ABSTRACT

This project grew out of my desire to realise an emancipatory vision in my practice of teacher professional learning in early education. Most of the professional learning for early education teachers in New Zealand is designed to assist the implementation of policy, and with broad trends such as standardisation and evidence-based practice dominating political agendas, the space for alternatives is limited. There is growing concern by some with the continuing positivist influence on professional learning which prioritizes technical training over critical inquiry and dialectical debate. Despite this, there is very little research questioning these trends; or seeking ways to work differently with teachers towards social justice. The main aim of this project was therefore to examine professional learning and the inter-related themes of knowledge, the learner, and change from a critical pedagogical perspective, using poststructuralist feminist theory and the work of Foucault to do so.

Action research was chosen as the methodology because this is most consistent with the critical pedagogical principles underpinning this project. In keeping with poststructuralist feminist theory and the work of Foucault, action research was reconceptualised within postmodernism and many of the normally accepted conventions of modernist research were therefore challenged and re-defined. There were no attempts made to produce certain and universal answers, or to prove the findings valid through methods such as triangulation. Instead, the aim was to present multiple perspectives, including the contradictory and uncertain. The researcher was not positioned as objective but as wholly present, and the subjectivities, contradictions and challenges experienced because of this were illuminated, not hidden. Moreover, a postmodern stance meant that findings were presented as partial, provisional, and local.

To achieve the research aims I worked with seven early education teachers in New Zealand over a period of 2 ½ years, meeting with them both individually and as a group. In group sessions we discussed and debated many educational issues; some raised by teachers and some introduced by me. These sessions were an opportunity to engage on a dialectical level with the discourses shaping beliefs and practices. Most of the data came from these fragmented and discontinuous conversations, and this data was used to examine how power, knowledge and discourse worked together to shape what was
counted as normal and worthwhile for these teachers to know and learn. Because the goal of reconceptualised action research is to understand more about the social order so that this can be transformed, data was used to inform social change during and not just after the project.

Poststructuralist feminist theory focused the analysis more specifically on how the women teachers in this project negotiated and manoeuvred in and through the competing discourses to which they had access. Foucault's work on sexuality was used to consider how the problematization of teaching affected what teachers believed to be best practice, and how this shaped their becoming. Additionally, Foucault's work on power and the practices of the self became useful for examining how discourse was regulated, preserved and reproduced throughout this project, and how this sanctioned and silenced what could be spoken and by whom. Together, the work of Foucault and poststructuralist feminist theory offered a different lens with which to question and challenge teacher professional learning in early education.

The main argument of this thesis is that professional learning for progressive social change involves much more than technical training. If teachers are to engage in the kind of critical inquiry and dialectical debate necessary for the work of social justice, then current professional learning opportunities need to be challenged. In this project, it was employing a Foucauldian analysis of power to the way I organised and managed time and space that brought the biggest shifts. For me, this involved redefining what I valued in terms of knowledge, the learner and change; and shifting what I prioritised in the time and space given to learning. As a result I more actively and intentionally sought to disrupt privileged truths and to create experimental learning spaces where learners could cross borders into the unfamiliar and unsafe. In these spaces both beliefs and practices were unsettled and learners were invited to become otherwise; and when they did, the change was transformational. The following pages share with the reader how this happened.

Applying a poststructuralist feminist and Foucauldian analysis to teacher professional learning provided a way for me to re-imagine how teacher professional learning in early education might be a force for progressive social change. This thesis highlights the possibilities presented by such an analysis and challenges others to consider professional learning in early education differently.
DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD,
(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,
(iii) the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Louise Taylor
August 2007
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My heartfelt thanks to the following:

To Richard, my husband and friend – thank you for your unconditional love and support throughout this long journey. Thank you for sharing so closely with me the exciting, and the more difficult times; but most of all, thank you for changing with me.

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To Heather my editor - you are just brilliant! You not only read and edited my work, but you gave me such encouragement as you did so; thank you.

To the women in my research group who made this project possible – thank you for sharing your lives so openly and for celebrating each milestone with me. I will always remember and treasure the times we spent together during this project.
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ABBREVIATIONS

CEIEC Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood
DOPs Revised Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices
ECE Early childhood education
ERO Education Review Office
OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMEP Organization Mondiale pour l' Education Préscolaire, which in English is translated to mean the World Organisation for Early childhood
UK United Kingdom
US United States of America

Abbreviations used with data

Con/02/2 Conference paper / 2002 / Page 2
Eth/01/1.3 Ethics application form / 2001 / Point 1.3
IS/210/2 Interview summary / Participant 210 / Page 2
FB/28 Feedback form from interview / Participant 28
JE/15/06/04 Journal entry from my personal journal / Date of entry
JR/SG7/2 Journal reflections on session / Study group session 7 / Page 2
SG5/2 Group session 5 / Page 2
PC/12/15/07/06 Personal conversation / Participant 12 / Date of conversation
PN Personal narrative undated
R/25/04/04/2 Reflections posted to me / Participant 25 / April / 2004 / Page 2

Three eclipses means the quotation or dialogue has been broken/separated in this inclusion
GLOSSARY OF MĀORI TERMS

Iwi
Tribe
Kapa Haka
Traditional Māori performing arts
Māori
The indigenous people of New Zealand.
Marae
Meeting area of whānau or iwi
Ngā tikanga Māori
The custom of Māori
Pākehā
Non-Māori, European, Caucasian
Tahi, rua, toru
One, two, three
Tapu
Sacred, forbidden
Te Kōhanga Reo:
Te Kōhanga Reo is a total immersion Māori early education service for children form 0 – 6 years.
Te Reo
The language
Te Tiriti o Waitangi:
Te Tiriti o Waitangi, which translated means The Treaty of Waitangi, refers to a legal agreement made between Māori and Pākehā in 1840 allowing for British governance while protecting the sovereignty of Māori people.
Te Whāriki:
Te Whāriki, which translated means The Mat, is the early childhood curriculum in New Zealand. At the time of this writing Te Whāriki is not mandatory, however the present Labour Government is in the process of changing this.
Tikanga
Meaning, custom
Tuakana/teina
Older brother, older sister / Younger brother, younger sister
Whānau
Extended family
Whānaungatanga
Relationship, kinship

The translations above have been taken from the Reed Dictionary of Modern Māori (Ryan, 1997).
**TERMINOLOGY**

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<td>The term <em>early childhood</em> is used to refer to the education, in New Zealand, of children 0 – 5 years. This term includes but is not limited to: childcare, daycare, early learning centre, kindergarten, kindy, preschool, Te Kōhanga Reo, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early education:</td>
<td>The term <em>early education</em> is used to refer to the education of children 0 – 8 years. Teachers who are working in both the early childhood and the primary school sectors may fit into this category.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-service teachers:</td>
<td><em>In-service</em> teachers are those teachers who have completed their training to be a teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant:</td>
<td>The term participant has only been used in the methodology at all other times the term teacher has been used to refer to the women who were part of this project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmodernism:</td>
<td>The term postmodernism has most often been used in the methodology to refer generically to research that is not within a modernist paradigm. In other instances the term poststructuralism has been used. These two terms can be used inter-changeably.</td>
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<tr>
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<td><em>Pre-service</em> teachers are those teachers who are in training to be a teacher.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Professional learning:</td>
<td>The term <em>professional learning</em> has been used to refer generically to all forms of in-service <em>teacher professional learning</em>.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The term <em>teacher</em> has been used to refer to all trained teachers who work with children. This term includes but is not limited to: childcare worker, educator, practitioner, prep teacher, preschool teacher, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher registration:</td>
<td><em>Teacher registration</em> is a process of teacher accreditation, in New Zealand, for trained in-service teachers, across all education sectors. To become a fully registered teacher, teachers must undergo a two year supervision and guidance programme. For more information on teacher registration see the New Zealand Teachers Council Website: <a href="http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz">http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz</a></td>
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CHAPTER 1

DESIRING EMANCIPATORY LEARNING

Learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor [sic] for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom (hooks, 1994, p. 207).

Beginnings

When I first read the work of bell hooks (1994) I cried, and even though I was not sure why I knew that hooks had changed the way I viewed my work as a teacher. I had not considered that teaching could be a place where I might work for social justice and equity, nor had I felt any desire to do so. Unlike some teachers who enter the profession with a clear social justice vision, my decision to be a teacher had been far less idealistic. I chose teaching because I didn’t know what else to do, and when my college teacher suggested to me in 1974 that I should consider a teaching career, I thought why not. So in 1979 I entered the teaching profession in New Zealand, firstly as a primary school teacher (children five to twelve years) and then as an early childhood teacher (children birth to five years). I had no idea that thirty three years later I would still be working in education, with the kind of passion that I lacked as a young teacher. The work of hooks (1994, 2000a, 2000b), and later that of Freire (1996, 2003a, 2003b), awakened in me a desire for emancipatory learning and this began my quest to understand more about how I might realise such a desire in my own practice.

My interest in professional learning began to materialise in the mid-1990s when I was working as an early childhood teacher and attending many professional learning workshops as part of my ongoing in-service training. These workshops often left me feeling less than satisfied and I was beginning to question their effectiveness. It was around this time that I attended a workshop that left such an impression on me that I
return to this memory often as a reminder of where I have been and what I am seeking to disrupt. I recall the workshop as follows:

*I attended a workshop with a teaching colleague who I will call Ann. Ann was a primary school teacher doing some relief teaching in early childhood and during the session Ann asked a question, using the term 'teacher' in her sentence. At the time the word 'teacher' was considered an 'unacceptable' term in early childhood circles but Ann was not aware of this having taught mainly in primary schools. I will never forget the response of the facilitator to Ann's use of the term 'teacher'; Ann was singled out and corrected in a manner I found intimidating and offensive. To Ann's credit she bravely debated the issue but the facilitator would not consider any ideas other than her own and so after a while Ann became silent. As this happened I observed the atmosphere in the room changing and noticed with interest how quiet everybody became. For the rest of the session everyone listened to the facilitator sharing her expertise, and no-one asked questions or challenged her. Ironically this workshop was about working positively with children but the only thing I remember is the silence... (PN)*

While the actions of the facilitator may seem extreme, I did not find this workshop atypical. Even though it had been unsettling, it was part of the professional learning that I was used to as a teacher. It wasn’t until a few years later when I became a professional learning facilitator myself that I began to trouble over this experience and to ask questions about how I might work differently with teachers. I began seeking the kind of learning spaces that hooks (1994) wrote of; the kind “where paradise can be created” (hooks, 1994, p. 207). I wanted new ways to “invigorate discussion and excite the critical imagination” (p. 195) and I began desiring the kind of dialectical debate that Freire (e.g. 1996, 1998a, 2003b) contends is essential to critical thinking and emancipatory work. It was from these troublings and desires that this doctoral research project grew.

**Project directions**

In the early stages of this project I read the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) ten policy principles for in-service training (cited by Education Review Office, 2000), two of which were:
• Teachers should strive to develop new ways of thinking and behaviour that address new challenges in fresh ways;

• Teacher development should be fostering lifelong learning, rather than focusing solely on subject matter or particular aspects of pedagogic techniques (p. 19).

In spite of such goals my teaching experience had taught me that professional learning rarely offers teachers such opportunities. My reading confirmed that there is very little time for teachers to engage in learning beyond the boundaries of technical training (e.g. Ayers, 1993; Gaffney, 2003; Hampton, 2000; Hartnell-Young, 2003; Hatherly, 1999; Kitchens, 2004; Van Manen, 1999). Much of the professional learning available to teachers is designed to assist the implementation of policy (Bartell, 2001; Ben-Peretz, 2001; Mayer, Mitchell, MacDonald, & Bell, 2005; Mepham, 2000; Ministry of Education, 2002; Perry & Cooper, 2001) and to train teachers to keep abreast with change (Duncan, 2001, 2002, 2004; Education Review Office, 2000; Hampton, 2000). Instead of encouraging teachers to “develop new ways of thinking” (Education Review Office, 2000, p. 19) this predominantly technical focus (e.g. Ben-Peretz, 2001; Cochran-Smith, 2004a, O’Brien, 2005), keeps teachers “imprisoned in routines” (Silin, 1995, p. 43) and works against critical inquiry (Freire, 2003b; Moss, 2006a) and “thoughtful innovation” (Potter, 2001, p. 12). Despite this tendency, professional learning has come under very little scrutiny and there have been very few studies seeking alternatives (Cochran-Smith, 2001a, 2005; Education Review Office, 2000; Ross & Regan, 1993).

This project is situated within this gap in research and is significant because of its potential to generate discussion on professional learning opportunities that can support critical thinking and dialogue in ways that other projects have not yet managed to do. I hope to challenge the discourses shaping what teachers should know and learn in their professional learning and to contribute to progressive social change by exploring the broad question:

• How can we expand our ways of understanding and practising professional learning for individual and social change in early education?

