwines and can encompass many differing aspects (M. Smith, personal communication, 18 March, 2011). Hence, the past, present and future are synergistic, and “the ancestors are to be found as much in the world around as in the lives of those long departed” (Durie, 2003, p. 272). This is emphasised within the whakataukī “*ka mua, ka muri... walking backwards into the future*” (Jacobs & Falconer, 2004, p. 1). Two interpretations could be applied here. Firstly, the past holds crucial messages to remember and draw on for the future (Te Awekotuku, 2009). Secondly, there is no clear or neat demarcation between the realm of the living and the realm of the dead; these are intertwined, collapsed together and therefore always touching (Barad, 2007).

This extension between the realms, so that none can exist separately without the others, means that what occurs within one realm has an interactional effect; what may be seen

within one realm can be sensed or seen within another. The veil between the realms is thin and, at times, stirrings, utterances and motion may be felt and movement between them may be easily traversed (T. Pokaia, personal communication, 5 March, 2011). Such thinness means that a memory, a re-membering, of such movement remains for those who travel between the realms (M. Smith, personal communication, 24 February, 2015).

This mutuality of the celestial, physical, spiritual and material realms is described by Barlow (1991) as encompassing four core genealogies. Within each of these genealogies there is the possibility to view how various relationship companions may be evident as travelling companions. Firstly, there are *cosmic genealogies*; as indicated earlier in this chapter, at the centre of the creation of the universe and of all living things is the supreme god, Io-taketake. From Io-taketake came the genealogical framework of Te Kore, Te Po and Te Aomarama. The stages of creation are mirrored within procreation narratives that tell of the conception, development and birth of a child who travels through each stage as they come to be and enter the mortal realm (M. Smith, personal communication, 24 February, 2015). Thus, each child retains an exorable connection to Io-taketake.

Secondly, following on from the cosmic genealogies, there came to be the *genealogy of the Gods*. As noted in Chapter One, from the union and subsequent separation of Ranginui, sky father and “the offspring of light” (Barlow, 1991, p. 174) and Papatūānuku, earth mother and “offspring of darkness” (p. 174), a number of children (generally all spoken of as sons) came to be. Their principal offspring, who serve as kaitiaki, are known as demigods, or departmental gods. Not only are they kaitiaki of the natural environment, they also provide a framework upon which all relationships are constructed and

understood, be these relationships with people, the environment, and known and unknown entities (M. Smith, personal communication, 24 February, 2015). Their exploits, endeavours, trials, tribulations and relationships serve as cautionary narratives for those yet to come, just as attributes and attitudes held are either admonished or admired (M. Smith, personal communication, 24 February, 2015). An example of the link between these gods and the lives of humans is given by Best (1922) when he talked of the malignant wairua of a still-born child who required placation and were thus “employed as *atua mo te riri*, or directing war gods” (p. 8).

The third genealogy is known as the *genealogy of mortal man or primal genealogies*; dwelling in the world of light, the children of Ranginui and Papatūānuku became “ira tangata or mortal beings” (Barlow, 1991, p. 174). By entering the physical realm, they were no longer immune to the frailties of man, “illness or death” (p. 174). As identified in Chapter One, the first mortal man was Tāne-nui-arangi whose union with the first woman Hineahuone produced a daughter, Hine-tītama. Father and daughter cohabitated, creating children who were to become “the forerunners of all the human inhabitants of the earth” (p. 174). However, upon discovering she had lain with, and begot children to, her father, Hine-tītama retreated in shame to Rarohenga, “the depths of the underworld” (p. 174), becoming known as Hine-nui-te-pō, “the goddess of death” (p. 174).

Each Māori child was dedicated at birth to one of the gods at their tohi (often spoken of as akin to a baptism ceremony) by the tohunga (Naumann & Winiata, 1989). Under the protection of the chosen god, children were encouraged to undertake the pursuits and activities of this god, such as the art of weaving for girls and warfare for boys (Jenkins &

Harte, 2011; Mead, 2003). Daily practices, such as that of karakia, were ways to ensure that the powerful spiritual connection between the gods who dwelt in the spirit world and man would continue to remain strong. It is the primal family, Ranginui, Papatūānuku, and their children, who are the atua, whose struggles and complex relationships with one another provide a framework upon which human behaviour is modelled and understood (Durie, 1998; Jenkins & Harte, 2011).

The fourth, and final, of Barlow's genealogies is the *genealogy of the canoes*; following the famous navigator Kupe's numerous voyages to Aotearoa New Zealand, a large contingent intent on migration arrived and settled. Those who arrived in the canoes, as well as the canoes themselves, provide the ancestral links upon which Māori identify their whakapapa and determine their collective and individual identity as tangata whenua. These ancestors continue to be acknowledged as spiritual guides, sources of comfort and givers of wise counsel for their descendants. Their endeavours provide guidance for attitudes and actions. Their dispositions, the essence of who they were, continues to exist within those who live in the present and those who are yet to enter the mortal realm. They walk alongside their descendants as "invisible rōpū" (MoE, 2009, p. 5) and their presence, although not always detected, is an essential component of the living. Thus, the process of layering never stagnates; it is always in a state of tangible and intangible construction.

What each of these genealogies offers for this specific research is an overlay of relationship pathways which seek to explain how the world(s) came to be and how entities are necessary to the formation these. Each genealogy accounts for a multiplicity

of connections which draw on the spiritual and temporal realms and note where pathways are forged and how crossings, and crossings over, can occur. The layering of these relationships relies on the remembering of ancestral knowledges and travellers, those knowledges and those who travel (in various forms) across space-time boundaries. It also calls on the active remembering of those who are the intended recipients of treasures handed down via this intergenerational transmission.

5.7 Space-Time Connections to Tūpuna

...We are reminded that we are always travellers in our life's journeys...The whakataukī, '*nā ngā ringaringa tohunga maha koe i rautaka*' (you have been fashioned by the hands of many experts) also gently reminds us that there are always timeless companions (hoa-pūmau) with us, at every stage of our lives. (Pohatu, 2015, p. 33)

Graham (2009) uses the term *tāwhaki* to refer to a Māori ancestor; however, as this is an unfamiliar term to me, and one that I have not observed within the literature I have sourced, I have elected to use the term *tūpuna* (or tipuna). Tūpuna denotes an elder, two generations older, or who is identified as an ancestor from whom one has descended (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1997).

Tūpuna breathe life into the living; those who have passed into the world of spirits can remain present to act as spiritual guides (Mark & Lyons, 2010; T. Pokaia, personal communication, 5 March, 2011). These spiritual guides may make themselves known to a

particular individual or may deliver their message through a matakite (to be explored later in this chapter) (Ngata, 2014; Valentine, 2009).

Ko tō ngākau ki ngā taonga a ō tīpuna Māori sustains the rich and complex historical narratives of Māori. Drawing on “nga taonga tuku iho (treasures handed down)...lays a whāriki...for others to follow” (Jenkins & Harte, 2011, p. xi). Taonga handed down from ancestors provide the very essence of life, including a wealth of messages denoting the place of the celestial, spiritual, physical and material worlds and the creation of the child (MoE, 2009; Rameka, 2015). Inherent to these taonga handed down are understandings of the tangible, what may be seen, and the intangible, what may be felt, just as they themselves are also a taonga.

Writers such as Pohatu (2015) speak of the journeys their tūpuna may take. Specifically, she refers to her tūpuna “in their ‘world’, travelling in ‘parallel columns’ ...with and alongside me, my world and kaupapa” (p. 34). She uses the following affirmation to further acknowledge their presence and significance within all facets of her life, “he hoa-haere tonu ōku mātua tīpuna i tēnei kawenga ōku...I realised that my parent and grandparent generations were my constant travelling companions in this journey” (p. 34).

These taonga take many forms and exist in a multi-layered and intricate system of beliefs, values and systems of knowing and being. Therefore, if engaging in relationships, and having a range of differing companions who may appear during times of the lifespan, constitute a belief system and practice recognised and handed down by ancestors, then it

would be correct to recognise, acknowledge and incorporate these into our lives (T. Tangiora, personal communication, 31 July, 2018).

Occupying an integral place within creation, pūrākau and whakapapa ancestors continue to make their presence felt in numerous ways within rituals and general day-to-day interactions. For example, within the powhiri process, “the ancestors of both [visitor and host] are carried on their shoulders” (Davis, 2005, p. 191) and are acknowledged within karanga and whaikōrero (Mead, 2003). In this way they are accepted as familiar and significant and their presence is accounted for.

The significance of the concept of spirit, and of connections with the spiritual, is that it is deemed to be inherent within kaihau-waiū, which as previously denoted firmly locates the child as a child of the gods, a child of their whakapapa and a recipient of ancestral inheritance. One specific aspect of kaihau-waiū I wish to focus on in more detail now is the connection to wairua and why this is important to consider for this research context.

5.8 The Importance of Wairua

Wairua encompasses two key elements of spiritual existence, *wai* denoting water, and *rua* meaning two (Pere, 1991). The term appears to imply a culturally located example of a superposition (see Chapter Three), whereby two entities whose presence or existence may be paradoxically considered to be oppositional, are necessary to provide balance (Taitimu, 2007; Valentine, Tassell-Mataamua & Flett, 2017). However, Pere (1991) advises caution as whilst water is necessary for survival (gives and sustains life), it can also take or

be the taker of life. To ensure harmony requires an awareness of when these two aspects may not be in balance (Barlow, 1991). What could be drawn on here is that without a holistic approach to understanding the worlds of the child, harmony and balance will be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

For Mead (2003), all things possess wairua, a “‘soul’ or ‘spirit’” (p. 54). This includes the earth and all living creatures (Barlow, 1991; Furbish & Reid, 2003). The child growing inside her mother’s womb has wairua that lies in a dormant state until the eyes are formed; a time within her development where she is capable of basic thought (Best, 1922; Mead, 2003). Wairua is also believed to exist inside and outside of the body, including being present even after death (Best, 2005; Reed & Calman, 2013). Therefore, it is considered immortal (Barlow, 1991) which has specific implications for this thesis as “A consequence of immortality is that the universe is inhabited by wairua. They roam in space, forests, on mountains, and are believed to be human souls. They are all around us but we cannot see them” (Mead, 2003, p. 55).

A supporting point made by Best (1922) is that a key feature of wairua is its capacity for movement and travel. Therefore, various travel companions can journey through the veil believed to separate the celestial and temporal worlds, as his following statement affirms:

The *wairua* of the Maori is a sentient spirit, the soul of precise anthropological nomenclature. It leaves the body at death, but it can also do the same during the life of its physical basis. Thus it leaves the body during its dreaming-hours to wander abroad. (p. 6) ...hence we see distant places and persons in our dreams. I have heard natives say, “I went to the spirit-world last night and saw So-and-so” – mentioning some dead person. (Best, 1922, p. 7)

Spirits who do not make their way to the realm of the dead (or who do not stay there) fall under the category of kēhua, or ghost (M. Smith, personal conversation, 5 July, 2011).

Reed (2002) suggested that kēhua are the wairua, or soul that never reach “their final destination” (p. 75), so they stay entrapped in the physical world and continue “to plague mankind” (p. 75). However, it appears presumptuous to claim that all kēhua, or wandering souls and spirits of the dead, are hostile and malicious in nature without further specific research into the presence and the potentiality of these entities to be primarily maleficent.

Best’s (1922) work includes a wealth of information on wairua and kēhua, although his observations of Māori clearly showed that he aligned their belief system with the folklore expected of barbaric and uncivilised peoples. However, his writings do offer innumerable mention of forms that may be taken by those who have passed into the spirit realm, whether they are visible as an apparition or whether they may pass through the world of living mostly unnoticed. When describing what wairua may be interpreted as, he suggested that wairua “denotes a shadow” (p. 6). The use of the word shadow is curious, as it can imply that the wairua is between the dark and light, thus causing a shadow to be cast or it could indicate that a shadow is an entity that follows closely alongside.

Mention is made by Best of the ways in which the dead may return, and thus may be noticed by the living; for example, the arrival of a flock of moriorio birds signified that kēhua were about to make an appearance. The appearance of bodily ailments, signs of mental derangement or incoherent and hallucinatory speech may also be due to the presence of the dead causing harm to the living or using the living as an instrument via

which their messages may be relayed to others. Some of these themes intersect with concerns expressed within Euro-western literature examined within the preceding chapter. In such instances, it appears that the matakite or matatuhi (see following section), seer, is needed in order to receive and decipher such messages which he deemed unable to be known to the person who does not possess the specialised skill of the tohunga.

Literature does caution that not all entities who visit the living are considered benevolent. For example, the term *kikokiko* is a term used to define spirits whose characteristics are determined to be malevolent in nature (Best, 1922; Makereti, 1986; Reed, 2002). Such spirits are often attributed to the wairua of stillborn children who can invade the body of another. It appears that the concepts of *kikokiko* (malevolent spirits) and *kēhua* (ghosts that may haunt) instil trepidation and fear, primarily as their preferred time to move is believed to be at night. They are thus able to enter into the minds and bodies of the living as they enter into a dreamlike state (Best, 1922; Reed, 2002). In order to avert such occurrences, a *karakia* is spoken as a protective mechanism used to counteract potential harm. The following example by Makereti (1986) tells of one such instance:

A case of premature birth seldom happened in the old days, and when it did, was supposed to be caused by the mother's breaking of the laws of tapu. A Tohunga then had to perform a *karakia Takutaku* over the woman to send away the wairua (spirit) of the unformed child, which was supposed to fly about in space – or it might enter a *mokomoko* (lizard) – and do harm to living people. A wairua of this kind, having never been properly formed, would never know any feeling of affection or love, and so would only try to harm. (p. 121)

Taking the above into account, it appears unlikely that the entities young children tend to engage with are kikokiko, as their presence is not generally considered within current literature to cause fear or dread for a child. Moreover, interactions (here I draw on my own autoethnographic experiences in Chapter Eight) appear to occur primarily during the daylight hours. However, as with all relationships, diversity is a key and consistent feature so a one-size-fits-all assumption should not be automatically applied without knowing the specific context.

5.9 Mauri of People, Places and Things

Mauri is generally translated as “life force” (Durie, 2003, p. x) or “life-essence” (Barlow, 1991, p. 83). It exists within all living things and defines how each will live “within their own realm and sphere” (Barlow, 1991, p. 83) alongside the entanglement commitments that are shared, many of which have been explored within previous sections of this chapter. Durie (2003) offers the following explanation of mauri:

Mauri...embodies two concepts. First, far from being static it implies a dynamic force; and second, it recognises a network of interacting relationships. Though the mauri of each object is separate, they share at least two commonalities: energy and vitality. No rock, or river, or tree, or person is entirely dead; shape and form are maintained by the spatial arrangements within cells, between cells, and across the whole, and the mauri may be conceptualised as a total energy package adding value to the individual components, creating as it were an integrated life force and conferring a meaning beyond the vision of the human eye. (p. x)

For Barlow (1991), mauri is inextricably linked to creation genealogy as a special power bestowed by Io. He goes on to say, “When a person is born, the gods bind the two parts of body and spirit of his being together” (p. 83). Upon death, the two parts of the body,

the physical body and the spirit, are no longer able to stay intertwined and thus must separate (Barlow, 1991; Mead, 2003). This sentiment is explained further within Barlow's (1991) writing:

He Manawa ka whītikitia, he mauri ka mau te hono. Ko te hunga mate kua wehe koutou i te hono, kōkiri wairua ki te tihi mauri aituā.

Ka tāreparepa mai te mauri ora ki te ao: ka tāreparepa atu te mauri mate ki tua o te ārai.

The heart provides the breath of life, but the mauri has the power to bind or join. Those who die have been released from this bond and the spirit ascends the pinnacle of death.

The mauri enters and leaves at the veil which separates the human world from the spirit realm. (pp. 82-3)

Mauri exists within animate and inanimate objects; for example, inanimate objects endowed with mauri include a home or a stone or sacred object. These were often placed under the blessing of a departmental god for safeguarding to keep the person, or iwi, prosperous and safe from harm (Mead, 2003; Reed, 2002). Durie (1998) points out "Distinctions between inanimate and animate objects are therefore blurred, because each is afforded a spiritual existence which complements the physical state. Nothing is lifeless" (p. 23).

This could provide further insight into alternative ways of tackling some of the definition difficulties raised within Chapter Four. Several authors noted the wide scope of relationships young children may have and the problems of trying to determine how these may fit into the ascribed category of an IC. What Durie (1998) offers to this is the

potential to view life within all these multiform relationships; there is no conflict nor are there limitations.

So, what could the child bring to this dynamic? What could they know differently that is vital to consider further? To re-turn the focus to the specificities of this research intent, I now explore the concept of *matakite*, the ability to *see* differently.

5.10 Matakite

The term *matakite* encompasses two core tenets: the person who is the seer and the experience of having visions (Best, 2005). *Matakite* refers to a person, or the act/experience of, being able to see something or someone with what surpasses what is considered to be usual human vision (Taitimu, 2007). The term *matatitiro* may be used interchangeably to denote a person who has the ability to see, or look for something, that others cannot (Tikao & Beattie, 1939).

The following passage from Best (2005) offers insight into the various concepts embedded within *matakite*:

As a noun the word *matakite* denotes a seer, any person believed to be possessed of second sight, one who practices divination; also any act of divination, or any utterance that embodies a prophecy or augury. The terms *mata* and *kite* are also employed separately to denote such an utterance, while *matatuhi* is used as is *matakite*, to define a seer, It is also used in an adjectival sense, as in *he tangata matatuhi* (an oracular person, one who practices divination). Such a diviner is also termed a *tangara titiro mata*, or *tohunga titiro mata*; in some cases the form

tiro *tiro mata* is used; *matamata aitu* also denotes a seer. The word *mata*, in ordinary speech, denotes the eye; *kite* means “to see, to discover, to perceive”; while *tiro* and *titiro* mean “to look”. (p. 278)

Conceptual beliefs about visions, specifically considering the hearing of voices and seeing of faces as evidence of madness and pathology, were introduced within the discussion of textual accounts on ICs in Chapter Four. It was noted in this chapter that hearing and seeing are culturally mediated as well as contextually situated (Mills, 2003; Ngata, 2014; Walker, 1990).

Two recent Aotearoa New Zealand doctoral theses draw on the integral interplay that exists between *wairua*, *matakite*, Māori wellness and wellbeing, and provide timely insight into the various intuitive experiences which may be evident across the lifespan.

Valentine’s (2009) work investigated the importance of *wairua* in understanding Māori perspectives on well-being and Ngata (2014) examined the possibility that some Māori who are diagnosed as mentally ill may be experiencing spiritual visitations which align to the concept of *matakite*. Each author included textual references in which mention was made of children, specifically how a child’s extra-sensory perception or second sight may enable them to see and listen across realms. Neither author viewed this capacity as concerning; rather, it was spoken of as a *taonga*. This understanding acknowledges the *kaihau-waiū* and *tohi* a child may receive and highlights the importance of positive enculturation in order to recognise, and therefore enhance, these *taonga*.

Each author recounts various stories, of their own or of another, in which there is travel. This may be the travel of a living person into an otherworldly dimension or the travel of a

visitor (known or unknown) to the temporal realm. What is significant within the argument of each thesis is the importance of recognising and upholding ancestral and spiritual inheritance in meaningful and respectful ways. Each traveller therefore comes with their own stories, which are made visible for the messenger to receive (Ngata, 2014). The writers are careful to caution that not recognising or upholding the inheritance can have detrimental and even disastrous implications for an individual, a community, and a way of life.

One particular example of noteworthy mention for this specific thesis is detailed within Valentine's (2009) writing. A story is shared by a research participant whose daughter is described as a matakite. In this vignette, a relative who has passed into the spiritual realm sought to make contact with the living realm. In a phone conversation between father and daughter, the daughter relates that an uncle who has died was standing at the foot of the bed with three other men dressed in suits standing alongside him. In this instance, Valentine suggests that the point of communication between the uncle and niece is his request for her to sing him the waiata, *Purea Nei*. The father recognises this waiata as symbolic and says to his daughter, "So what he is asking you to do is to set his mates free" (p. 66).

5.11 Hoa-haere

Te Ao Māori does not leave each generation to its own to "figure out" how to undertake its purpose and obligations. It has fashioned *hoa-haere* (valued

travelling companions) that journey through time, constantly available, waiting to be invited into our contexts, Kaupapa and relationships. (Pohatu, 2015, p. 241)

Hoa-haere, crucial and inseparable cultural companions, appear in literature as partnering tikanga and kawa (Keelan & Woods, 2006; Pohatu, 2003, 2011; Tapsell & Woods, 2008).

Keelan and Woods (2006) position hoa-haere as “companions providing depth in application” (p. 6), stating that they are the attributes and attitudes endowed and applied by a person to support tikanga and kawa practices, such as the following identified by Pohatu (2011):

te whakaaro (thought), te rongo, (intuitively knowing), te mahara (reflection), te whiriwhiri (discussion and interaction), te kōrerorero (engaging in valued talk) and te wetewete (analysis)...The patterns of cultural and spiritual interpretation are considered transferable to any kaupapa that Māori participate in. Deeper readings of Māoritanga are then given ongoing opportunities to inform kaupapa, thereby becoming hoa-haere (essential reminders), as Māori struggle to ‘make sense’ of the applicability of our cultural capital in each new time. (pp. 9-10)

Hoa-haere, within this context, align with tikanga and are put in place, through people, places and things, to ensure that the principles of tikanga are upheld and applied optimally. As previously noted by Pohatu (2015), the concept of hoa-haere can be used in a broader sense to encompass a variety of companionship relationships. Not only does hoa-haere provide companionship for tikanga, it can also be viewed within two interconnected paradigms viewed here as complementary rather than contradictory (M. Smith, personal communication, 5 July, 2011):

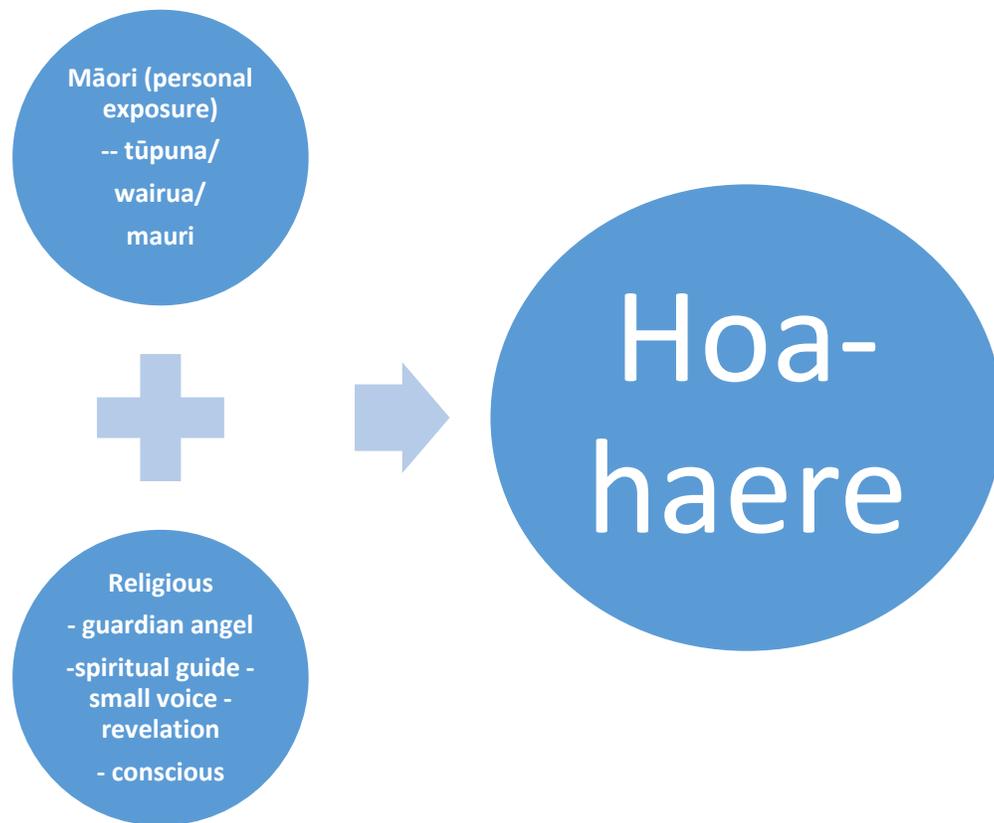


Figure 6 Components of Hoa-haere

The above image offers an interpretation of hoa-haere which comprises personal exposure and a religious component. Each is considered to enhance the other, especially in relation to melding traditional Te Ao Māori and Christianity. The religious component includes the presence of a guardian angel, whether the presence is known to the person or not. The guardian angel benevolently watches over and safeguards the person. The spiritual guide offers advice to the person and, in this instance, the hoa-haere is revealed as a small, inner voice of reason or wisdom, or through an epiphany or message. Hoa-haere may also be experienced as a calmness or stillness, a feeling of completeness (Pohatu, 2015). The hoa-haere, or their message of guidance, may appear as a dream or

through the emotional connection to a passage found within scripture or within karakia, whakataukī and/or waiata. As a component of consciousness, the hoa-haere is there to safeguard the integrity of the person, their tūpuna and their cultural knowledges.

Personal exposure is evidenced through the presence of kēhua. In this instance, they are akin to an apparition, and their presence appears to be perceived as comforting and usual rather than as worrying or maleficent. However, their presence may be recognised as cautionary in nature, warning the person to be vigilant and/or to proceed with care.

Another way to consider notions of hoa-haere is to use the term *hoa-haerere*; “to go around with, to be alongside, to be with you all the time” (M. Smith, personal communication, 24 February, 2015). In this way a hoa-haere is therefore conceptualised to be like tūpuna who “travel through time” (Pohatu, 2015, p. 37) and sit on the shoulders of the living (McNeill, 2005).

Hoa-haere therefore provide an interesting way to further conceptualise the form, function and roles that the companions of young children may take. They are culturally compatible travelling guides which offer comfort, wisdom and support. As such, their companionship can be viewed as an integral component to how the concept of relationships is understood, and enacted.

5.12 Final Thoughts

Text explored within this chapter sought to bespeak differing relationships to those which have traditionally been advanced and accepted through efficacious Euro-western textual accounts. There was also an intent to draw on and weave into this chapter elements identified as conceptually significant within my kirituhi kotahi. The intent was to re-turn (Barad, 2007) to knowledge which has previously been subjugated from text (Foucault, 1981) to offer an alternative perspective on how relationships fashioned outside of the temporal realm offer insight, can be seen as usual and familiar and may offer wisdom and guidance.

What was noticed within these explorations is that Māori pūrākau contain a wealth of cultural and ancestral messages to inform and uphold sophisticated and complex epistemological and ontological approaches to conceptualising the various relationships, and relationship companions, who may feature within the lifespan. There is a holistic and complex system of interweaving apparent within the various concepts explored, with key features being the continuous overlap of realms and the aspiration to conceive of a multitude of possibilities which may be accounted for. There are spaces of mystery and spaces where new knowledge dwells, waiting to be revealed or reclaimed.

As identified earlier in this chapter (see 5.1), the sentiments explored sit outside of my cultural and ancestral inheritance. They are known to me primarily through my personal and professional travels and via the intimate relationship I share with my daughter, Hine. In this way they have become my companion as she is mine and I am hers.

The chapters to follow will explain how I approached the new learning offered to me through my chosen research methodology and my recollections of, reflections on and theoretical inquiries about my experiences of being Hine's mother.

Chapter Six

Taking an Autoethnographic Path into Research

By understanding ourselves in narrative, as always living in the midst of a yet-to-be completed story, we see ourselves both in the process of continuously becoming and in a state of being. Such understandings shake up the conceptions we might have of truth...Each narration casts a different light on the same series of events. Neither is true; nor is either false. (Kouritzin, 2000, p. 5)

Ruptures occur when the supposedly fundamental arrangements binding together assumptions are challenged and changed (Foucault, 2005). When this happens, agential cuts (Barad, 2007) to established claims create possibilities to look differently into unresolved problems inherent within current theoretical understandings of culturally resonant phenomena. This requires a theoretical undoing to destabilise interpretational configurations which have to date held pervasive Euro-western declarations of the form, function and significance of the various entities, as companions, who may share the lives of young children (see Chapter Four).

Chapter Five proposed that relationships can be configured in many ways and explained that cultural accounts of multiform companions are a customary feature of Māori pūrākau. Notions of separateness, such as presence and absence (see Chapter Three, 3.2) are put under pressure as these are inexorably bound together, creating a patterning where the boundaries of the temporal and spiritual are constantly being remade dependent on the context.

Patterning influences which stories and whose stories may come to light as the research process unfolds. As the quote introduced at the beginning of this chapter highlights, each

story is therefore always in a state of travel, encountering and incorporating various complex constructs, traces and resistance. As previous chapters have noted, there is a raft of assumptions, definitions and intricate pathways woven within the topic of this thesis. Each carries its own ontological and epistemology suppositions regarding who may hold this knowledge and who can be considered as worthy recipients of this knowledge.

Prior thesis chapter travels (see Chapters Three and Four) have identified research gaps which provide opportunities for the emergence of new pathways into this complex research topic exploring social and cultural constructions of young children's companions within the early childhood years. Preceding chapters have offered insight and resistance into the varying assumptions and claims Euro-western theorising has put forth which this chapter now builds on.