Within this I have chosen to focus more specifically on the role of knowledge, the learner and change, in professional learning, guided by the following questions:
• What constitutes professional early education knowledge, who owns it and how can it be generated?
• What are the needs and challenges facing early education teachers as learners, how are these being addressed, and how can professional learning be supported in the future?
• What influences teacher change and how can it be supported in early education professional learning programmes?
• How can professional learning in early education become a force for progressive social change?

Investigating these questions will not only contribute to the wider body of knowledge on teacher professional learning but will also open up "the field of possibility" (hooks, 1994, p. 207) from which "education as the practice of freedom" (p. 207) can be experienced.

Theoretical positions

Until I read hooks (1994) and Freire (1996, 2003a, 2003b) I had little regard for educational theory. My focus had mainly been on the technical aspects of my teaching (e.g. assessment practices). I knew that I wanted this project to be positioned within critical pedagogy but it was a year into the project when I decided that feminist theory should also be integral to my work. As hooks (2000b) notes, feminism teaches us how to "love justice and freedom in ways that foster and affirm life" (p. 71). As I read more feminist work I appreciated the potential that feminist theory had for emancipatory work in general, but also more specifically for providing alternative ways to think about knowledge, the learner, and change; issues that were central to rethinking professional learning in and through this research.

It wasn’t until I read Parker (1997) however; that the conceptual framework that would underpin my study came together with more clarity. Parker challenged me to consider the continuing effects of positivism on teacher professional learning because he contends that even an ideal such as reflective practice, can be "insufficiently divorced from the traditions it rejects for it to be capable of expressing the things that it feels or realising its declared emancipatory purpose" (Parker, 1997, p. 5).
Rising to Parker’s challenge, I settled on poststructuralist feminist theory and the work of Foucault to guide the conceptualisation of my study. These theoretical frameworks brought together my interest in both critical pedagogy and feminism, giving me very specific tools with which to view and question the normalising discourses shaping the practice of teaching; and the effects of this on teacher professional learning.

To be consistent with the critical pedagogical principles motivating this project (Cherry, 1999), action research became my preferred methodology. Action research allowed for a collaborative, dialogic and emergent approach to be taken to the research questions and enabled these to be investigated with teachers rather than for them (Oja & Smulyan, 1989). Because this project has been conceptualised within postmodernism the aim has not been to prove answers to the research questions but rather to take “a more fluid and intuitive approach” (MacNaughton & Rolfe, 2001, p. 12) to exploring “a range of possibilities” (p. 24).

Together action research, poststructuralist feminist theory, and the work of Foucault have shaped the way this project has been enacted and theorised. This has provided multiple ways to think about how teacher professional learning in early education might become a force for progressive social change.

**Contexts**

This project was carried out with seven early education teachers in New Zealand over a period of 2½ years. When first seeking participants I was looking for early childhood teachers because I had been working in early childhood for 14 years, but during the recruitment phase two primary school teachers approached me and asked if they could also be involved. As a result I broadened the scope of this project to include teachers who were working with children from birth to eight years from either sector, and I have called this area of teaching, *early education*. My own perspective on the project comes predominantly from within the early childhood community as this is the area where I work, and this is where I see this research having the most impact.

In New Zealand the term early childhood can be applied to all settings catering for children from birth to five years. In 1986 the New Zealand Government brought all early
childhood services under the education wing of Government (May, 2001) combining "the care and education of young children within one administrative agency" (p. 206). Since then all early childhood services in New Zealand have become subject to the same auditory controls and all are entitled to Government funding provided they enter into a charter agreement with Government, which almost all settings do. Between the years of 1980 and 1990 early childhood in New Zealand underwent major re-structuring (Mepham, 2000) which resulted in changes to the qualifications needed by early childhood teachers and which also saw the introduction of the first early childhood curriculum, known as Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996a), which is discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

When I transferred from primary school teaching to early childhood teaching in the late 1980s I had to retrain because in New Zealand early childhood and primary school teachers have separate qualifications; one either trains to be an early childhood teacher or a primary school teacher. Teachers working in early childhood need to hold at least a Diploma of Teaching, but teachers can be training towards this qualification while they are working in an early childhood setting. Primary school teachers must obtain a teaching degree before they can teach. Both early childhood and primary school teachers must work towards Teacher Registration once they are fully trained (for more information on Teacher Registration see the New Zealand Teachers Council website).

All Government funded educational settings in New Zealand are entitled to funded professional learning, mostly at no cost to those attending although spaces in these funded programmes are limited. While courses are varied and different approaches are used (Gaffney, 2003; Mepham, 2000; Mitchell & Cubey, 2003), most are still administered through workshop type sessions, and all are linked to Government objectives and initiatives (e.g. Meade, 2004; Mepham, 2000; Ministry of Education, 2002, 2004a, 2006a). Non-funded professional learning is also available but this is often costly and more sporadic, and teacher involvement is dependent on the approval of senior staff.

The seven teachers who joined this project were all fully trained and they were all seeking professional learning that was different from what they had already experienced. In the following pages, their storylines are told.
Looking ahead

The next chapter outlines the literature reviewed for this project followed by the conceptual framework which explains how this research has been analysed using poststructuralist feminist theory and the work of Foucault. Chapter 4 details the methodology and how this has been enacted within postmodernism, and Chapters 5, 6 and 7 show how the conceptual framework has been applied to data. Chapter 8 brings the data chapters together to answer the research questions and this is followed by the conclusions which are written in the form of an interview.
CHAPTER 2

CONTEXTS AND DIRECTIONS IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: A LITERATURE REVIEW

This study draws on literature from a range of fields: poststructuralist feminist theory; critical theory; adult learning theory; action research; and a wide range of readings in the general area of teacher professional learning. While there is a plethora of literature on teacher professional learning in general, there have been no significant research studies carried out in early education using poststructuralist feminist theory to frame an investigation of teacher professional learning. Moreover, there is very little research on professional learning in early education with objectives that are directly related to social justice. To give context and direction to this study, this literature review draws from a wide body of work, beyond just early education, and includes literature from early education right through to the tertiary sector.

Research on professional learning: A selective overview

Current research on teacher professional learning has been described as fragmented, inconsistent, and contradictory (Alton-Lee, 2004; Chen & Chang, 2006; Guskey, 2003; Ingvarson, 2003; Nesbit, 1998) and while some find this troubling (e.g. Guskey, 1986), others like Cochran-Smith (2005) have embraced this fact believing that teacher education, be it pre-service or in-service, is a profession rich with diversity and complexity, and one where simple and uncomplicated answers do not suffice. Most of the research that has been done in the past decade has not really sought to understand more about teacher professional learning per se, but rather to improve teacher performance and student outcomes through targeted professional learning opportunities; and this is evident across all education sectors. In many cases teacher professional learning has been the means to a desired end rather than an end in itself, with the main objective being to achieve visible, measurable, improved outcomes in children’s learning (e.g. Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005; Mitchell & Cubey, 2003; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2006).
Broadly speaking the research I reviewed can be classified under three headings: studies that address professional learning by researching curriculum delivery; studies that focus more specifically on professional learning initiatives; and studies that have critical inquiry and social justice at their core. Because of the limited amount of research specifically in early education this overview includes research across sectors.

**Research focusing on curriculum delivery**

Research focusing on curriculum delivery is varied and numerous, with studies including recommendations that impact either directly or indirectly on teacher professional learning. Research on curriculum includes, for example, research on literacy (e.g. Long, 2004; McDowall, Cameron, Dingle, MacGibbon & Gilmore, 2007; Smith, Hofer, Gillespie, Solomon and Rowe, 2003), technology (Bolstad & Gilbert, 2006; Chen & Chang, 2006), and assessment (Lepper, Williamson & Cullen, 2003), with most being in mathematics and science (Guskey, 2003), and most outside of early education. In New Zealand there are many studies of this nature listed on the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, and the Ministry of Education websites, including studies commissioned by Government to evaluate government funded curriculum projects (e.g. Bolstad and Gilbert, 2006; Boyd, 2005; Boyd, Bolstad, Cameron, Ferral, Hipkins, McDowall, & Waiti, 2005; Ham, Gilmore, Kachelhoffer, Morrow, Moeau, & Wenmoth, 2002; Keith, 2002). While not all of these studies were conducted in early education they all had a component designated to teacher professional learning which could be applied more generally across sectors.

Studies on curriculum in early education were more specifically directed to government mandated or sanctioned curriculum documents than to discrete curriculum areas, such as the project by Woodrow and Brennan (1999), in Australia. This study assessed the impact of the (then) newly mandated curriculum guidelines for early education that were introduced in the state of Queensland. In New Zealand similar studies have been done to investigate how effectively the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996a) is being enacted (e.g. Gaffney, 2003; Liddington, 2002; Mitchell & Cubey, 2003), with two of these studies being specifically commissioned by Government (Gaffney, 2003; Mitchell & Cubey, 2003). As with the other studies on curriculum, the main aim of these studies was to enhance the delivery of curriculum, and professional learning became the means to achieving this end.
Research focusing on specific professional learning initiatives

Many of the studies on specific professional learning initiatives, both in early education and more widely, have trialled and critiqued varying professional learning models in order to evaluate their effectiveness, and their reproducibility (e.g. Buchanan, Morgan, Cooney & Gerharter, 2006; Chen & Chang, 2006; Guskey, 1986, 2002; Lieberman & Miller, 1990; McLeod, 1999; Sandholz & Dadlez, 2000; Smith, et al., 2003; Taylor, 1998; Yendol-Silva & Fichtman, 2004). Others have investigated professional learning initiatives that target a specific group of teachers such as those working in urban schools (Anderson & Olsen, 2006), and rural schools (Robert, 2000), or teachers in their first year of teaching (Cameron, Baker & Lovett, 2006; McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006). Generally speaking, these studies have sought to improve professional learning for distinct groups of teachers, in particular ways, and in specific settings.

Robert (2000), who conducted her medium scale project in early education, challenges what she believes is still predominantly a “one size fits all” (p. 277) approach to professional learning, seeking as she does better ways to serve the professional learning of rural teachers in Queensland Australia. Other studies have trialled specific models of professional learning in local settings, ranging from those in one small early childhood setting (e.g. Taylor, 1998) to larger scale projects carried out in university departments (e.g. Buchanan, et al., 2006; Smith, et al., 2003); with each hoping to provide examples that can be used in other settings. In another study, particularly targeting early education, Mepham (2000) sought to address what she perceived as a general lack of “teacher voice” (p. 1) in professional learning by using narrative to share the stories of six early childhood teachers in New Zealand. As these examples show, the scope of studies investigating professional learning initiatives across all sectors is broad and the ones mentioned here are but a few of these.

Research focusing on critical inquiry and social justice

In contrast to the majority of studies on teacher professional learning where the objective is to provide certain and reproducible answers, there are some studies, albeit a few, which resist making universal claims and instead attempt to open up dialogue (e.g. Fleet & Patterson, 2001; Potter, 2001; Snow-Gerono, 2005). For example Fleet & Patterson (2001), in an early education study, avoided making claims of certainty in their findings using instead statements such as “some individuals may…” (p. 9); this study challenge[s]
us to rethink…” (p. 9) and “professional development opportunities can usefully be explored…” (p. 9). Potter (2001), too embraces uncertainty, writing in her conclusions of “a serious and fundamental dilemma” (p. 12) and an “anomaly” (p. 12) that exists “between the demands for social justice and the celebration of diversity on the one hand and the normalising discourse in which schools engage on the other” (p. 12). But not many studies are prepared to face these anomalies in the way that these researchers have done.

Research with an aspiration towards critical inquiry and social justice does not often provide evidence that is “beyond reasonable doubt” (MacNaughton 2003a, p. 6). Because this type of research typically involves questioning, debating, and disrupting the taken-for-granted (MacNaughton, 2005), it is more likely to create uncertainty than verifiable proof. As a result there is a tendency for researchers, and those funding research programmes such as governments, to favour quantifiable research which can provide more certain outcomes especially those that can be linked to student performance; as is the case in New Zealand (e.g. Alton-Lee, 2003, 2004; Timperley, et al., 2006). This is why MacNaughton (2003a) believes that more scientifically based research is so “alluring to governments” (p. 4), and could explain why investigating the uncertain and messy terrains of critical inquiry and social justice is less popular.

While there is some research on critical inquiry, and even less referring overtly to social justice, there is virtually no research on teacher professional learning using a feminist poststructuralist framework for data analysis, particularly in early education. Along with Woodrow and Brennan (1999) I discovered a notable silence on gender issues in relation to teacher professional learning across all sectors, and with Cochran-Smith (2001a, 2005) I found a remarkable lack of attention to social justice within teacher education in general. Potter (2001) was one of only a few studies where social justice had a central position in professional learning and this study was set outside of early education; other research in this area is difficult to find.

In summary
On the whole, research in the area of professional learning is about providing certain answers that can be reproduced in order to affect outcomes for students and there is very little research outside of these parameters. This is so from early education right through
to tertiary level. There is however an enormous amount of literature in general on professional learning, and the next section draws from this literature to highlight some of the broad trends and general themes currently influencing teacher professional learning.

**Professional learning: Broad trends and general themes**

**Broad trends**

Broadly speaking, there are two worldwide trends strongly reflected in the wide body of literature on teacher professional learning, these are: the standardisation of teaching; and evidence-based practice. Both of these trends impact directly and indirectly on what teachers do in classrooms, and on the professional learning that is available to teachers as a result of policy decisions and funding.

*The standardisation of teaching*

Cochran-Smith (2003) claims there are many educationalists in the US (United States of America) who believe that recruiting, training, and supporting excellent teachers will enable the US to reach its goals for education, and it is safe to say that this conviction is not restricted to the US. Because of this, policymakers, at least within the Western world, are driving for more standardisation within teaching in the belief that this will enhance the quality of teaching and raise the status of the teaching profession (Cameron, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Haycock & Robinson, 2001; Mayer, et al., 2005). While not all of those in education agree with this trend, it is evident that policymakers on the whole are seeking to bring uniformity to the practice of teaching in the belief that “state-of-the-art practice is typically reflected in professional standards” (Bransford, Darling-Hammond & LePage, 2005, p. 16).

In Australia for example, Ingvarson (2003), one of the key researchers influencing policy directions in education, states that Australian education could benefit from “strong normative structures” and “standards” (p. 16), suggesting that what is needed is “a new infrastructure to support professional development toward[s] standards for each career stage” (p. 16). In his work Ingvarson provides examples of standards-based systems being used globally, citing research that supports their validity and credibility. He states that “everyone has much to gain from a stable and effective professional learning system with capacity to engage all teachers” (p. 17), and believes that Australia is not far away
from making “a standards-based professional learning system a reality” (p. 17). In Queensland standards have already been used with school teachers as “a framework for professional learning” (Mayer, et al., 2005, p. 159) with teachers using this framework as a guideline for improving their practice.

One of the main contentions of those advocating for standardisation is that this will bring coherence and consistency to educational practice which will improve quality (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Elliot, 2006; Lubeck & Jessup, 2001). In the UK (United Kingdom) for example, “the Blair Government is attempting to forge a coherent plan of action that establishes common standards, goals and procedures” (Lubeck & Jessup, 2001, p. 244), and in early education moves have been made to consolidate education and care, a move which Elliot (2006) would like to see happening in Australia. Elliot (2006) claims that in Australia, the vision of education and care coming together, “has faded” (p. 15) and that Government intervention at policy level is needed to revive this vision. Elliot is an advocate for “a comprehensive, quality system” (p. 16), which should include “a national curriculum framework for early childhood services” (p. 17), believing that such measures will “ensure greater consistency and comparability” (p. 17). While the sentiments of Elliot, and the initiatives of the Blair Government, might be commendable, Moss (2001a) contends that an “ideal of order and control” (p. 79) underpins these moves towards standardisation and this comment indicates that the debate about standardisation is by no means over.

In the US “there are no government-sponsored goals or guidance regarding either the content or approach for educating young children” (Lubeck & Jessup, 2001, p. 241). Education continues to be decentralised making it difficult to impose universal standards of practice and this has created a general “lack of a ‘system’” (Lubeck & Jessup, 2001, p. 245). While attempts are being made to establish “a coherent training structure” (Lubeck & Jessup, 2001, p. 245) and Government is increasingly legislating for better outcomes for children (e.g. the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), see U.S. Department of Education Website), the US is still lacking “an overall strategy” (p. 245). This has resulted in a fragmented and inequitable provision of service where, according to Fromberg (2006), a kindergarten child’s education is dependent on where they live and their socioeconomic status. A move towards standardisation then may seem a feasible way to address some of these disparities, but not all agree that more stringent controls on teachers will have
positive outcomes. Fromberg (2006), for instance, has concerns about the reduced autonomy that this kind of accountability can bring believing that “exemplary professional teachers appeared to value high autonomy” (p. 76). So while some advocate for standardisation there are others who question whether this will in fact have the desired effects.

Unlike the US, the system in New Zealand is coherent and consistent, something that has been commended by Darling-Hammond (2005). Because New Zealand has a relatively small population (just over four million people) and a centralised education system, it has been easier for Government to standardise the practice of teaching. This has been done through set curriculum frameworks across all education sectors, centralised regulations, which are audited every two to three years; and through a comprehensive system of teacher accreditation, known as Teacher Registration (New Zealand Teachers Council website). These regulatory practices are across all education sectors, they are included in Government strategic planning (e.g. Ministry of Education, 2002, 2006a), and they impact directly on the funding and provision of professional learning opportunities. While this may have brought consistency this also makes the following comment by Gaffney and Smith (2001) particularly pertinent:

Given New Zealand’s centralised regulation and funding regime for early childhood services, it is not fully known if the current funding policies support diversity (p. 201).

In terms of professional learning, some believe that the reduction of teaching to a set of standards, no matter how broad these might be, continues to position teachers as technicians (e.g. Moss, 2001b, 2006a, 2006b) and is creating what Wilkin (1999, cited in Cochran-Smith, 2001a,) calls “painting by numbers or rather learning to teach by numbers” (p. 4). In this kind of context teacher professional learning is mostly about interpreting and applying standards (Mayer, et al., 2005) which is not a lot different from teaching in the 19th century when, according to Singer (1992), teachers took orders and gave orders to others. The question then is will standardisation really enhance the quality of teaching, or is standardisation more about controlling what teachers do, normalising the practice of teaching, and trying to bringing certainty where there will always be ambiguity (Bown & Sumsion, 2007; Moss, 2001a; Osgood, 2006; Yendol-Silva & Fichtman, 2004)?
In relation to the standards themselves, questions should also be asked about who decides what standards are the most important or in other words, who will be eligible to speak and which narratives will be heard (Moss, 2006b). Even with the best of intentions, agreeing on standards is a complex and difficult process (Mayer, et al., 2005), which will inevitably lead to the privileging of some ideas and speakers. Every day decisions are made in education which are both inclusive and exclusive, and which serve the interests of some more than others (e.g. Cochran-Smith, 2004a, MacNaughton, 2003b, 2005) and making decisions about standards is no exception to this. Inevitably what is counted as acceptable will be decided by those who have the most power to determine what it is that others should know and do.

**Evidence-based practice**

Another broad yet clear trend emerging across all education sectors, especially in research, is a trend towards more evidence-based practice, with education currently being at the forefront of many policymaking discussions (Cochran-Smith, 2000a; Cullen, 2003; Moss, 2006a). Underlying this trend is a belief that when teaching practice is based on evidence about what works, there will be better outcomes for students (Alton-Lee, 2003, 2004; Education Counts, 2006; Farquhar, 2003; Guskey, 2003; Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005; Timperley, et al., 2006). Many researchers, regardless of their personal position on this issue, agree that there is a distinct lack of evidence guiding the practice of teaching (e.g. Cochran-Smith, 2005; Farquhar, 2003; Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005; Mitchell & Cubey, 2003; Timperley, et al., 2006), although what counts as evidence is still being contested (Alton-Lee, 2004; Guskey, 2003; MacNaughton, 2003a). In relation to teacher professional learning there is a call for more evidence linking the professional learning of teachers, to student outcomes, with Timperley, et al. (2006) calling this need "urgent" (p. 4). While the need may appear to be urgent, the task of linking professional learning directly to student outcomes is not easy, with Meiers and Ingvarson (2005) noting that evidence of this nature is in fact very "hard to pin down" (p. 8).

Cochran-Smith (2004a, 2004b) maintains that this drive towards more evidence is because the practice of teaching is now being classified as a policy problem. As a result, policymakers are seeking certainty that their investments are sound, in terms of both human and fiscal input, and to ensure this certainty they want evidence (Alton-Lee, 2004; Neville, Sherman & Cohen, 2005, cited in Cochran-Smith, 2005; Penn & Lloyd, 2007;
Sumsion 2005). Cochran-Smith (2004b) says that this move towards more evidence-based practice (along with standardisation) is affecting many countries but in particular the US, UK, Australia, and New Zealand, and this trend is also reflected in OECD objectives. The outgoing chairperson of the 2006 OECD Education Ministers’ Meeting, Marietta Giannakou, was recently quoted by the OECD Observer (2006) as saying: “we need to develop better evidence of learning outcomes” (p. 1), placing this objective as one of six priorities needed for education reform. Along with endorsement from the OECD there is now, according to Cochran-Smith (2000b, 2004b), widespread public and political debate about education which is increasing the pressure on governments to make choices about education that will appease voters. As a result education is moving higher up political agendas (Lubeck & Jessup, 2001; Moss, 2001a) and evidence of what works is becoming more and more important to those in decision-making positions.

The New Zealand Government is following this trend and in early education is claiming “we cannot leave to chance the quality and accessibility of early childhood education” (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 1), stating that Government has a “vision of lifting the educational achievement of all New Zealand children” (p. 2). To achieve this vision Government believes that, amongst other things, they will need to ensure that teaching practice is “more evidence-based” (Ministry of Education, 2006a, p. 4). Statistics from the early 2000s show that “the New Zealand education system is less equitable than the OECD countries’ average” (OECD, 2001, cited in Alton-Lee, 2004, p. 1) creating what Alton-Lee (2004) has called a “policy challenge for educational improvement in New Zealand” (p. 1). To meet this challenge Government states that they will conduct “research to inform future ECE policy development”; and they will involve “the sector in ongoing policy development and implementation” (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 3). One such research initiative introduced by Government to inform policy is the introduction of a Best Evidence Synthesis research programme (see Ministry of Education website) with projects being conducted from early education through to college level.

Alton-Lee (2004) explains that the Best Evidence Synthesis programme was developed by the New Zealand Ministry of Education in 2002 to “systematically identify, evaluate, analyze, synthesise, and make accessible, relevant evidence linked to a range of learner outcomes” (p. 2), with the overall objective being to make “a bigger difference in education” (p. 2). Those who have contributed to this programme reiterate these goals
stating, for example, that the synthesis will “improve the evidence base for policy, practice, and research” (Farquhar, 2003, p. 45) and “strengthen the evidence base that informs education policy and practice” (Mitchell & Cubey, 2003, inside cover). All in all there is a strong trend in New Zealand towards evidence-based practice, with evidence derived from research affecting policy decisions including those related to teacher professional learning and the initiatives that will be funded. To date there are five completed synthesis reports and three in draft form; one of these drafts has been cited in this literature review (Timperley, et al., 2006).

Initiatives such as the Best Evidence Synthesis programme in New Zealand, are built on the premise that it is possible to prove with certainty that research evidence is accurate and transferable to multiple situations (MacNaughton, 2003a). The trouble is that “policy makers and practitioners want simple answers to their questions” (Guskey, 2003, p. 3), and seeking simple answers can lead to over-generalising (Cullen, 2003), and making decisions that have not been properly thought through. According to Ingvarson (2003), this kind of haphazard decision making is “equivalent to expecting the Sydney Harbour Bridge to be build with matchsticks – and in less than a month” (p. 5). Not only this, policies and practices that are founded on evidence-based principles rely on student assessment and testing as proof that what is meant to be working, is in actual fact working (Timperley, et al., 2006); leading to more and more testing of children (Cochran-Smith, 2001a, 2004a, 2004b). One example of this is the testing frenzy that has erupted in the US since the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) (see U.S. Department of Education Website), was introduced (Timperley, et al., 2006); a move which is now being critiqued (e.g. Cochran-Smith, 2004a; Ingvarson, 2003, Kincheloe, 2004, MacNaughton, 2003a).

The problem of over-testing can be compounded even further when, in order to achieve better results in tests, the focus of student achievement becomes cognitive, at the expense of other areas of learning such as working with, and alongside, others (Alton-Lee, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2001a, 2005; MacNaughton, 2003a; O'Brien, 2005; Reid, McCallum & Dobbins, 1998). Unfortunately when this happens, results can fall short of original intentions (Cochran-Smith, 2005).