This chapter outlines the approach and the design of the autoethnographic research undertaken, which has called for a new strategy for this chapter' organisation. This chapter has been organised into the following three key components: (1) I offer a background to my selected methodology, autoethnography; (2) I explore key tenets and complexities of autoethnography as a research methodology utilising a literature review; and lastly (3) I identify how my chosen methodology aligns to my Conceptual Framing (Chapter Three). Embedded within this chapter narrative is the literature engaged with to provide the guiding methodological foundation for this aspect of the thesis. The key tenets of autoethnography have been closely grappled with due to the personal nature of this thesis inquiry and the entangled relationships and culturally mediated understandings

which have been identified as an integral component of the past, present and future as seen in indigenous terms.

6.1 Methodology Background

Qualitative methodology was selected as the most appropriate approach due to the situated and interpretive features of this research. Qualitative research brings its own philosophical assumptions to the field of social and cultural critical inquiry (Chang, 2008; Creswell, 2012) and tends to be favoured within educational settings as it acknowledges the uniqueness of an individual's own reality (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2014). By its very nature, qualitative research methods of inquiry resist the dominance of positivist approaches by legitimising the existence of multiple ways of knowing and inquiring about social and cultural phenomena (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Wall, 2008; Whitinui, 2013). For this multi-layered and intricate paradigm that is qualitative methodology, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) offer a generic starting place:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations...Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them... (p. 3).

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) suggest that a qualitative research approach endeavours "to retain the integrity of the phenomena being investigated" (p. 21). In this

way a multiplicity of voices and “alternative ways of knowing” (Braidotti, 2006, p. 6) can be used to shed light on phenomena which may dwell in visible and in hidden contested social and cultural terrain (Braidotti, 2006, 2013; Haraway, 1991).

The researcher’s epistemological and ontological understandings influence all facets of the research design, the type of methodology selected, and the methods used to carry out the research (Creswell, 2012; Mukherji & Albon, 2018). Within this specific research context, the design selected stemmed from my aspiration to explore other ways of conceptualising the companions of young children and what the subsequent implications could then be for ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand. This is complex terrain to navigate for researchers as they seek to align their philosophical presumptions to the field of inquiry they wish to pursue and as they traverse the multidimensional, and often contentious, paradigm of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Drilling down further, Creswell (2012) makes the following point:

...research involves differing levels of abstraction from the broad assessment of individual characteristics brought by the research on through the researcher’s philosophy and theory that lay the foundation for more specific approaches and methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. (p. 18)

The researcher must draw together their situated and contextually specific philosophical position and orient this alongside a theoretical framework to provide a socially, culturally and scholarly robust rubric to guide the research process (Creswell, 2012; Spry, 2001). Each phase emphasises that understanding human existence and behaviour requires the researcher to resist and challenge the traditionalist “detached, objective observer” (Cohen

et al., 2007, p. 19) viewpoint and acknowledge the role they themselves play as an agentic social actor (Holt, 2003; Reed-Danahay, 2009). In doing, so possibilities are provided for the researcher to construct and share their own richly woven situated narratives which can serve as “counterweights” (Saggio, 2011, p. 202) to dominant discourses and positivist research processes which frequently seek to exclude the self as subject (Denshire, 2014; Hartmann, 2003).

As I journeyed this research process and project, I was acutely aware that a direct linear research orientation was impossible to implement due to the particularities of my life. This can be seen within my kirituhi kotahi (see Chapter One) which acknowledges the complicated knottiness and various ancestral, cultural and social crossings inherent within my personal and professional life. These invariably provide an entangled weave within this specific academic context as I explored what else could be known and thought about young children’s companions who are unseen to others. The following two statements were influential as I sought to consider my research approach and how I conceptualised my location within this research context:

I write in order to change myself in order not to think the same things as before (Foucault, 2000, pp. 239-240).

I can discover only insofar as I can interpret my experience (Ricci, 2003, p. 590).

As Denzin (2014) asserts, “a life is a social text, a fictional, narrative production” (p. ix); so who can say what may be produced, how that may occur, and what “*unbeknown knowledge*” (Uotinen, 2011, p. 1308) may be (re)claimed and made visible as encounters,

and disencounters (Braidotti, 2013), are experienced and interpreted? These sentiments are echoed throughout this research, as entities who may share our lives are no more isomorphic than those who hold a human form.

Hence, to provide an understanding of what my research methodology experience looked like in action, I first return to the significance of storytelling as a culturally located and appropriate mechanism of knowledge production and transmission and as an integral component of this research paradigm.

6.1.1 Storytelling: stories as the cornerstone of autoethnography

Because humans are born into a storied world, they naturally learn to make sense of it through their own as well as others' narratives. (Smith-Sullivan, 2008, p. 1)

Storytelling is not a new endeavour; its origins can be traced and mapped back to the dawning of humankind (Fisher, 1984). As a species, "humans are storytelling organisms" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2) who have the cognitive capacity to understand and transmit internal representations of the world experienced via complex symbolic representation (Dow, 2006). This can be seen in the various explorations spoken of within Chapters One, Two and Six where layered storying appears as the foundation of Celtic and Māori knowledge creation and transmission.

It is via these complex sociohistorical storied representations that our own travels are imparted to others, and vice versa. This point is further emphasised within the following quote taken from Trouillot (1995):

Human beings participate in history both as actor and as narrators...In vernacular use, history means both the facts of the matter and a narrative of those facts, both “what happened” and “that which is said to have happened.” The first meaning places the emphasis on the sociohistorical process, the second on our knowledge of that process or on a story about that process. (p. 2)

A key point relevant for this thesis is that whilst all aspects of our lives are storied, “narrative is rarely entirely one’s own” (Morse, 2002, p. 1159). This offers different ontological and epistemological foregrounding to my Conceptual Framing (Chapter Three); however, due to the threading of cultural accounts this is fitting to include and explore. Doing so takes into consideration what research and theorising in the narrative tradition may provide to further enhance this complicated weave.

Our experiences are influential cornerstones of our socially and culturally constructed lives, and the lives of others, as the stories we tell are shared via intergenerational transmission and symbolic expression. These “stories of our lives” (Foster, McAllister & O’Brien, 2006, p. 45) are integral in the formation of our ancestral, personal, cultural, social and political identity as not only do they mirror the “complexity of the human existence” (Foster et al., 2006, p. 45), they also illuminate the process of how we discover who we are and our locations and pathways within the worlds that surround us. Aluli-Meyer (2006) refers to this as the act of “bearing witness” (p. 276), an approach through

which we are able to conceptualise a deeper truth about who we are and “why we do what we’re doing” (p. 276). Of particular interest for the story of this chapter and thesis is that what may be conceptualised as fantasy and fantastical storytelling for one person may be recognised as culturally significant and meaningful to another. Therefore, the companions of young children who may, for some, be conceptualised as imaginary (see Chapter Four), may be recognised by others as culturally compatible (see Chapters Two and Five).

6.1.2 Ethics of storytelling

Similarities can be drawn within this section to some of the key features examined in Chapter Four, in relation to Foucault’s (1984, 2005) practice of *parrhesia*. To build further on the main themes explored, such as the multi-layered discourses entangled within the practice of speaking and sharing one’s stories to a larger audience, González’s (2003) take on the ethics of storytelling was used. This approach was selected as being relevant to indigenous issues for thinking about how storytelling could be employed within this thesis.

González (2003) speaks of the sacred nature of storytelling, speech and “cultural reality” (p. 82) and offers four key ethics, or wisdoms, based on ancient indigenous teachings and traditions, which could underpin storytelling within a postmodern and postcolonial ethnographic context. These are salient and applicable to this research; they can provide a holistic framework within which the integrity of each of the following ethics is inter-

connected with the others. The ethics are, namely, accountability, context, truthfulness and community.

To be *accountable* is “the ability to account...When we are accountable, we are able to tell a story” (González, 2003, p. 83). It is how we tell our story, as our knowledge of a story and our ability to tell a story are inherently connected. For a story to be told, it “has to become part of us” (p. 83). Pathak (2010) describes this as an intricate dance that must occur for the autoethnographer; they must fluidly and simultaneously move “between the space of subject and object, storyteller and protagonist, researcher and researched” (p. 8).

The ethic of *context* is the engagement of accountability, the stage upon which the story is set (González, 2003; Pathak, 2010). Context “allows for naming the systems that shape, constrict, disrupt, inform both the story and the storyteller” (Pathak, 2010, p. 8) and provides the wider lens of “how the story lives [and travels] in the wider world” (p. 8). For González (2003), this ethic is one of “open-eyed mindfulness” (p. 84) to the environment that surrounds both the storyteller and the story being told. This perspective differs from that of Foucault and Barad (see Chapter Three) who, rather than focus on the experience of the individual, view the individual and context as collapsed. Nonetheless, this ethic is included as it is couched within my particular orientation to the configuring principles of an indigenous account.

“More than a simple consciously expressed truth” (González, 2003, p. 84), the ethic of *truthfulness* encompasses accountability and context but posits that to be truthful requires seeing “that which is on the surface not visible” (p. 84). Here, vulnerability,

courage and purpose are located, as to own, and use, one's voice "disrupts the scientific imperialist demand that knowledge must be measurable by variable analytics in a fixed, material world" (Pathak, 2010, p. 8). It is here that a reality relegated to invisibility by theory presumed and positioned as superior and by a colonist mindset can be disrupted by challenge and resistance (Pathak, 2010; Whitiui, 2013).

The fourth and final ethic of *community* "reflects what is created when naked stories are shared, and one opens both in expression and receipt of those stories" (González, 2003, p. 85). This ethic is underpinned by the understanding that one person's story is inextricably linked to that of others; no story can exist in isolation (Morse, 2002). As González (2003) highlights, "the ethic of community implies that once we step forward with an ethnographic tale, we can no longer feign separation from those with whom we have shared that story" (p. 85). Compassion is identified as instrumental within this ethic. In order to share stories, there must be a mindful and heartfelt intent to share our own experiences and point of view alongside an awareness and understanding that the stories of others may or may not be similar (Custor, 2014; Ellis, 1999; González, 2003). González (2003) asserts that the storyteller must demonstrate compassion, knowing that the "sharing of one's tale will make others uncomfortable – not because we have chosen to be harsh, but because they are unaccustomed to our experience of reality" (p. 85).

Embedded within each of the above ethics is the fundamental concept of respect: respect for self, for others, and for stories and storying. The complexity of such an approach requires that those who hold experiences or stories that differ from the content examined

are not viewed as oppositional; rather, the story of the researcher is viewed as one possibility and potentiality, because as Medford (2006) cautions, “autoethnographic scholars know that writing the Truth, or the objective count of *reality*, is not possible” (p. 853). There is space and place for the commingling of multiple truths, multiple stories and representations, regardless of congruence or contradiction (Freeman, 2015; Maric, 2011).

6.1.3 Counterstorytelling—stories from *elsewhere*

Whilst storytelling may be an integral part of our daily lives, within an academic context scrutiny must be applied to which stories are worthy of telling, how the storytelling occurs, and by whom (TKRI, 2013; Pathak, 2010; Smith, 2001). Here “counterstorytelling” (Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2012, p. 152), also referred to as “indigenous autoethnography” (Whitinui, 2013, p. 456), acknowledges power imbalances by privileging more than one perspective, more than one story. This is what Trouillot (1995) refers to as “a different kind of [narrative] credibility” (p. 8). Whitinui (2013) subsequently asks, “Whose story counts?” (p. 465). This could be particularly relevant in the case of young children who may speak of different kinds of stories about the companions who may share their lives, especially when such companions are usual features of their cultural storying (see Chapters Two and Five).

As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, those with the loudest voices and widest audiences seem to provide the grand narratives upon which others then build and weave their own experiences around. This macro-microstoria discourse speaks of the enmeshed

and overlapping network of socially and culturally tangled web-like relationships that inform where an individual may be located and by whom (Boje, 2001; Foucault, 1976, 1980; Muir, 1991). What is evident is that there is omission of the stories and lives of those whose narrative may not fit with the larger macro-narrative, those whose stories have not been historically considered worthy of counting, specifically within a colonial context (Foucault, 1982; Mikaere, 2011; Smith, 2001). The intricate relationships that form their everyday lives are, as previously identified, subjugated, evacuated and obscured from texts. However, as Boje (2001) claims, the clues and traces are there for those who choose to look and to bring these stories (back) to light as “Societies do put their history into grand narratives, mostly great man narratives...Stories have a situated context...Microstory has the potential to trace acts of resistance of ‘little people’ to the grand narratives that embed their lives” (p. 55).

The little people denoted in this context are the corporeal beings whose knowledges, travels and voices have been, and continue to be, viewed as different and of less value, so are relegated to the margins (Foucault, 1980). This argument could be drawn on as relevant in considering how young children also may show resistance to Euro-western grand narratives which tend to relegate their companions that are unseen to others to the imaginary. Feminist writer Haraway (1991) makes the point that whilst “some differences are playful; some are poles of world historical systems of domination. ‘Epistemology’ is about knowing the difference” (p. 159).

A further point Haraway makes which is applicable to draw on is that traditional constructs of human-animal and conversely *other* have created ideological and territorised spaces. She suggests that there can be “boundary breakdowns... [and]...breached bound[aries]” (p. 151) which can be critically analysed to determine the various coded, and encoded, ways we read our world. This enables us to re-interpret the impreciseness of traditional Euro-western concepts of the corporeal and non-corporeal and to challenge the notion of fixed binary categorisations that were problematised earlier within the conceptual framing (Chapter Three).

It is from here that my story now travels. My journey with autoethnography now crosses to textual points of reference from selected literature to identify established threads of potentiality which may appear within the warp and weft of this methodological inquiry.

6.2 Autoethnography as Methodology

The various benefits and pitfalls of qualitative methodology within many disciplines has been, and continues to be, critically examined and scrutinised by a range of authors (e.g., see Anderson, 2006; Behar, 1997; Denzin, 2006, 2014, Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Ellis, 1999; Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011; Spry, 2001, Tolich & Davidson, 2011). Rather than specifically comment on this comprehensive discussion, my focus is on autoethnography, understanding that some of the themes covered invariably intersect, critique and address wider conversations and concerns often levelled at qualitative methodology.

My initial engagement with autoethnography drew on the following definition offered by Custor (2014):

Autoethnography is a creative process. It is an artistic tool of deep inquiry. It cuts and chisels at the stone of our being in order to reveal a marble statue inside our many layers of coal. It is also an innovative tool because it promotes reevaluation, reinterpretation, and reinvention from the inside out. (p. 7)

As a general guideline, the three central components of the word autoethnography are: *auto*, drawing on an orientation to self and “being directed from within” (Ricci, 2003, p. 593); *ethno*, how sense is made of people, culture and culturally mediated experiences (Behar, 1997; Ellis & Bochner, 2000); and *graphy*, the method and form through which the process of research is represented (Chang, 2008; Ricci, 2003; Wall, 2006).

Autoethnography is thus a means through which the depicted experiences or voices of an individual or group of people may be graphed and charted (B. Davies, personal communication, July 7, 2015). It is context-driven and captures the visceral alongside the theoretical so the emphasis that each autoethnographer places on each component, or axis, within their individual research process varies (Chang, 2008; Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Autoethnography, described by Anderson (2006) as “personal or self-narrative research” (p. 373), provides the researcher with opportunities to collect their viewpoint of a particular time and of particular experiences using introspective inquiry (Sotirin, 2010). It is through the personal that we ascribe meaning to the social, cultural and other worlds in which we live (Denshire, 2009, 2014). It is, as Chang (2016) observes, the researcher’s

own experiences which produce the “primary data to analyse and interpret the sociocultural meanings of such experiences” (p. 444).

A retrospective voice is generally used by the researcher as they seek to travel across time and weave their own narrative accounts of aspects of their everyday life raising “provocative questions about social agency and socio-cultural constraints” (Reed-Danahay, 2009, p. 28). However, Ellis (1999) contends that, as a methodology, it is difficult to offer a definitive definition of autoethnography due to its dynamic and continuous movement. This is primarily because:

Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience, then they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations... (Ellis, 1999, p. 673)

By foregrounding the self, disruption to “the traditional academic voice” (Pathak, 2010, p. 1) occurs by “reveal[ing] the fractures, sutures and seams of self interacting with others in the context of researching lived experience” (Spry, 2001, p. 712). Thus, autoethnography is “both process and product” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 1) and acknowledges “the inevitable overlaps between the maker and the made” (Freeman, 2015, p. 919). Research is grounded on personal experience (Pitard, 2016) and the researcher themselves is an integral component, “an ethnographic exemplar” (Naidoo, 2012, p. 3); “the

epistemological and ontological nexus upon which the research process turns” (Spry, 2001, p. 711).

Autoethnography has been likened to the opening of Pandora’s Box (Behar, 1997; Forber-Pratt, 2015), raising the question, “Who can say what will come flying out?” (Behar, 1997, p. 19). Gifts alongside turmoil may be unleashed in the opening; however, as Clarke and Friese (2007) observe, it is “the complications, messiness, and denseness of actual *situations* in social life [that] are [the] central concerns” (p. 368) of autoethnography. There can be no disquieting of situations observed to be “complicated”, “knotty” and “messy” or tumultuous in nature, as to do so would hinder the possibility and potentiality of the generation of new ideas. If we are to “enact the worlds we study”, as Denzin (2006, p. 422) suggests, then indeed these are necessary precursors to evoking Behar’s (1997) claim that, “New stories are rushing to be told in languages we’ve never used before, stories that tell truths we once hid, truths we didn’t dare acknowledge” (p. 33).

The rise of autoethnography, alongside postmodern sensibilities that hold that “no method has a privileged status” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 961), has provided what Denshire (2014) refers to as a “blur of boundaries, crafting fictions and other ways of being true in the interests of rewriting selves in the social world” (p. 1). Such a rewriting of “self-other interactions” (Holt, 2003, p. 2) highlights the complexity of producing scholarly work whilst acknowledging that, as social actors ourselves, we cannot ever be completely removed from the phenomena we seek to examine (Allen, 2015; Barad, 2003; Holt, 2003; Reed-Danahay, 2009). As Fine (1994) argues, “despite denials, qualitative

researchers are always implicated at the [self-other] hyphen. When we opt, as has been the tradition, simply to write *about* those who have been Othered, we deny the hyphen” (p. 72).

6.3 Historical Underpinnings

The origins of autoethnography are generally attributed to Sir Raymond Firth, who used the term in his 1966 seminar on structuralism. Hayano (1979), attending this seminar, noted Firth’s reference to a 1928 argument in a public lecture between two Kikuyu tribesmen: Jomo Kenyatta, a native post-colonial Kikuyu tribal chief who later became the first president of independent Kenya, and L.S.B. Leakey, a British paleoanthropologist born and primarily raised in Kenya (Gripka, 2014; Muncey, 2010). According to Hughes, Pennington and Makris (2012), the inherent tension identified in this argument was premised on the following:

Both men claimed insider knowledge of Kikuyu customs. Born in Kenya and educated abroad, both men were acknowledged as Kikuyu tribesmen with doctoral degrees in anthropology. Elder et al. (2007) allude to their argument as choosing who has the right to represent a society—traditional, hypothesis-driven anthropology (from a man with a modern family history of “going native” in Kenya) or autoethnography (from a man with a modern family history of “being native” in Kenya). (p. 210)

This example illustrates a key discourse of autoethnography: the place of insider research, and who has the right to tell which story and to whom. These tensions will be revisited

later in this chapter. The term *autoethnography* again appeared in anthropologist Heider's (1975) account of his doctoral investigation into the ways in which sixty Grand Valley Dani school-aged children from the highlands of Irian Jaya, Indonesia, would respond to his question, "*akhuni nena hakakhatek?* People what they (customarily) do? What do people do?" (p. 4). He outlined his orientation to the research as "...what can be called a Dani auto-ethnography: 'auto' for autochthonous, since it is the Dani's own account of 'what people do'; and 'auto' for automatic, since it is the simplest routine-eliciting technique imaginable" (p. 3).

However, his approach to autoethnography has at best a vague resemblance to current methodological understandings, as the "self" in this context was not Heider but rather the Dani children as the informants (Chang, 2008). His use of the term is a cautionary illustration of the sometimes-ambiguous disjunctions that characterise autoethnography and the scepticism that is accordingly levelled at its ability to address concerns about validity and rigour (Anderson, 2006; Forber-Pratt, 2015; Tolich, 2010). What his text does highlight is the importance of the Dani people's own narrative and voice and, he concluded, their response "gives some sort of picture of the Dani's own view, or knowledge, or cognitive map of their world" (Heider, 1975, p. 9).

The term again appeared in Hayano's (1979) ethnographic text where it was used to "refer to a study of the ethnographer's 'own people'" (Chang, 2008, p. 47) as he explored the culture of card players in Southern California, himself included "as a card playing insider"

(Denshire, 2009, p. 57). Wolcott (2004) states that these people were “like himself” [Hayano] (p. 98) and goes on to say:

For Hayano, who admits to his pleasure at ‘risk-taking activities’, the poker room was where he was spending a lot of time. He decided he might as well write up what he was learning, and he needed to signal to his reader his advantaged position as a fellow player. (p. 98)

More recent interpretations of the term autoethnography have moved away from Heider’s definition and more closely align to that of Hayano.

Spry (2001) asserts, “Autoethnographic texts express more fully the interactional textures occurring between self, other, and contexts in ethnographic research” (p. 708).

Autoethnography is texturally rich, capturing and problematising the refractions that may occur at any given moment and recognising the broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives that exist within our socially and culturally mediated lives (Reed-Danahay, 2009).

Autoethnography and autoethnographic research tend to fall within four key styles: evocative, analytic, performative and transgressive. Whilst these four appear often within autoethnographic literature, they are only four of a much wider group of terms that can be applied to autoethnographic research depending on the researcher’s approach, the context, and the phenomena of inquiry. As ethnographic and narrative inquiry is the basis for all autoethnography to occur there is invariable overlap between each style.

In this specific research context, the two styles that I considered most influential, and therefore decided to examine further, were identified to be *evocative* and *analytic*, primarily due to my positioning in Chapter One. In this chapter I identified my desire to call into question, interrupt and challenge ECE's own historical, political, social and cultural accounts regarding which relationships are noticed, privileged, and conceptualised as being of importance, and conversely which have been rendered of less significance and therefore do not feature. To do so required stepping elsewhere to acknowledge the alternative forms that relationships, and therefore companionship, may take.

My own experiences as the mother of a visionary child – a child with different insight and knowledge and who has “encountered things that aren't tangible” (Ngata, 2014, p. 163) - were the catalyst for me to remake understandings of young children's companions. Excerpts from accounts of these experiences, alongside theoretical analysis drawn from the Conceptual Framing that was articulated (Chapter Three), provide the next layering which will be presented in Chapters Seven and Eight.

6.4 Evocative Autoethnography

Made popular in qualitative research such as that by Bochner (1997), Ellis (1999, 2004), Ellis and Bochner (2000), and Bochner and Ellis (2016), this genre of autoethnography turns the gaze onto the researcher and provides a vehicle through which experiences, feelings and interpretations of personal events are shared (Turner, 2013).

Autoethnography is sometimes labelled “confessional tales” (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 73),

“self-centric autoethnographies” (Chang, 2008, p. 51) or “heartful autoethnography” (Ellis, 1999, p. 669), due to its emotive nature. Experiences that have been recounted and shared include times of change and/or trauma and the journey of personal travel that occurred through the living of, and retrospective reflection on, often stigmatised social experiences (Anderson, 2006; Custor, 2014; Tolich, 2010). Examples of texts where this approach may be seen is in exploring personal experiences of child sexual abuse (Custor, 2014), abortion (Ellis & Bochner, 1992), responding to an ex-lover (Medford, 2006), daughter-mother relationship and Alzheimers (Malthouse, 2011), life with a parent who has paranoid psychosis (Foster et al., 2006) and anorexia nervosa (Spry, 2001).

Evocative autoethnography invites personal engagement for the autoethnographer and the reader alike, as “the evocative style leaves the narrative to resonate with the reader” (Struthers, 2012, p. 12). A central caution here is that vulnerability invariably exists, not only for the autoethnographer, but for those who appear within the story, and for the readers of these stories (Behar, 1997; Medford, 2006; Tolich, 2010). Vulnerability, and ethical responsiveness, are examined in more specific detail further in this chapter.

When writing is evocative and emotive, it can be viewed as unscientific (Anderson, 2006). Thus, there is a presumed absence of truthfulness, validity and scholarly rigour (Reed-Danahay, 2009), as self-narrative may be viewed as “moments quoted out of context” (Denzin, 2006, p. 423). These sentiments are addressed by Ellis (1999) who believes:

...if you viewed your project as closer to art than science, then your goal would not be so much to portray the *facts* of what happened to you accurately but instead to

convey the *meanings* you attached to the experience. You'd want to tell a story that readers could enter and feel part of. You'd write in a way to evoke readers to feel and think about your life and their lives in relation to yours. You'd want them to experience the experience you're writing about... (p. 674)

What evocative autoethnography offers to the knotty research project that constitutes this thesis is the possibility to assemble, and re-assemble, various accounts of my experience of being Hine's mother. The ability to draw on these experiences as the primary participant enables me to contribute the data I see as contextually relevant and pertinent to speak to my articulated research questions introduced in Chapter One. There is the potential to think through how these specific accounts could be instrumental in adding to the textual interlacing of theoretical and cultural patterning explored within preceding chapters whilst also inviting the reader of this text to be part of the unfolding story, rather than positioned as sitting outside of it.

6.5 Analytic Autoethnography

Contrarily, analytic autoethnography is considered to follow a more systematic and formal ethnographic method (Anderson, 2006; Struthers, 2012) to analyse events or phenomena. This approach is believed to differ from the "more free-spirited intuitive approach" (Chang, 2011, p. 14) offered by evocative autoethnography. Analytic reflexivity is emphasised alongside the use, and analysis of, theories to illustrate the process through which the researcher "construct[s] their knowledge of particular events" (Struthers, 2012, p. 12). This is where qualitative data, through self-storying, becomes qualitative evidence;

it is “data brought to bear on specific questions, theories or experiences” (Lincoln, 2002, p. 5). It seeks to “improve theoretical understandings” (Denzin, 2006, p. 420).

Its primary point of departure from evocative autoethnography is the incorporation of other participants. Whereas the researcher within an evocative autoethnographic context may be a central or the sole participant, analytic autoethnography casts the participation net wider in a bid to counteract problems that may arise from relying on self-narrative as the sole focus of the inquiry (Anderson, 2006; Chang, 2011; Wolcott, 2004).

Anderson’s (2006) five key features of analytic autoethnography provide the basis upon which analytic autoethnography is often understood (see Denzin 2006, 2014, Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Struthers, 2012). Denzin (2006) cautions that Anderson’s work illustrates a desire to pursue his own agenda and suggests that he seeks “to clarify and embed his approach in traditional symbolic interactionist assumptions” (p. 421). Regardless of his motives, Anderson’s work appears to be a central starting place to understand some core tenets of analytical autoethnography which he identified as:

...the researcher (a) is a full member in a research group or setting; (b) uses analytic reflexivity; (c) has a visible narrative presence in the written text; (c) engages in dialogue with informants beyond the self; (d) is committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena. (Anderson, 2006, p. 375)

This approach to autoethnography offers a way into destabilising the normative regimes of thought and truth spoken of by Foucault (see Chapter Three 3.5.2) by tangling together my autoethnographic experiences alongside the theoretical concerns I seek to address.

The theoretical problem at hand, which has been further complicated due to the historical overlay of Euro-western discourses holding in place established perspectives of the child, childhood and subsequently how their relationships are conceptualised, can then be interrogated to decipher where ruptures may occur when background assumptions are challenged (Foucault, 2005). This act has the potential to expand theoretical conversations to include greater attunement to culturally mediated knowledge of what may constitute reality and therefore which companions may be thought of as providing culturally compatible companionship to young children.

Each of these approaches to autoethnography aims to draw on researcher experience and reflection in order to better understand a cultural phenomenon. An evocative autoethnographic approach attempts to create personal emotional engagement with the reader so the reader can see, or imagine, themselves as having or sharing the experience shared within the text. The reader is therefore encouraged to feel a sense of connectivity with the researchers' experiences and feelings. Conversely, an analytic autoethnography approach offers autoethnographic narratives which tend to include others. The research gathered is examined alongside theoretical analysis in order to generate new insight into broader social and cultural phenomena (Anderson, 2006).

As previously mentioned, my autoethnographic approach initially favoured the taking the path of evocative autoethnography into this research context. However, as the research proceeded it became apparent that what I wished to achieve was more closely aligned to analytic autoethnography, as the desire was to dismantle and offer a speaking back, or kicking back (Barad, 1998), to what I had determined to be a narrow and restrictive

current take on the problem at hand: how young children's companions unseen to others may be theoretically conceptualised differently.

6.6 Troubling the Paradigm

Like all knowledges, the term autoethnography invites further critical investigation.

Autoethnography is not exempt from the scrutiny with which we examine all other aspects of our lives. Leaving the term untroubled does autoethnography no favours.

There must be encounters "of order with disorder" (Werbner, 2016, p. 454), as without movement there can be no travel. Movement is necessary as "meanings are always in motion" (Denzin, 2014, p. 37). Medford (2006) suggests that those who engage in autoethnographic writing must be more aware of and transparent about its faults and foibles; we should "tak[e] it to task; it [should] not [be] a blind love" (p. 859).