Despite the above cautions, those influencing policy decisions still largely believe that it is possible to verify evidence and reach consensus about what should be happening in teaching practice. Alton-Lee (2004) for example, suggests that methods such as
triangulation ensure that evidence is consistent enough to warrant attention, and that from this evidence agreement can be reached over what should become a policy direction. Once agreement has been made about what works best for children, the next step then is for policymakers to ask "what kinds of professional learning opportunities for teachers result in an impact on student outcomes" (Timperley, et al., 2006, p. 1). This question has led researchers in New Zealand to explore what they call the "black box between acts of teaching and what students learn" (Black & William, 1998, cited in Timperley, et al., 2006, p. 13); what goes in this black box is what then forms the basis of professional learning programmes. Because Government is seeking evidence to inform policy, and Best Evidence research, such as that by Timperley, et al. (2006) is providing Government with this evidence, the findings of such reports naturally inform policy directions. In this specific case, what researchers identify as suitable black box programmes will become policy, and what becomes policy will then be what receives funding. This in turn will be the professional learning that is made available to teachers in New Zealand including those in early education.

With the best of intentions, providing evidence that what happens with teachers directly affects student outcomes remains problematic. For instance, alongside the research calling for more evidence-based practice, there is also research which suggests that learning is a generative process (Beatty, 1999; Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005; Mitchell & Cubey, 2003) which does not follow a linear progression (e.g. Fleet & Patterson, 2001; Smith, et al., 2003) making learning, and outcomes from learning, hard to track. Additionally, because learning often requires engagement with issues over extended periods of time, it can be difficult to observe change in the short term (Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005). Getting "from teacher education to impact on pupils' learning requires a chain of evidence with several critical links" (Cochran-Smith, 2005, p. 303) and professional learning experiences are only one of the links in this chain, making the outcomes question "a complicated one" (Cochran-Smith, 2000a, p. 333). So while there is a trend towards evidence-based practice, with this impacting directly on teacher professional learning (Ministry of Education, 2006a), this discussion is not over. For this reason education continues to be a "site of struggle and compromise" (Apple, 2000, cited in Lubeck & Jessup, 2001, p. 229).
General themes
There are many themes weaving through the literature on teacher professional learning with two very general themes being: the importance of teachers; and challenges to a one-size-fits-all approach. These two themes in literature are consistent across education sectors.

The importance of teachers
Throughout the literature on teacher professional learning, regardless of the age group taught, there is general acknowledgement that teachers are valuable and that quality outcomes for students are dependent on what teachers do (e.g. Anderson & Olsen, 2006; Bransford, et al., 2005; Buchanan, et al., 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Farquhar, 2003; Mepham, 2000; Ministry of Education, 2006a). Some estimate that what teachers know and do is the single most important influence on what children learn, even positioning the quality of teachers above social and economic factors (e.g. Alton-Lee, 2003; Chen & Chang, 2006; Ingvarson, 2003; McCormack, et al., 2006; Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005; Timperley, et al., 2006). However teachers are positioned, no-one would deny that teachers are significant in the lives of those they teach, and that teacher actions directly affect students. Because of this, changing what teachers do is believed to be the best way to improve student outcomes.

There are two main schools of thought regarding teacher change; one is based on the premise that if teachers’ actions can be changed, and there are positive results from these changes, teachers will then change their beliefs (Guskey, 1986, 2002; Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavis, 2005). Another, seemingly contrary approach involves changing teachers’ beliefs first, because once beliefs change, a change in behaviour should naturally follow (Ingvarson, 2003, 2005; Kennedy, 1998, cited in Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005; Stewart, 2000, cited in Mitchell, 2003). Both of these positions on teacher change place teachers at the centre of educational problems, and make the responsibility for change that of individual teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2004a; MacNaughton, 2000). Whatever the conviction, teachers remain central to any initiative directed at educational reform.

Because teachers are viewed as central to change, many authors are of the opinion that reform in education will happen through teacher professional learning (e.g. Anderson & Olsen, 2006; Buchanan, et al., 2006; Chen & Chang, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2001;
and any discussion about education reform should therefore give serious consideration to teacher professional learning (Mayer et al., 2005). Despite this opinion, Long (2004) believes that professional learning has hardly moved, and that news of new initiatives is not really news at all, just news that is still news because things have remained largely unchanged. Anderson and Olsen (2006) would agree, claiming that although researchers continue to highlight the importance of professional learning, “reality has not always caught up to the rhetoric” (p. 360).

According to Kent (2004), there is still not enough funding given to professional learning. In the US, for example, extra funding is still not being directed towards teacher professional learning even though research suggests that dollars spent on teacher learning have direct benefits for students (Kent, 2004). One reason could be that research on professional learning cannot provide definitive answers about student outcomes, because these are hard to measure (Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005); making it hard for policymakers to justify spending. In addition to this, Ingvarson (2005) suggests that policymakers can have naïve expectations causing them to set goals that they themselves don’t know how to achieve, citing the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) in the US (see U.S. Department of Education Website), as an example of this. When naïve expectations such as these are attached to funding, a failure to meet policy directions may result in funding being cut or withdrawn. While educational goals may be more ambitious than ever (Ingvarson, 2003), and it may be challenging to define clearly the parameters of quality teaching, Ingvarson considers that money should nevertheless be invested “first and most in policies that enhance teacher quality” (p. 2) and that serious problems, such as children at risk, can only be addressed with serious money (Ingvarson, 2005).

Whichever way professional learning is theorised or conceptualised, and no matter what education sector, it is apparent that what happens with teachers has a direct and profound impact on what happens for children. Because of this the professional learning of teachers should be given the high regard and consideration it deserves. As the study of McCormack, et al. (2006) has confirmed: “learning to teach is a complex and lengthy process” and “professional learning is vital in this process” (p. 110).
Challenges to a one-size-fits-all approach

Another area of virtual consensus amongst the authors I read, and again across sectors, was the view that although one-off workshops still dominate professional learning, they are largely ineffective, and show very little evidence of long term change (e.g. Buchanan, et al., 2006; Chen & Chang, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Haycock & Robinson, 2001; Kent, 2004; Long, 2004; MacNaughton, 1999, 2005; Renyi, 1998; Timperley, et al., 2006; Vukelich & Wrenn, 1999). Teachers returning from such workshops may be enthusiastic for a while but as Renyi (1998) found, this enthusiasm can often be short lived, particularly when there is disparity between what is promoted in the workshop and what is possible in practice.

One-off workshops have a tendency to position teachers as in need of; a deficit model (McCormack, et al., 2006) providing one-size-fits-all, simplistic, solutions to problems of practice (Ball & Pence, 2000; Ingvarson, et al., 2005; Lieberman, 1995; MacNaughton, 2005). This form of professional learning continues to reduce teaching to a technical task, which not only keeps teachers “imprisoned in routines” (Silin, 1995, p. 43), but also dependent on the expertise of others for knowledge. This kind of professional learning leaves no room for “uncertainty, indeterminacy, and contingency” (p. 43), and offers teachers very “little guidance of any lasting pedagogical value” (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 193). One-off workshops overlook teacher expertise (Lieberman, 1995), they are disconnected from the lives of teachers and children, and according to MacNaughton (2005), ignore “the messiness, uncertainties and ethical dilemmas of relationships in teaching” (p. 193); relationships which are “notoriously difficult to control and predict” (p. 193). This form of learning trivialises the complex issues faced by teachers and children daily, diminishing professional learning to what Haycock & Robinson (2001) call “drive-through” (p. 17) learning; a painless and pleasurable experience but with very little long term value.

There is also widespread agreement in literature that although there are many professional learning models and specific initiatives being trialled and researched; no one approach is better than another. While no one model or approach is preferable, different programmes and activities are seen to serve different purposes with each having its own worth (Timperley, et al., 2006). Teachers are not a “monolithic group” (Anderson & Olsen, 2006, p. 370) and taking a universal approach to professional learning is
problematic particularly when one-size does not fit all. It is because of this that individual programmes are been employed to suit the varying needs of specific groups of teachers (e.g. Anderson & Olsen, 2006; Buchanan, et al., 2006; Cameron, et al., 2006; McCormack, et al., 2006; Robert, 2000). Offering diversity and choice (Anderson & Olsen, 2006) is seen as desirable and what appears to be of most importance, is matching programmes with intended goals (Alton-Lee, 2003; Loucks-Horsley, Hewson, Love, & Stiles, 1998, cited in Ingvarson, 2003).

In an early education study in New Zealand, Gaffney (2003) found that the model or approach used in professional learning was far less critical than other factors. More important were how effectively the programme matched the needs of participants, the safety of learning environments, the degree of flexibility within the programme, and the relationships between providers and participants. These findings were overwhelmingly consistent across an extensive research sample from both providers of professional learning, and participants. Smith, et al. (2003), had similar findings, even though this project was carried out in adult education. They found that it was not different models of professional learning that had the most impact on change, but the degree of integration that occurred between thinking and acting, the motivation that participants felt towards their learning, and whether or not participants felt that they had a voice in any decision making that directly impacted on them. A key finding of Smith, et al. (2003) was that “teachers change in different amounts and ways as a result of participating in professional development, and individual, professional development, program and system factors interact to affect this change” (p. 35). They suggest that teachers should be offered “a variety of professional development models” (p. 32) because “teachers’ pathways to change were neither simple nor linear” (p. 26); change, they found, was complex and shaped by the many experiences of teachers' lives.

There are similar findings in the primary school sector with Timperley, et al. (2006) also finding that the mode of delivery is less important than other aspects such as the “underlying resources these programmes or activities offer participants to change what they are already doing” (p. 48). They suggest that when teachers have the opportunity to deepen their professional understandings and extend their skills through the content they are offered, there is more likelihood that student outcomes will improve. Ingvarson is another researcher who strongly believes that the approach is not the key to effective
teacher learning but rather the strengthening of teacher knowledge, and like Timperley, et al. (2006) he thinks that a focus on content will improve outcomes; reiterating this in the studies he has been involved in (e.g. Ingvarson, 2003, 2005; Ingvarson, et al., 2005; Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005). To Ingvarson, his colleagues, and those he refers to in his reports; positive changes in outcomes for children will be more likely when teachers have more content knowledge and when they can apply this better in their practice.

This emphasis on improved content specific knowledge (e.g. Timperley, et al., 2006, Ingvarson, 2003, 2005) while focused outside of early education, does not mean that those working in early education should ignore this issue. Ardent supporters on Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996a) in New Zealand may argue, for instance, that the holistic nature of this document precludes any debate on content specific knowledge, believing this to be irrelevant. Cullen (2003) cautions New Zealand researchers against such an insular focus, reminding them that it is necessary to situate their work alongside international studies. Farquhar (2003) reiterates this fact, stressing that research from within the primary school sector has a lot to offer those in early education and that a broad perspective can add value to children’s learning. This being said, the issue of content specific knowledge has not escaped discussion within the New Zealand early education community, even though discussion is not widespread (Farquhar, 2003; Haynes, 2000; Hedges & Cullen, 2005; Mitchell & Cubey, 2003).

Of significance, particularly in New Zealand, is the fact that there is a strong drive at policy level, for teachers to know more about Te Whāriki and how to apply this in practice (Ministry of Education, 2002), positioning Te Whāriki in a similar place as content specific knowledge; that is, with high priority. Additionally, there is a growing body of research on literacy and numeracy (see New Zealand Council for Educational Research website) with initiatives in this area following trends in the UK and US (Lubeck & Jessup, 2001). All in all, the debate about what teachers should know and learn continues to be positioned alongside what it is that children should know and learn, suggesting that content specific knowledge is indeed an issue relevant to the New Zealand early education community (Cullen, 2003) and beyond.

Even though there are varied approaches to teacher professional learning in all education sectors, and none are preferred, there is increasing recognition that learning does not
occur in a linear progression but rather in cycles (e.g. Fleet & Patterson, 2001; MacNaughton, 1996a, 1999, 2000, 2003a; Mitchell, 2003; Sandholtz, 2000; Timperely, et al., 2006). Hartnell-Young (2003), whose doctoral research focused on professional learning in the middle school area, stressed that teacher learning should not follow the “notion of a ladder or stages” (p. 266), and she criticises empty frameworks that build staircases in knowledge acquisition. She stresses that it is less important to produce and pass on knowledge than it is to “develop the space in which knowledge can be created” (p. 267); believing that there are tensions in standards driven and outcomes based education models. In the tertiary sector, Hood (2000) agrees, asserting that in this rapidly changing world full of unpredictability and uncertainty, “filling heads with knowledge that might be needed one day” (p. 4) is no longer appropriate. He says that learning should be across disciplines, should be integrative, and should encourage “higher-order” (p. 4) thinking; the kind of thinking that involves unlearning as much as learning (McIntyre & Cole, 2001), struggling over meanings (Harrington, 1994), and an engagement with complex issues over time. This kind of learning will be more possible when policymakers support and create the space for open-ended learning rather than continuing to uphold constricting frameworks, such as those that focus on skill development and accountability measures (Hartnell-Young, 2003).

Whatever the perspective on professional learning there is an overall feeling amongst those I read that no one approach alone is sufficient and that teacher professional learning is indeed a multifarious and difficult area to define and research, especially for anyone seeking definitive answers. As Bransford, et al. (2005) put it: “no single set of ideas is alone sufficient to produce the complex and changing array of judgements and activities that accomplished professionals demonstrate” (pp. 21-22); this is the profession known as teaching.