As noted earlier in this chapter (and within previous chapters), our lives exist within multifaceted spaces where experiences and meanings are continually overlaid in complex and situated ways. Wider criticisms levelled at the paradigm of qualitative research concerning fact, truth and truthfulness invariably target autoethnography as it, too, is contested terrain (Anderson, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Reed-Danahay, 2009). Much has been said on whether autoethnography can, or indeed should, attempt to answer these criticisms. Because autoethnography emphasises the personal, and memories are subjective, stories and perspectives are continuously influenced by a range of multiplex

interconnected historical and current social and cultural variables (Behar, 1997; Custor, 2014). In connection with these concerns, Freeman (2015) stresses that:

...to offer a truth as a fact is always problematic. It is also one of the greatest pitfalls of autoethnography. Describing our beliefs as truths makes them sound rather grand at the same time as it discourages challenge and when we confuse the truth of our memories with the fact of what really occurred we are generally heading for trouble. All writing balances on the razor edge of deception and description but few forms self-delude better (or worse) than autoethnography. (p. 920)

As noted in Chapter Three, the complex explorations and excavations of truth-based discourse, the mechanisms by which truth is produced and the social systems through which truth is exercised, were a core tenet of Foucault's (1980) large body of work. He highlighted the murkiness that exists between truth and what "is supposed to count as truth" (p. 118). The intricate task here is attempting to decipher what may be considered true, and thus observed as valid and indicative of reality, when discourses "themselves are neither true nor false" (p. 118). Of truth, Foucault posited:

...truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint...Each society has its régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (p. 131)

Within the context of autoethnography, truth, and being truthful, relate not only to what is included within the text, but also to what may be omitted, whether intentionally or not (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012). It was suggested by Trouillot (1995) that the “epistemological break between history and fiction is always expressed concretely through the historically situated evaluation of specific narratives... [in some instances] ...it matters little whether it is based on facts” (pp. 8-9).

Due to the personal nature of autoethnography, some details of an experience may not be considered appropriate, or ethical, to share with a wider audience due to the potential for harm (Tolich, 2010). Some details may not be considered salient or relevant to include, or some may be forgotten or distorted as memory wanes (Chang, 2008, 2016). Such omissions are referred to by Medford (2006) as “slippage”; the “slippage between Truth (or our experience of reality) and truthfulness because sometimes it seems appropriate” (p. 853). She observes that when stories are retold, there is invariably slippage and suggests, “the difference between what we know (or what we cannot remember) and what we write is *mindful* slippage” (p. 853).

Buzzard (2003) asserts that travel in itself is not sufficient to secure a relevant incarnation. What is meant here is that the “metaphor of knowledge *as* travel” (p. 63) must be enacted to ensure that ideas are not seen as solely representative, or belonging to, a localised and specialised group of people. His ideas have been borrowed for this context as they provide insight into the problematic conviction that autoethnography follows a linear and easy-to-replicate process. Just like all aspects of our lives, autoethnography is dynamic

and open to interpretation, agitation and interrogation. Disruption and fractures occur not only within the phenomena that autoethnography seeks to examine, they are also present within the fabric, structures and processes of autoethnography itself.

An area of autoethnography that is often the recipient of critical responses is that created by the shift from Hayano's approach of research in which the researcher is also a participant to research in which the researcher is the sole participant (Anderson, 2006; Wolcott, 2004; Tolich, 2010). To place emphasis primarily on the researcher raises concerns about autoethnography being self-indulgent and about insufficient fieldwork resulting in little transformative social action following the research process (Atkinson, 2005; Coffey, 1999; Ellis et al., 2011). Indeed Atkinson (2005) has been a strong and vocal advocate for autoethnographers to engage in a more disciplined and systematic approach to their research in order to allay these and wider academic concerns about the confusion caused by the proliferation of qualitative methods.

Many of these concerns are shared to some degree by Tolich (2010), who argues that the term *auto* is a "misnomer... [as]... the self might be the focus of research, but the self is porous, leaking to the other without due ethical consideration" (p. 1608). Thus, there is intermittent bleeding and blurring that inevitably occurs as the self "is a member of certain cultural groups connected to others" (Chang, 2016, p. 445).

In writing about oneself, others invariably appear in the text, whether directly or indirectly. Authors such as Ellis (1999) have tried to create fictitious characters based on a merging of real relationship partners to sit alongside the self. However, peer critique (see

Tolich, 2010) has determined that this approach is often flawed and raises ethical concerns about researcher conduct, informed consent, and ways of mitigating current and future harm for those who may appear either directly or indirectly within the text.

6.7 Traversing the Self-Other Hyphen

Another central aspect appears within Gannon's (2006) writing on autoethnography; she challenges the writer to go beyond what Freeman (2015) suggests could be potential "navel-gazing" (p. 924) or what Dickson (2011) refers to as "me-search" (p. 11). Me-search tends to leave the "speaking self relatively untroubled in the text" (Gannon, 2006, p. 477), which she asserts is necessary in order to engage in "deconstructive textual practices that represent and trouble the self at the same time" (p. 477) as the phenomena being examined. Dismantling and internalising disruptions of text and self are therefore key features of taking an autoethnographic approach.

Autoethnography, Berson (2016) cautions, "must move beyond insular journeys within the self to engage with the outside world" (p. 53). As previously indicated, notions of self and other are socially constructed and "knottily entangled" (Fine, 1994, p. 72) categories that require interrogation and dismantling in order to identify the ways in which each is created by, and thus is thought to exist, within the other. There can be no sense of self without a sense of the other, or of another for, as Foster et al. (2006) contend:

The 'self' is seen as continually connected to the social world, and constantly in flux. The very existence of 'self' is interwoven with that of social exchange so that

the self is in the exchange and only exists in its integration with relationship. Therefore, different selves may emerge in differing relationships, and thus, the 'self' is seen as belonging as much to the 'other' as to oneself... (p. 45)

"Betweenness" occurs within the blurred self-other boundaries, which requires "*working the hyphen*" (Fine, 1994). It is an "in-between space of zigzagging and of crossing" (Braidotti, 2006, p. 5). In a research context, this involves researcher and informants considering what is occurring within the negotiated space of sharing stores of knowledge (Carr & Lee, 2019) and determining the "negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequence" (Fine, 1994, p. 72). This is the site where discursive regimes are complicated and irremediably fragmented as "boundary breakdowns" (Haraway, 1991, p. 293) occur. As feminist and social activist hooks (2015) avows:

I am waiting for them to stop talking about the "Other," to stop even describing how important it is to be able to speak about difference. It is not just important what we speak about, but how and why we speak. Often this speech about the "Other" is also a mask, an oppressive talk hiding the gaps, absences, that space where our words would be if we were speaking, if there were silence, if we were there. This "we" is that "us" in the margins, that "we" who inhabit marginal space that is not a site of domination but a place of resistance. Enter that space. Often this speech about the "Other" annihilates, erases: "no need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author,

authority. I am still the colonizer, the speak subject, and you are now at the center of my talk.” Stop. (p. 233)

In her earlier writing, hooks (1994) built on Freire’s liberatory work to affirm her “right as a subject in resistance to define reality” (p. 53). Her struggle to rework the object-subject location of black women highlights the relentless and oppressive forces that continue to shape those who dominant discourse has sought to push to the “othered” margins. These are the bodies and voices whose resistance “threat[ens] to subvert and undermine all that [hegemonic discourses] were seeking to build” (p. 60).

6.7 Outsider-Insider Dichotomy – Resistance to Silent Authorship

As has been alluded to earlier in this chapter, writing about oneself invariably raises concerns about potential “blurred relationships between the researcher and the researched” (Muncey, 2010, p. 33). It is through the personal that we read, understand, and make sense of the social and cultural world (Denshire, 2014) and autoethnography “takes an overt stance against silent authorship and its implication of objectivity” (Ricci, 2003, p. 593). The following account by Muncey (2010) highlights this complexity and offers insight into her research journey which led to autoethnography:

It was ironic that I was doing research in order to understand people better, yet at the same time was being taught to view these people as devoid of any subjectivity. As my interest in one individual cohort member grew, my own story started to seep into my thinking. I started to consider whether my own story was deviant

because I found it was missing from the research I encountered in the literature...
(p. 5).

Therefore, not only is the researcher an integral element of the research, they are also required to critically reflect on their own experience of being researched (Naidoo, 2012). In this way the researcher is both the *process* and the *product* (Ellis et al., 2011). It is this very tension, and our own imperfections as social actors (Ellingson, 2006), that creates new spaces from which to better validate and interrogate the situated self in relation to wider social and cultural phenomena. As Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) assert:

Having a partial, local, and historical knowledge, is still knowing...Qualitative writers are off the hook, so to speak. They do not have to try to play God, writing as disembodied omniscient narrators claiming universal and atemporal general knowledge. They can eschew the questionable metanarrative of scientific objectivity and still have plenty to say as situated speakers, subjectivities engaged in knowing/telling about the world as they perceive it. (p. 961)

The re-bodying of research is inexorably connected to the re-bodying of the self. Within her writing, Ellingson (2006) argued for the visibility of the researcher's body and agency within health research; the same sentiments can be echoed and embedded within an educational context. Within the following excerpt, Ellingson (2006) claims:

It is the privilege of the powerful to leave their bodies unmarked...when...researchers' bodies remain unmarked—and hence naturalized as normative—they reinscribe the power of scholars to speak without reflexive consideration of their personality, whereas others' voices remain silent and marginalized by their marked status. (p. 301)

If the researcher's body, and voice, is evacuated from the stories they tell and from the research they create, then silent authorship prevails (Holt, 2003; Sparkes, 2000). This is what Fine (1994) referred to as seeking "to hide the researcher/writer under a veil of neutrality or objectivity...as if they were transparent" (pp. 73-74). Obscuring and erasing the researcher from the research diminishes the transformative action of autoethnography; for the researcher and for the wider audience who have access to the project (Ellis, 2007). This notion of silent authorship as an example of an objective and detached researcher (Charmaz & Mitchell, 1997) is likened to the Victorian expectation that a child is "to be seen (in the credits) but not heard (in the text)" (Sparkes, 2000, p. 22).

Parallels can be drawn with the constructions of an IC that were spoken of within Chapter Four. Two key concerns can be revisited here. Firstly, the paucity of perspectives in which such companions are viewed as anything other than created by the child continues to position the child as subject and their relationship as object and therefore able to be subject to the application of specific categorical markers. Secondly, the possibility that when a child speaks of a differing reality it can be held as true pushes against omnipresent Euro-western contentions. This is especially relevant, as children have insider knowledge due to the very fact that they are currently located in the socially and culturally constructed space of childhood.

The claim to insider knowledge is a contentious tenet of autoethnography. With this in mind, I now return to the aforementioned debate between Jomo Kenyatta and L.S.B.

Leakey and the dichotomy raised between “going native” and “being native” (Elder et al., 2007, as cited in Hughes et al., 2012, p. 210) and who may/can claim insider knowledge. These differing researcher orientations, or locations, are defined by Naaeke, Kurylo, Grabowski, Linton and Radford (2010): “emic” being a researcher who is a member of the culture or community, a “native”; and “etic” a researcher who is an outsider to the culture or community, a “non-native”.

“Going native” appeared as a phrase to describe the process whereby an anthropologist or ethnographer immersed themselves within the lives of the peoples they were studying (Kanuha, 2000). Anthropologists such as Mead (1928) lived amongst native or “primitive societies” (Mead, 1963, p. 220) to gather information about what life is like for these peoples. However, as an *outsider* writing an *insider* perspective there are inherent benefits and pitfalls. Firstly, our own experiences and bias shape our worldview and invariably influence the interpretive system used to decipher what may be considered as knowledge and thus worthy of studying (Foucault, 1984; Rameka, 2012; Smith, 2001). Secondly, the intricacies of the lives lived by others can only be observed if we are attuned to, and have opportunities to witness and experience, the social and cultural subtleties and nuances that exist. Thirdly, as an insider the researcher can strive to better comprehend a phenomenon which has been recognised as “commonplace but rarely elucidated” (Kanuha, 2000, p. 441). Lastly, the ‘fresh eyes’ we bring as an outsider may offer insight into tacit social and cultural practices by offering a “broader spectrum of voices” (Naaeke et al., 2010, p. 159).

6.8 The Vulnerable Self and Vulnerable Other

Autoethnographic research exposes vulnerability. The researcher is vulnerable due to the often revealing and introspective nature of this methodology (Holt, 2003). This is especially problematic when a researcher recounts past traumatic events or writes about experiences that locate other persons as central, or supporting actors, within the text (Tolich, 2010). Whilst such writing is often viewed as cathartic, as the researcher seeks to understand, and bring closure to, past and current events which may be traumatic, nonetheless where there is perceived risk there dwells uncertainty and vulnerability for all who appear within the text, directly or indirectly (Custor, 2014; Ellis, 1999; Tolich, 2010).

Where there is vulnerability there is the potential for harm. Tolich (2010) suggests that harm may not be immediate; it may occur in the future and autoethnographers need to anticipate and plan for this. He uses the following example to illustrate the way in which autoethnographic topics that delve into socially and/or culturally stigmatised events or experiences leave an indelible mark on the researcher's life:

Imagine living the moment now, not in the future. Like an inked tattoo, posting an autoethnography to a Web site or making it part of a curriculum vitae, the marking is permanent. There are no future skin grafts for autoethnographic PhDs. (p. 1605)

Such vulnerability makes us as researchers open to self-examination and to the scrutiny of others (Custor, 2014; Medford, 2006; Tolich, 2010). It lays bare and exposes aspects of our lives, alongside aspects of the lives of others who are invariably identified as relational characters (Ellis, 1999). The researcher is responsible for ensuring that the perspective

they take does not cause harm or detriment either to the cultural group being studied or to their knowledges and systems of ways of being (Naaeke et al., 2010).

Anthropologist Ruth Behar addresses key concerns about vulnerability, self and others, within her seminal text *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart* (1997). She makes the following claims about the inter-relationship between vulnerability and the researcher/writer:

Writing vulnerably takes as much skill, nuance, and willingness to follow through on all the ramifications of a complicated idea as does writing invulnerably and distantly. I would say it takes yet greater skill. When an author has made herself or himself vulnerable, the stakes are higher: boring self-revelation, one that fails to move the reader, is more than embarrassing; it is humiliating...

Efforts as self-revelation flop not because the personal voice has been used, but because it has been poorly used, leaving unscrutinised the connection, intellectual and emotional, between the observer and the observed.

Vulnerability doesn't mean that anything personal goes. The exposure of the self who is also a spectator has to use someone we couldn't otherwise get to. It has to be essential to the argument, not a decorative flourish, not exposure for its own sake. (pp. 13-14)

Behar also highlights the vulnerability that exists not only for the writer, but for those who may be the subject of the writing, and also for the reader and wider audience of the work. A vignette offered within her text exposes the complexities of her own introspective examination as she sought to grapple with the complexities, advising "When you write vulnerably, others respond vulnerably. A different set of problems and predicaments arise

which would never surface in response to more detached writing. What is a writer's responsibility to those who are moved by her writing?" (p. 16).

These are relevant concerns that autoethnography seeks to grapple with. However, to be vulnerable also offers potential for positive, transformative change and action. A point made by Custor (2014) is that the transformative nature of autoethnography is enacted through "our willingness to own and engage with our vulnerability [and this] determines the depth of our courage and the clarity of our purpose... [therefore]... [a]utoethnography by its very nature is engagement" (p. 4).

This leads to the following focus for this chapter: how my selected methodology draws on core tenets articulated within my Conceptual Framing (Chapter Three).

6.9 Conceptual Framing Connectivity

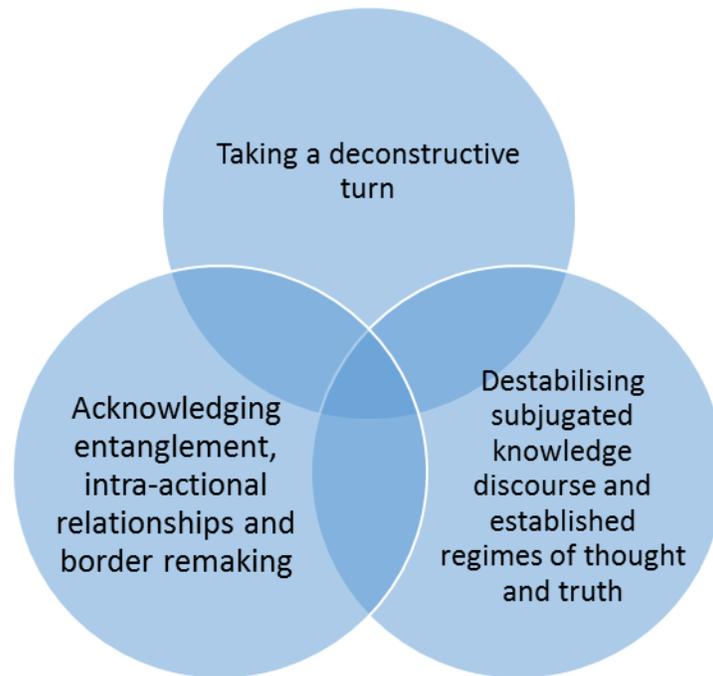


Figure 7 Conceptual Framing

The above image assembles core theoretical tenets encountered within my conceptual framing (Chapter Three). These are now carefully worked through in relation to my selected research methodology of autoethnography.

As identified earlier in this chapter, qualitative methodology is responsive to the existence of multiple ways of knowing and inquiring about complex and knotty social and cultural phenomena. This approach seeks to take apart in order to make sense, and subsequently meaning, of variegated ways into philosophical and theoretical problems which may be encountered (Derrida, 1981; Norris, 1987). By this, space is created for a multiplicity of voices to shed light on what a phenomenon could entail. Therefore, the potential of this research approach is to proffer counter-narratives to serve as alternative ways into

thinking about the inherent messiness of multiplicity, such as how young children may speak of their relationship encounters, regardless of whether or not these are our known experiences.

For Derrida (1991), a deconstructive move denotes a willingness to discern and analyse textual movement by examining what internal disruptions the text may reveal. By turning to what has already been described, there is the potential to agitate, dismantle and therefore speak of disjunctures (Derrida, 1994) which need to be resolved within established and pervasive Euro-western claims. These are the claims which have continued to position entities who may provide companionship for young children as existing primarily within *imagined* terrain. As Chapter Four indicated, the assertions circulating within Euro-western text about such companionship primarily locates these relationships in the imaginary. It was noted that fractures are emerging within these textual accounts, such as the small amount of research exploring alternative culturally mediated understandings of how the relationships may be conceptualised.

Unfortunately, there remains a paucity of culturally diverse textual accounts inquiring into this phenomenon which makes this research timely and necessary. The fundamental purpose of autoethnography is to be transformative and generate new understandings, which calls for border-work. Anzaldúa (1987), in her writing on re-working the Texas-U. S Southwest/Mexican border, asserted that engaging in border-work is to be located within shifting and often uncomfortable terrain. To breach a border is to “cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the “normal” (p. 3)

To go through the confines of the “normal” requires looking diffractively at the phenomena in question to push apart existing dualistic boundaries and structures “to figure difference differently” (Barad, 2014, p. 170) and restructure structures. However, the caution that needs to be applied here is that to do so does not make this autoethnographic research a text which seeks to add authoritative weight to this complex discourse. Rather, this text is but one account of a border breach which seeks to open up discursive space in the hope that divergent dialogue will occur.

Autoethnography is multi-layered and context driven, bringing together the visceral alongside the theoretical. By foregrounding the self, personal engagement occurs. Ruptures are made as text is read differently and interrogated in order to consider which new meanings may be revealed. This act can interrupt established truths which have held Euro-western claims in place by weaving into the research additional textual and cultural takes to further think about, and think through, what else could be considered. These are accounts which have previously been distanced from Euro-western text’s claim, that these companions are imaginary, has been predicated and advanced regardless of whether this may be the lived social and cultural experience of the child (Foucault, 1980). In this specific research context, it involves a widening of the textual scope to think with additional cultural narratives and to be attuned to alternative ways of speaking of companionship, to re-claim ancestral and cultural knowledges as powerful, valid and valuable ways to reconceptualise the multiplicity of relationships (Foucault, 1982).

As noted in Chapter Three, Barad’s (2003, 2007) term intra-action describes a co-constitutive relationship in which the ability to be agentic occurs within the relationship

dynamic rather than outside of it. Her assertion that entities do not pre-exist prior to this entanglement, as they are already entangled, offers much to autoethnography for the following reasons. Firstly, the companions who share the lives of young children could thus be conceptualised as “always already entangled” (Barad, 2012b, p. 51). To position them as imaginary fails to acknowledge that they do not exist separately to the child. Secondly, as entanglement is inherent within autoethnography, understandings of the phenomena being inquired into are continually being made and unmade. Integral here is how understandings of reality are configured, and notions of agency relate to possibilities. Therefore, there is the potential to remake constructions of what may constitute reality (Barad, 2010). Thirdly, intra-action with the entities who may share young children’s lives is always occurring. So, whilst I may not have directly engaged with my daughter’s imaginary companions I have intra-acted and do intra-act with this phenomenon via the discourses and languages which are produced and circulated. Therefore, I do not sit outside this phenomenon as I am instrumental in shaping what regimes of thought and truth continue to be replicated.

6.10 Final Thoughts

This chapter draws together core threads from preceding chapters and considers how these can be worked alongside my chosen research methodology of autoethnography. As stated in Chapter One, my overarching concern arose from a growing uneasiness about which alternative knowledges of young children’s companions it may be beneficial to

explore and include within ECE pedagogy and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. This led to the introduction of my research questions (see Chapter One, 1.6).

My research questions have continued to guide and provide companionship for my thesis chapters. Question One investigates indicators showing that young children may have experiences of companions which sit outside normative developmental constructions of childhood. Question Two considers how aspects of ancestry and culture, specifically identified within this research context as Celtic and Māori cultural narratives and my own autoethnographic accounts, may speak of different kinds of companionship. Question Three then queries how differing understandings of companionship may be acknowledged in ECE settings within the international and national literature drawn on within the chapters of the thesis. Finally, Question Four considers what this theoretical and autoethnographic analysis offers for ECE and ECE teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand. It also seeks to explore the possible implications this could have for ECE and ECE teachers (nationally and internationally).

Each of the above research questions has sought to investigate various aspects tangled into this complex and intricate theoretical terrain. Chapter threads provide the potential for a taking of new pathways into this research topic and to consider multifaceted conceptual notions of how children, childhood and the entities who may feature in young children's lives may be constructed and subsequently understood.

The paucity of accounts of alternative experiences and perspectives on young children's companions became a central pillar within this research, especially as I continued to

reflect on what I had observed and experienced as a parent, and then as an ECE teacher.

This became the impetus for thinking about ways in which a deconstructive and diffractive move could be taken to disrupt the seemingly continuing unhindered travel of entrenched problematic Euro-western understandings.

One way would be to offer another way of telling, to take a different approach which moves beyond what has already been thought and talked about concerning these relationships. It would be to push the established boundaries of world(s) and of theories in order to travel elsewhere.

Chapter Seven

Contextualising the Unstable

...she dismantled the very categories I so worried we had constructed as sedimented pillars around her, and she wandered among them, pivoting her identity, her self-representations, and, therefore, her audiences...But she would be better viewed as an honest narrator of multiple poststructural selves speaking among themselves, in front of an audience searching relentlessly for pigeonholes. (Fine, 1994, p. 71)

The above quote from Fine was chosen to introduce this chapter as an expression of resistance. To me, the girl depicted in this prose is engaged in her own deconstructive pursuit as she moves through socially constructed regimes of thought and truth designed to suspend her within discursive structures and apparatuses of normalcy. Here these stratified conventional notions are “put to the test of their limits” (Derrida, 1992, p. 47). It resonates with me when I think of my young daughter Hine and how her approach to her world(s) was surrounded and surveyed by adults who continually sought to view her as they wanted her to be (Cannella, 1997).

As noted in the preceding chapter, autoethnographic writing provides the researcher with opportunities to consider the ways in which their own experiences can be drawn on to shed light on a specific event or phenomenon. Using autoethnography has enabled me to include my voice alongside the copious amount of academic discourse and literature continually encircling and tangling the perceived lived experiences of young children who may share their lives with a companion, a *hoa-haere* or *hoa-haerere* (see Chapter Five).

This chapter and the next are threaded together, as each explore selected stories of my experience of being Hine's mother. For this chapter I begin by identifying my situated research project—the why and how—which underpinned how I approached autoethnography within the context of this specific research. Secondly, I summarise the ethical considerations which travelled alongside this thesis as my *hoa-haere*, my companion, to show how key tensions spoken of within Chapter Six were actively thought through and subsequently addressed. Lastly, I share a storied account of some recollections of being Hine's mother using a two-pronged approach: autoethnographic writing with close and careful theorising alongside. The theory examined here has been selected to speak to my theoretical framing introduced in Chapter Three.

The recollections offered within the chapter focus specifically on being pregnant with Hine and on her birth. Recollections of her early years and middle school years are shared in Chapter Eight, which is the next layering of this chapter.

7.1 My Entangled Research Project

My approach to this research was underpinned by my interest in learning more about how young children may engage with entities, and companions, which are unseen to me. I was troubled by the Euro-western textual accounts of young children's companions, especially as these companions, like entities spoken of within Chapter Three, appeared to cause concern when they did not behave in ways that adults thought they would or should (Barad, 2007, 2014).

For this research, autoethnography was selected as the sole data-gathering approach in order to forefront a particular story and way into this topic. Proposed future research endeavours would then seek to inquire into additional stories that others, such as ECE teachers, children and their whānau, may wish to share. However, at this time I have chosen autoethnography as my first step into this complex terrain.

I began by taking an evocative autoethnographic approach, desiring to make meaning and develop working theories of my own experiences (Ellis, 1999; Ellis et al., 2011). This occurred alongside sourced literary accounts. I wrote myself into my work by turning the gaze onto myself to understand more about a social and cultural phenomenon through my own experiences and engagement (Behar, 1997; O’Riordan, 2014; Sotirin, 2010).

My personal engagement with this research can be seen within the arrangement and placement of textual features. The structure, and subsequently the contents of this thesis, provide a textual journeying of the theoretical ideas traversed and disjunctures encountered as I sought to make meaning of past experiences and mobilise current understandings within a scholarly context.

Putting to work the theoretical writings of Derrida, Foucault and Barad (see Chapter Three) has challenged me to enact agential cuts to the wider and deeper social and cultural thoughts entangled within my research topic. It has also required me to put pressure on my own idealised understandings of what I thought I knew, including what I thought was worthy of knowing, about my experiences and interactions with my daughter Hine. This has led to the following analytical account of my research journey.

7.1.1 Power and privilege

As identified within previous chapters, my autoethnographic account and theoretical and conceptual understandings are couched within a predominantly Pākehā worldview.

Within my personal life I am the mother of children of dual ancestral and cultural heritage, Pākehā and Māori. In my professional capacity a specific area of my practice includes the teaching of Aotearoa New Zealand's troubled, and oft contentious, history of nationhood.

I am often traversing complex social, cultural and political terrain. I would like, however, to acknowledge that in general I am surrounded by familiar and easily navigated cultural structures, systems and artefacts due to my being Pākehā. The complicated discourse of power, whiteness and privilege reveals a historical-geographical construct that shapes notions and understandings of the various places and spaces which may be deemed occupiable (Baldwin, 2012; hooks, 1994, 2015). As such, research—including my own—remains indelibly marked by these features (Smith, 2015).

Pivotal to the development of this thesis was this question which travelled alongside me, *“Do I own a story because I tell it?”* (Chang, 2008, p. 69). There were numerous times I had to consider the possibility that this story may not be mine to tell, that I could not claim any sense or right of ownership. My story does not exist in isolation; rather, it has been created within a complicated set of ideological standpoints inscribed with the explicit and implicit traces of dominant hegemonic discourse, a continued legacy of colonisation. As such, not all that has occurred is, or can be, included within the final text

written to meet the scholarly requirements of my discipline, as there could be possible implications for Hine and wider whānau.

As my explorations deepened, the challenge was to consider how to make my own situatedness explicit. This required recognition of the various privileges, entanglements and constraints that I bring to the research and an awareness that any change, personal and professional, would only be possible through continued “careful self-examination” (Allen, 2015, p. 35). What is offered within this thesis is an example of multiple crossings where the tangible and intangible are inexorably woven together, unable to be discerned as existing separately from each other. Indeed, as Barad (2012a) advises, there is always already touching so there can be no mutually exclusive boundaries here.

One area of continuous critical reflection that has permeated this thesis chapter construction is the concept of silent authorship (Muncey 2010; Ricci, 2003). I cannot recall the presence of entities as my early childhood companions. Therefore, I am unable to consciously draw on my own recollections. As an adult, I am not currently aware of the presence of entities within my daily life. I grappled with the notion of whether I should/could try to shed light on a phenomenon that currently sits outside of my own experience. These tensions have been my constant travel companion and as such I have often had to take a step back to re-consider where my journey may take me and how best I could attempt to account for my travelling textually. However, as previously mentioned, the companionship I have acknowledged within this thesis is my kirituhi which travel alongside me, and I view their presence as more than just markings made upon my skin.

There was a period of time when I had to think hard about Barad's (2007) suggestion that just because something can be dismantled and ruptured does not mean that it should be (Chapter Three). Thinking through this was perplexing, as I wondered why I was seeking to *explain* companionship and whether this was a phenomenon I needed to "dismantle" (Derrida, 1981; Norris, 1987). What could be the positive impacts of doing so and for whom? How could I offer a different way into the problem, a way that is mindful of multiple pathways and crossings? A way that makes clear my theoretical travel *elsewhere* (Denshire, 2014) and does not seek to replace what has been known with this text—which would be inconsistent with the project and taking a deconstructive approach (Derrida, 1991; Rolfe, 2004).

Stepping elsewhere creates movement. Derrida (1995) asserted that what emerges during this movement—the unfolding process—is just as, or perhaps even more so, important than the eventual outcome. Struggling with these new lines of inquiry shaped the final structure for this thesis as it led to a re-turn to literature to provide a theoretical account. Whilst this has meant that my following autoethnographic account may not appear to be a key feature of this thesis, this was a selected strategy, as my first deconstructive move was to introduce instability into the textual features of this phenomenon. In this sense my voice provides companionship to the text. It suggests a different story: one which seeks to create ruptures which necessitate the taking of new pathways which call into question what traditional Euro-western theorising has offered to this knotty topic. This "out of joint" (Derrida, 1994, p. 23) thinking then opens up scope for others to then add their voices, as this is just one text; it is not a *definitive* text. In this way

the desire is to then consider where else travel may occur as additional storytellers layer this text with their own ways into this topic (this is research for another day).

As acknowledged in Chapter Six, the highly complex nature of autoethnography requires critical self-examination and scrutiny of the power relationships between me as the writer and author of this text and the experiences, viewed as an “outsider”, and the ideas being explored. Positioning my own narrative as a central feature of the research could potentially silence the voices of those whose own experiences may differ considerably to that of my own.

Something I was not initially fully cognisant of was that my querying of my aforementioned concerns would not only test my application of autoethnography but would also put my conceptual framing continually under strain. There was sustained querying to ensure that the framework I had elected to use was *fit for purpose*. There were periods of time when this was not the case and continual shifts occurred as this thesis narrative continued to unfold.

7.1.2 Autoethnographic approach

Evocative autoethnography as the research method provided the starting point for this research. My initial narrative accounts included short vignettes of specific experiences I recalled relating to events and interactions which I considered to be instrumental in shaping my interest and growing awareness of this phenomenon. As the research

progressed, additional textual layering occurred as I began to recount supplementary details which I believe further enhanced my own awareness and understanding. As this style of writing progressed, it was evident that the style of my written recollections was more aligned to a memoir than to autoethnography. I have elected to include these in this chapter as they were an instrumental feature of the unfolding process—providing the starting point which enabled me to journey further.

As previously identified, not all accounts survived the research process journey for a variety of reasons. As the research progressed, some content was deemed inappropriate to include due to the ethical considerations discussed in Chapter Six and explored in more research-specific detail in the following section. There was the concern of potential harm (immediate and/or long-term), or that the research findings may not sit well within the research focus and narrative. An evocative approach introduced additional complications. As noted earlier, I had to be continually mindful that my story involves my daughter; she is the central character of my recollections and I am (in this context) the narrator. To ensure that she was protected from harm, in the immediate and longer term, required me to be clear about the parameters of my storying.

Another crucial aspect that I needed to be cognisant of was how to avoid my storying resulting in the production of primarily self-indulgent text which would essentially be of no interest, or use, to anyone other than myself. Subsequently, some stories were removed as, whilst they were of interest to me, they did not strengthen the growing thesis narrative. I also needed to be continually mindful that my storying could also constitute a

negative experience for my daughter in the sense that she may feel my writing style draws unwanted attention to her.

As the research evolved, I became more conscious of the criticisms levelled at evocative autoethnography and began to draw more on the later work of Wall (2016) who advocates for a stronger and more consistent analytical approach to autoethnographic writing. Her own analysis of various sourced autoethnographic writing examples led her to query the theoretical and transformative contributions some authors were making within their specific disciplines. This provided further querying into my own approach and the contributions my investigations may make to bring about change not only within my particular context but in ECE in general. I shall return to this point in Chapter Nine.

7.2 Research Ethics

Chapter Six identified the slippery terrain to be navigated when taking an autoethnographic approach to research. Embedded within these concerns are the principles which govern how the research is to be conducted and how we traverse this changeable terrain. One particularly concerning point raised by Smith (2007) is the importance of being attentive to the power-laden relationships and meanings inherent within statements made about ethics. She laments, “The powerful still make decisions for the powerless” (2007, p. 97), especially when engaging in cross-cultural research relationships.

Taking her point on board, the following considerations and sensitivities were observed. These were articulated in order to ensure that my methodological approach identified, addressed and adhered to ethical principles of nurturing reciprocal relationships framed within an autoethnographic research paradigm, alongside meeting the requirements of my academic institute and my personal and professional roles and responsibilities.

This research did not involve human participants in the usual way of qualitative research. The nature of this research means that I am identified in text as the primary participant. My reflections are about my own life and my own experiences. In addition, there is reflection about my daughter Hine when she was a child, over a decade ago. She is now an adult, so this is to some extent now a historical account—with all the trappings associated with nostalgia, memory recall and consequent slippage (Medford, 2006).

The research project was discussed with Hine and she was made aware of the motivation, purpose and aims of my intended research. The methodology used was explained to her, including the ways in which I would be including vignettes in the form of recollections and reflections of selected aspects of my experiences of being her mother.

Due to her current age (over 16 years), she was able to give consent for the use of any information within the thesis that may relate to her and her childhood experiences. She had access to all draft chapters where information pertaining to her and her childhood appeared. She was able to seek clarification, ask for amendments to or the removal of, any information connected to her.

It was deemed appropriate by my thesis supervisors that an external cultural advisor be appointed to support Hine, which Hine was receptive to. She chose this person, who she has known since she was 18 months old. Her cultural advisor was available to her, and me, to offer guidance and advice and to advocate on her behalf if necessary, specifically concerning Te Ao Māori content and information relating to Hine's whakapapa (see Chapter Five for further examination of these concepts).

Hine is acknowledged as the co-author of this thesis within my academic institute's research ethics application. She is an integral conversation partner and companion within the thesis content as this thesis is an act of intra-action; it occurred within our relationship rather than outside of it (Barad, 2003, 2007). As the co-author she has the ability in the future to speak to, and speak against, anything which appears within this thesis. She has the right to reply to and dismantle anything I have written about her, her childhood, her companions and the scope and features of this specific inquiry now, or in the future, as there is no time constraint on when this could occur.

To mitigate potential issues regarding confidentiality, my daughter's name does not appear within the thesis content. Rather, a pseudonym has been used, suggested by her external cultural advisor and agreed on by my daughter (see Chapter One). No other persons (name, specific connection to me/her or their role) have been identified other than members of my immediate family (see Chapter One). The only feature included within the thesis that raises possible concerns about identification is the shared kirituhi

(see kirituhi tuarua Chapter One). Verbal permission was sought and obtained from Hine and my mother to include the imagery and story of this.

I am cognisant this does not, however, ensure anonymity or confidentiality because the identity of Hine could be inferred from my text. Obviously, those who know me will know my children; however, every reasonable attempt was made within the text to ensure that no information would be disclosed (such as dates, identifying birth order, etc.) which would clearly identify which of my children is the focus of my recollections. I also carry a different surname to my daughter. This is the name under which the thesis will be published which may make it less likely for her to be immediately recognised.

Hine is my daughter and I have no wish for my recollections and writing to draw attention or cause discomfort or harm to her or to our wider family/whānau. My desire is to draw attention to companions which may share the lives of young children within the ECE years but not at the expense of the relationship that I have with Hine; her well-being, mana and wairua must always be respected and upheld (see Chapter Five for further examination of these concepts). This is also applicable to our family/whānau too.

As previously noted, the nature of autoethnography means that my story is inescapably enmeshed with the stories of others. I endeavoured to pay attention to ethical considerations and show care and sensitivity in relation to how I share stories that may not be solely mine to tell, or share knowledge and concepts that are not of my ancestral and/or cultural heritage. I now turn to my autoethnographic stories of being Hine's mother as the next layer of this chapter.

7.3 Hine Joins our Whānau

The following are some recollections of being Hine's mother. As identified previously, this section is written using a memoir approach. Primarily this is because what appears within this text has been drawn from memory and as such it does not meet the specific academic rigour explored within Chapter Six. However, it provides a backdrop for what is to come next and drawing on these memories was integral for the further unfolding storying which is why the recollections have been included in this chapter.

These are my stories; they portray my perspective of the events and happenings selected. Phillips and Bunda (2018) refer to a story as a gift. The writer and the listener engage in a delicate interplay of wrapping and unwrapping, each imbuing differing meaning to the layering of the narrative. They suggest that each layer unfolds when and where the reader and the listener require. Therefore, it is important to make the observation that the stories which follow are only one layering, written at a particular time and including particular happenings.

For the reader, there will be sites of potential convergence and divergence. There may also be aspects which do not appear of interest or significance at the present time.

However, this may change, and something read about in this thesis could be the catalyst for reconceptualising relationships and thinking about the nature, purpose and features of companionship. This is the storying gift and dynamic that Phillips and Bunda (2018) speak of.

Hine has her own stories of her childhood. She draws on a differing narrative to inform and make sense of her world and the multiplex relationships which exist for her – past, present and future. My hope is that one day she may re-story this story, to speak to the scripts she wishes to disrupt and dismantle. Thus, the gift of story will continue to travel, embodying new and exciting potential pathways and journeys.

7.3.1 My new travelling companion

Story background

Of all the pregnancies I have had, this one included some unusual things. I say unusual but mean this in a good way. It was like I was aware she existed from conception; like I knew of her presence and felt her with me. This was a weird sensation, although not in a scary or worrying way. Strangely comforting, like she was meant to be.

The use of the term *unusual* may evoke Foucault's (1973) writing on epistemes, the conditions which exist at any given time and give rise to general power-knowledge systems. This is where theory as apparatus comes into play as an instrument for producing orderly unconscious structures which provide the "conditions of possibility" (Foucault, 2005, p. xxiv) of knowledge, separating out and advancing what is therefore taken as accepted and conversely that which is not.

To speak here of the unusual is to acknowledge that I noticed the occurrence of something which differed from what I was expecting, something sitting as *other* than and

other to. This lay outside the ordered borders of what I knew about, rupturing my known constructions of what I believed this experience should and would be like. Unbeknown to me at the time, I was being introduced to competing forms of knowledge and ideas (Foucault, 1973) that governed what this experience could entail.

In Chapter Three, Derrida's (1967) concept of presence was introduced. Taking this further within my autoethnographic text adds complicated messiness to this philosophical terrain. The notion of presence, occupying a current, knowable and known space, is privileged in Euro-western philosophising over that which is conversely deemed to be absent, in the past or future or notably located as elsewhere. If presence is proper, in that it upholds Euro-western understandings of meaning and existence, then to suggest otherwise threatens this well-ordered and settled system of thought. Derrida's (1976) work played with the entangledness of presence and absence, attacking the proposition that there can ever be any certain binary distinction. Therefore, there can never be an absolute truth attached to these terms, as each is connected within the other.

Barad (2007) posited that connection occurs in unexpected ways; therefore, we are always already entangled together, always present/absent through space and time. Thus, Hine and I were already touching, already inextricably connected. To speak of Hine as having presence thus acknowledges this concomitant bind.

When I was about six weeks pregnant my paternal grandmother died. This was unexpected (to me). It was likely that I missed the signs that she was so sick as I was caught up in my own life and I was living in the North Island, she in the South.

Her death wasn't on my radar. My Dad told her I was pregnant the night before she died – which was of comfort to me. She knew of Hine. Her funeral and the days following were a blur. I missed her. She and I had always remained in contact through regular letters, phone calls and visits when possible. My grief at losing her became a constant companion through Hine's pregnancy.

Shortly after her passing I decided to visit a local woman for a psychic reading. I wanted, or perhaps needed, confirmation that all was going to be ok. My grandmother's death had unsettled me. When I saw her, I wasn't noticeably pregnant and had said nothing about the pregnancy. Her first comment to me was about Hine. She told me I was pregnant with "an old soul...who had walked this earth before". This was a familiar turn-of-phrase within my family – I'd heard this often since my childhood about various relatives.

She said she was going to struggle to give me a reading as she couldn't tell whose story was whose. It seemed Hine had a strong presence even then. When pressed she cautioned me the birth would not go as planned and that I would need help. I asked her whose help I would need, she replied, "everyone's help" and she looked upwards. The reading did help ease some of the worry I had been feeling, especially about Hine, and gave me something to look forward to. However, as the birth drew near there was also increased anxiety, a funny spine-tingling feeling, when I thought back on her words.

Reference was made to Hine as “an old soul”. The inference in the use of this term is that she is perceptive, intuitive and knowing—a visionary child. In my family, the term an old soul is often used to describe someone who has been in the temporal world before and carries inscriptions, insight and rememberings of this experience. These may be physical, spiritual and/or emotional. The notion of an old soul is aligned to the concept of reincarnation, which commonly appears in Celtic and Māori literature, especially in relation to re-birth in which the person inherits attributes of ancestors or fairy/otherworld beings (Barlow, 1991; Evans-Wentz, 1911). The attribute of clairvoyant vision may also be deemed to be gifted through reincarnation (Ngata, 2014; Rolleston, 2010; Williams, 1871). Re-turning to Barad (2007), everything is intra-woven through entanglement. Space-time boundaries are blurred, and she stresses:

The past matters and so does the future, but the past is never left behind, never finished once and for all, and the future is not what will come to be in an unfolding of the present moment; rather the past and the future are enfolded participants in matter’s iterative becoming. (p. 181)

In an interview with Adam Kleinman (2012), Barad expanded on this further. The notion of presence was worked to emphasise that “‘Past’ and ‘future’ bleed into the ‘now’ of the questioning. Presence is not a matter of a thin slice of now, but rather the hauntology of inheritance, inheriting the future as well as the past” (Kleinman, 2012, p. 81).

Interconnectedness, in that past, present and future are also sinuously pulled together, is also a feature of Derrida’s (1994) hauntology, this being “out of joint” (Derrida, 1994, p. 23) (see Chapter Three). What each is speaking of is the disjuncture of reality and how

understandings bleed into and therefore provide a ghostly presence-absence trace. Taking this line of inquiry means that there can never be any absolute demarcation between past, present and future. Space and time are collapsed, as haunting is “always already threaded through with anticipation” (Barad, 2010, p. 244). Therefore, to speak of Hine as an old soul is not out of joint theoretically or culturally, as both approaches are open to the potentiality that there can be cross-over between realms and that inheritance can make space for the possibility of reincarnation. To draw on her ancestral knowledge is to reclaim and make visible knowledge which may previously have sat outside the carefully constructed borders of Euro-western theoretical pattern making. It is to see elsewhere, to reclaim and thus remember “past lives” (Te Awekotuku, 2009, p. 2).

It was hard work growing Hine. I was large and uncomfortable. A friend jokingly referred to me as “The Queen Mary” – apparently, I looked like a ship. I felt huge and cumbersome and moving was slow and at times painful. Hine had large growth spurts. Well-meaning strangers commenting on my size did nothing to help, especially when comments were made about my soon-to-be-born “twins” (seriously!). There were times when my responses were often harsh, when I hissed back comments like, “It’s not a baby it’s a large cyst”, “I’m not having twins actually I’m hoping for puppies”. These became my standard replies when I didn’t want to talk about the obvious size of my stomach.

There was a shift; I began to describe Hine as my companion to those around me. Rather than seeing Hine as a part of my body, she was spoken of within these interactions as an entity that sat outside of how a normal body is presumed to function. Foucault (1976,

1995) argued that constructions of the body are designed, manipulated and subsequently mobilised as an instrument within larger social discursive structures (Punday, 2000). It is through the acts of surveillance and measurement that “the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved” (Foucault, 1995, p. 183) is introduced, marked and mapped.

The body is inscribed with codes which is how the body, as one part of the relationship, is trained and regulated as it interacts with the object that is being manipulated (Foucault, 1995). In the underlined text, I was speaking of Hine as sitting outside of these codes, identifying her as, firstly, an object which could be recognised as potentially harmful to my body [a cyst] and therefore as abnormal. Secondly, as a species that is nonhuman [puppies]. In doing so I was marking myself, and Hine, as the holders of unstable bodies, bodies that are inconsistent with recognisable fixed social and cultural features (Foucault, 1979; Witz, 2000). I am not sure why I felt like this or why I described her as such. Perhaps again this was in reference to the unusual, to something different to what I was expecting.

Hine was not an active baby in utero. She was sloth-like; slow, leisurely and never in a rush. She sat like a frog with her knees up. Her movements hurt, especially on the odd occasion when she tried to flip.

During the last few months of pregnancy I began to have recurring dreams. One was that I woke up to find all my teeth had fallen out and I couldn't find them.

Another was that I'd given birth during my sleep and couldn't remember where I'd

put my baby. I'd wake up in a panic and confused. I couldn't wait for her to finally be here.

When the time came the "Divine Miss Hine" took her time. It was as if she was in no hurry to be born; slow and leisurely like her movements during pregnancy. I think I expected something different; perhaps that she was as excited to meet me as I was to meet her?

Labour was extremely painful; I couldn't speak or make sounds. Her birth did not go as I had anticipated or hoped. I had never experienced anything like this, and I hope I never will again. It was a feeling of absolute powerlessness, as if I had no control over my body or what was happening around me. Giving birth to her silenced me. All my energy went into getting her here. I recall silently praying to anyone I could think of. I called on my ancestors. I called on hers. At that stage I wasn't picky, I'd settle for anyone who could help me. My mother didn't leave my side. I couldn't have done it without her.

There was no other option though, she must be born and somehow amidst all the chaos of what was happening I knew this.

Two orientations could be explored here in relation to the above statement about being silenced. Firstly, within the context of this recollection the silence could be linked to a diminished feeling of power over: (1) the internal happenings of my body; and (2) the external environmental context. Secondly, it could have been a silence that sought to remove the gaze (Foucault, 1973) of those around me so I was beyond analysis.

Herrle-Fanning (2000), writing of Euro-western “management of childbirth” (p. 45), draws on Foucault’s (1990) work on *bio*-power, devices used to subjugate and exercise power over bodies and over the control of populations. She uses Foucault’s body-population rhetoric to illustrate how surveillance and authoritative discourses of the norm continue to produce truths which encircle birthing women. The most prevalent claim encircling women is that giving birth needs to be managed through careful observation in order to ensure that the process does not deviate from the norm. This produces a powerful relationship dynamic with health professionals which Herrle-Fanning (2000) describes as follows:

The compulsion to submit to the better judgement of professionals is particularly amplified in the case of pregnancy and childbirth, because the question of survival is magnified to include the fetus (“You don’t want to harm your baby”) and, by implication, the species at large (the obligation to act *responsibly*). (p. 45)

My second point introduces a new thread into this complicated fabric. According to MacLure, Holmes, Jones and MacRae (2010), silence carries “some kind of meaning beyond itself...It is simultaneously a knot and a dehiscent gap...an open(ed) wound” (p. 493). Silence can resist the possibility of surveillance and consequently analysis, as “we are unable to make sense of it” (p. 493). Within this particular context there is the possibility that silence was used to move beyond the constraints of what may be usually thought of, or known, to be happening when a health professional-patient gaze is applied to select and filter observable information using a medicalised paradigm (Foucault, 1973, 1995). Correlations can be made here to the phenomena this thesis seeks to know more about by, firstly, exploring internal and external constructions and dynamics which

exercise power over thought and meaning, and secondly, the act of being silent can erase, subjugate, but can also be a site of resistance by enacting new cuts to counter established truth claims. Silence can therefore be powerful.

Hine finally arrived—surrounded by her whānau—after a lengthy and difficult planned homebirth. The long hours had taken their toll on everyone and by the time she was born, apparently none the wiser of her slow arrival, everyone was exhausted and possibly quite stunned (I know I was!).

She was gorgeous! Absolutely worth the wait. It was fantastic to finally meet her. She felt like mine and like she and I had accomplished something very significant together. Like my travels were her travels and our lives were intertwined. Staring at her face she felt familiar—like I already knew her. It was like we were already part of each other's stories.

Getting Hine earth side was only part of this encounter. It wasn't finished and the third stage of labour was no easier. It was long and arduous. Things didn't go smoothly. Finally, I was put into my bed with Hine contently tucked up beside me. We were all relieved she was finally here, and all appeared well.

She didn't cry, just quietly looked around and then went to sleep.

To meet is to encounter. Therefore, to meet Hine was an important event. The title of Barad's seminal text *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning* (2007) suggests that the concept of *meeting* is highly significant theoretically. A crucial point she makes is that in meeting there is

motion; to meet the universe halfway infers that each must therefore be travelling. Intra-action necessitates that entanglements occur from within this relationship which is reliant on a *meeting* to occur. For her this convergence is one in which neither seeks to erase the other; rather, they co-constitute an entangled togetherness. She also makes apparent that different differences mean that there is the potential to learn from one another. To meet Hine is an important encountering. This is an entanglement from within which new potentialities abound.

7.4 A Life-Shifting Experience

Hard birth, big baby. I slept. But I wasn't asleep. Something else was happening. Something only my mother realised and recognised. Something was wrong, very wrong. My mother rushed into my bedroom and over to my side of the bed. She just knew. No one else knew, but she did.

She stood beside me asking "How's the bleeding?". "It's squirting" I remember mumbling. That's the last thing I remember saying. Then I drifted off.

I know that giving birth and having difficulties post-partum isn't uncommon. However, what happened during this experience seemed to set in motion a different kind of relationship dynamic between Hine and me. Perhaps it further entangled our relationship?

Whatever it was, it scared my mother as she experienced something no mother wants to go through with their child, regardless of their age. (When I first wrote

this, I was feeling unsettled and anxious awaiting the birth of my first mokopuna. He was born recently, and his travels here were not smooth or uneventful. I feared for his mother and for him. I felt the overwhelming sense of relief when he was born, and I knew he and his mother were ok. He carries the name of one of his Ngāti Hāua tūpuna; an ancestral kaihau-waiū to travel with and guide him. He is a blessing and we await to hear the stories he will share with us).

Within this excerpt, connections can be made to specific theoretic threads previously spoken of within this section, for example, the continued entanglement as our relationship came to be through our intra-action. Re-turning to Barad's (2014) assertion that, "[t]here is nothing that is new; there is nothing that is not new" (p. 168), highlights that our relationship holds within it multiple possibilities that muddy careful Euro-western theorising of order and stability. Space-time is blurred and so too are boundary-enacting practices. This is relevant for the following point, the recent birth of my mokopuna.

As the next layering of our whakapapa, my mokopuna is the holder of rich and intricate ancestral patterning. What could he have inherited within his kaihau-waiū? If, as Mead (2003) suggests, his kaihau-waiū is gained through birth and his relationship with his mother, then he too will be the recipient of ancestral knowledges, and companions may travel alongside him as his hoa-haere (Pohatu, 2015). We can now only wait and see what he may share with us as his story unfolds.

I was floating, floating out of my body. I watched my mother and Hine from the top right-hand corner of the bedroom ceiling. As I write this, and each time I re-

read this, I feel like I am back there – the emotion of the encounter never leaves me. If anything, it seems to get stronger.

I see them, actually, I see three people; Hine warm and asleep nestled into the crook of my arm. I see myself. I am sleeping, I look peaceful. My mother is trying desperately to wake me. I am thinking; why isn't she being very nice to me? Why is she shaking me? Why is she raising her voice (something very rare for my mother)?

I notice the panic and urgency in her voice. I work out that she seems scared – she's frightened. This realisation comes to me, but I'm not worried about it. I feel a weird sense of calmness – like everything is happening slowly and perhaps to someone else? It's a feeling I've never had before. I know now that I was unresponsive and her years of experience as a nurse had kicked in. Thank goodness she was there.

I was bleeding heavily. All over the bed and slowly dripping down onto the floor. I saw it all from the ceiling.

I wasn't scared. I didn't have any pain.

I noticed things I hadn't seen before; the top of the freestanding wardrobe unit, and the curtain rail. Fleetinglly I thought about the dust gathering on the top of the wardrobe unit and that this was maybe a good time to clean it. My thoughts felt like they were all broken up – shattering as soon as they came to me.

I had to work hard to focus. I had to look down. I had to make myself look down. I had to make myself stay connected to what was happening on my bed. I couldn't keep drifting.

But I was curious. I wanted to look around.

I wondered about the bright light I had heard about. I wanted to see this. Would I see it? Where was someone I knew? Would I see my grandmother? I really wanted to see her and hoped she would be there with me. She wasn't there, which I was disappointed about. It was just me.

I think I had expected to see my tūpuna, those who had gone before me, come and collect me. These are the stories I grew up with, the idea that the transition from a temporal body to a spiritual body would include some sort of travel; travel away from what was known and travel towards something different. It would involve walking the path elsewhere, for example, to the underworld spoken of within Celtic storying (see Chapter Two) (Restall-Orr, 2007).

I returned my gaze to my mother and Hine. I didn't look at me.

I saw the beautiful face of a newly born sleeping child. I saw my child. I still see her face now. She appeared perfect—peaceful, calm and gentle. I felt a huge wave of love for her.

If I stayed here my child would never know me as her mother. What would it be like to have no mother? I couldn't begin to imagine. How could I leave my child

with no mother? The pull to be with her was so strong. It was suddenly a deep ache and concern about her.

Who would raise her if I wasn't there? I was so tired. But she needed me. There was fear and panic—I remember a strong and over-riding concern I had was who would breastfeed her?

My strongest memory even now is the anxiety around not being there to breastfeed Hine. Perhaps this also connects to Mead's (2003) explanation of kaihau-waiū and the significance of this being passed on "through the mother's milk" (p. 40). Did she need me in order to receive her kaihau-waiū?

I looked at my mother. She who had raised me. She wasn't ready to lose a daughter. I wasn't ready to lose a daughter. My daughter wasn't ready to lose her mother.

Our bonds to each other were interconnected and strong. There would be no breaking of these ties today.

After what felt like ages, but was probably less than a minute, I watched my mother increase her efforts to wake me. She was working hard. I felt it.

An unusual jarring moment. A swift move. A rupture in time and space. A deep breath. Pulling. Tugging. I felt fractured, like I had woken from a deep sleep but hadn't had time to gather myself together.

I felt disorganised. I wasn't sure what to do. I was grateful, relieved. I looked at my mother's face; she was really scared. I had never seen that look on her face before – and I have never seen it since.

This experience fractured not only my sense of body (space-time) but also my meaning making of relationships. Foucault (2005) advised that fractures occur when fundamental arrangements that keep established assumptions together are challenged and changed. This experience, for me, was then a fracture. It ruptured understandings of my own mortality as well as my thinking on how relationships can be fashioned across space-time. From this experience I could see that companionship was not always reliant on a corporeal body; there could be something other than what I had previously thought of or acknowledged. Interestingly, this experience was the catalyst for me to return to study. From this experience I felt a sense of calmness which enabled me to think that if I could survive this ordeal then I could face anything. So, the rupture that occurred was also a positive one in that it fractured my old sense of self, and self-identity, and created something else, the start of a new kind of pattern-making (Barad, 2014).

Startled.

I was rushed, with Hine, to the local hospital by emergency ambulance. One of the ambulance officers had popped a button on his shirt. I could see his hairy tummy. I don't remember much else.

Hine and I spent three days in hospital. The first two days I received on-going medical treatment including blood transfusions. Hine was unfazed by this and

spent most of her time sleeping and feeding. She was always hungry. When awake she was alert and watchful—seeming to take in her surroundings.

My mother stayed with me for the first two nights. She took over the care of Hine, manoeuvring her and me so feeding and co-sleeping could happen comfortably. She kept an eye on me and advocated on my behalf when necessary.

I struggled to speak or put words together into an understandable sentence. I think this was due to the trauma and drugs and to the fact that I was struggling to remain at one with my own body. The fractures were still raw and present.

I felt powerless. I couldn't speak for myself or give an account of what was happening to me; especially to my body.

I had to rely on my mother. She was my voice and my greatest ally. She took care of me and watched over me.

As I healed and thought back to this experience, I knew I wanted to do that for Hine. To be her voice when she needed. To take care of her. To know her so well she didn't need to speak. My promise to her.

What this experience and promise set in motion was to become our *hoa-haere*; our travelling companion. This travelling companion includes “essential reminders” (Pohatu, 2011, p. 10) of the bond we share and also of the importance of remembering and safeguarding the knowledges of those who have come before and those who are yet to be. These sentiments will now be built on further within Chapter Eight.

7.5 Final Thoughts

This chapter has introduced the first layering of my autoethnographic approach which is included within this thesis as companionship to the textual explorations within preceding chapters. I am thus able to contribute my voice as a companion to the theory that encircles and entangles this complex research topic. My recollections therefore offer additional insight and another approach into understanding how young children's companions may be manifested and noticed; or conversely go unnoticed.

As identified earlier in this chapter, my motivation for undertaking this research was to find something out, to think differently, diffractively, about a phenomenon I was intrigued and confused about. Doing so has revealed some interesting and perplexing twists and turns, which will now be expanded on within Chapter Eight as I continue to shift, to speak of my recollections of parenting Hine within her infancy, toddler, preschool and middle childhood years.

Chapter Eight

New Theoretical Insights

Chapter Seven introduced the first layering of my autoethnographical account of my experience as the mother of a visionary girl who has different insight into the intangible (Ngata, 2014, p. 163). This chapter now builds onto these by exploring additional excerpts which offer further insight into my understandings of the companions who shared my daughter Hine's life at various times within her early and middle childhood years. Whilst these companions were unseen to me, they appeared to be a usual feature of her childhood. In this way they travelled alongside her as her companions.

As previously identified within Chapter Seven, I am relying on my own memories for these accounts. Therefore, these accounts are mine and Hine may have another take on these experiences, which she may choose to share in time. I proceed therefore knowing that what is written in this chapter is one story, one account, and as such only speaks of my interpretation of the experiences which are shared here within this thesis text.