Effective professional learning opportunities

While no particular model or approach to professional learning is preferred, there are some features of professional learning that are believed to be the most effective. These ideas are grouped under two headings: learning through connectedness; and learning in relationships, and these are reflected in literature from early education right through to tertiary level.
Learning through connectedness

At the most fundamental level, teacher professional learning should be connected to what happens in classrooms, and be relevant to the real issues that teachers grapple with daily (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 1998; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Harrington, 1994; Ingvarson, 2003; Lieberman, 1995; Mepham, 2000, 2001; Mitchell & Cubey, 2003; Renyi, 1998). In research from all education sectors, teachers repeatedly report the benefits of professional learning that provides opportunities for connectedness (e.g. Beatty, 1999; Buchanan, et al., 2006; Kitchens, 2004; Long, 2004; Mitchell, 2003; Renyi, 1998). As Fleet and Patterson (1998) note, teachers do not live in a vacuum, and like children they learn best when their learning is connected with the ideas and the experiences that they bring to learning situations (Ayers, 1993; Evans & Policella, 2000; Mepham, 2001; Mitchell & Cubey, 2003). One way to ensure that this learning provides connectedness is to make sure that teachers are part of the decision making that goes into their professional learning (Mepham, 2000; Smith et al., 2003).

Literature from all sectors shows that when teachers can influence their own learning, change is more likely to occur (e.g. Beatty, 1999; Fleet & Patterson, 2001; Hampton, 2000; Hartnell-Young, 2003; Kitchens, 2004; Lieberman, 1995; Mitchell & Cubey, 2003; Renyi, 1998). In more than one of the studies that I read, teachers who felt motivated and supported met in their own time beyond the term of the initial research project (Beatty, 1999; Long, 2004; Mitchell, 2003), indicating how valuable these learning experiences were. In instances where teachers continued to feel motivated and supported over time, and where teachers had direct input into their learning, change happened in both beliefs and practice (Beatty, 1999; Buchanan, et al., 2006; Campbell, Davis, MacNaughton, & Smith, 2000; Long, 2004; McCormack, et al., 2006; Taylor, 2003 cited in MacNaughton, 2003a). Furthermore, when teachers felt that their expertise was valued and their input considered important, they were more forthcoming with ideas, and more prone to innovation (Beatty, 1999; Kent, 2004; Mitchell, 2003).

One way to ensure connectedness is to invite teachers into intellectual discussions which not only link theory and practice, but which also require teachers to meet "pedagogical truths with scepticism and resistance" (MacNaughton, cited in Campbell, et al., 2000, p. 26 MacNaughton (cited in Campbell, et al., 2000)). Because this kind of engagement with theory requires an in-depth examination of one's beliefs, it is hard to separate theory
from practice, or to ignore contextual factors; which by default ensures connectedness. While numerous authors strongly suggest that theory and practice should be linked, few recommend deconstructing the very make-up of theory itself, as MacNaughton (cited in Campbell, et al., 2000) does, and those who do so are usually working from a critical pedagogical and/or a postmodern stance (e.g. Cochran-Smith, 2003; Furman, 1998; Kincheloe, 2004; Kitchens, 2004; MacNaughton, 1999; O’Brien, 2005). The fact that there is very little literature, particularly research, of this kind in relation to teacher professional learning is surprising given that current discussion across sectors suggests professional learning lacks quality, and is of a low intellectual nature, (Gaffney, 2003; Ingvarson, 2003; Kent, 2004; Mitchell, 2003; Myers, 2004; O’Brien, 2005; Timperley, et al., 2006; Vukelich & Wrenn, 1999; Whang & Waters, 2001). This raises questions about what might be possible in a climate of teacher professional learning which characteristically promotes low level intellectual discussion, and where links between theory and practice are primarily of a technical nature (Ben-Peretz, 2001; O’Brien, 2005).

Fleet & Patterson (2001) found that most teachers, regardless of their experience, can be sophisticated thinkers when given the opportunity, an opinion shared by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1997). However, according to Parker (1997) professional learning is still predominantly about putting the taken-for-granted theory of others into practice, a model which Guskey (2002) still promotes as the best way to alter teacher beliefs. Perhaps this is because thinking intellectually, engaging in debate about issues on a deep level, and moving beyond quick fix solutions takes time; time which teachers do not typically have for such activities (Ayers, 1993; Gaffney, 2003; Hammerness, 2003; Hartnell-Young, 2003; Hatherly, 1999; Kincheloe, 1993; Kitchens, 2004; MacNaughton, 2004; Mitchell, 2003; Silin, 1995). Talking at length and in-depth about inequity and injustice, for example, cannot be done without a commitment to questioning what may not be answerable in the short term. This kind of thinking and discussion cannot be “prepackaged or conveyed by means of traditional top-down ‘teacher training’ strategies” (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995, p. 597); this kind of learning requires serious and on-going engagement with others, and with the most complex issues of life.

According to Bates (2006), any teacher reform “depends upon connecting the conversation of teacher educators with the conversation of the world” (p. 285), a
conversation which he believes “cannot escape issues of social justice” (p. 285). While Bates is referring here to teacher educators, his sentiments can just as easily be applied to those working in professional learning; from early education and beyond. When the conversations of teachers are not connected to wider world issues, teaching becomes disconnected from reality, and socially irrelevant (Silin, 1995). However, connecting teacher learning to classroom practice and accepted theory is only the beginning; there also needs to be “interconnections among schools, communities, cultures, nations, and the planet” (Harrington, 1994, p. 196) which involves learning without boundaries (hooks, 1994, 2003), across borders (Collins, 1998; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Hartnell-Young, 2003; Moss, 2006a, 2006b), and in meaningful and socially relevant ways. This will most definitely involve making a concerted effort to contribute to the making of a more just world.

Believing that teachers are the single most important impact on outcomes for children may well highlight the value of teachers, but unless the social and economic inequities that many children struggle with daily are also considered critical to learning; professional learning for teachers is only addressing one aspect of the problem (Silin, 1999). Instead of positioning teachers as the main answer to educational problems, policymakers would do well to ensure that education initiatives remain connected to social issues in real and personal ways, and this will go some way towards ensuring that education remains relevant for all (Freire, 1996; Silin, 1995).

Learning in relationships

A considerable amount of the general literature on professional learning, places the individual at the centre of learning, and in the spirit of humanism positions the autonomous and enlightened learner as the key to change. In contrast to this, some literature, particularly since the late 1990s, highlights the importance of collective learning alongside individual learning; that is, individuals learning in relationship with each other (e.g. Allan, 2003; Beatty, 1999; Mayer, et al., 2005; MacNaughton, 1999, 2000, 2005; Mitchell, 2003; Rosewarne & Tyler, 2001; Sandholtz, 2000; Taylor, 1998). Teaching can be a solitary experience with relationships between adults and intellectual adult conversations being scarce, even for those working in teams (Beatty, 1999; Hatherly, 1999; Long, 2004; Mepham, 2000; Robert, 2000; Snow-Gerono, 2005; Sumsion, 2002) The lack of adult conversation beyond day-to-day planning (Hatherly,
1999), and spending all day alone with children, can create virtual isolation even within a crowd; and this isolation can go on for years and years.

Darling-Hammond (1998) gives an example of one college teacher who spent 25 years in isolation. This teacher is quoted as saying: “I have taught 20,000 classes; I have been ‘evaluated’ 30 times; but I have never seen another teacher teach” (p. 9). This is one reason Darling-Hammond (1998) believes collaborative learning communities are vital; they provide a context where teachers can support each other, give feedback to each other, and where they can engage in problem-solving together. While early education teachers in New Zealand may not have the same problem as this college teacher because they work in teams, literature suggests that networking and collegial support is highly valued amongst teachers, from all sectors of the teaching community (e.g. Anderson & Olsen, 2006; Beatty, 1999; Boyd, 2005; Kitchens, 2004; Long, 2004; MacNaughton, 2005; Mayer, et al., 2005; Mitchell, 2003; Rosewarne & Tyler, 2001).

Apart from the “emotional deprivation” (Beatty, 1999, p. 4) that can accompany isolation, some writers claim that isolation stifles the creation of new ideas and makes challenging existing patterns and practices difficult (Beatty, 1999; Long, 2004; Palmer, 1998; MacNaughton, 2000, 2005; Ruskin-Mayher, 1999). Not only is it harder for a single voice to be heard, but the tenacity required to follow through with change can fade when one is singly responsible for driving and sustaining any innovation or change oriented initiatives. Sustaining change, according to Gaffney (2003), is reliant on “the energy of teachers” (p. 113), and one way to sustain this energy is through the support and care that teachers can give to each other in groups such as critical learning communities (Campbell, et al., 2000; Kitchens, 2004; Lieberman, 1995; MacNaughton, 1999, 2005; Mitchell, 2003; Rosewarne & Tyler, 2001). Such communities offer teachers the chance to reclaim “creative energies” (Beatty, 1999, p. 9), “carry the load together” (Rosewarne and Tyler, 2001, p. 4), and share the responsibility for change (Allan, 2003).

Throughout my reading, across a wide range of contexts, I got an overwhelming sense that the relationships between teachers and professional learning facilitators was of principal importance (Gaffney, 2003). In early education more specifically, Kitchens (2004), Gaffney (2003), and Mitchell (2003) all found that successful programmes had facilitators who were flexible and varied in their approach, and prepared to change shape.
as the project developed. Gaffney (2003), whose findings were supported by a previous study (Gaffney & Smith, 1997, cited by Gaffney, 2003), showed that while a good facilitator should be "responsive, sympathetic, [and] supportive" (p. 109), they should also be able to "give feedback" (p. 109) and be "focused, directed, able to challenge, and well organised" (p. 109). Kitchens (2004) drew similar conclusions reiterating the need for facilitators to be able to take a direct role and focus discussion, without being dominating or imposing a set direction on participants. Mitchell (2003) described the facilitator's role as varied; one requiring balance combined with a conscientious and constant examination of power relationships.

Freire (1996) described the relationship between the teacher/facilitator and learner as one where “they become jointly responsible for the process in which all grow” (p. 61). Freire did not view himself as an expert responsible for depositing knowledge in others but as a co-learner, believing that although he had something to offer others, he was also always a learner (Freire, 2003a). In the Māori culture (the culture of indigenous New Zealanders) this role reversal in learning is known as "tuakana/teina" (Hohepa, 1999, cited in Royal Tangaere, 1997, p. 2) and is typically used to describe the reciprocity between an older and a younger child. In this relationship, each learns from the other, with each being both teacher and learner (Royal Tangaere, 1997). Lather (1991a) contends that this kind of reciprocity helps to build positive learning relationships, because shifting between learner and teacher helps to address the kind of imbalance in power that can exist when one is perceived to be more expert than another. Reciprocity can create vulnerability and a feeling of stepping into the unknown. In such a context, what is created together is more valuable than what is created alone (Taylor, 2001, cited in Campbell, Lowe, Smith, & Taylor, 2001).

This kind of working together helps to nurture the “synergy of teachers” (Beatty, 1999, p. 3) which can generate curiosity and the imaginative exploration of ideas (Stallworth, 1998). When relationships are nurtured, and experimenting and making mistakes is accepted as part of learning, open spaces are created and the potential for collective problem-solving and innovation is enhanced (Hartnell-Young, 2003; Lieberman, 1995; MacNaughton, 1999, 2005; Sumsion, 2000). This stands in contrast to situations where teachers are taught the right answers in order to enhance their practice (Guskey, 1986, 2002), a learning situation which is more akin to “closing worlds rather than opening
windows on possibilities” (Harrington, 1994, p. 190). When learning is not so much about getting it right as it is about experimenting with ideas, and when there is no foreclosure “on the sometimes confusing, often provocative, moments” (Silin, 1999, p. 42), learning becomes a space where ideas can be shaken, boundaries can be pushed, and risk taking can occur (Anderson & Olsen, 2006; Beatty, 1999; MacNaughton, 1999; Manning-Morton, 2006; Mitchell, 2003); this is the place where innovation is possible (Kosnik, 2001; MacNaughton, 2005; Potter, 2001).

For change to happen, people need to think about their work and themselves in new ways (Humphries & Senden, 2000), and learning of this nature cannot be a purely objective exercise; it requires an active engagement with the self, with others, and with the world at large. In New Zealand Māori terms this means living and learning in relationships where one knows one’s roots, where one nurtures others, and where one extends one’s connections out from the family to the wider world (Taylor, 2001, cited in Campbell, et al., 2001; Ministry of Education, 1996a). This is subjective learning where one is not detached from subject matter or others, but where one lives a full-bodied learning experience (hooks, 1994) bringing together the personal and professional, the individual and the collective, without denying “all the pleasure and pain that feeling close to another person entails” (Manning-Morton, 2006, p. 47).