This chapter is constructed in the following ways. It begins with excerpts from Hine's early years in chronological order: infancy, toddler, preschool years and middle childhood. As with Chapter Seven, theoretical perspectives from the conceptual framing (Chapter Three) are drawn on alongside cultural considerations taken from text examined within Chapter Two and Chapter Five. This chapter concludes by re-turning to Foucault's (1984, 2005) notion of parrhesia, the act of fearless speaking, to consider how Hine may be a fearless speaker of her own truth (introduced in Chapter Four).

8.1 Hine's Early Years

Hine's Infancy

When Hine was about six weeks old, she got really excited by things unseen to us.

I'd watch her and wonder what had caught her attention. She'd giggle, give big smiles, and move her arms and legs with enthusiasm. I noticed this most when she was in her pram bassinette. There was a spot she would constantly look at. If she was unsettled I would pop her in her pram and she would smile.

As I watched her, I could see was focused and enthralled. If I was standing next to her she seemed to prefer this spot to me.

As she got older the sounds she made whilst looking at this place in her pram were just like those she made when she and I were interacting. There was listening, pausing and responding – what I thought of as a definite communication pattern.

Often these conversations went on for a while. What could she see that I couldn't?

These conversations quickly became a common feature of her first few months.

They seemed to happen all the time. My mother would laugh and comment on her chats "with the fairies" and I began to call her a "child of the fairies".

Within Euro-western theorising examined within Chapter Four, alluding to Hine as having chats "with the fairies", being a "child of the fairies" and a walker between worlds, would suggest that she is engaging in imaginative pursuits. This is demonstrated by the term IC:

the companion the child interacts with is imaginary/imagined. A fairy similarly would be attributed to the realm of the imagination, the fantastical (Gleason, 2002).

An essential component of human existence is our ability to partake in imaginary pursuits within our daily lives, regardless of our age (Eckhoff & Urbach, 2008). What does appear to be troublesome is applying a universal approach to examine the role of the imaginary and the place of imagination, especially in regard to cultural knowledge and norms (MacNaughton, 2003). To see imaginary and imagination as interchangeable terms elicits confusion, as they occupy differing spaces within the sphere of psychological discourse (Klausen & Passman, 2006).

The presumption is that, by having chats with the fairies, being a child of the fairies and a walker of worlds, Hine travels between spaces and engages in relationships with companions who take on a form other than corporeal. In doing so there are connections to fairies, or a fairy realm, which is a common feature of Celtic creation stories and Māori pūrākau alike (see Chapters Two and Five). Fairies, frequently appearing in Celtic creation stories as *sighe* and Māori pūrākau as *patupaiarehe*, are entities who are often referred to as preternatural. According to Allchin (2007), the preternatural encompasses phenomena and realms suspended within the “domain of wonder and marvel” (p. 565). It is the space between what is deemed to be supernatural, and miraculous, and that which is temporal, commonplace and predictable (Allchin, 2007).

As fairies are present within her familial narratives, to imply that Hine is engaging in interactions with fairies, and the fairy realm, is ancestrally and culturally congruous. There

is no conflict here, as these are entities whose companionship is known of, and spoken about, within rich and complex oral and textual narratives that continue to be transmitted intergenerationally (Ngata, 2014; Nikora, Te Awekotuku & Tamanui, 2013; Rhys, 2017).

Hine's Toddlerhood

Hine often wandered around the house and garden engaged in animated conversations. She would dance and sing.

I could hear her talking about what she was doing, asking questions, and seeming to answer questions asked to her. She appeared content within these interactions; smiling, giggling and being involved within sustained conversations; some would last for hours.

Over time some people outside of our whānau would mention this, particularly a few mothers who attended Playcentre too. However, I wasn't concerned as to me this was just her and this happened all the time.

As she got older, she'd 'do her own thing'. A term I heard applied to her by adults around her was a daydreamer.

This made me smile as I often thought she was moving between worlds – she had one foot in each and sometimes I didn't know exactly where she was.

I guess I'd got used to this. She seemed to chat often to companions I couldn't see or hear.

I'll start here with a Euro-western take on these experiences in which my daughter seemingly chatted often to unseen companions. It appears to be acceptable and appropriate to hear and respond to voices of the unseen within some contexts, such as the receiving of a religious revelation; however, in general, Euro-western textual accounts tend to look less favourably on this (Alguira et al., 2017; Altran, 2002; Lakeman, 2001). Whilst not all authors suggest that hearing and responding to voices could be an indicator of mental health concerns, the experience tends to be deemed to sit outside of established norms of social behaviour, especially for those who are no longer children (Harper, 1995; Longden et al., 2012).

As Chapters Two and Five asserted, interactions with companions that others may not see or hear are present within Celtic and Māori storytelling text. The various forms these companions may take, as well as the travel between realms they may engage in, are usual features of these stories. Moreover, the veils or surface where the worlds meet are frequently spoken of as thin terrain and are therefore easy to traverse (T. Pokaia, personal communication, 5 March, 2011; Sellner, 1993).

Revisiting the concept of wairua introduced within Chapter Five could shed further light on notions of realm movement and how it may relate to Hine's experiences. As noted previously, everything has wairua, which Mead (2003) defines as a "'soul' or 'spirit'" (p. 54). It exists inside and outside the body and is believed to be immortal, remaining present even after death (Barlow, 1991; Best, 2005; Reed & Calman, 2013). Research undertaken by Valentine, Tassell-Mataamua and Fleet (2017) on understandings of how

wairua may be conceptualised by their research participants determined that wairua appears to sit:

...outside of normal sensory modalities, implying it is an immaterial entity that cannot be seen or touched. In many ways, wairua was positioned as having an existence far greater in volume, essence and structure than human beings can conceive of... [it can be conceived as] ...a particular type of knowing, almost a type of 'sixth sense', which may not lend itself to rational or logical understandings or explanations...it transcends space-time boundaries, and is a vital link to ancestors. (pp. 67-68)

Interestingly, Valentine, Tassell-Mataamua and Fleet (2017) also contend that dreaming is a component of te ao wairua, which Hine engaged in often during her childhood years. This was frequently identified, especially in relation to dreams – or perhaps visions – which often took her elsewhere, to places unknown and unseen to me but perhaps familiar and ordinary for her as these could be the spaces where her ancestors dwell (Durie, 2003; Mead, 2003; Pohatu, 2015).

Hine's Preschool years

Hine was determined and motivated. If she set her mind to something, she would do her best to make sure it happened. Rarely did she require help.

One example I recall was when she was about four years old. She decided she was going to ride a two-wheeler bicycle. Before this she had had very little interest in removing her balance wheels so her declaration that this was going to happen "today" was a big surprise to me. It didn't seem like a surprise to her though.

I just assumed she would need and want my help.

I followed her around asking, "Do you need me to help you?". "No" was always her reply. I then asked her, "Do you need me to hold your bike for you and you can try to pedal?" She shook her head "no".

All she asked me to do was to take her balance wheels off; the rest she wanted to do herself. She was very sure of what she planned to do.

She made it clear I was to stay inside. She told me not to look out the window. I was not to disturb her. She made me promise. I wasn't impressed. I thought my role as her Mum was to help her. However, on this, she told me she did not want or need my help in any way.

She was outside for approximately two hours. She didn't come inside at all. Often, I heard her talking. I heard her utter words of frustration. A few times I heard a soft cry.

I really wanted to help her. I felt helpless and redundant and frustrated. But I had promised her I would stay inside, so I did. Although I couldn't resist the occasional sneaky peak out the window.

She persevered. Suddenly she came back inside. She matter-of-factly told me, "it's done". From that day she could ride her bike with ease. We never spoke about that day again.

I often wondered why she didn't need help; however, in hindsight perhaps she received all the help she needed, it just didn't come from me. Perhaps I was not always the one she turned to or needed.

This was a weird realisation as a mother – as her mother.

As this excerpt shows, Hine appeared motivated and determined to complete a goal she had set for herself. She made it clear that she did not wish to receive any assistance from me, which I found unsettling as I had not anticipated that she would not need (or want) me to help her. I assumed that my role as her mother was to be there to guide and encourage her and I was disappointed that she had a plan for this task that did not include me. So perhaps what I was more upset by was that I felt excluded. However, what I did note was that although she may not have wished to draw on my help in completing this task, she seemed to have a plan in mind. In order to achieve her plan, she may have been drawing on, and subsequently receiving, guidance and support from other places; from elsewhere.

With this in mind I now re-turn to the writing of Pohatu (2015) introduced in Chapter Five, in particular the whakataukī, “‘*nā ngā ringaringa tohunga maha koe I rautaka*’ (you have been fashioned by the hands of many experts)” (p. 33). This whakataukī draws special attention to the knowledge that is woven around a Māori child – my child. This firmly locates Hine as the recipient of a wealth of attitudes, attributes and skills which may be demonstrated in individual and unique ways. Such knowledges were fashioned prior to

her conception and birth and have been bestowed upon her as an integral component of her kaihau-waiū.

It is therefore possible that her inheritance includes the wisdom and guidance of several ancestral “mothers” or guides (Mark & Lyons, 2010). I spoke of my affinity to the Celtic goddess Moregan, whose three forms are often considered as the maiden, the mother and the crone, and count her as one of my companions during the various stages of my life (see Chapter Two). Hence there is the possibility that Hine, too, receives guidance from elsewhere.

Those who offer Hine guidance are unseen to me. However, this does not mean that they are not travelling alongside her. When Pohatu (2015) spoke of her tūpuna they were described as “he hoa-haere tonu ōku mātua tīpuna i tēnei kawenga ōku...I realised that my parent and grandparent generations were my constant travelling companions in this journey” (p. 34).

Similarly, tūpuna may walk alongside Hine as her “invisible rōpū” (MoE, 2009, p. 5), her guardians and protectors. Those that accompany her may not be my ancestors, and as such their connection to me exists through the whakapapa I share with Hine. Might this not be the reason why they are not known—or make themselves known—to me?

Once Hine walked out in front of a car. She was in deep conversation – not with me or her sisters, who were also there at the time.

I was standing next to her. I assumed she was aware of what I was saying to her (reminding her as I often did about road safety). I also, mistakenly assumed she

was aware of her immediate surroundings; that because she was standing in front of me and looking at me that she was present.

Her fringe moved she was so close to the car. I was scared. I quickly pulled her back and towards me. She looked up at me – startled, like she didn't realise I was with her and she didn't know what was happening.

When I asked her, "Did you see the car?" she replied, "What car?"

This excerpt demonstrates that there were times when it was as if Hine was not attuned to movement or moving things around her. It could be that she was engaged in daydreaming, as spoken of earlier by Valentine, Tassell-Mataamua and Fleet (2017). Perhaps she was, as Nikora et al. (2013) suggest, seeing "spirit everywhere and in everything" (p. 5) and she was preoccupied. Whatever was happening, she did not always appear to be fully present (Derrida, 1994); rather, it seemed that she was entangled in other relationship dynamics unseen to me. This experience was a timely reminder for me that I could not assume that she was always alert to her environment. I needed to be more careful.

When Hine was about five years old, we visited a male relative who lived next to her whānau marae. She'd been there with us many times before and always seemed comfortable and at ease – kind of like she felt a sense of belonging to this place.

Interestingly she seemed to know about this place. She didn't need to be told about the out of bounds areas; she knew.

This was very different to home where I often felt like I had to remind her about potential hazards around her, especially those outside of our home.

During this visit I was to learn just how connected she was to this place, which was more than I had realised.

I really loved seeing her happy and moving around the relative's house, garden and the marae. She spent unhurried time looking at, and tracing with her fingers, the various carvings on the marae buildings. I thought of her as content, carefree and settled there.

She was also curious. She asked about things she noticed and also seemed to be more confident in her interactions with those she met—even those who were not previously known to her.

Usually she was quite shy. It was almost like she stood a bit taller, like she was a more complete version of herself.

She liked the local church just down the road. We walked there together. She skipped, giggled and would point out things of interest to talk about. This church is strongly connected to her tūpuna. They have made carvings for the interior of the church and some are buried in the adjoining urupā.

She seemed to recognise the significance of these spaces. It was rare that I needed to remind her to move quietly.

In the church she'd climb onto a pew and just sit. She was fascinated with the reverend of the church. He was an older Māori man who spoke fluent te reo Māori and had a lively, and at times, mischievous sense of humour. He had charismatic charm – which was not wasted on Hine. She often sought him out and would sit close by him to hear him talk. He seemed quite taken with her, too.

On one occasion he mentioned to me her strong sense of faith and her interest in worship, especially as often she sat listening to him as if mesmerised and enchanted. She would enthusiastically volunteer to perform tasks during the occasional services or funerals we attended when he needed a helping hand.

Hine appeared to be comfortable there. Something I noted was that it was as though she knew this place, that it was familiar to her without my having to offer descriptions or explanations. She seemed attuned to both the place and those she met and, interestingly, on reflection I have realised that because of this I felt more at ease there, too. I think I felt more at ease because I was not worried about her and also because she gave me confidence in a place, and with people, with whom I do not share whakapapa (ancestry). This also meant that she did not call on me to speak of the history and knowledges of this place that I realise I then knew very little about; rather, she appeared to seek out others to provide this for her.

Within this context Hine appeared to move carefully; it was as though there was a deliberateness to her movements. Revisiting some of themes already woven through these analyses, it could be that she had guidance from elsewhere informing her about

how to move within this space. Her ancestors were to be found all around her (Durie, 2003). It could also be that she was “remembering...memories; past events...past lives” (Te Awekotuku, 2009, p. 2) and drawing on these for guidance. The following passage from Salmond (2014) takes this entanglement further:

While a one moment, a person may stand in Te Ao Māori, where river ancestors are real and copresent, at another, they may speak and think as a physicist, or a historian, or a highly trained lawyer, with no evident sense of contradiction. Place in the relational field and modes of being are mutually implicated. In ancestral Maori ways of being, indeed, there is nothing new about shifting between different dimensions of reality (for instance Te Po, the realm of ancestors, and Te Ao, the everyday world of light), or between different papa or levels on the relational field—hence whakapapa, to move among papa, different dimensions of being. At certain strategic points, these dimensions intersect, and the sites at which this happens are particularly potent. These sites, which act as pae (or portals between different dimensions of reality), may be taonga or ancestral treasures; toi Māori, ancestral art forms; people (for instance tohunga (priests), or ariki (high chiefs); or places or events in which Maori “ways” are dominant—for instance, marae (kin group ceremonial centers)...et cetera. In these people, practices, and places, ancestral Maori concepts are active and alive, adapting to changing conditions, including various modernist assumptions about reality. The process of juxtaposition and exchange has generative effects. It makes it possible to deal creatively with competing and shifting universalisms without feeling the need for an “eye of God” account in which only one set of propositions about reality can prevail. (Salmond, 2014, p. 301)

Perhaps in this place Hine was attuned to her whakapapa, her inherited ancestral legacies and culturally located knowledge. Perhaps she experienced the close weaving together “of the realms of humans, into the realm of the dead and the realm of the gods” (O’Connor &

Macfarlane, 2003, p. 230). All three were accounted for in this place. Maybe I did not need to say anything at the time, as it had already been said by an unseen companion(?).

This was the first time we had spent a night in this relative's home.

We had visited regularly over the previous year or two, so Hine knew the house well. She had spent time with him and his whānau. She knew them well. She seemed fine about spending the night there. That night she slept well.

The next morning, she and I were in the lounge. I was sitting on one of the couches in the sun and she came over to me. She climbed up and sat next to me. I asked her how she was. We engaged in conversation. Then there was a pause.

She looked up at me and then said she knew why there were no whānau photos on the walls of the house. I asked her why. Her reply was, "because they walk the hallway at night".

I was taken back. This wasn't the conversation I was expecting to have with Hine that morning. I looked at her. Her face seemed calm and thoughtful—with no hint of a smile to show she was making a joke or trying to be funny.

As what she had said sunk in, I looked around me. I realised she was right—there were no photographs of whānau visible on the walls she was referring to.

I hadn't noticed this before. Her statement was very matter of fact. It was different to the conversations she and I usually shared.

I asked her, "Who did you meet?" She told me about them. She gave descriptions of their physical characteristics. She told me what they had talked about and how they had seemed to her.

I tried to take it all in. I didn't know those she was talking about.

There have been many generations who have lived in this house; however, I had only met two.

She didn't hesitate as she spoke. Her words flowed effortlessly, like she was talking about the features and words of someone well known to her. There was hardly a pause. It didn't tumble out in a disorganised way. She knew what she wanted to say and as the listener it made sense to me.

When Hine told me that there were no whānau photos on the walls I remember feeling an odd sensation, an all over tingling. I also recall that as she spoke, I became lost in my own thoughts, my own memories, not of anything particular; there was just a strangeness of feeling that I did not usually experience. Looking around the whare confirmed what she had said; there were no photographs on the walls. I wonder now whether there was a reason for this – whether whānau visitors are commonplace and always present. Hine saw them and talked with them. She spoke of them as she spoke of other members of her whānau.

Text sourced and presented in Chapter Two on Celtic connectivity between humans and otherworldly beings stated that women are considered to be an embodiment of a goddess (Matthews, 1995; Stevens & Maclaran, 2007). One of the abilities of gods and goddesses

is realm travel and attunement to realm movement. What is suggested is that females are more attentive to entities which may cross realms and are possibly able to “see” these entities as they travel. Whilst this is speculation, I revisit it here in relation to Hine, as my own familial experiences do not conflict with this proposition, so I feel comfortable in suggesting that it is compatible with Hine’s and my experiences.

This idea of being attuned to realm movement is also congruous with Māori text in Chapter Five. In their specific research contexts, Ngata (2014) and Valentine (2009) investigated the interconnectedness of wairua and Māori wellbeing, drawing various conclusions about the ways in which the temporal and spiritual worlds are enmeshed. Each suggested that one of the ancestral endowments that a child may receive as part of their kaihau-waiū is extra-sensory perception, or second sight, which may enable them to see and listen across realms. This seems pertinent to consider when thinking of the experience Hine shared with me and her observations of tūpuna as they moved about the house. Her calmness also suggested to me that this was not new, or unfamiliar, territory for her.

Revisiting the concept of agency introduced earlier, and who or what may be ascribed agency, Barad (1998) posits another interesting further line of inquiry. Did Hine choose to meet her tūpuna or did they choose to meet her? Perhaps, as suggested in Chapter Seven, there needs to be a willingness on behalf of both, much like the title of Barad’s (2007) text *Meeting the universe halfway*; the inference is that each must be travelling with the intent to come together. So, agency need not be attributed to Hine or to her tūpuna; rather, it could be manifested as the result of their entanglement.

Drawing on these culturally mediated perspectives, it seems that these relationships and companions are not outside of the ordinary for young children. Rather, it appears that young children's perception of these relationships may be influenced by how those around them make meaning of their experiences. If adults relegate such experiences to the imaginary, and therefore the imagined, do young children start to discern these relationships differently? Do these relationships become contested terrain, subjugated and therefore disqualified as invalid and "beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (Foucault, 1980, p. 81)? Are these relationships and experiences evidence of cognitive immaturity (Hart & Zellers, 2006) or do they speak of something different altogether?

Hine in Middle Childhood

At around seven years of age Hine came to me and told me she had talked the previous night with an older man from her father's whānau.

She told me she knew he was whānau but wasn't sure exactly who he was. I realised that who she was referring to was the father of the aforementioned relative. I knew this because she used his name – not his given name but the nickname he was known by.

I made this connection for her and told her who he was and how he fitted into her whānau whakapapa. She nodded, like this made sense for her. He had died four

years earlier and she had attended his funeral, although I don't know that she remembered this, and I didn't mention it at this time.

I don't think we talk about him a lot around Hine, so it was a surprise to hear her speak of him.

She told me how well he was looking. To her he was looking healthy and happy. She noticed his friendliness and commented on how caring he was. She told me what they had talked about and some comments he had made to her.

As I listened to her I got the idea she realised he was deceased, in the sense that his physical body was no longer able to be seen by everyone and that he was not someone she saw often. From what she was saying it seemed he visited her sometimes. The feeling I got as she spoke was that she was aware not everyone could see him.

At one point in our conversation she asked me if she should tell his son (her relative) what he had said. I asked her, "What do you think you should do?". She paused and seemed to think about this.

She spoke of several different ways this could go if she did tell him. She said it could make him happy or it could make him feel sad. She said he may not want to hear it. I wasn't sure what to say as I didn't know either, so my suggestion was that we could have a think about it some more. She agreed.

This was an interesting experience for me for two reasons. Firstly, because Hine shared with me information that I don't think she would have known about unless her ancestral

visitor had told her. Whilst she wasn't initially able to place him within her whānau members, when I realised who she was speaking about and told her, it seemed to make sense to her. The second reason is that she called on me for guidance; as mentioned within a previous excerpt, I had felt excluded from providing her with this support. When I recall this conversation, I feel a sense of happiness as she chose to talk with me and share her uncertainty about what she could do with the information she had received. I too was uncertain; uncertain as she was speaking of whānau and cultural knowledges which were not of my ancestral legacy, and uncertain about how best to support her and the relationship she had formed with her companion who, in this form, was not known to me.

Uncertainty is a concern shared by Derrida, Foucault, Barad and other new materialist theorists. The core premise is that there can be no one way, or absolute truth, that can convey an understanding of the universe and the place of the human and nonhuman, or perhaps the more-than-human (Braidotti, 2013), within it. According to Gamble and Hanan (2016), new materialism insists that humans and ensuing discourses that surround what being human may entail, are always "enmeshed with more-than-human configurations" (p. 265). The human body and nonhuman bodies can therefore not be smoothly cut apart (Barad, 2007). Like Karen Barad, Gamble and Hanan (2016) argue that a redrawing of boundary lines is required to enact new cuts and challenge normative hierarchies of what constitutes the known and therefore stable and consistent body. If old assumptions of what matters as matter are left unsettled then "nonhuman bodies will continue to be banished to a domain of utter meaninglessness" (Gamble & Hanan, 2016, p. 274).

In the above instance, Hine appeared to be unsettling traditional Euro-western assumptions of human-nonhuman boundary-making. I say this because, interestingly, Hine knew the nickname of the tūpuna she was conversing with. Whilst she was not immediately able to recognise him, and I presume did not seek to probe further to try to determine who he may be, nonetheless she knew he was whānau. He was not banished or exiled into *othered* terrain. She was not perturbed by this interaction (that I noticed); rather, it appeared to be ordinary for her. This appears congruent with points previously made about the ability of young children to see and pick up on cross-realm movement and for this to not be an unusual occurrence for them (Ngata, 2014; Valentine, 2009; Valentine, Tassell-Mataamua & Fleet, 2017).

To be a matakite, “a seer of faces” (Taitimu, 2007, p. 86), and therefore to converse and listen to ancestors, is considered to be a gift within Te Ao Māori (Ahuriri-Driscoll, 2014). Taitimu (2007) warns that this gift is embedded with responsibilities for the recipient. She cautions that others may not comprehend or appreciate the significance of the gift and may conclude it to be symptomatic of mental health concerns. Her research echoes some of the responses I received when sharing Hine’s experiences, as not everyone was comfortable with what Hine experienced and spoke of. This could create vulnerability for Hine, vulnerability because I shared her story with others whom she herself had not chosen to be the recipients of this information (Behar, 1997).

Another relevant cautionary point to make relates to the consequence of treading unprepared into otherworldly realms without appropriate guidance and support. Again, this is something I was made aware of as a child and mentioned briefly within Chapter

One. Ngata (2014) speaks of this in relation to matakite, specifically about the problems which may occur if channels between realms are opened with little understanding of the intent of entities – for example, beneficence or maleficence. These concerns feature within Celtic creation stories and Māori pūrākau alike (see Chapter Two, A Story of Moregan as an example).

Here a spiritual guide is required to impart knowledge and teaching about how to discern the wairua of spirits in order to offer help and ensure the safety of the matakite and those around them (Best, 2005; Mead, 2003). Ngata (2014) stresses that this guidance is integral for children. In order for a child to develop a strong sense of collective and individual well-being and identity, it is imperative that they have access to “skilled and knowledgeable mentoring” (p. 193). This mentorship enables a child to “engage positively with **matakite** experiences” (p. 193, emphasis in the original) and to see these relationships as part of a wider system of interconnections, rather than as something unbelievable.

I noticed after this last conversation with Hine that not everyone was ok or comfortable with what she had spoken of.

When I told them, some family and friends humoured me, listening to what I said then changing the subject. On a few occasions the responses went something like, “She has an active imagination”, “She’s probably seen this on TV”.

A few expressed concerns. One wondered aloud if this was something we needed to seek professional help for. The insinuation was something was wrong. There was something wrong with what had occurred.

Therefore, was something wrong with Hine?

Over the next few months Hine told me about conversations she had with him. These seemed to be a regular thing and often she would casually pass on a comment of something he said or they had spoken about. It was something I came to see as a frequent part of our interactions—just like our conversations about what happened at school that day or something she had seen or thought of during the day.

When Hine was about nine years old we were invited to a christening for a friend's new-born baby at a small, local semi-rural church. We hadn't been there before.

When Hine walked into the church she stopped suddenly in front of the alter and said, "I feel like I have come home".

After Hine spoke with me about her companion I began to talk to others about her experience. I think that I had assumed that because I was not concerned about her companion who was unseen to me, others would respond similarly. However, as indicated within the above excerpt, comments made when I attempted to share Hine's experiences elicited varied responses. Hearing comments like, "She has an active imagination", and "She's probably seen this on TV" made me realise that whilst I saw this

relationship as culturally compatible companionship, I could not assume that others would too.

Some of the comments aligned to the concerns expressed by several authors in Chapter Four. Responses proposing that she was the holder of an active imagination and was having difficulty trying to distinguish reality from fantasy suggests that her experiences were not considered to be plausible and therefore true.

Adult responses seem more closely orientated to the claim made by Klausen and Passman (2006) that real events become blurred, so young children struggle to differentiate between real and imagined events. Again, this dualistic differentiation that something needs to be clearly positioned as true and therefore believable or conversely false and therefore fantasy, is reliant on adult enculturation and adult surveillance (Foucault, 1981). This is a powerful construct which continues to hold these companions and those who speak of them in a place where the narratives of young children who speak of different truths is encircled, contested and relegated to make-believe and false belief (Atran, 2002; Foucault, 2005).

A further comment in which the speaker wondered whether this was something that we needed to seek additional help for steps back to concerns raised previously (see Chapter Four) that her experiences could be more than just blurred boundaries between reality and fantasy. This experience could be evidence of something more worrying, a possible indicator of pathology (Longden et al., 2012). These responses are at odds with text sourced from Celtic and Māori accounts; especially as there was nothing within Hine's

demeanour or words within our conversations together that suggested that she was worried or anxious about his visit. Due to this, I did not consider the possibility that there was anything sinister relevant, or useful, at this time.

I had not anticipated that Hine would not be believed. I had not anticipated negative responses. This made me realise that I could talk freely about other aspects of her life, “safe” topics such as how school was going and how she was enjoying sports, etcetera. However, some things were off limits. I could not talk of all of her relationships. I had made a promise to Hine when she was born to be her ally, her advocate. To think that she could not talk of her companions felt like censorship. Something I believed to be integral to her could only be spoken about in certain contexts with certain people. I started to wonder how other people may perceive her, and I think by extension, me. If she was not believed, and her experiences were not believable, then perhaps I as her mother should have known better than to believe her. Perhaps what I felt was that not only was Hine under attack, but so too was my credibility as her mother. This was something I had not anticipated.

I was working full-time as a senior teacher in an ECE centre. A young child started in the room I was in and it quickly became apparent that he had a relationship with a companion that I didn't see.

His mother had told us, “Oh, and he has an imaginary companion” during one of our daily conversations as he settled into the new environment. She didn't appear to be particularly concerned; she also didn't seem particularly interested in us

including his companion within our daily happenings (this was my impression and I could be incorrect and making an assumption).

When she said this none of the teaching team present, me included, asked her anything more about his companion. I remember there being a smile, and a polite little laugh, but nothing further was asked. Perhaps our initial responses indicated to her this was not something we as a team were able to accommodate.

Did she feel silenced?

The conversation then moved onto asking her about his sibling and immediate family members. This information was then written down on his “This is Me” profile for his learning portfolio.

As a teaching team we began to talk about, and debate, the merits of his companion being included/excluded. There was no consensus.

One teacher expressed concern about how we could make this work—especially within busy centre routines such as eating lunch in the dining room as there was limited room available. She asked, “Why should we set a place for an imaginary friend?”

Another colleague wondered what his peers may think of him. Would they see him as different; especially if we included his imaginary friend and other children noticed?

Questions were also raised regarding social competence; the assumption was that this relationship could be evidence that he may be lacking in his social ability to build connections with his peers. His companion therefore was considered a possible barrier for him to make real friendships and a sign he may need our help to do so.

What I took to be key was his companion was not really our problem. Rather the problem we were faced with was what to do to enable him to make friends with his peers – real relationships.

This seemed to sit alongside the belief his interest in his companion was just a phase and he would grow out of it. It seemed to be something to tolerate or manage for us as his teachers; with as little disruption to our day, and that of his peers, as possible.

It also seemed to be important his peers didn't see him as different, as this was thought to have social implications for him. He may not be accepted and could be ostracised by his peers.

As a team we couldn't decide. Asking wider than our immediate team we received similar perspectives and opinions. So, at the time we elected to do nothing. I think the hope was this would go away. I do remember feeling uneasy about this—like we were missing something. Like there was something we hadn't thought of or hadn't thought to ask about.

My impression is some of the teaching team chose not to notice when he was engaged in dialogue with his companion. He was steered towards peer activities or the subject was changed to talk about something thought to be more appropriate.

Once I set a place for his friend at the lunch table. Another teacher removed this. In passing she commented that this place could be better used for another child to sit at.

We didn't then speak of his companion or our approaches to the matter as a team again.

This excerpt brings to light many of the knotty problems explored within Chapter Four, especially regarding concerns that having a companion may be a social impediment, potentially detrimental to the making of real friendships. Whilst Chapter Four didn't discount the notion that young children's relationships with unseen companions could be helpful and that they may have no negative influence on their peer relationships, this excerpt shows that primarily the boy's companion was spoken of as potentially obstructive. Perhaps the central concern of the teaching team was that we saw his companion as limiting the ways he may interact with his peers, that he would turn his dialogue inwards rather than outwards. Can young children do both?

What I took to be key within the conversations was that this boy's companion was not really our problem. Rather, the problem that we as a teaching team were faced with was what to do to enable him to make friends with his peers. This seemed to sit alongside the belief that it was just a phase he would grow out of. It appeared something to tolerate or

manage for teachers; with as little disruption to our day as possible. It also seemed to be important that his peers didn't see him as 'different' as this could have implications for him socially. He may not be accepted.

In electing to do nothing, we did something: we chose to subjugate his knowledge. We disqualified his relationship and made it *untrue* by making the existence of this relationship invisible (Foucault, 1980; Hobbs, 2008). It was perceived that things went back to normal. The status quo was resumed (or assumed). We became the technical specialists who determined which explicit and implicit systems of knowledge were worthy of reproduction and which relationships were subsequently identified as valued and thus important to invest in (Foucault, 1981).

As this was going on, I realised Hine had stopped talking with me about her companions. The next time Hine and I spoke about her companions was when I approached her to talk about the possibility of exploring this topic further as a thesis focus.

I don't know when and why Hine stopped talking about her companions. I don't remember there being any conversations between Hine and me that signalled to me that there had been shifts within her relationships with her companions. I don't know whether her companions continue to travel alongside her in a differing form to when she was a child (Gleason, 2002; Singer & Singer, 2005). That could be research for another day or something that Hine, as the co-author of this thesis, may choose to speak to in the future.

8.2 Hine as a Fearless Speaker of Her Own Truth

The next key theme promoting further inquiry for this chapter is Foucault's (1984, 2005) notion of parrhesia, the act of fearless speaking, to which I re-turn to consider how Hine may have been a fearless speaker of her own truth, especially if the companions of young children could be considered problematic for adults. This notion was first noticed within my storying when, on sharing dialogue Hine had spoken to me, I experienced comments I regarded as negative and disempowering. Initially, my response was one of surprise; however, this gave way to frustration and concern as I realised that Hine would not be able to speak freely of her experiences, which included what I considered to be an ancestral gift. This led me to explore the reasons why adults may not be comfortable and supportive of a young child who speaks frankly of a different type of truth (Foucault, 1984, 2012), especially if a young child does not speak of, or share their interactions with their relationship companion/s, or if the listener does not recognise this dialogue.

I was drawn to a statement introduced earlier within Chapter Seven in relation to the concept of silence or feeling silenced. MacLure et al. (2010) wrote of a young girl named Hannah. Hannah is a child who is "not opening... [her]... mouth properly" (p. 492). She is silent to the call of her name when the school morning register is taken. The authors note, "This has become a problem. Which means *Hannah* has become a problem" (p. 492). What is made visible within this particular scenario is the embattled terrain which exists when a child behaves in a way perceived as unknown, unexpected or considered to breach the social constructs or social order of childhood (Burman & Stacey, 2010; Foucault, 1981).

This is similar to the work of Foucault (1981) woven throughout this thesis, especially Foucault's "troubling" of the ways in which knowledge, truth and power operate, by showing that they do not always behave in the way we think they should, and how this puts pressure on the web of normativity to pull tighter to ensure that a stable and familiar weave continues to occur. What this highlights is that Hannah and Hine are pushing the boundaries of established regimes of thought and truth—they are straining against and contorting the familiar and known patterning. In doing so they are engaging in a deconstructive/dismantling turn. They are disturbing the weave.

The shifting weave disrupts how those around may respond. For example, Hannah's silence is described by MacLure et al. (2010) as invoking the following from the adults around her:

...fear, perplexity, anxiety, excitement, blame. It prompts diagnoses, for there must be something wrong with Hannah: she must be timid, or recalcitrant, or attention seeking, or abnormal. It leads to actions and outcomes: changed classroom routines, parental visits, staffroom meetings, charts, and stickers...her silence eventually prompted analysis by researchers...Hannah's silence seemed to carry some kind of meaning beyond itself...It is simultaneously a knot and a dehiscent gap—an impasse and an open(ed) wound...Hannah's silence above all *resists analysis*. We are unable to make sense of it. Yet we desperately want to. The silence both blocks and produces analysis. (p. 493)

The resistance to analysis was also a feature in Derrida's (1998) work. He proposed that within every act of resistance something invariably is left over—*restance* (a remainder).

This remainder defies analysis (Derrida, 1998; MacLure et al., 2010). MacLure et al. (2010)

suggest that the contradictory features of analysis are implied within its etymology, which they disassemble as:

...one which seeks to return to origins, births, and causes (*ana-*) and the other working relentlessly to break down, untie, solve, dissolves, resolve (*-lysis*)...Pulled or paralyzed between birth and death, intact origin and final (dis)solution, analysis is regulated by the structure or the stricture (Derrida's preferred word here) of the double bind. Pull on one thread and you tighten the other. (pp. 493-494)

Comparability can be drawn with young children's travelling companions. Firstly, as with the example of Hannah, and secondly, the child who may be silent about their companion—or selective like Hine about who they share their companion with and the detail given—risks being classified as problematic. They, and their relationship, come under scrutiny and elicit concern and possibly suspicion.

In trying to conduct an analysis, there is the inherent complexity of determining how those seeking to take on this process could undertake it. What evidence can be accumulated so that meaning making can occur? How can it be possible to offer a resolute and definitive account of a phenomenon which resists analysis? Do we even have to?

Within Hine's life, there were many people who were not aware of her childhood companions unless I spoke of them. They were not privy to any information about their presence or about the context or content of these interactions. Interestingly, I don't recall many people noticing these relationships, other than a few close family/whānau members. This leads me to believe that either they did not know Hine well or she was

very adept at keeping these relationships (especially as she got older) out of sight, away from surveillance. Perhaps this was her act of resistance, to avoid analysis.

The very word *analysis* appears to mirror the complexities of the phenomenon and of my own travels as a parent and an ECE teacher. Links can be made here to the notion of superposition (see Chapter Three), whereby an entity can hold two contradictory positions simultaneously (Barad, 2010). Indeed, within narratives of religious icons and figures such as Santa and the Tooth Fairy, we model that this is possible and unproblematic (Atran, 2002; Bouldin, 1998; Wigger et al., 2013).

Perhaps the lack of noticing reveals more about the adults around Hine than anything else. It suggests that they feel secure in their constructs of the child and childhood or that they do not ever think to inquire about anything other than what they “see” and have experienced themselves. This signifies the pervasive and firm ground that traditional Euro-western perspectives have held and how these sentiments organise our thinking until we are faced with a disrupter, a child who conveys different knowledge.

So, whilst Hine’s companions may elicit concern and anxiety, applying differing theoretical lenses to their existence, such as quantum physics and ancestral and culturally mediated storying, would offer a multiplicity of potential explanations. However, to do so requires a shift in theorising. This further complicates the entangled web. To pull on one thread inevitably re-shapes the fabric of what is being explored. As Foucault (1981) pointed out, it may create a tighter weave, further encircling what is in place. Conversely, it may also

do something other, it may cause a slackening and lessening of tension which gives the weaver the opportunity to undo part or all of that which has previously been created.

8.3 Final Thoughts

This chapter turns attention to some of the difficult knowledge that can be produced when seeking to discern what a particular phenomenon may encompass. For example, within my included autoethnographic excerpts there is an acknowledgement of the theoretical complexities, and subsequently limitations, I encountered when attempting to offer a diffractive (Barad, 2007) approach. The intent was to offer alternative sites and sources of knowledge which could give rise to deeper and more contextually located interpretations of the multifaceted companionship experienced by Hine, and my take on these relationships as Hine's mother.

Difficult knowledge is a continued thread, and threat, apparent within this chapter, as different is often considered alongside difference, which Derrida, Foucault and Barad each address theoretically in their own way. For Derrida, opposites can never be exclusive as they rely on each other. A key example drawn on within this chapter is the breaking down of Euro-western binary constructs of presence and absence; there can be no presence without absence (Derrida, 1998). Foucault's treatment of difference is tangled within complex constructs of what may be taken as threatening "difference-denying" (Trainor, 2003, p. 569), or the silencing of anything that may be counted as "different to". The Baradian approach argues, "two accounts do not need to be reconciled. Instead, they

must be understood to be as equally real as each other” (Marshall & Alberti, 2014, p. 28). For Barad (2007), difference is a result of analysis, therefore it does not exist prior to the apparatus assembled around the phenomenon in question.

When anything that is considered problematic and beyond analysis is further subjugated and excluded from text and/or dialogue there is risk. What children say, or elect not to say, is a further example of this. If we as teachers perceive differing knowledge as threatening, and therefore risky, we may work harder to ensure normative discursive apparatuses further encircle what children may know and what opportunities they have to be fearless and courageous speakers of the various entanglements which are an ordinary and usual feature of their lives.

This offers travel elsewhere, creating spaces for young children to say something about, and therefore to offer possibilities for deconstructing normative discourses and received pedagogy. They can be the “*messenger*” (Goodnight, 2007, p. 2), the speaker of different truths, truths which present a “challenge... [to]...the *status quo* and its structured relations of power” (Huckaby, 2008, p. 771).

With this in mind, this thesis now travels to its next layer to explore the shifts in thinking that have occurred as a result of Chapters Seven and Eight. It then takes into consideration patterning inheritance implications for ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand, specifically in relation to the conception, implementation and subsequent refresh of our national curriculum document *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa* (MoE, 1996, 2017).

Chapter Nine

Inheritance Implications for ECE

Offering an autoethnographic account enables the researcher to include their voice and their stories alongside what has previously been written on the phenomenon they seek to explore. For me, this provided the opportunity to recall and revisit my own experiences of being the mother of a visionary girl who had companions unseen to me during her early and middle childhood years, and to consider how particular interactions had been influential to my awareness and understanding of the myriad of relationships children may encounter within their early childhood. This led me to reflect on how my travels within this research may enable and constrain the phenomenon I sought to explore. It also provided me with various ways into this intricate topic, enabling me to agitate theory alongside my experiences to see how some of the paradoxes regarding notions of reality could potentially be resolved.

Previous chapters of this thesis have investigated the tangled troubles attached to socially and culturally bound constructs of the child, childhood and the various relationships children may experience. Each chapter has sought to shed light on tenuous threads which have held pervasive Euro-western thinking in place and how these speak of, and for, historical theoretical claims which may not have a place within ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand. Of primary concern is how these claims have laid the historical and current foundational logic applied not only to the ways that various entities not only conduct themselves, but also to the ways we as teachers may understand their features, forms and entanglements. A central thread drawing these multifaceted explorations together has

been the difficulty of trying to discern what may, or can, be known about the various relationship companions who may share the lives of young children.

This chapter now hones in on the new theoretical insights that have been revealed from my autoethnographic explorations of Chapters Seven and Eight. It centres on shifts that have occurred as I continued to look into the weave that preceding chapters have offered to this specific thesis pattern making. Following on from this, the chapter travels to the next site of noticed tension, the inheritance implications for ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand, specifically within the national ECE curriculum document *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa* (MoE, 1996, 2017). Here the focus is at looking more specifically into the ECE context of Aotearoa New Zealand to briefly determine what ghostly traces and patterning may have to be accounted for (Derrida, 1994). As previously identified (see Chapters Three, Seven and Eight), space-time enfoldings emphasise that everything is already threaded through, thus nothing is ever still, and the past, present and future are always cut together/apart (Barad, 2010). With this in mind the intention is to look into the work that has already been undertaken and to then critically consider what may yet be done for curriculum and practice to further deconstruct patterning that may no longer be fit for purpose (Barad, 2010; Fisher, 2012).

9.1 Shifts in Thinking

My storying and the critical analysis introduced in Chapters Seven and Eight map a shift in awareness of the phenomena I sought to examine. There was a specific turning away

from the pervasive normative Euro-western theoretical conceptions regarding these relationships (see Chapter Four). Rather than continue along these established pathways, my travel led me to explore alternate terrain, and to look further into what could be revealed and re-claimed via ancestral remembering (Mills, 2003; Rhys, 2017; Te Awekotuku, 2009).

In writing the autoethnographic account in Chapters Seven and Eight, I worked to ensure that at no time did I allude to Hine's experiences or relationships as imaginary. I don't recall the term imaginary being used within our home, or in conversations outside the home; however, it was introduced by someone outside of Hine's immediate family/whānau when sharing stories of Hine's experiences. Instead, the interactions that Hine was engaged in were considered by myself, and members of my family, to be in the context of relationships that were unseen by us.

My excerpts and theoretical explorations show resistance to the troubled use of the term IC (imaginary companion) and the various constraints that go along with it (see Chapter Four). I began to recognise that new possibilities may be entangled within the term. However, to dismantle it would require the suggestion of an alternative term in its place, potentially just as problematic (Gnanasekaran, 2015). This led me back to my conceptual framing (see Chapter Three) and to Derrida (1976).

Central to Derrida's deconstruction strategy is the symbiotic relationship that exists between what is spoken and what is written, and whether or not what is meant, or intended to be known, can be known. Derrida used Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's

study of signs, which Saussure termed *semiology* (from the Greek *sémîon*, ‘sign’) (Saussure, 2004, p. 60), as the basis for developing his own deconstructive response to how language creates meaning. Saussure, alongside philosopher Charles Peirce, established the foundation for thinking about “the fundamental definition of the sign” (Chandler, 2007, p. 4), each providing “different philosophical implications” (p. 59). From their ideas Derrida developed his own argument on the inter-relationship between the spoken word and the written word, and where he believed that important emphasis should occur.

Within various text Derrida used, with reference to writing, the term *sous rature*, translated as *under erasure*—a philosophical device to question transcendent meanings that originated from Heidegger’s *Zur Seinsfrage*. Central to Derrida’s (1976) use of the concept is the focus on trace, a footprint or track. When a word/term is put under erasure it is crossed out to signify its inadequacy; however, it remains present within the text. Writing under erasure keeps a word in its position within the text to demonstrate its importance within the ensuing discourse. A cross is inserted through it to highlight that whilst this word is no longer the preferred, or adequate, text it holds a necessary trace of thinking that has previously occurred, and which therefore hitherto held it in place.

Writing under erasure signifies the continued entanglement evident within the textual features and conditions of language and text (Burman & MacLure, 2005; Derrida, 1976). Therefore, placing ~~*imaginary-companion*~~ under erasure signals that this term is no longer good to think or journey with (Duke University, 2014). Holding the term within the text

indicates, too, that a preferred/adequate substitute has not yet been found to replace it (Burman & MacLure, 2005).

Within my autoethnographic storytelling, I can see places where this Euro-western value-laden normative term, imaginary companion, started to get into trouble. I specifically noted that this term no longer spoke to, or spoke for, the various entanglements inherent in it. It could no longer stand up to the multi-layering of accounts and multiplicity of crossings embedded within the relationships it described. Nor did it speak for what I see as my own experience – and that of my daughter Hine’s. It couldn’t encapsulate a multitude of rich and sophisticated alternate cultural beliefs about the entanglements spoken of within Celtic creation stories (Chapter Two) and Māori pūrākau (Chapter Five). The term did not leave space for there to be stories other than those traditional Euro-western theoretical perspectives, and closely aligned previous research endeavours, had so far produced and promoted as suitable and relevant knowledge. Using the under erasure approach enabled me to signal that I had determined that I no longer wished to *think with* the term IC; however, I was uncertain about what could appear in its place (Derrida, 1976). I utilised the under erasure strategy as this thesis built; however, as time went on, I determined that putting the term imaginary companion under erasure did not adequately address the concerns I had raised throughout each chapter’s explorations.

As previously introduced in Chapter Three, the concept of subjugated knowledges was put forward by Foucault (1982) to denote those knowledges which have been removed from language and text due to their assumed inferiority. A particular point made by Foucault (1980) was that these are the knowledges that Euro-western theory has traditionally re-

located “beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity” (p. 81). Therefore, these are the knowledges that have been exiled from what is perceived as observable, measurable and subsequently believable (Foucault, 1981), in this specific thesis context the knowledge of companions who are unseen but culturally compatible.

Accordingly, knowledge that posits these relationships and relationship companions to be anything other than imaginary has not generally been welcomed within traditional Euro-western theorising (see Chapter Four). Rather, it has been disqualified and marked as subordinate, relegated to the territorialised terrain of the imagined: the *un-real*, the *non-existent*, the fantastical and *un-believable*. It has been pushed underground, leaving ancestral and cultural knowledge pathways in a state of disrepair and upheaval (TKRI, 2013; Evans-Wentz, 1911).

This has been the knowledge that Euro-western theorising has struggled to account for: the notion that some companions may be difficult to decipher, making it problematic to be certain of the definitive properties they may possess (Barad, 2007). These are the companions that may not behave as they should, that is in known, predictable and stable ways; their features, form and function therefore cannot be assured and assumed (Capellmann, 2017).

From my autoethnographic accounts and accompanying theoretical analyses in Chapters Seven and Eight, I determined that several recurring notions became apparent which I summarised as encompassing: the reclamation of subjugated knowledge; ancestral storying; Hine’s ancestral inheritance; culturally compatible ancestral guides as travelling

companions in childhood, and Hine as a fearless speaker of her own truth. To speak to these meant that rather than continuing to utilise the term imaginary companions, which these accounts has argued is too narrow and restrictive, it would be beneficial to put forward an alternative term. This led to the emergence of a new term, culturally compatible travelling companions (CCTC), which is now used in place of the Euro-western term imaginary companion.

The term CCTC is offered as a *hoa-haere* that can be drawn on, and that can draw together culturally resonant understandings of and meanings for the myriad of relationships which may exist. It does not seek to erase or supplant one text for another. It acknowledges what Euro-western textual accounts have contributed to this discourse alongside alternative narratives, namely Celtic and Māori storying within this specific research context (see Chapters Two and Four). It acknowledges that such companionship is a feature of the history and narratives of every culture, and as such the relationships are conceptualised dependent on context, rather than existing within one boundary-making and boundary-marking theoretical paradigm. Flexibility to include ancestrally resonate inheritance alongside that which has become part of the usual features of daily life is offered; for example, I hold my own ancestral knowledges which differ from those that Hine holds. However, due to our entangled relationship there is scope for me to be attentive and to create space to be responsive to her ancestral companions in culturally located ways (Rameka, 2012). This term signals a shift and is therefore a reading together to draw new insights which counter any particular take on young children's companions.

This term does not seek to constrain the nature, purpose, form or function that these relationships may take. It does not seek to relegate relationships to any specifically demarcated terrain. Rather, it offers an alternative pathway for reconceptualisation, for new theory to emerge – or re-emerge – and for travel. It makes room for cultural constructions that speak of a range of possibilities. It speaks of, and to, the multifarious relationships and companions who may share our lives across the lifespan in ways that are culturally meaningful and significant. It also creates space for culturally contextual meanings to be ascribed to these relationship companions. It is therefore open to interpretation and welcomes fluidity and movement. It does not subscribe to a constricted perspective and enables further diffractive thinking and cutting/bleeding to occur (Barad, 2014; Foucault, 1981).

To be responsive to the CCTC who may share young children’s lives requires further “deconstructive” moves to occur: dismantling and thinking differently about the structures and systems which may constrain rather than empower young children to speak their truths. Accordingly, this chapter now shifts to carefully consider the role that curriculum and teachers play within this knotty terrain.

9.2 Inheritance Implications for ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand

As mentioned previously (see Chapter Three), Foucault (1981) asserted that discourse sits within the domain of technical specialists, those who are responsible for establishing what is constituted valuable knowledge worthy of replication. Addressing power imbalances in

an attempt to reverse the resident power relationship for children would presumably enable young children to become technical specialists, to enact agency over *their* stories, their childhood and the various companionship they encounter (Dahlberg et al., 1999). However, this move would create further tension according to Derrida (1976), as it would merely replace the centre and introduce a new ordered hierarchy. A deconstructive move would destabilise the problematic meanings and textual features to open up alternate possibilities. This calls for the entangled stories, and fearless speech, of children to be recognised and accepted as a true and believable account of their experiences and their companions (Foucault, 1984; MacNaughton & Smith, 2008), even when they may differ from our own and when they may call into question the theoretical constructs we have carefully and neatly formulated around them.

More recent interdisciplinary scientific approaches provide a pathway to enact such a deconstructive move. Writers such as Barad (see Chapter Three) have sought to trouble historical subjugation—destabilising and disrupting the ground that lies under Euro-western established claims. As Barad (2012b) asserts, everything is “always already entangled” (p. 51), already in touch and touching (2012a); therefore, the universe holds possibilities and potentialities unlimited. Limitation exists only in that we derive meaning from what we see, understand and consequently know at any one time (Barad, 2010). This concept of entanglement re-opens pathways to question, challenge, break through and break apart established Euro-western dualistic notions of corporeality and non-corporeality. New patterns and directions can thereby be created in order “to figure difference differently” (Barad, 2014, p. 170) and fracture notions of absolute binary

opposites upon which presumed superior discourses of thought and truth have come to be accepted (Foucault, 1981).

This is the terrain that offers exciting possibilities to re-theorise, and re-inscribe, understandings of the CCTC who may travel alongside us. It offers opportunities to consider how a companion may well exist in more than one form or state and emphasises the fact that we can think differently about the ways in which we can get “along well together” (Duke University, 2014) and rethink these entanglements. This calls for a reorientation to border-work; to identify where additional boundaries may be drawn and the potential barriers that such boundaries may subsequently present (Anzaldúa, 1987; Barad, 2010).

One potential site that requires further investigation is where and how the Aotearoa New Zealand ECE curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017) may be positioned within this contested terrain. As the national curriculum document for all ECE teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand, *Te Whāriki* is an integral pattern-making instrument. It is pertinent to ask how this curriculum document, and, by association how teachers as the assumed technical specialists, can recognise and respond (Carr & Lee, 2019) to young children and their CCTC in located ways that are cognisant of children’s cultural and ancestral remembering.

Of central concern are the constructs which inform what may be contained, concealed and constrained within the ontological and epistemological orientations and interpretations of the weave of the curriculum’s structure and ensuing patterns. These

are the threads which when pulled on reveal what lies at the heart of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017). They are the threads which give an account of which knowledges are privileged and signalled out for further travel via replication and which are not. They also speak of the space occupied by the child and how and where the child's voice may be noticed to give rise to a different type of storying about the lived experience of *their* childhood, *their* CCTC and subsequently *their* curriculum.

This chapter now travels to the specific space that is occupied by ECE to consider which patterns have been constructed around the child, childhood, and the CCTC they have may have within the early years. This involves taking a step back in order to determine which legacies may be haunting our current curriculum document and what we may now need to be attuned to. We can then consider which alternate pathways could be taken to make room for new "cutting" to occur so that young children and their CCTC can be accounted for.

9.3 ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand

ECE policy, curriculum and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand are underpinned by a range of legislative and regulatory requirements which aim to ensure and uphold high-quality provision and participatory rights within the sector. These are set alongside Aotearoa New Zealand governmental goals which aspire to all young children receiving care and education in services where there is "a shared understanding of agreed processes and procedures...that...are consistent, safe and appropriate" (MoE, n.d., p. 38). The

underlying stance is that all children have the right to receive high-quality ECE. This will contribute to better life-long learning outcomes which are beneficial not only for the individual but also for the economic capability and viability of the country (Stuart, 2014; Te One, 2013).

This remainder of this chapter now looks more specifically into the historical and current ECE context of Aotearoa New Zealand to briefly determine what ghostly traces and patterning may have to be accounted for (Derrida, 1994). For this reason, the following section lays the groundwork by offering an account of selected historical perspectives I have identified as providing an instrumental trace/footprint upon which current understandings of the ECE curriculum, of children, and subsequently their CCTC, have been constructed.

9.3.1 What haunts ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand?

Historically, ECE has been considered the underdog of the country's education system. Much has been written about the history and construction of a formalised curriculum approach to ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand. With this in mind I seek here to offer an overview of key ideological standpoints, events and documents as they pertain to this thesis context. I begin in the 1980s, as what occurred then was to provide the backdrop to my introduction to motherhood and to ECE.

The 1980s were a crucial time of change for ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand. Dalli (1994) applied the term *Cinderella* to denote where the sector was positioned within the

government's education portfolio. The sector was considered to be at the mercy of the compulsory education sector, unable to "afford a ball gown and who definitely had not been invited to the ball" (p. 224). However, like Cinderella, despite the circumstances, there was hope as a site of resistance was carefully being marked out and prepared for change.

Several possible reasons for ECE's predicament were suggested. Primarily, the key challenges faced by the sector at this time were a low proportion of voting power within the sector, the diversity of services on offer attracting differing tiers of funding, inequitable funding in comparison with other education sectors, concerns around accessibility and affordability, the plethora of qualifications and experiences of teachers in the sector and continued marginalisation due to the perceived status and perception of care and education for young children and for women, by whom the workforce was predominantly staffed (Dalli, 1994; Duhn, 2009; May, 2001).

The administrative responsibility for ECE moved in 1986 from the Department of Social Welfare and into the Department of Education (later replaced by the Ministry of Education in 1989), signalling a desire to view ECE as education as opposed to care (Duhn, 2009; Wells, 1999). This required a re-orientation of state and self, as historically the care and education of young children has been the responsibility of parents, predominantly mothers, rather than a concern of the state (Atwool, 2006; Duhn, 2009; Mitchell, 2010). Such was the legacy inherited from historical Euro-western conditions of childhood introduced within Chapter Three. Te One (2013) draws attention to two distinct

standpoints that informed discourse about the provision of care for young children historically:

...since the choice to have children was a personal one, educating them was a private responsibility; it followed that the provision of education was also in the private domain. This argument created tension between two conflicting assumptions: first, that families were ready, willing and able to exercise choice; and, secondly, that communities were in a position to provide them with choice. (p. 9)

In 1987, the introduction of a three-year ECE initial teacher education training qualification into colleges of education indicated a shift in how the sector was perceived. This signalled and advocated for a more *skilled* and *professional* workforce and announced that the emphasis was now shared between the provision of care and the provision of education (Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007).

Two key documents commissioned during the late 1980s, *Education to be More (The Meade Report, 1988)* and *Before Five: Early Childhood Care and Education in New Zealand* (1989) were pivotal influences in capturing the shifts in ideological status occurring at the time for the sector. The *Meade Report* focused on recommending quality provision and the unification of policies for the sector, including the consolidation of “all Childcare Centres and Kindergartens into a single state funded and regulated system” (Ray, 2009, p. 27) in line with simultaneous structural and administrative changes occurring within the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors (Wells, 1999). It also highlighted “te reo Māori and tikanga Māori as concerns of Māoridom and as tenets of quality” (Ritchie & Skerrett,

2014, p. 44), set against the backdrop of continued Treaty negotiation. However, the hopes and expectations raised by these documents arguably did not come to be realised.

Concurrently concerns were being raised by Māori about the myriad of ongoing problematic historical legacies of colonisation and assimilation within the education sector. The slow response of any political party to address these concerns led to strong public outcry over the longstanding inequities experienced by Māori, politically, socially, culturally and educationally (Ritchie, 2012; Stuart, 2014; Walker, 1990). This led to political and educational changes for Māori and constituted an epistemological shift in the making for ECE, as the promises and obligations articulated within Te Tiriti/The Treaty could no longer be ignored and swept aside as historically insignificant. This suggests that the sector was to be conversant in Te Ao Māori and pūrākau (introduced within Chapter Five).

Concern was also expressed regarding the low participation rates of Māori within the ECE sector. Alongside this, attention was turned to the inadequacies of centres to “meet the [language and culturally specific indigenous knowledge] needs of Māori children and their whānau” (Walker & Rodríguez de France, 2007, p. 32). As a result, Māori initiated a counter-colonialist approach, a process which Te One (2013) describes as follows:

During the 1980s Māori throughout Aotearoa New Zealand supported the development of kōhanga reo in a serious attempt to save te reo Māori (the Māori language). Hailed as a grass-roots revolutionary movement (Irwin, 1990), kōhanga reo focused on mokopuna/tamariki as the future speakers of te reo Māori. Immersion in te reo and tikanga Māori (Māori customary conduct) would empower these children, along with their whānau, hapū and iwi, to maintain the language

and thus ensure its survival. Although the concept concerned young children, it did not identify itself as an early childhood education movement. Māori leaders argued it was a social justice movement, a manifestation of tino Rangatiratanga (self-determination) under the Treaty of Waitangi. Māori activists and academics alike were clear that the existing system of education disadvantaged Māori and that the kōhanga reo movement was an example of a solution to this situation: by Māori, for Māori. (p. 11)

A problematic outcome of the *Meade Report* was the transfer of Te Kohanga Reo to the education portfolio (Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014). Initially administered by the Department of Māori Affairs, the disestablishment of this government department meant that Te Kohanga Reo was assimilated into the Ministry of Education in 1990 (Bushouse, 2008). Whilst this shift meant an increase in funding, the organisation's concerns about their ability to retain their unique Kaupapa within a mainstream and highly regulated governmental department were clearly voiced (Bushouse, 2008; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014; Skerrett-White, 2001).