Getting to know another in the way that Manning-Morton (2006) suggests is only possible in relationships founded around dialogue (Freire, 1996, 2003a, 2003b; hooks, 1994). Royal Tangaere (1995) says we must “listen to one another. We must dialogue. We must share and talk” (p. 5) because it is talking with others and listening to different perspectives that builds understandings, changes worldviews, and makes collective change more possible (Palmer, 1998; Potter, 2001). Listening to how others describe their lives not only gives valuable insight into how others make sense of their worlds (Perry & Cooper, 2001) but dialoguing together is also a necessary step towards transformative social action (Chang, Muckelroy & Dowell, 2000; Derman-Sparks, 2002; Ryan & Ochsner, 1999). Individuals may be able to make a difference on their own, but eventually it is the collective effort that has the most impact on progressive social change (Palmer, 1998). 

Royal Tangaere (1995) urges those in the New Zealand early education community to:
Be accountable to one another, to be accountable to the community – Mana tangata, to be accountable to the land, the environment and this beautiful country – Mana whenua, Mana Aoturoa, to be accountable to our future through our children - our whakapapa (geneology) Mana Atua, Mana Reo (Royal Tangaere, 1995, p. 4).

This exhortation is not just for New Zealanders but for all those who hear and read these words: build relationships; accept collective responsibility; and believe that together it is possible to make a difference.

Summary

Working with teachers towards innovation and change requires an understanding that “new initiatives cannot by themselves promote meaningful or long-term change in teachers’ practices if they are embedded in a policy structure that is at odds with the visions of student and teacher learning that reforms seek to bring alive” (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995, p. 598). Despite this, most of the general body of literature on professional learning neglects to examine the theories and ideologies underlying current policy and decision-making directives, even though the importance of doing so is clear (e.g. Beatty, 1999; Carr & Kemmis, 2002; Giroux, 2001, 2003; Kincheloe, 2004; MacNaughton, 2003b, 2005; McLaren, 2003). Research on professional learning in all sectors continues to focus on finding out what works, and those compiling educational resources, according to Kincheloe (2004), are for the most part “unconscious of the political inscriptions embedded within them” (p. 9). Furthermore there is little attention being given to how such political inscriptions affect the way knowledge, the learner, and change are conceptualised within current professional learning opportunities; nor to what this means for the future of education. As this project is seeking to do just this, the next section includes an examination of the inter-related themes of knowledge, the learner, and change as they are positioned within positivism, interpretivism, and critical pedagogy, and how this positioning impacts on teacher professional learning.
Paradigms of learning

A positivist approach to professional learning

Since the late 19th century, positivism has been "the most powerful intellectual force in western thought" (Carr and Kemmis, 2002, p. 61), creating a belief that "the aims, concepts and methods of the natural sciences" (p. 62) can also be applied to social science. Accordingly, scientifically proven knowledge is supposed to hold the answer to practical problems, including those related to teaching practice; an ideal that has not escaped teacher professional learning. Cochran-Smith (2004a), believes that teacher professional learning has been dominated by positivism, particularly between the 1950s and 1980s, creating what she calls "a technical view of teaching, a behavioural view of learning, and an understanding of science as the solution to educational problems" (p. 295). Reducing the act of teaching to the application of techniques effectively, "remove[s] the teacher as an active agent in the educational process" (Kincheloe, 1993, p. 10). Instead, teachers are reliant on external experts to teach them what they should know, and how they should then put this knowledge into practice (e.g. Ayers, 1993; Berlin, 1995; Brookfield, 1995; Butt, 1999; Cranton, 1996; Evans & Policella, 2000; Hood, 2000; Kincheloe, 1993; Lieberman, 1995; Palmer, 1998). In the last twenty years, this framework for learning has raised many questions amongst some educationalists, particularly in relation to how positivism influences the way knowledge, the learner, and change are conceptualised.

Positioning knowledge, the learner and change within positivism

A positivist view of knowledge assumes that scientific measures can be applied to information in order to prove its truth value, and that once proven this knowledge is neutral, totalising, and independent of the knower (e.g. Carr & Kemmis, 2002; Kincheloe, 1993; hooks, 1994; Jalongo & Isenberg 1995; Jipson, 2000; Usher & Edwards, 1994). Because of the truth value and neutral status given to scientific knowledge, it is also assumed this knowledge can be coded, pre-packaged, and passed on to others; a pattern typical of the professional learning offered to teachers within a positivist paradigm (e.g. Ayers, 1993; Belenky, et at, 1997; Freire, 1996; Lieberman, 1995; Yost, Sentner & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000). This perspective privileges scientific knowledge and positions other forms of knowledge, such as subjective and practical knowledge, as inferior (Fleer & Kennedy 2000; Schon, 1983; Woodrow & Fasoli, 1998). Not only this, those who
speak and pass on this scientific knowledge become known as experts, creating what Jipson (2000) calls a binary between those who know and those who don’t. As a result, some have the power to name what others should know, while others are dependent on such experts for direction (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Jipson, 2000; MacNaughton, 1996b; Robinson & Diaz, 1999; Shweder, 1995).

Within a positivist paradigm all learners are believed to have the same learning needs regardless of context or difference (Beattie, 1995; Brunner, 1994; Butt, 1999; Clarke, 1995; Furman, 1998; Lieberman, 1995; Renyi, 1998; Vukelich & Wrenn, 1999). Pre-packaged knowledge and programmes are therefore viewed as an effective and efficient way to assist learners towards new and better understandings. Freire (1996) likens this approach to banking, whereby experts deposit knowledge into learners, who are positioned as consumers of knowledge and reliant on others for what they need to know (Freire, 1996; hooks, 1994; Hood, 2000; O’Brien, 2005; Woodrow & Fasoli, 1998). Not only does this technical focus devalue the status of teachers (Ayers, 1993), but this type of learning is more likely to result in docile thinking (Freire, 1996; Foucault, 1995a) and cognitive passivity (Kincheloe, 1993), than intellectual thought. In this paradigm, an educated person is not so much the person who can think, or critically reflect, but rather the “one who can remember and repeat” (Palmer, 1998, p 101) what others have named as worthwhile to know.

When learning needs are universalised and learners are situated within totalising narratives, Giroux (1991a) contends that diversity is reduced to “a one dimensional, all-encompassing logic” (p. 19) because what is the same becomes more important than what is different. Positivist learning has little or no regard for minority viewpoints, anomalies in thinking, or cultural difference, because the main aim is to ensure that knowledge does not become “infected by subjective preferences and personal bias” (Carr & Kemmis, 2002, p. 62). Any learner viewpoints and experiences that sit outside of the norm are therefore quickly subjugated to dominant world views, creating the ideal context for white middle-class patriarchal perspectives to prevail (e.g. Ball & Pence, 2000; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Furman, 1998; Robinson & Diaz, 1999). Additionally, when little value is placed on learner contexts and diverse viewpoints, there is no urgency for dialogue or relationship building, because knowledge itself is viewed as more important than the learner, and the experiences they bring to their learning (Brookfield, 1995; Evans

When the learner is conceptualised as in need of expert knowledge, then problems of practice and the solutions to these are more likely to be generalised (Carr & Kemmis, 2002; Clarke, 1995). The objective of those who train others then will be to predict problems of practice and decide in advance how these problems might be addressed. The next step will be to deposit the right and true answers in others, and through methods such as demonstration, motivation, reinforcement, observation, and analysis, move teachers towards change (Guskey, 1986, 2002; Ross & Regan, 1993). This model of learning, with its origins in behaviourism (Bellanca, 1996; Durkin, 1997; Ross & Regan, 1993), is built on the premise that changing the behaviour of teachers is the best way to improve teaching practice and educational quality in general (Guskey, 1986, 2002). Learning and change are viewed as a linear process involving firstly the transmission of new knowledge, followed by teachers learning this knowledge and applying it to their practice. Those subscribing to this simplistic view believe that observing and measuring change will be a relatively straightforward process (Cranton, 1996; Korthagen, 1993; Jipson, 2000) which trivialises the complexities associated with learning and change.

Because this model of learning leaves very little space for differing perspectives, and is highly dependent on experts who claim to have the answers, it can be safer for teachers to conform, rather than to go against the norm (e.g. Ayers, 1993; Brookfield, 1995; MacNaughton, 2003b). If challenging the norm means speaking against the expert knowledge of others, then it may seem wiser to support mainstream thinking, rather than risk being labelled unknowing, incompetent, or a troublemaker (Beattie, 1995; Robinson & Diaz, 1999; Woodrow & Fasoli, 1998). As Tamboukou (2000) notes, “the thing people loathe most in the ‘caring’ work arena are those people who are perceived to ‘rock the boat’” (p. 472); and people who challenge experts, and accepted knowledge, are often perceived as doing just this. It is highly probable in positivist learning contexts, that alternative perspectives will be absent and dissenting voices silent, all of which works against social justice and change.
Professional learning that is situated within positivism does not take into account teacher knowledge, contextual knowledge, or difference; learners are positioned as homogeneous, unknowing, and docile recipients of others' expertise. At best this kind of learning is conformist (Kincheloe, 1993; MacNaughton, 2003b) and at worst is a form of social conditioning that perpetuates the values and practices of mainstream thinking. Rather than creating a climate for social change or innovation, this kind of professional learning is more likely to maintain the status quo. The irony is that knowledge produced and disseminated within such a context is far from value-free or neutral. Issues such as these have contributed to a growing concern with this approach to professional learning, with some believing that reflective practice offers a viable alternative.

**Reflective practice: An interpretive approach to professional learning**

Most of the literature on reflective practice builds on the work of Dewey and Schon (e.g. Clarke, 1995; Kosnik, 2001; Van Manen, 1999; Yost, et al., 2000). As the term *reflective practice* implies, the process involves an active and interactive relationship between what one does in *practice* and what one learns through being *reflective* about this practice. O'Connor and Diggins (2002) describe this process as "stop, think, change" (p. 9) and they believe that employing these three techniques cyclically will ensure teachers do not just "teach from habit" (p. 13). They suggest that "choosing to be a reflective practitioner is a positive choice to make" (p. 13) Yost, et al. (2001), and view this interactive process as twofold; with both practical experience, and a knowledge base to inform this practice, being necessary. While reflective practice is essentially an active and practical task, it is nevertheless a process that is reliant on theory, because it is theory that is the benchmark for reflection, and it is incorporating new theory into one's practice that supposedly brings improvement to this practice (O'Connor & Diggins, 2002).

Those advocating for reflective practice claim this approach is the antithesis to banking education because teachers are no longer just consumers of knowledge but are instead, actively engaged in their own learning (e.g. Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985; Brookfield, 1990, 1995; Mezirow, 1990; O'Connor & Diggins, 2002). Not only does reflective practice encourage teacher involvement and expression, but because teachers are continually analysing their practice with a view to improvement, supporters believe that change in teaching practice is more likely. As such, reflective practice has been "characterised as a hallmark of quality teachers and as the bedrock of their professional
growth" (Wood & Bennett, 2000, cited in MacNaughton, 2005, p. 6). While most authors agree that reflective practice is both desirable and necessary, there is discontent amongst some with the continuing positivist influences affecting how reflective practice is being enacted (Bleakley, 1999; 2000; Clark & Wilson, 1991; MacNaughton, 2001a; Palmer, 1998; Parker, 1997; Van Manen, 1999). Embedded in the many readings I found on reflective practice are assumptions about knowledge, the learner, and change, all of which highlight the pervasiveness of positivism in this approach to professional learning.

**Positioning knowledge, the learner and change within reflective practice**

Reflective practice attempts to bridge the gap between theoretical and practical knowledge by bringing the two together in reflective exercises; however, in reality the existing dichotomy between theory and practice continues (Woodrow & Fasoli, 1998). While practical knowledge may have a stronger position than it does in positivist learning paradigms, it is nevertheless theoretical knowledge that determines what should be best practice, and it is this that forms the baseline from which teachers measure their performance (Brookfield, 1995; Carr & Kemmis, 2002; Jipson, 2000; Kosnik, 2001; Lincoln, 1997; Van Manen, 1999). Because theoretical knowledge is typically sanctioned as valid and true by institutions such as universities, this knowledge becomes privileged (Kosnik, 2001; MacNaughton, 1996b; Robinson & Diaz, 1999; Schon, 1983; Shweder, 1995) and this makes it difficult for other forms of knowledge to gain the same status. As a result, what is counted as valid and true is still very much determined by those who have the most power to name for others what is worthwhile to know (Furman, 1998; MacNaughton, 1996b; Robinson & Diaz, 1999). When reflective practice is an interpretive exercise, it is still knowledge as truth that determines what it means to be a good teacher (Brunner, 1994; Campbell, 1999; Johnson, 2001; Robinson & Diaz, 1999).

Influenced by humanism, reflective practice "posits the subject as an autonomous individual capable of full consciousness and endowed with a stable 'self' constituted by a set of static characteristics" (Lather, 1991a, p. 5). Reflective teachers are those who learn and interpret the truths about best practice and who diligently constitute themselves within these truths in order to improve their practice (Carr & Kemmis, 2002; Giroux, 1991b; Rorty, 1995). Not only is this reflective process desirable in teachers, but this is now an expected outcome of competent teaching (O'Connor & Diggins, 2002), further supporting the assumption that the role of the teacher as learner is to understand and
apply what others name as worthwhile to know (Jipson, 2000; Lincoln, 1997; Usher & Edwards, 1994). Instead of teachers being positioned as critically knowing subjects with differing and valid perspectives, this way of learning continues to privilege a centre defined by the dominant culture (Furman, 1998). Rather than creating contexts for learner diversity and teacher voice, reflective practice as an interpretive exercise is more about understanding, and learning to articulate, what brings validation and recognition from others (Brunner, 1994).

Humanist influences on reflective practice compound the belief that self-realisation and introspective, cognitive distancing will bring about change (Bleakley, 1999; MacNaughton 2001a). Fay (1987) cautions against this form of reflective thinking, believing it is restricted to an “individualistic world of psychological rehabilitation” (p. 108) which neglects social factors, including those contributing to inequities. The learner is positioned at the centre of a knowable and predictable world where methods such as self-surveillance are employed, alongside normalising standards, to measure and improve practice (Foucault, 1995a). In this context change is more about standardising practice than it is about diversity; teachers are more readily manipulated (Foucault, 1995a; Usher & Edwards, 1994), curriculum is more easily controlled (Ayers, 1993; Beattie, 1995) and the existing social order is more likely to be maintained (Usher & Edwards, 1994). When this happens what is defined as best practice, can really just be “a constructed reality that serves to protect the interests of the powerful” (Brookfield, 1995, p. 87). While change may occur in individual teachers’ understandings and practices, an interpretive approach to learning results in very little progressive social change (Carr & Kemmis, 2002).

The underlying assumptions of this approach to professional learning are concerning given the continued silencing of minority voices, and the marginalisation of alternative ways of being and thinking. The focus on individual change against normalising standards of practice is not that far removed from the ideals of positivism which emphasises an objective and knowable world waiting to be understood (Lincoln, 1997; Parker, 1997). Reflective practice may have the potential to transform teacher learning and practice but as Parker (1997) points out:
Reflective teaching is insufficiently divorced from the traditions it rejects for it to be capable of expressing the things it feels or realising its declared emancipatory purpose (p. 5).

So while reflective practice may encourage a linking of theory and practice, and an examination of practice with a view to improvement, this interpretive perspective on reflection, means the impact of change is limited to “making moderate changes” (MacNaughton, 2003b, p. 155). MacNaughton (2003b) calls this kind of change reformative, as opposed to more transformative change, which she describes as “changing or altering something into something new” (p. 70). The absence of any critical reflection on, for example, the inequities in society that directly affect knowledge production and learning, means that reflection rarely moves beyond how individuals can better their own practice. Even though individual reflection is not necessarily counterproductive, adding a more critical dimension to reflection is one way that MacNaughton believes change, of a transformative nature, is made possible. Critical reflection involves questioning “how power operates in the processes of teaching and learning” (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 7). This kind of questioning enables oppressive and inequitable practices to be critiqued, disrupted, and transformed.

A critical pedagogical approach to professional learning

Critical pedagogy has its origins in critical theory which has links with the Frankfurt School of critical theory, established in Germany in 1923 (e.g. Carr & Kemmis, 2002; Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003; Giroux, 2001, 2003; Kincheloe, 2004) to “challenge the traditional forms of rationality that defined the concept of meaning and knowledge in the Western world” (Darder, et al., 2003, p. 8). Unlike interpretive approaches to professional learning, critical theory and critical pedagogy are more analytical, and as the term implies, more critical (Carr & Kemmis, 2002). As a way of thinking about education, critical theory and critical pedagogy are hard to define in universal terms (Giroux, 2001, 2003; Kincheloe, 2004, MacNaughton, 2003b) largely because of the many strands of critical thinking that have developed from the original school of thought (MacNaughton, 2003b). Kincheloe (2004) maintains that critical pedagogy is still evolving, and while this might be so there are nevertheless some generally accepted understandings (Kincheloe, 2004; MacNaughton, 2003b).
Generally speaking, critical pedagogy “has an emancipatory ideal” (Darder, et al., 2003, p. 2). The aim of critical pedagogy is to challenge the historical, social, and political factors influencing society so that oppressive and discriminating structures and practices can be exposed and transformed (e.g. Ayers, 1998; Giroux, 2001, 2003; Hinchey, 2003; Kincheloe, 2004, MacNaughton, 2003b; McLaren, 2003). Those working from a critical pedagogical stance assert that knowledge is not value-free, and that men and women too, are “essentially unfree” (McLaren, 2003, p. 69). They believe the world is full of “contradictions and asymmetries of power and privilege” (p. 69) which creates inequities in society. Because of this, critical pedagogy is concerned with the assumptions, ideologies, and big ideas (Darder, et al., 2003; Freire, 2003b; Giroux, 2001, 2003; MacNaughton, 2003b; McLaren, 2003) shaping what is accepted as normal, and influencing the practices that sustain privilege. Critical pedagogues believe that a better, fairer world is possible (Ayers, 1998; Hinchey, 2003; Kincheloe, 2004; MacNaughton, 2003b) and that this can be achieved as issues of justice become “central to institutional decisions and commitments” (Glass & Wong, 2003, p. 82).

Those subscribing to critical pedagogy maintain that education settings are not neutral sites but highly political spaces (e.g. Ayers, 1998; Cochran-Smith, 2003; Freire, 2003a; Hinchey, 2003; Kincheloe, 2004; MacNaughton, 2005) where “educational practices are contested” (Kincheloe, 2004). Education sites function as terrains “of ongoing cultural struggle over what will be accepted as legitimate knowledge” (Darder, et al., 2003, p. 11) and as places “which replicate the existing values and privileges of the dominant class” (Darder, et al., 2003, p. 11). Even teachers who consider themselves apolitical are, according to Freire (1996, 1998a, 2003a), political by default, because indifference enables oppressive and discriminating structures and practices to go unchallenged. As Hinchey (2003) notes, whatever happens in classrooms is always “someone’s agenda” (p. 44), making it impossible to act in ways that are free from bias. Asking questions to uncover bias is therefore a necessary part of critical pedagogy and begins with questions such as whose interests are best served by decisions and actions that maintain the status quo (e.g. Francis, 1997; Freire, 2003a; Greene, 1998; Kincheloe, 2004; MacNaughton, 2003b; O’Brien, 2000). The overall objective of such questioning is to challenge and transform oppressive and discriminating structures and practices, once these have been exposed.
Critical pedagogy is a form of social activism (MacNaughton, 2003b), and to the critical pedagogue, schools are sites of social and political struggle (e.g. Kincheloe, 2004; Reid, et al., 1998). In terms of professional learning, critical pedagogy is about “equipping people to challenge the status quo” (Hinchey, 2003, p. 143) and this, Hinchey contends, is “a blatantly political goal” (p. 143).

**Positioning knowledge, the learner and change within critical pedagogy**

Unlike positivist and interpretive approaches to education, in critical pedagogy, knowledge is not accepted as merely “fact” (Giroux, 2003, p. 34), disconnected from historical, social, and political factors. Instead knowledge is understood to be constructed (e.g. Darder et al., 2003; Giroux, 2001, 2003; Gore, 2001; Hinchey, 2003; McLaren, 2003), having the potential to both emancipate and repress (Jipson, 2000). Critical pedagogues believe that knowledge becomes repressive through a process called hegemony (e.g. Brookfield, 1995; Darder, et al., 2003; Giroux, 2001; Kincheloe, 2004; MacNaughton, 2003a, McLaren, 2003), whereby dominating “ideas, structures, and actions” (Brookfield, 1995, p. 15) are absorbed into society in such insidious ways that those who are repressed by such beliefs and practices may even consider these to be in their best interests. In educational settings for example, teachers may wholeheartedly support government initiatives, believing that these are best practice, even when such initiatives create conditions for teachers and students that are repressive and normalising, (Foucault, 1995a; Potter, 2001); and which may be impossible to achieve (Walkerdine, 1990).

Those working from a critical pedagogical perspective develop what O’Brien (2005) calls an “informed scepticism” (p. 35) towards knowledge, believing that a dialectical approach to learning will facilitate emancipation (Darder, et al., 2003; Freire, 1996, 2003a, 2003b; Giroux, 2001, 2003; Kincheloe, 2004; McLaren, 2003). Dialectics is therefore central to any critical pedagogical work, with Freire (2003b) maintaining that unless learning involves problematizing and an uncovering of the reasons behind the taken-for-granted, learning is a “mind-narrowing process” (p. 45). In relation to teacher professional learning, this means engaging teachers in debates about knowledge, where interpreting knowledge is eclipsed by active interrogation (Cochran-Smith, 2003), and where a submerging of difference is replaced by illumination (Jipson, 2000). This dialectical relationship with knowledge encourages teachers to “look deeper” (Whang &
Waters, 2001, p. 204) at the theories that shape practice, “essentially causing trouble and wobbling perceptions” (p. 204), particularly when knowledge supports oppressive and discriminating practices. Exposing “the forces that prevent individuals and groups from shaping the decisions that crucially affect their lives” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 51) requires critical thought and this, Giroux (2001) asserts, is the “precondition for human freedom” (p. 19). Active and critical engagement with knowledge helps teachers to exercise their intelligence well (Freire, 1998a), and create learning contexts where education becomes what Freire (1996) calls a practice of freedom.

In critical pedagogical discourse the learner is positioned as autonomous and capable of enlightenment in much the same way as they are in interpretivism, but instead of just interpreting and applying knowledge, the learner is encouraged to critically reflect on the historical, social, and political factors influencing knowledge. As MacNaughton (2005) notes, “inserting the ‘critical’ into reflective practice” (p. 9), shifts the concern “from just changing an individual educator’s practices to changing individual educators in ways that challenge oppressive and inequitable power relations in the classroom” (p. 10). To be able to challenge power relations teachers need to understand more about “the operation and effects of power relationships between people” (p. 7) because “the more we make those different possibilities of domination and exploitation clear – the what and the why – the better we understand the phenomena” (Freire, 1998a, p. 92). Having a better understanding of how knowledge is constructed and the power relations that operate in relationships, opens the mind to the possibility of something different (Freire, 2001); positioning the learner as knowing, active, and capable of challenging and changing situations they no longer find desirable (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Jipson, 2000; MacNaughton, 2005; Robinson & Diaz, 1999). This implies a reading and “rereading of the world” (Freire, 2003a, p. 44), and a “perpetual uncovering and unfolding of self – and others – in the world” (O’Brien, 2005, p. 35).

Critical pedagogues believe that as individuals engage in dialogic relationships, they become more conscious of the world around them, making change more possible (e.g. Darder, et al., 2003; Freire, 1985, 1996, 2001, 2003a, 2003b; Giroux, 2001, 2003; hooks, 1989, 1994, 2000b; Kanpol, 1999; Kincheloe, 1993, 2004; McLaren, 2003; MacNaughton, 2005; O’Brien, 2005). When this becoming aware drives a desire for transformation, which results in action, the process is known as conscientization.
(MacNaughton, 2005); a process which Freire (2001) ardently believed in, even 30 years after first coining the term. To Freire (1996, 2001, 2003a, 2003b) conscientization was achievable through the coming together of awareness, dialogue, and “epistemological curiosity” (Freire, 2003b, p. 96), and while conscientization is essentially about individual liberation, Freire nevertheless envisaged change occurring through the collective exchange of ideas. Taking a temporary distance from the world in order to question it with curiosity not only broadens perspectives, Freire asserts, but also generates hope for a better world (Freire, 1996, 2001, 2003a, 2003b), without which any attempt to improve the world is futile; “a frivolous illusion” (Freire, 2003a, p. 8).

Those working towards emancipatory change should create opportunities for epistemological curiosity, and the dialogic exchange of ideas, and should endeavour to “unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles are” (Freire, 2003a, p. 9). Not only will this facilitate a deeper consciousness of the world and oppressiveness, but working with others in ways that generate hope for a better world helps to overcome resignation, fatalism, and immobilization, and turns difficulties into possibilities (Freire, 2003a, 2003b). Turning difficulties into possibilities makes change possible and because of this the critical pedagogue will never be content “accepting yesterday or today” (Freire, 2003b, p. 43), because they will always have a desire for a more equitable and socially just world.