Before Five (1989) was the Labour Government's policy document in response to the *Meade Report*. Dalli (1994) describes the years of 1989-90 as a time of great optimism and hope for the ECE sector following its introduction. It was believed that the advocacy and lobbying to raise awareness of the importance of education during the early years had not fallen on deaf ears and that positive changes to elevate the status of the sector, as well as to address disparities in funding, would be at the forefront of new initiatives. A four-stage funding plan was introduced that encouraged those within the sector to work towards a range of perceived quality provisions in order to access higher levels of funding.

These new quality guidelines were intended to supersede “the minimal ones in The Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations (1990)” (Dalli, 1994, p. 225).

However, this document was unsuccessful in delivering on promises of equity and funding, both identified as quality indicators by the *Meade Report* (Dalli, 1994; May, 2002; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014). In 1990 the newly elected National Government suspended further circulation of the newly developed quality guidelines. Instead they opted to introduce *The Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices*, a move that Dalli (1994) asserted “immediately annulled the power of the quality guidelines to require higher standards for chartering purposes than those in the regulations” (p. 226).

Throughout the 1980s the Department of Education facilitated early childhood curriculum workshop discussions (Dalli, 1994; Te One, 2013) to which participants representing a range of settings within the sector were invited. The key concerns were subsequently articulated: provision for infants and toddlers, Pasifika communities and home-based care settings, and the desire to avoid “‘down ward pressure’ from the school curriculum” (Te One, 2013, p. 10).

In September 1990 an advertisement appeared in the *New Zealand Education Gazette* inviting interested persons and/or organisations to apply for the Ministry of Education contract to develop guidelines for an inaugural early childhood curriculum document for Aotearoa New Zealand (Stuart, 2014). Following this, a consultative writing team was appointed comprising Margaret Carr and Helen May from Waikato University and Tilly and Tamati Reedy representing *Te Kohanga Reo*. Group members aspired to work

collaboratively in a “parallel process” (Ritchie & Rau, 2006, p. 4), modelling the partnership principles articulated within *Te Tiriti/The Treaty* (Ritchie, 2012), as indicated by the following statement from Te One (2013):

Even before work on *Te Whāriki* began, the Rūnanga Matua [advisory board charged with the protection and promotion of things Māori within the Ministry of Education] had identified concepts central to the promotion of mana Māori in education. Seeing *Te Whāriki* as a guide to “fulfilling the intent of the Treaty of Waitangi” the Rūnanga proposed “an infusion approach...whereby mana tangata, mana atua, mana whenua and mana o te reo are considered as key factors”. Thus the final form of *Te Whāriki* had its beginnings in Māori pedagogical and philosophical beliefs. (p. 11).

Scripting a bicultural curriculum document firmly positioned in the unique cultural, social and political context of Aotearoa New Zealand was further challenged by the paucity of national and international models available to draw on for guidance (May, 2001).

Attention turned to the curriculum model in place within Te Kohanga Reo, which at its heart aspired to create a curriculum document to restore te reo Māori me ōna tikanga; Māori language and “the Māori way of doing things” (Williams, Broadley & Lawson-Te Aho, 2012, p. 26), alongside transformation and liberation for Māori as tangata whenua of Aotearoa New Zealand. Accordingly, the objective for the new curriculum was to ensure that the continued transmission of cultural and ancestral knowledge was maintained as a taonga (see Chapter Five) and different tribal accounts were acknowledged as integral to the curriculum intent and application.

Whilst wide consultation was sought within the ECE community, questions were raised about the preparedness of a diverse and largely unqualified sector to respond to the multi-tiered philosophical positioning that the curriculum was seeking to achieve (May, 2001; Ritchie, 2013, 2018; Stuart, 2014). Particularly noted as challenging was the desire to construct and implement a “degree of conformity” (Stuart, 2014, p. 4) within the sector which conversely sought at the same time to devolve “responsibility to each centre” (Stuart, 2014, p. 4).

Teachers across the sector were expected to be, or become, conversant with the tangible and intangible tenets upon which the curriculum was promulgated. These tenets would inevitably encompass orientations to worldviews that may, or may not be, complementary; for example, a Euro-western view of the child and childhood (see Chapter Four) sat alongside Māori epistemology and ontology (see Chapter Five). This included notions of ancestral remembering and CCTC and how they may be accounted for within the core tenets of the curriculum. Therefore, the capacity of teachers in the sector to acknowledge and challenge their own culturally held assumptions, values and beliefs further impacted on the ways in which curriculum implementation was conceptualised and subsequently occurred (Ritchie, 2003; Williams et al., 2012).

One specific area of increasing concern was the ethnic make-up of teachers within the sector, in particular the over-representation of Pākehā. Queries were raised about how the sector could genuinely respond to the bicultural aspirations embedded in *Te Whāriki* when the dominant worldview of its established workforce was the historical norm (TKRI, 2013; Ritchie, 2012). In particular, questions were asked about the preparedness not only

of the teachers but also of the initial teacher education providers to engage with the specificities of pedagogy and practice when differing ancestral knowledge, worldviews, histories, values, aspirations and language now needed to be carefully and closely attended to in order to address core social justice tenets (Duhn, 2009; Pihama, 2015; Ritchie, 2002, 2012).

The draft curriculum published in 1993 and circulated across the ECE sector was widely considered visionary and was well received, especially in relation to the bicultural aspirations articulated within it which inspired hope and signalled an intent to dismantle pervasive colonial historical legacies of colonisation. It symbolised the expectation of better things to come and held promise for an exciting future; early childhood had begun the journey of stepping out from under the shadow of her sister, the compulsory education curriculum, and was indeed in a position to attend the ball. This draft was trialled over the following three years, and in general it appeared to be accepted and to provide shared principles of pedagogy and practice within the variegated sector (Stuart, 2014).

9.3.2 *Te Whāriki* (1996)

Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa (1996) was the Ministry of Education's finalised edited version which superseded the 1993 draft. Governmental editorial changes to the 1996 curriculum document promoted the desire to more closely align to the primary school curriculum, shifting the focus from early childhood as part of a

progressive educational landscape of learning to early childhood as the foundation upon which the skills, attitudes and aptitudes of a successful learner would be constructed.

Alcock and Haggerty (2013) identify the ways that this was made evident within the textual features of the new government sanctioned curriculum:

...the shift in language from references in the draft document to “learning opportunities” which offer “more than one possible strategy or outcome” and include “expressive and creative activities (those which do not have a defined outcome)” (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 117) towards references to “learning outcomes” in the final document. Rather than highlighting the place of opportunities that do not predetermine outcomes as part of the plurality of learning – what Duhn (2006a) refers to as the openness of the draft “toward considering heterogeneity” (p. 168) – the final document offers a closer specification of the ideal child as ECE product, framed as 188 learning outcomes. (p. 23)

Aspirations embedded within the draft document of *Te Whāriki* were slashed by the Ministry of Education in favour of “a more integrated approach” (May, 2001, p. 11) in which learning and teaching represented a particular view of what was deemed important and valuable to for children to know (Stuart, 2014). So, whilst *Te Whāriki* was conceptualised as a bicultural and bilingual curriculum document through which the historical legacies of the past were to be acknowledged and challenged and cultural and ancestral knowledges reclaimed, the hopes and expectations that it articulated remained problematic to realise. Viewpoints which drew attention to sites of tension appeared to be subjugated, leaving *Te Whāriki* the uncontested curriculum. The desire for *Te Whāriki* to

be a transformative, progressive and bicultural curriculum document for ECE had been stymied within the political arena.

The Ministry of Education's edited version of *Te Whāriki* included a pan-Māori approach, which differed from the original draft document. Whilst Williams et al. (2012) acknowledge that there some "generic kaupapa Māori principles" (p. 11) are commonly shared, it must also be acknowledged that "whānau, hapū and iwi have their own identity, language and culture" (p. 11). The unique history, knowledges, narratives and dialects of each whānau, hapū and iwi were amalgamated into a pre-determined 'shared' homogenous worldview of Māori epistemology making it easier for teachers to "do *Te Whāriki*" (Ritchie, 2018, p. 10) in a generic decontextualised way. This presented a problem as culturally located knowledge was assimilated into a generic approach. From the perspective of the focus of this thesis, the subtleties of connectivity with specific CCTC may then be altered or removed.

The introduction of *Te Whāriki* coincided with neoliberal political reforms occurring at a global and national level. Embedded within these reforms was the desire to "move towards the educationalisation of early childhood" (Duhn, 2012, p. 84) – to put ECE under the spotlight and enact discursive shifts "concerned with the normalisation of children" (Stover, 2016, p. 537). This viewpoint echoes historical Euro-western perspectives from which the child is viewed as a future economic resource for productivity; ECE was now the foundational place in which to prepare the child for such a future (Alcock & Hadderty, 2013).

On a positive note, the introduction of *Te Whāriki* was, in general, heralded nationally and internationally as a seminal framework (e.g., Cullen, 1996; Farquhar, 2010; Lee, Carr, Soutar & Mitchell, 2013; Nuttall, 2003; Ritchie, 2003) that hinged on an “expectation of a radically different notion of curriculum” (Ritchie, 2012, p. 9). Its premise was to reject traditional Euro-western orientations to curriculum that were predominantly prescriptive and structured in nature, in order to provide a “philosophical and cultural” (Williams et al., 2012., p. 32) framework representing a “multiplicity of viewpoints” (Bone, 2008, p. 266).

Not only was *Te Whāriki* designed to provide a shared philosophical statement that could be applied within a diverse range of settings, a “big ask”, in early childhood in Aotearoa New Zealand, it also provided a critical positioning statement about the interests, and lives, of children in the pre-compulsory school years. Although the “seamless curriculum” (Stuart, 2014, p. 4) sought by the Ministry of Education inevitably impacted on the development of *Te Whāriki*, it also offered the curriculum writers a site of resistance in which to articulate and position the ECE curriculum as stand-alone, as opposed to a watered-down curriculum inherited from the compulsory sector. It signalled a positive start to the conceptualisation of alternative – culturally mediated - constructions of the child, their childhood and their CCTC.

9.3.3 A knotty weave

The translation for *Te Whāriki* is widely spoken of as a woven mat, a whāriki upon which all have a place to stand (May, 2001). This metaphor is central to the ideology embedded

within *Te Whāriki*; however, the term has other possible translations, such as “to spread” or “to cover” (Stuart, 2014, p. 10). So, whilst the “weft and warp” (Alcock & Haggerty, 2013, p. 23) imagery and symbolism has become synonymous with the diversity of settings and the holistic and integrated way each young child develops and learns within the context of their family/whānau, communities, environment and relationships, this very metaphor could conceal more than it reveals.

Macartney (2011) asserted that *Te Whāriki* “is open to multiple interpretations and is, as such, a site where knowledge, values and pedagogy are contested and, when this is recognised, can be negotiated” (p. 4). This suggests that teachers implementing *Te Whāriki* need to have awareness and a sound understanding of the complexities embedded within the document to be conversant with how they:

Identify and acknowledge own narratives; the ideas, values, beliefs and experiences that inform their personal and professional practice. To understand that personal narratives may, or may not, be historically, socially and culturally mediated.

Draw on differing perspectives of what constitutes as knowledge and how knowledge can include and exclude dependant on context and content.

Understand that what may be considered valuable and important knowledge in one context may not be within another. That knowledge may exist, and be transmitted, in multiple ways and that knowledge can never be neutral or politically ‘free’.

Have awareness of pedagogical orientations and to identify and determine whose interests particular approaches may serve.

Determine where sites of challenge and resistance may be and to continually retain an inquiry based approach to making sense of the aspirations articulated within *Te Whāriki*. (Adapted from Macartney, 2011)

Throughout *Te Whāriki* there are numerous references to the unique place held by Māori as tangata whenua. Emphasised is the intent to make te reo Māori me ōna tikanga visible, relevant and meaningful within everyday planning and teaching practice (MoE, 1996). *Te Whāriki* clearly articulated that the vision was for all children, not only those who whakapapa as Māori, to experience Te Ao Māori in meaningful and contextual ways. However, as previously asserted (see Chapter Five), for children of Māori whakapapa their kaihau-waiū is reliant on proper enculturation which means that observance of Te Ao Māori should not be left to chance (Mead, 2003; Ngata, 2014; Pihama, 2015).

As earlier identified within Chapter Five, “Ko tō ngākau ki ngā taonga a ō tīpuna Māori” sustains the rich and complex historical narratives of Māori. Drawing on “nga taonga tuku iho (treasures handed down) ...lays a whāriki...for others to follow” (Jenkins & Harte, 2012, xi). The taonga so handed down provide the very essence of life, including a wealth of timeless messages denoting the place of the celestial, spiritual, physical and material worlds and the creation of the child. Inherent to these taonga are understandings of the easily seen and the spectral, relationships of many forms and relationships which may exist within a variety of configurations, such as CCTC which accompany a child. Therefore, these taonga manifest themselves in a multi-layered and intricate system of overlapping beliefs, values and patterns of discerning, knowing and being.

At its heart *Te Whāriki* aspired to recognise “the cultural heritages of both partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi” (MoE, 1996, p. 9) and “the significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi” (p. 40). However, as has been pointed out, this was not to be an easy task given the overt and covert historical attitudes, values and beliefs continually permeating pedagogical constructs and practice within education in Aotearoa New Zealand (Orange, 1987; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014; Smith, 1999; Walker, 1990). The continued legacies of colonisation had etched indelible marks on people, places and on the way CCTC were perceived and whilst the desire for transformative change was indeed admirable, the practical application was to prove far more contentious and difficult than was initially presumed (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015; Pihama, 2015).

9.3.4 Hidden apparatuses weave complicated patterns

As mentioned previously (see Chapter Three), the continued transmission of knowledge via regimes of thought and truth relies on the work of technical specialists, those deemed to hold expert knowledge of the structures and systems being created and applied. Particular tools, which Foucault termed apparatuses, are arranged by the specialists to secure this knowledge in place through frameworks that guide current and future endeavours. As such these apparatuses have the capacity to exert influence over all aspects of teachers’, children’s and families’ lives (Foucault, 1981; Oliver, 2010). A curriculum document can be a powerful discursive tool to advance knowledge marked as

superior—simultaneously further displacing knowledge deemed to pose risk to its perceived prestige and rearticulation.

Stuart's (2014) earlier point that a translation of *Te Whāriki* could be conceptualised as a cover/to cover is shared by Duhn (2012). Duhn (2012) argues that where the weaving metaphor of *Te Whāriki* comes under strain is that rather than embodying an indigenous approach to pattern making the weave of our curriculum document more closely resembles that of a grid "loom-like structure" (pp. 96-97) as opposed to a woven mat. She states that the Ministry of Education's (1996) assertion that the curriculum is a whāriki in which the principles, strands and goals are interwoven fails to take into consideration "the materials (principles, strands, goals) offered for the weaving of a mat may already have been produced on a loom" (p. 97).

Therefore Duhn's (2012) argument is that what is articulated as sitting at the heart of *Te Whāriki* has been already fashioned elsewhere. This *elsewhere* is located much closer to the Euro-western claims about the child, childhood and childhood companions expressed within Chapter Four, the tracings of which remain twisted within the warp and weft patterning of the intended weave. What is held within these threads is further advanced by the way the weaving then occurs.

A warp thread is stationary, pulled taut and fixed to the apparatus in use. It runs vertically, lengthwise, alongside the desired structure or frame. Weft threads lie widthways and are inserted in a cross-over-and-under pattern, contributing texture and colour variation (Crane et al., 2017). The weft threads are the "filling" (Önder & Berkalp,

2009, p. 7), the threads which have less twist and are subjected to less tension. Warp threads hold the tension in place and so take more strain than the weft. Traditionally, weaving resembled a web-like structure; however, over time more sophisticated and often rigid frameworks have evolved upon which weaving takes place – or is held in place.

Duhn (2012) explains that weaving in a traditional indigenous way is not dependent on a fixed structural support. Weaving can occur in any place or location and the design can unfold and take shape from the inspiration the weaver receives. The weaving that is produced retains elements and qualities embedded within the raw material and there is flexibility for innovation and creativity to flourish through ever-changing designs and pattern making. There is space for the unfolding of ancestral remembering and patterning to occur.

On the contrary, the history of the loom, the Euro-western apparatus, is chequered. Weaving in industrialised Europe is symbolic of the rise of capitalism and is indicative of a desire to produce flawless, neat, orderly and uniform patterns. The raw material retains little of its original form and there is an absence of scope for diversity or alternative interpretations which may influence or emerge as the weave takes shape. The weaver within this industry is therefore deemed to be an exploitable resource whose role is to follow rigid instructions and contribute economic value through continued productivity.

Following a loom-like approach, which may occur unwittingly, further holds in place established regimes of thinking and truth and the unquestionable role of teachers as technical specialists. It also further silences the flourishing and transmission of other

knowledges which may cut through, cut apart and create ruptures within colonial complicities and logic (Barad, 2007). Leaving the whāriki metaphor untroubled, especially in regard to the articulated intent to further advance bicultural aspirations, evokes continued notions of safety and security; it upholds the status quo or “business-as-usual” (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015, p. 1) stance of ECE as “the threatening possibility of irreducible difference disappears in the tidy weaving” (Duhn, 2012, p. 98).

This contradicts the “multiplicity of viewpoints” (Bone, 2008, p. 266) and the “weft and warp” (Alcock & Haggerty, 2013, p. 23) imagery which is a prominent cornerstone of *Te Whāriki*. A Westernised loom would mean that the child, and CCTC, will only be included within the curriculum delivery as long as they do not “confront or oppose official discourse” (White, 2011, p. 5) or seek to undermine what has already been carefully constructed about the known and knowable child, their childhood and the companions who may share their lives.

Hidden within the warp and weft are powerful sentiments which continue to hold in place entrenched worldviews, those that maintain a clear divide between entrenched Euro-western binary claims of what is reality and imaginary, what is counted as being true and of value and conversely what is positioned as *other* than and accordingly assigned to the margins.

9.3.5 Swept under the whāriki

Further problematising the notion of our curriculum whāriki is what White (2011) refers to as the dust that settles underneath it. The concept of dust conveys the ways in which the real teaching is often swept away as this is not the ‘stuff’ prioritised and privileged from a documentative, and regulatory, perspective. The dust appears to be the tangledness of teaching practice that sits outside of what has been historically considered worthy of knowing and transmitting. By ignoring alternative forms of knowledge, companions and voices and sweeping them under our whāriki, we further strengthen the colonial loom and increase our fixation on the warp—ensuring the possibility that any other type of weaving approach and fabric creation is therefore eradicated.

Thus, the warp and weft of the weave continues to privilege one worldview. The whāriki maintains a seemingly tight and polished surface weave; however, this belies what may be seen should the whāriki be re-turned to look at what has been subjugated to the underside, what exists elsewhere, hidden away so as not to interfere with pervasive normative discourse. It is as if two patterns are woven independently, one in full view and one relegated to the underside.

An example of this could be that the sections of the curriculum written in English and in te reo Māori were not a direct translation of each other, creating “a curriculum within a curriculum” (Ritchie, 2014, p. 98). The adage “don’t judge a book by its cover” appears apt for *Te Whāriki*. The title written in te reo Māori and the opening whakataukī by Sir Apirana Ngata infers that the curriculum document’s content is bicultural and bilingual;

however, in a document spanning ninety-nine pages only seven are written in te reo Māori. It can be argued that the section written in te reo Māori is specifically for Te Kōhanga Reo settings, where *Te Whāriki* complements the Kaupapa. Yet, it makes for a “them” and “us” curriculum approach (Duhn, 2012), with teachers either unaware of or unconcerned about their commitment to implement a bicultural and bilingual curriculum and the implications this can then have for the children they teach and the relationships they recognise as familiar and usual (Rau & Ritchie, 2011). This concern is further addressed by Ritchie and Skerrett (2014) who assert that by not embracing bicultural and bilingual practice, “monolingual English settings produce monolingual monocultural children, totally out of step with *Te Whāriki*” (p. 59), and out of step with their CCTC as important ancestral travel guides.

9.4 Our Updated ECE Curriculum

In 2016 a Ministry of Education-led group was launched tasked with updating *Te Whāriki*. The updated curriculum draft was released in November 2016 with an initial six-week consultation period for wider sector response. The submissions highlighted several key concerns, including the need for further, and longer, consultation in order for the sector to become conversant with the proposed changes and to enable more robust professional dialogue across the diverse sector, stronger adherence and visibility of Māori theoretical concepts and pedagogy, and a greater acknowledgement and affirmation of young

children's variegated and continually shifting identities and relationships (Kaye, 2017; MoE, 2017).

The sector's long-standing affinity with *Te Whāriki* meant for the writing team that this document held "a special place in the hearts of early childhood educators" (McLachlan, 2017, p. 8). Its status and standing had been cemented within the sector, notably due to the ideological shift it had represented when first introduced in the 1990s. Whilst the sector had long spoken of the need for *Te Whāriki* to better reflect the current complex political, social and cultural contexts of young children, their families/whānau and communities, there was nonetheless familiarity, comfort and security associated with the curriculum in use.

The Hon. Nikki Kaye, Minister of Education during the writing and drafting period, identified the government's stance on the aspirations to be included and the intention behind these:

All children are born with immense potential. Quality early learning helps our children begin to realise that potential by providing rich experiences that support each child's unique interests and development...*Te Whāriki* expresses our vision that all children grow up in New Zealand as competent and confident learners, strong in their identity, language and culture. It emphasises our bicultural foundation...It encourages all children to learn in their own ways, supported by adults who know them well and have their best interests at heart. (Kaye, 2017, p. 6)

Following feedback and revision, Aotearoa New Zealand's national ECE curriculum was released by the then Minister of Education, Hon Hekia Parata, in April 2017 with several

key shifts noted. Firstly, changes had been made to the previous 118 learning outcomes; which were reduced to 20. These are positioned as capabilities a child will work towards over time rather than set outcomes to be achieved by a specific time. Secondly, as McLachlan (2017) asserts, a stronger and more explicit alignment to “**sociocultural theorising**” (p. 9 emphasis in original) appeared. Primarily this was in response to concerns raised about teachers continuing to defend their place as technical specialists by ‘cherry picking’ aspects of theory they favoured or were familiar with and “ignor[ing] the rest” (p. 9). Thus, concerns raised in the 1980s and 1990s about the preparedness of ECE teachers to engage with a contextually rich curriculum suffused with an array of intricate culturally located overlays remains currently relevant.

9.5 Where Could Young Children’s Companions be Located Now?

The revised *Te Whāriki* requires that teachers in the ECE sector take a new approach. There is an articulated shift to intentional teaching underpinned by a broader scope of educational and culturally located theories rather than an over-reliance on selected theoretical aspects chosen from a narrow range of familiar and known theoretical perspectives (Ritchie, 2018; Skerrett, 2018). There are aspirations for, expectations of and obligations for teachers to take a wider, deeper and more culturally resonant approach to learning more about the lived lives of young children and their families/whānau to provide the basis for how learning and teaching will occur. Inextricably bound to this is an understanding of the multifaceted relationships, and CCTC, threaded into the lives of

young children in a myriad of ways; for example, via ancestral intergenerational knowledges and inheritance.

The following whakataukī taken from *Te Whāriki* clearly articulates a differing approach to conceptualising children and childhood in Aotearoa New Zealand thus acknowledging and drawing on the significant ancestral and cultural knowledges young children bring with them as their kaihau-waiū.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takitini

I come not with my own strengths but bring with me the gifts, talents and strengths of my family, tribe and ancestors. (MoE, 2017, p. 12)

Directly after this whakataukī is the following supporting statement:

In Māori tradition children are seen to be inherently competent, capable and rich, complete and gifted no matter what their age or ability. Descended from lines that stretch back to the beginning of time, they are important living links between past, present and future, and a reflection of their ancestors. These ideas are fundamental to how Māori understand teaching and learning. (MoE, 2017, p. 12)

These statements clearly communicate the significance of entanglement. Ancestral knowledge, and by association, ancestral pathways and visitors, are nowhere assigned to a place or space of being imagined or imaginary. The “timeless companions” (Pohatu, 2015, p. 33), *hoa-haere* and CCTC spoken of earlier in this thesis (see Chapter Five) are therefore acknowledged as vital not only to the child but to their family/whānau and wider community. CCTC and their ancestral gifts and legacies are not relegated to the imagined

and make-believe spaces—rather they are identified as being salient features to guide the ways that teaching within the sector should be conceptualised and enacted.

However, as identified previously within thesis chapters, such recognition and acknowledgement of this are reliant on a range of complicated factors. What is spoken of above will create disruption to firmly entrenched Euro-western perspectives which have, effortlessly, travelled alongside ECE nationally and globally within the weft and warp of regimes of thought and truth and via curriculum patterning. Cooper (2017) notes:

There is a strong emphasis on each service personalising the document to reflect “its own local curriculum of valued learning” (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 10).

This implies the teaching team has a collective and clear agreement about what to include/exclude, however this may not be the case. (p. 16)

This requires the visibility and inclusiveness of conversations and research about various and varying relationship companions within the lifespan. This calls for a differing type of weave – cognisant of a deliberate disruption to ensure the dismantling of the traditional Euro-western loom-like warp and weft threads spoken of earlier in this chapter. These marked threads need to be identified and untangled with careful attention paid to identifying established regimes of thought and truth which have left indelible footprints on our curriculum.

Intra-action makes and unmakes understandings of phenomena (Barad, 2003), as boundary-drawing is entangled within the discourses produced and circulated and the positions ascribed to children and their CCTC. For young children to see themselves and their CCTC as a usual feature of the myriad of relationship conversations requires

attentiveness to how all facets of the curriculum account for their experiences. This calls on teachers to consider their role and responsibilities in ensuring that proper enculturation and skilled mentorship occurs within the ECE setting. It asks for teachers to critically consider alternative routes when thinking of, and thinking about, who may share the lives of young children. It also puts the onus on teachers to consider how often they converse with young children about their experiences of companionship and how often they seek to inquire further into the lived experiences of young children and the features, forms, and functions of the CCTC who may walk alongside them.

Te Whāriki is premised on young children being competent and agentic, capable of making rich and varied contributions to content knowledge (Hedges, 2012; MoE, 2009, 2017). They bring knowledge and learning of their worlds fashioned prior to their participation within an ECE setting. They are not passive recipients of knowledge; rather, they are crucial co-constructors within multi-layered sociocultural contexts (see Chapter Five) (Chaffey, 2018). Their curriculum relies on their voice; this asks for teachers to listen to and take account of their wealth of experiences, not just the ones we find to be believable and/or palatable.

Te Whāriki is conceptualised as an inclusive document (Kaye, 2017; MoE, 2017). This creates spaces for children's CCTC to be recognised as relevant and meaningful. Just as these constructs have been made, they are simultaneously being un-made, most noticeably by children themselves (Barad, 2007, 2014; Cooper, 2017; Derrida, 1991).

9.6 Final Thoughts

The desire to see our ECE curriculum as flexible and able to account for a multiplicity of perspectives must extend to our conceptualisation of relationships. Just as there needs to be a pushing-back against the rigidity of an overt and covert colonially inspired weave, so too do we need to challenge idealised relationship constructs which privilege corporeal companions over those who take alternative form. This is timely “relationship work” (Jones & Hoskins, 2016, p. 83), as young children are “not in the position to make strategic decisions about their early childhood education, yet they are the recipients of many systemic failures” (Westerbeke, 2016, p. 292).

Therefore, inherited legacies woven into the fabric and features of *Te Whāriki* need to be accounted for in order to achieve the social justice aspirations embedded within its warp and weft. This asks teachers to be attuned to their response-ability: the mutual entanglement between child-teacher alongside child-companion (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012). For “*something else*” (Jones & Hoskins, 2016, p. 82) to be produced calls for the coming together of multiple approaches in order to draw on new insights. This includes creating spaces for the child who speaks of CCTC, which may sit outside of our own familiar cultural and familial narratives.

For as this whakataukī advises us; “*nā ngā ringaringa tohunga maha koe I rautaka’* (you have been fashioned by the hands of many experts)” (Pohatu, 2015, p. 33). Experts walk alongside each child to provide culturally appropriate companionship. They provide the

blueprint, the patterning which is recognised through cultural connectedness and continuity.

The following chapter concludes this thesis by weaving together the various threads explored in this thesis.

Chapter Ten

Conclusion: Weaving Threads Together

This final chapter threads the thesis content together, drawing on what has been explored through the research journey. Firstly, I begin this this chapter by revisiting my kirituhi kotahi alongside the research aim and questions introduced in Chapter One which provided the overarching querying and structure for this thesis. Secondly, I offer summaries of the research findings, speaking to each of the research questions in turn. Thirdly, I identify the limitations of this research. Fourthly, I provide a conclusory account of what else could be known about young children's CCTC taken from this specific research context. Lastly, I present suggestions for further research endeavours building on insights revealed in this research.

10.1 Revisiting the Research Aims and Questions

This research sought to take a wider, and more culturally located, examination of what may be known about the various culturally compatible travelling companions (CCTC), to use the term adopted in Chapter Nine, who may journey alongside young children. It drew on key concerns, primarily the paucity of differing theoretical approaches to and perspectives on the ways that the companions of young children may be conceptualised. These concerns were identified as arising from a growing uneasiness about what alternate knowledges it could be beneficial to explore and include within an ECE context in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Undertaking this research called on a range of complex theoretical approaches to frame the scope of the conceptual investigation in order to consider which other stories and accounts of these companions it could be relevant to attend to (see Chapters Two, Three, Five, Seven and Eight). A fundamental motivator for this research was to interrogate how power/knowledge operates, the ways in which adults may position and produce children as idealised subjects within ECE, and the implications this could subsequently have for the companions who may share their lives. The desire was to open up new spaces for thinking about the complex and multifaceted lives of children and the childhoods they may experience. It was also an opportunity to rework category constructs and definitions in relation to the relationship companions who may frequent their lives – whether seen or unseen, noticed or unnoticed – by others.

This research desired to challenge the ubiquitous portrayals of children that highlight the durability of dominant Euro-western claims and the ways in which they have been instrumental in obscuring the ability of differing storying to flourish and take its place as valid and worthy of observance. Therefore, this thesis seeks to make improvements to how studies of childhood may be conceptualised within the deeply entangled and culturally nuanced relationships that young children may experience.

In Chapter One I identified the thesis problem statement to be the paucity of alternative perspectives and terms available to interrupt traditional Euro-western textual accounts of the nature and purpose of companions unseen to others during the early childhood years. My fundamental concern was the scarcity of research available to speak against, and speak of, the differing experiences young children may have of the companions who may

share their lives. Alongside this I sought to dismantle the predication that young children's unseen – to others – companions solely exist within the realm of the imagined, especially as this assertion is out of step with indigenous theoretical explorations, posing numerous problems for young children in Aotearoa New Zealand (Phillips & Bunda, 2018; Pihama, 2015).

The research explorations were thought through utilising the various theoretical notions explored within my conceptual framing. These were continually revisited and reworked alongside the thesis content as new ideas and pathways began to emerge. What was noticed as significant was the continued complexity and challenges inherent within the various threads examined. Applying a deconstructive turn in order to *step elsewhere* created an observable ripple of movement and revealed new tensions and concerns that required attention.

Deconstruction calls for a dismantling approach (Derrida, 1991). In the context of this thesis it was employed to call into question Euro-western approaches to the construction of conceptual distinctions, primarily those that rely on binary opposition to further advance their reproduction. With this as the starting point, investigations shifted to consider which truths and notions of knowledge have been integral to the continuation of the child and of childhood as idealised subjects constructed by adults.

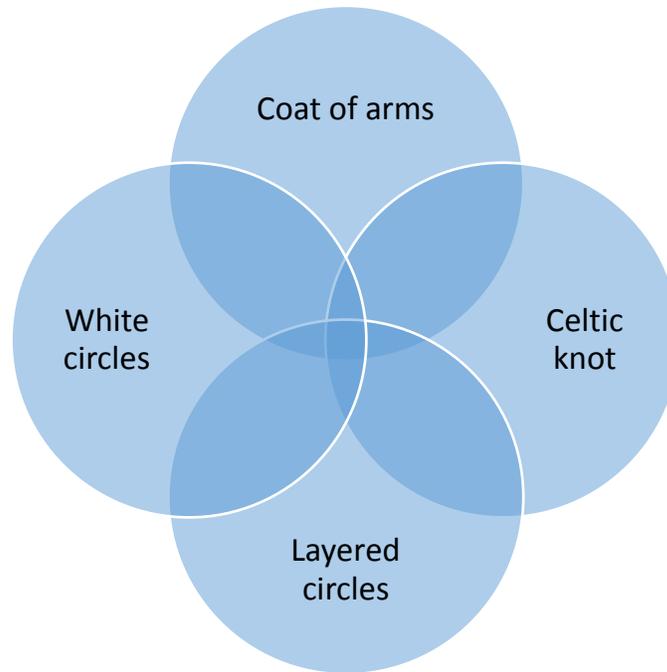
Embedded within these queries was the role that dominant discourse has played, and continues to play, in the subjugation of differing knowledges which calls into question the claims of those who until now have been deemed to be the technical specialists and

producers of such knowledge (Foucault, 1981). Continuing this line of thought then enables established regimes of thought and truth to be put under pressure, with the potential for further dismantling to occur to reverse privileged asymmetrical power hierarchies. In this process alternative voices are shifted from the margins – and are therefore able to speak of differing knowledges and truths which shed light on alternative ways of thinking and conceptualising. This further promotes a more collaborative co-theorising approach to understanding what may occur for children within *their* childhood.

The CCTC who may share the lives of young children exist within an intricate and complicated discursive space. Accordingly, there has traditionally been an intent to survey, categorise and demarcate terrain and borders where human and nonhuman are separated (Haraway, 2008). Historically, this has especially occurred when indigenous peoples held perspectives on the world(s) which invariably call into question accented and taken-for-granted Euro-western truths (Barad, 2007; Foucault, 1981). This can be seen within the articulated research questions from which this thesis unfolded (see later in this chapter).

10.1.1 Revisiting kirituhi

The core tenets taken from my kirituhi kotahi were introduced within Chapter Three – Conceptual Framing. These were:



(See page 181)

The coat of arms depicted within my kirituhi kotahi provided the overarching framing for this research as it signifies the crucial place of ancestral layering and remembering. In this way it provides protection for the wearer and travels alongside them as a constant companion. It is therefore the blueprint, the patterning, for knowledge.

Celtic knots and knot making provide the intricate and complicated internal and external weaving patterns which denote the enfolding of space-time alongside the interconnectedness and intra-action of human and nonhuman relationships (Barad, 2007). As such they speak of mattering, as each knot is interlaced with ancestrally compatible pathways.

The layered circles support the enfolding of space-time by acknowledging the concept that there is never nothingness. Everything is always already in a state of touching and just

because you may not see something does not mean that it doesn't exist (Barad, 2007; Keane, 2011). The shading signifies that not all companions and companionship take the same form and there can be variance within the ways in which they may travel alongside you.

Spaces of growth, learning and mystery are symbolised within the white, unshaded, circles. These are where potential flourishes and where new, or remembered, knowledges are acknowledged. Here questioning, challenging, breaking through and breaking apart can bring to light new understandings.

Each of these components has provided guidance, comfort and companionship as this thesis has travelled, sometimes into unexpected and challenging terrain. Each mark on my skin denotes various entanglements. Each speaks of ancestral legacies forged and messages to be attuned to in order to draw on rememberings, some of which Hine and I share. They remind me to care of ancestral and cultural heritages and inheritances and to actively disrupt structures and devices which may put these under threat. This has been a crucial motivator in this research journey, in the creation and unfolding of each of the research questions which I now speak to in the order they came to be.

10.2 Indicators for Non-Corporeal Entities in Childhood

What are the indications (e.g., in research literature and the author's autoethnographic reflection) that young children have experience of non-corporeal entities that are outside normative developmental constructions of childhood?

Literature sourced to inform and guide this thesis clearly demonstrates that relationship companions can take multiple forms. Whilst traditional Euro-western literature speaks primarily of such companions as imaginary and imagined (see Chapter Four), this was not noticed within Celtic and Māori storying (see Chapters Two and Five). Celtic and Māori storying clearly identifies and speaks of the existence of various companions throughout the lifespan. These companions may appear for a range of reasons; for example, to provide ancestral wisdom and guidance, to provide comfort and to advise when caution may be needed (Gibney, 2004; Keelan & Woods, 2006; Pohatu, 2011, 2015).

Within Chapter Four (see 4.8), I examined concerns raised within Euro-western text about the possibility that young children's relationships with companions unseen to others could be evidence that the child was displaying personality and/or social inadequacies (Hart & Zellers, 2006). Similar concerns appeared to be mirrored within my autoethnographic account (see Chapter Eight) in which two key experiences were spoken of: firstly, in relation to sharing Hine's experiences with people and their mixed responses, and secondly, the uncertainty about and avoidance of professional dialogue regarding a young child's companion within an ECE teaching team.

My experiences of sharing Hine's encounters drew attention to the ramifications of speaking of different kinds of stories and the possibility that these will not be received positively or considered to be truthful. What was specifically noted was the inherent tension which sits alongside these stories of difference, stories which are assigned to the position of inferiority and fantasy. These are stories which elicit concern, alarm or perhaps scorn, stories which struggle to be heard and believed as they become encircled

by assumptions of mental health concerns and normative Euro-western theoretical and textual interpretation which fails to acknowledge the validity of other storying, internationally and nationally (Mills, 2003; Ngata, 2014; Whitiwhi, 2013).

The second experience related to a child who was newly enrolled in the ECE teaching environment I was working in. The conversations that occurred within the teaching team echoed those threaded through Euro-western text; for example, concerns about how to accommodate his “friend” and debate about whether we should have to, concerns about his being ostracised by peers, and querying whether his friend was a substitute for a real relationship. What this example highlighted was that as teachers we all intra-acted (Barad, 2007) with this discourse, as we were actively part of producing subject positions ascribed to him and to his companion. His companion was relegated to the imaginary.

What these two accounts show is that in each situation when I was in a position to engage in conversations with other adults and teachers, some of their responses highlighted the riskiness and vulnerability of sharing these experiences. Just as vulnerability was raised as a key concern within autoethnographic writing, it is also pertinent to consider vulnerability in relation to a child who speaks of a different kind of truth – a child who takes on the role of a parrhesiastes (Foucault, 1984, 2005, 2012). The riskiness involved in speaking a different truth is that it locates what has been said, and the person doing the speaking, as outside of recognised normative structures and apparatuses.

Whilst a stronger approach to working alongside children and their family/whānau is asserted within *Te Whāriki* (2017), Cooper (2017) advises teachers to be mindful that this

is no easy endeavour. For those who have been positioned outside of the norm there is a continued “level of vulnerability” (p. 17) due to the power dynamics. Those who are vulnerable do not find comfort in having their *diversity* or otherness laid bare; rather, exposure “highlights difference” (p. 17), increasing vulnerability and further scrutiny.

Within my own autoethnographic account mentioned above, as a teaching team we struggled to engage in collegial and collaborative critical professional conversations about a young child’s companion who was unseen to us. Exclusion thus occurred – however, not as a result of careful, intentional pedagogical dialogue. Rather, this happened due to the inability to cut through and challenge normative discourse surrounding the phenomenon and to look elsewhere for alternative voices and perspectives. Our reluctance to do so silenced the possibility of the occurrence of any kind of interruption, and subsequent improvement, to normative discursive structures (Gnanasekaran, 2015).

My own travels as Hine’s mother has shown me that not all relationship forms are corporeal. Her relationship companions, spoken of within my autoethnographic accounts in Chapters Seven and Eight as ancestral visitors. Here I acknowledge that these were the ones she shared with me; however, I am making an assumption if I presume that these were her only companions. What I was made aware of may have only been a small selection of her experiences.

From the accounts Hine shared with me I can see the association she could have with the role of matakite, a seer who has the ability to make connections between the temporal and spiritual realms (Ngata, 2014; Valentine, 2009). Similarly, I can see these qualities as

being culturally resonant with my own familial Celtic narratives and the ability to traverse temporal and spiritual realms (see Chapters One and Two) (Matthews, 1995).

In her interactions with me, Hine was reflecting on her role as the receiver of information and whether or not she should share the messages she had received. An area of interest I had not thought to think through further until recently was whether Hine was the intended recipient of this information or whether it was shared with her in order for it to be passed on. At this stage I am not sure, and to try offer a definitive explanation would simply be to speculate.

10.2.1 Ancestral and cultural narratives about entities

How might aspects of ancestry and culture be expressed in these experiences of non-corporeal entities, as experienced in an autoethnographic account (see Chapters Seven and Eight)? How can cultural narratives (in this case Celtic and Māori) inform understandings of ‘imaginary companions’?

Celtic and Māori ancestral narratives shed light on the myriad of ways in which those with whom we share ancestry may remain present in our lives—they and the gifts we inherit are our timeless travel companions (Pohatu, 2015). As has been noted, in both cultures these companions are considered usual and familiar travel companions, especially as some are identified as ancestral guides whose role, responsibility and obligation is to impart counsel, wisdom and knowledge to their descendants. In this way they are close, familiar and necessary travel companions, emphasising the wider connectivity of all

realms. These connections, as Williams (2001) advised “[slip] through time and space” (p. 187); the past, present and future are always touching and entangled and are significant and boundless (Barad, 2007).

When revisiting this question, the concept of *re-membering* is pertinent to re-consider (Te Awekotuku, 2009). Previously within this thesis this denoted the calling on ancestral knowledge to remember that which is precious and has been under threat of subjugation (Foucault, 1981). What has been revealed within this thesis research is that the concept of remembering can also be used with regard to the companions of young children. When analysing the accounts of being Hine’s mother it became apparent that for Hine her *kaihau-waiū* was the reclaiming of ancestral knowledge pathways and the ability to remember someone who had departed the temporal realm, such as an ancestor. It was also to *re-member* her *whānau*; her *whānau* includes a range of members who take on multiple forms. Therefore, to *re-member* means to speak of these ancestral companions as an integral part of her *whakapapa*. They are not then delegated to existing solely within one realm; rather, they are always in touch, touching, as the *whakataukī*, “*ka mua, ka muri... walking backwards into the future*” (Jacobs & Falconer, 2004, p. 1), introduced in Chapter Five, asserts. They are intrinsic and enduring travel companions.

Therefore, to *re-member* is to reimagine and reconceptualise notions of family/*whānau* structures and to consider a wider range of companions with whom we may have relationships during our corporeal lifespan. In this way we are cognisant that family/*whānau* can consist of those who take a range of forms and that there are times when the presence of each will be more easily discernible than others. This *re-membering*

also enables us to take a wider and culturally deeper approach, to understand that those who have come before (and also those yet to be) have an influential place in the lives of our young children and in our own lives.

10.2.2 Where are companions acknowledged in ECE?

To what extent are such companions acknowledged in ECE settings in the international literature and in Aotearoa New Zealand?

A key concern identified at the start of this research journey was the ways in which young children's companions unseen to others may be handled within international and national literature. As previously stated, to date there remains a paucity of international and national literature exploring the presence of entities and companionship from diverse cultural perspectives. Currently the majority of the literature that circulates is premised on a Euro-western traditional approach in which companions who do not observe a recognisable and stable corporeal form are relegated to the domain of the imagined. Chapter Four highlighted the knotty and complex nature of the terrain within which these companions are located. Of particular concern for this specific research question is the notable failure within traditional and current Euro-western textual accounts to move beyond the scope of the term IC (imaginary companion), or terms I determined to be in use that are similar in premise to this term. The only text in which an alternate pathway into this topic was apparent was the research undertaken by Mills (2003) on possible

cross-culturally comparable categories of children's ICs in the United States and children's previous-life identity remembering in India.

Therefore Euro-western theorising offers only one divergent account and should not therefore be the definitive voice on what this phenomenon could and should look like. It does not, and cannot, speak of or speak for all relationships, nor does this approach to the phenomenon take into consideration the variety of features and functions that each specific encounter may entail. Wider theoretical weaving is therefore required to draw on a multiplicity of threads which are attuned to culturally resonant ancestral and cultural knowledges to offer new insights and possibilities to reconceptualise young children's companions and companionship.

Chapter Nine introduced the inheritance implications for ECE. Within this chapter several key concerns were raised about the fragility of the threads and subsequent pattern making with which our national ECE curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017) is woven. As an influential apparatus, our curriculum is a webbed network of power, history and possibilities which are made explicit and implicit within the textual features of the document (Foucault, 1980). As such, it is entangled with mattering, with producing practices that matter (Barad, 2007). Conversely, it also excludes what may matter as matter through a system of complex configuring where cutting occurs that silences possibilities or places them in the background (Barad, 2007, 2014).

Te Whāriki (MoE, 1996, 2017) is premised on the recognition and acknowledgement that children's identity and relationships are variegated and continually shifting (Kaye, 2017;

MoE, 2017). In Aotearoa New Zealand they are couched within complex and contested political, social and cultural discourses threaded through with the ongoing historical legacies of colonisation. So, whilst Chapter Five has drawn attention to the multiplicities of forms that companionship may take within Te Ao Māori, and as an integral inheritance for Māori children, numerous concerns have been expressed about the ways in which these may be acknowledged and accounted for within ECE (see Chapters Eight and Nine).

What is currently in place to inform theory, curriculum and practice for ECE should be considered only part of a much more expansive and richer multi-layered and dynamic story. Analysis of the sourced textual references and my own autoethnographic accounts led to the understanding that these entities should be acknowledged as an integral component of ancestral and cultural inheritance. Therefore, they do not sit outside of a child; rather, they are an intimate travel companion.

An alternate term, CCTC, was introduced in Chapter Nine to speak of the multifaceted culturally resonate companions who may share the lives of young children. This term does not seek to remove or erase the Euro-western term of IC used within the preceding text of this thesis (see Chapter Four); rather, it encompasses all cultural takes on and possibilities for the forms, functions and features of these companions.

10.2.3 Implications for ECE teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand

What are the implications of this theoretical and autoethnographic analysis for ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand, specifically for ECE teachers?

Woven throughout this thesis content is the significance of ancestral and cultural inheritance. These are the tangible and intangible gifts, features, qualities and attributes which each child receives and makes their own. When taken from a Māori perspective these are observed to be included within a child's *kaihau-waiū*.

What each child will inherit will differ and it is therefore problematic for a teacher to seek to determine what is a known and knowable child using prevalent Euro-western constructs of the child and childhood. Whilst these constructs offer insight into theoretical perceptions which are helpful to observe, they have historically delimited the potential for alternative voices and experiences to exist.

Each teacher brings with them their own ancestral and cultural theorising and interpretations which they use to guide and make sense of ECE pedagogy, curriculum and practice. For teachers to actively realise the aspirations, and limitations, inherent within *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017), they need to be critically aware of how their own storying informs their values and beliefs and to consider what else may be known about children and childhood which may sit outside of their familiar and privileged worldview structure and systems. Teachers also need to recognise the importance of spiritual guidance and teachings and how they may occur within the ECE context (Ngata, 2014).

As Duhn (2012) and White (2011) argued, our curriculum (here they were referring to the 1996 document; however, the same cautions are relevant to apply to the recently introduced 2017 update) promulgates the flexibility and openness of a *whāriki*, to draw on a weaving metaphor. However, the weave is not always benign. The structure, the

position of the warp and the “fillers” used in the weft, mean that our curriculum conceals, or smuggles, a range of knotty ontological and epistemological tenets which may weave a pattern of further inequity and injustice. Furthermore, it may pull tighter the complex colonial logic which has sought to subjugate alternative knowledges to the margins, so they are not considered as a feature of the central pattern or pedagogy. These are the continued implications for teachers to deconstruct and detangle; they ask them to travel *elsewhere*, to consider what else and who else could be known, or re-known, and re-membered.

10.3 Limitations of this Research

The research design and methodology employed for this research focused on my own exploration and engagement with this topic. As such, each chapter has been arranged in line with my own theoretical inquiries and travels. I have taken my own pathway through this research; what is therefore presented is my journey through and alongside the various selected theoretical and personal textual features and interpretations.

Autoethnography enabled me to examine the topic using a context-driven self-narrative approach (Anderson, 2006; Chang, 2008). My own recollections of selected experiences provided the data to accompany the theoretical explorations and agitations undertaken. They offered me a pathway into the phenomena I sought to learn more about and enabled me to analyse socio-cultural meanings and interpretations through drawing on my own stories and experiences (Chang, 2016; Wall, 2016).

As noted previously, the autoethnographic approach is not without tension. Our lives are always in motion and meaning making is continuously overlaid in complex and situated ways. Recollections and stories are subjective, influenced by historical and current political, social and cultural variables (Custor, 2014). In a quote drawn on earlier, Freeman (2015) asserts:

...to offer a truth as a fact is always problematic. It is also one of the greatest pitfalls of autoethnography. Describing our beliefs as truths makes them sound rather grand at the same time as it discourages challenge and when we confuse the truth of our memories with the fact of what really occurred we are generally heading for trouble. All writing balances on the razor edge of deception and description but few forms of self-delude better (or worse) than autoethnography. (p. 920)

One challenge is the desire to decipher what may be considered true when, as Foucault (1980) argued, discourses “themselves are neither true nor false” (p. 118). Of difficulty here, in terms of the possible limitations of this specific research, is to consider not only what has been included within the text but also what may have been omitted and why (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012).

Whilst I have tried to consider how best to arrange this research text and to draw on a range of perspectives and interpretations, I cannot assume that this research speaks of all that it could do. Therefore, I acknowledge that there are inevitable limitations embedded within the thesis text and subsequent analyses.

This research relied on me to select and interpret the data which has been included.

Some aspects could not be included within this thesis as the stories involved were not

mine to share. Two primary data sources were utilised – textual works and my own autoethnographic recollections of parenting my daughter Hine during her early and middle childhood years. I have tried to treat all the information used in an ethical and respectful way, noting that not all that I sought to give accounts of were known or could be known to me, due to my own ancestral and cultural heritage and encounters. This includes my own cultural positioning as Pākehā, and therefore a member of the dominant cultural group who has benefited from the troubled and contentious history of colonisation in Aotearoa New Zealand.

10.4 Potential Value of this Thesis

As identified in Chapter One, young children’s participation in ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand continues to steadily increase; MoE (2018) statistics show that in 2018, 64.4% of children aged from birth to four years were enrolled and attending between 20 and 24 hours per week in some type of licensed ECE service. There has been an ongoing sector-wide push to increase access and participation for Māori children, requiring the sector to recognise the problematic historical legacies of colonisation and the continued impact they have had on the reclaiming of ancestral knowledge pathways and receiving of myth-messages (Mikaere, 2011; Walker, 1990).

This thesis has argued that Euro-western literature has continued to focus on unseen entities as imaginary companions and that this take is too narrow and prescriptive. To continue to adopt this viewpoint erases the potentiality of there being different accounts

that speak of what these companions, and the companionship they provide, may entail. Alternate cultural approaches, such as those of Celtic storying and Māori pūrākau drawn on within thesis chapters, show that children enter ECE as the holders of a wealth of cultural and ancestral messages. They are the recipients of ancestral inheritance which informs and upholds sophisticated and complex epistemological and ontological approaches to conceptualising the various relationships, and relationship companions, who may feature within their lifespan as their CCTC.

Young children's ancestral identities and their CCTC need to be acknowledged, nurtured and seamlessly woven into all threads of their curriculum and their daily experiences in culturally located ways (Rameka, 2012). This calls for pedagogical approaches and teacher responsiveness to shifting the hierarchical power base from the notion of the teacher as expert to that of the child as having important knowledge through which they can direct their own lives, understandings of relationships and companionship, and subsequently their learning journeys (Chaffey et al., 2017). This asks us to be open to what young children may know, what they may share with us, and in turn to what we may learn from them. This calls on teachers to create spaces in which young children can engage in their own deconstructive moves to dismantle out-dated and unhelpful establish truths which are no longer relevant to think with or consider.

This research is especially timely, as ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand is in the process of embedding our updated national curriculum *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017). The aspired-to patterning of this revised document emphasises that additional philosophical and theoretical threads need to be included and accounted for if a stronger whāriki is desired.

This speaks of a careful weave, requiring weavers who are able to draw from, and draw on, a complex array of epistemological and ontological bearings and chartings (Williams & Anderson, 2015; Williams et al., 2015). This necessitates that spaces be created for young children to engage in active re-membering in order for the following whakataukī, introduced in Chapter Nine, to be realised:

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takitini

I come not with my own strengths but bring with me the gifts, talents and strengths of my family, tribe and ancestors. (MoE, 2017, p. 12)

10.5 Personal Shifts

This thesis emerged from my personal and professional uncertainty about my selected topic. My initial desire was to investigate, and make sense of, my own experiences as a mother alongside what I had experienced as an ECE teacher. As such, it has been the catalyst to investigate a myriad of perspectives which intersect in this rich and complicated topic.

My travels within each chapter have signalled a shift in thinking for me. Firstly, I have discovered the multiplicity of theoretical constructions and assumptions which seek to make meaning of, and provide guidance and frameworks for, how we may live our lives. These are intricate and thought-provoking travel companions which often exist unnoticed alongside us.

From this I have a new-found appreciation for the knottiness and messiness of thinking. This has been unexpected learning for me. Previously within my professional capability I desired to analyse, sort and categorise ideas to help me better interpret and apply them. At the conclusion of this thesis I have realised that this approach has previously limited my ability to think diffractively, to see challenge and interruption as inherent and necessary and not something to be anxious about.

Secondly, there has been a reawakening of my own ancestral and cultural narratives which also travel alongside me as an integral and essential travel guide, providing companionship. These have revealed a range of pathways which I recall as being influential and important in my own childhood and adolescence, but which I had travelled away from in the busyness of my adulthood. It has been comforting and familiar to re-tread and re-thread these paths and to reconnect with them as I consider how they may continue to be noticed within my daughter.

Something I had not anticipated was the feeling of loss as this chapter (chapters) draw to a close. This thesis has been a pivotal part of my life for so many years that there is a sense of sadness that it will no longer feature as my companion. There have been many years that we have travelled together, sharing twists and turns. It will feel weird, and I wonder perhaps a little empty, to not having this companionship in this form anymore.

Similarly, I am also saying goodbye to an aspect of my identity, too. I have been a student since 2000. It seems strange to no longer consider myself as such, in a formal sense – although I will always be a learner. Identifying as a student has been a continued

component of my personal and professional identity through most of my adult years. This term has therefore provided both companionship and a demarcation/border category within my own identity formation.

There are other shifts which are concurrently occurring. I will submit this thesis under a different surname, so this is another aspect of my identity which is being dismantled and subsequently remade. There is a sense of loss in that I will no longer share a visible connection to Hine and her sisters.

Recently I have become “Nanny” to a precious grandson. There is much to hope for as he traverses the temporal realm and we begin the journey of getting to know him and his kaihau-waiū. I wonder who will travel alongside him and which myth-messages he will receive to guide him as he draws on his Waikato-Tainui, Te Arawa, Ngāti Raukawa, Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Celtic, and Scottish ancestry. Thus, the next marvellous and miraculous journey is about to start, and who knows where this may lead us? As a Nanny and a teacher, I wonder how his journey in ECE will uplift and enhance his intricate kaihau-waiū, and this has prompted me to reflect further on my current professional role as an ITE lecturer. I have had to dismantle some established pattern making which I had relied on, and drawn comfort from, which has been challenging and exciting, as it has led me into unfamiliar terrain.

10.6 Areas of Future Research

This research does not seek to offer a definitive account of what may be known, or thought about, young children's CCTCs. What it does offer is a timely interruption to normative Euro-western accounts as the only, or the loudest voice, in conceptualising and constructing what these relationships may entail. It offers alternative pathways and avenues along which additional insight may now be discovered in order to think differently about relationship companions and how they may feature within the lives of young children in Aotearoa New Zealand.

As mentioned previously, there is information that has not been included within this thesis, for a variety of reasons. Therefore, this is *a* take on this story, rather than a definitive account that offers *the* story. However, it has ignited the desire to take my explorations as the catalyst for the undertaking of further research in order to consider what else may be known about young children's companions within ECE (further than what has been included within this thesis content). Thus, this thesis exploration offers a new pathway into the phenomena at hand and provides an alternative conceptual framework to draw on, and further refine.

My hope is that what has been spoken of within the chapters of this thesis will ignite a re-turning within ECE. I hope, too, that this in turn will interrupt what has historically been produced about the imaginary and imagined spaces and places of childhood and will be the impetus for different kinds of pedagogical dialogue to flourish in which children's own

truths are recognised as key to deconstructing what has been *made true* about their lives, childhoods and companions.

The thesis also opens up possibilities to speak back to what has been included: what has been constructed within this thesis can be attended to differently, making way for further theorising to occur. As noted within my conceptual framework, the taking of a dismantling turn seeks to challenge “text that tries to tell it like it is, including this one” (Rolfe, 2004, p. 275).

On a personal note, my hope is that Hine may re-inscribe this text in time as the co-author, that she may dismantle and overlay this story with another story—*her*story.

10.7 Final Comment

Relationships are recognised as significant and beneficial for young children. What is known, and thought about, the relationships young children may engage in has historically been influenced by Euro-western theoretical perspectives. These have provided the complicated and contentious normative matrix upon which constructs of the child, childhood, relationships and relationship companions have been promulgated.

Of particular interest and concern for this thesis were the relationships which have traditionally fallen out of neat and orderly normative classifications, those which have been categorised as inferior and which therefore have been subjugated to the margins within Euro-western theory and literature. These are the relationships which scholarly theory and text fails to take into account, as pervasive constructions of meaningful and

significant relationship companions have been conceptualised and identified as primarily corporeal. Thus, those relationship companions which fail to meet these idealised classifications have been demarcated as imaginary and unreal. They have at times been considered potentially detrimental and have therefore elicited concern.

My research and subsequent thesis have explored the many intertwined threads impacting on how notions of these companions may be constructed. My research has identified a range of complex theoretical, social, political and cultural factors which have been instrumental in influencing how young children and their companions, unseen to others, have been considered, as well as the implications of continuing to advance and reproduce these perspectives. It has also highlighted that Euro-western claims about these companions, specifically the proclivity for relegating them to the imaginary, constitute only one voice and thus fail to adequately provide wider scope for a more ancestral and culturally nuanced and variegated conceptual weave of children and childhood to be taken into account.

With a push for increased participation in ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand, and a recently revised curriculum document, it is timely to unravel the tangled threads which have impacted on our awareness and conceptions of young children's relationship companions. It is especially important as notions of ancestral knowledges and culturally located understandings provide the complex historical context in which the key theoretical underpinnings inherent within *Te Whāriki* can be realised. This asks us to take into account the fact that the companions that young children speak of may not be known or familiar to us.

Such relationships are evidence of the myriad of rich and intimate relationships which may be experienced within the lifespan. They provide ancestral and cultural guidance and support and, as such, a more appropriate and agentic term for these hoā-haere and their companionship and travels alongside us would be ***Culturally Compatible Travelling Companions (CCTC)***.

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