**Critical pedagogical work: Challenges and critiques**

Working from a critical pedagogical perspective requires more than a detached transmission of content knowledge, and more than engaging in reflective exercises where the objective is solely to improve practice against established and accepted truths. Critical pedagogy “asks much of the practitioners who embrace it” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 2) because not only do teachers need to be competent in their field, they also need to have a broad understanding of historical, political and social issues, and how these shape what becomes taken-for-granted as normal. In addition, critical pedagogues need to be prepared to take action against injustice, despite being potentially criticised for doing so; and even when this may be costly (e.g. Freire, 1996; 2003a; 2003b; hooks, 2003; Hinchey, 2003; Silin, 1998). According to Greene (1998), it is not enough just to believe that people will notice injustice and recognise the implications of this, it is also necessary to “arouse” (p. xliv) in others a sense of what injustice means. This involves bringing instances of injustice to the attention
of others and working in ways that "challenge, shake us up, provoke, shift our paradigms, change the way we think, turn us around [because] that's what revolution does" (hooks, 2000a, p. xiv). Moreover this entails keeping a check on one's own practices (Bell, Washington, Weinstein & Love, 2003; hooks, 2000a, 2003; Hinchey, 2003) and being ready to rewrite these if necessary (Freire, 1998b).

Not only is teaching for social justice and equity cognitively challenging but also "emotionally and socially charged" (Bell, et al., 2003, p. 464) with conversations about oppression and discrimination potentially giving rise to "confrontation, [the] forceful expression of ideas, or even conflict" (hooks, 1994, p. 39). Consequently critical pedagogical work may be daunting and fearful, not just for students, whose beliefs and practices will be challenged, but also for those leading such efforts (Freire, 2001; hooks, 1994; Shor & Freire, 2003). Shor and Freire (2003) contend that fear is a likely emotion for those working towards social justice and equity, essentially because of the political nature of this work, and the resistance by some towards such endeavours. Critical pedagogical work involves taking risks (Freire, 2001, hooks, 1994; Shor & Freire, 2003), and requires tenacity and a long term commitment to an emancipatory vision particularly as this work can go unnoticed and unrewarded, especially in academic circles (hooks, 1994). The work of emancipation does not happen overnight, because changes in beliefs and practices that go beyond token measures take time (hooks, 1994), and those engaged in this work therefore need to be what Freire (2003b) calls "patiently impatient" (p. 64), and because of the strength required, Freire suggests that those doing such work should choose their "battles carefully" (Shor & Freire, 2003, p. 490).

Those critiquing critical pedagogy do so for a number of reasons, one being the incongruence between the now largely institutionalised practice of critical pedagogy, and the ideals it esteems (e.g. Cochran-Smith, 2005; Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1992, 1993; Kanpol, 1999; Luke & Gore, 1992). For instance, critical pedagogical work is largely an intellectual activity due to the dialectical nature of such work, and the predominantly rational approach to critiquing knowledge. Because of this, critical pedagogical work may be more suited to academics, than those who could benefit the most from its ideals (Kanpol, 1999). Even the language of critical pedagogy can be inaccessible, with Kanpol (1999) claiming that some of his students feel this language "so obscure that it assumes
an authoritarian position" (p. 159); creating a situation which works against the core values of such work.

There are also structural factors limiting the way that critical pedagogy is enacted (Kanpol, 1999) such as the expectation of educational institutions for measurable outcomes and visible evidence of change which constrains what pedagogues can achieve. For instance, Gore (1993), Evans (cited in Evans & Policella, 2000) and Ellsworth (1992) all experienced first hand the contradictions of their own practice because of the institutional constraints within which they worked. They had become so accustomed to working within these constraints that the incongruence of their practices had gone largely unnoticed, until challenged by their students. As these pedagogues discovered, “even emancipatory discourses are systems of power with the capacity to dominate” (Kesby, 2005, p. 6); and it is dangerous and naïve to think otherwise (Masschelein, 1998).

Postmodern thinkers suggest that such incongruence in critical pedagogy stems from its modernist foundations. The preoccupation of modernism with finding the truth, for example, can limit the troubling of intellectual territory (Hatch, 2000; Whang & Waters, 2001), an activity that is crucial to critical pedagogical work. When truth is centralised, even the disrupting of knowledge through dialectical discussion will inevitably be sidetracked into uncovering, for example, the real reasons for privilege, and the right ways to end oppression. Being “caught in a desire for reassuring sureties” (Lather 1998, p. 489) works against creating new understandings and “deepen[ing] our knowledge” (MacNaughton, 1999, p. 8) and when this occurs, critical pedagogy can work against itself by reproducing the very power relations it is seeking to dismantle (Ellsworth, 1998, cited in Tisdell, 1998). Furthermore, when power and knowledge are reified, as they are in modernist discourse, it is easier to believe that power can be dislocated from knowledge; a conceptualisation of power that subtly moves critical pedagogy back to the positivist perception that knowledge can be value-free.

Kincheloe (2004) and MacNaughton (2003b, 2005) believe that bringing a postmodern perspective to critical pedagogy will move this work forward by taking the critical further than modernist discourses do. Postmodernists in general find the concept of a world waiting to be understood, and the individual within this world being singular, unified, and knowable, problematic (e.g. Davies, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a; Lather, 1991a;
MacNaughton, 2000, Usher & Edwards, 1994), which opens up the possibility of further critique. This is particularly so for poststructuralist feminists who trouble the dominant and patriarchal definitions that continue to name and position women as inferior to their male counterparts. The self of humanism, poststructuralist feminists argue, is essentially a male construct with anything other to this, being positioned outside of the norm (Luke & Gore, 1992). As critical pedagogy is “still very much a boy thing” (Lather, 1998, p. 488), with males dominating both the construction and interpretation of critical pedagogical work, postmodern and feminist poststructuralist perspectives can trouble such constructions.

As Masschelein (1998a) suggests, “critical pedagogy has to reconsider seriously and theoretically its own concepts” (p. 526), and one way to do this is by bringing a “poststructuralist suspicion” (Lather, p. 489) to critical pedagogical work. Lather (1998) suggests that those working from a critical pedagogical perspective would be well advised to:

Move away from the too-dogmatic relation to its own discourses; its asking of genealogical questions regarding the origins of one’s concepts, the weight of tradition, the ways current codes of traditional political problematics are insufficient, and the construction of complicated, disturbed answers [towards being] reflexive without being paralyzed, working the ruins of modernist philosophies of knowledge towards possible practices of the impossible… (pp. 496-497).

In terms of teacher professional learning this will mean creating spaces where seeking to know more will not be about finding the right answer, but about questioning the unanswerable, discussing the undiscussable, and thinking the unthinkable (MacNaughton, 1999). In this kind of space, certainty and truth will be replaced by unpredictability, chaos and open-endedness. The “slipperiness of identity as a problem to be solved or an obstacle to be avoided” (Orner, 1992, p. 74) will be reformulated as a reason to celebrate the potentiality of difference and multiplicity. No longer will the responsibility for change be primarily that of the enlightened teacher working away on their own (Cochran-Smith, 2004a; MacNaughton, 2000) but instead change will be a collective responsibility brought to life by a desire for social activism (e.g. Freire, 2003b; hooks, 1989, 1994, 2000a, 2000b; MacNaughton, 2001a, 2003b, 2005; Palmer, 1998). And those leading others will need the humility (Freire, 1998b; 2003b; Gore 1992) and the “state of mind”
(Freire, 2003b, p. 96) to remain epistemologically curious about the enactment of their own emancipatory practice (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Orner, 1992). Only when this kind of space is created will it be possible to engage with teachers towards “practices of the impossible” (Lather, 1998, p. 497).

Conclusions

Whatever the belief about what makes the best kind of professional learning experience, or whatever the approach taken, there is widespread recognition, amongst educationalists in general, that teacher professional learning, in whatever shape or form it takes, should have an orientation towards change. Questioning “whether things should/could be done differently” (MacNaughton, 2000, p. 171) should be fundamental to those working in education, but how this change is conceptualised remains an open question. Ingvarson (2003) alleges that there is a “zone of vagueness” (p. 5) that exists around change in professional learning, with links between what teachers do and outcomes for students still being unclear. In addition, teachers face increased tension as they encounter expectations that not only sit in conflict with the reasons many of them first entered the teaching profession, but which are also often impossible to achieve (Ingvarson, 2003; Walkerdine, 1990). Ben-Peretz (2001) claims that “teachers are torn between varied and sometimes conflicting external demands, on the one hand, and their own internal tensions and needs, on the other hand” (p. 48), making long-term and meaningful change more difficult to achieve.

Despite the huge volume of literature on teacher professional learning across a broad range of contexts, and the continuing discussions at policy level, there are relatively few discussions about the incongruence that exists between the ideals that are promoted and the policies and practices that are actually in place. As this literature review has shown, there are many incongruencies of this kind. For example, research in all sectors identifies that expanding teachers’ knowledge is a key to enhancing professional learning, and yet professional learning continues to focus primarily on technical knowledge which is of a low intellectual nature. Teachers working within all areas of the education system have clearly identified their need for connectedness and collegial relationships, but they still report feeling isolated and emotionally deprived. Despite the fact that there is an
overwhelming amount of literature generally highlighting how nurturing relationships brings benefits not only in terms of teacher support but also by prompting innovation and change; getting it right still seems to be the focus of many professional learning initiatives.

There are few researchers questioning the "impact of preparing teachers for diverse populations" (Cochran-Smith, 2005, p. 302) even though inequities are clearly evident and Fromberg (2006), and keynote speakers such as Bates (2006), are exhorting the education community to connect their conversations with wider world issues. Trends towards standardisation and evidence-based practice have the potential to position cognitive learning and testing above concerns with diversity and social justice, creating what Potter (2001) calls inconsistencies between an education system that is working towards normalisation, and the demands of living in a socially just world. Inconsistencies such as these continue to ensure that education is indeed "a site of struggle and compromise" (Apple, 2000, cited in Lubeck & Jessup, 2001, p. 229) and a profession imbued with " contesting purposes, values and practices" (Reid, et al., 1998, p. 247). Lieberman (1995) contends that such conflicts "stem from deep-rooted philosophical notions about learning" (p. 592), and those prepared to work for change need to be aware of these philosophical differences and the limitations that such positions bring to teacher professional learning. While this is important, as this review has shown there is very little research giving attention to such issues, and early education follows the general trends described here.

There is a notable absence of research in early education where teacher professional learning is aimed at progressive social change, particularly where poststructural feminist theory has been used to frame the investigation. Furthermore, there are no studies examining the role of knowledge, the learner, and change, nor any questioning how different paradigms affect the way that these are conceptualised within professional learning. This project is situated in this gap by exploring the professional learning of early education teachers within critical pedagogical ideals; using poststructuralist feminist theory and the work of Foucault to do so. I believe, with Kincheloe (2004) and MacNaughton (2003b, 2005), that such an approach will help to move critical pedagogy forward by disturbing the modernist and patriarchal thinking behind current professional learning initiatives.

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This study has been carried out without seeking definitive answers to questions about knowledge, the learner, and change, and without attempting to find the right ways to work towards progressive social change. Questions are explored in ways that expose, disrupt, and transform, without making claims to universal truth. There are no prescriptive recommendations at the end of this project, and no attempts have been made to simplify the complex and contradictory world of education and teacher professional learning in early education. The next chapter outlines the conceptual framework used in this investigation.
CHAPTER 3
THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Contexts and possibilities

I chose poststructuralist feminist theory for the conceptual framework because it specifically challenges modernist and patriarchal discourses and this theory encourages a re-imagining of situations from multiple perspectives. According to Davies (2000a) poststructuralist feminist theory "open[s] up discourses and practices to questioning, and provide[s] strategies for questioning, that run against the grain of common sense and of dominant (and dominating) discourses and practices" (p. 169), and this encourages possibility thinking. For this to happen, however, Davies (2000a) contends that one must first of all gain "knowledge of the grain itself" (p. 85) and to do this I have supplemented poststructuralist feminist theory with the work of Foucault. In Foucault's work I found very practical ways to locate, observe, question, and critique the operation of power on multiple and co-existing levels. From his many years of investigating and writing about power and the subject Foucault offers his readers numerous vantage points from which to examine the relationship between power, knowledge, discourse and the subject, and as he does, he provokes his reader to think differently. Combining the work of poststructuralist feminists and Foucault has challenged me to consider knowledge, the learner, and change in new ways, and from this, to re-imagine the professional learning of early education teachers.

Feminist poststructuralist theory: Contexts

Feminist poststructuralist theory draws on the tenets of postmodern and poststructuralist theory which view the world as discontinuous and fragmented. Both postmodernists and poststructuralists seek to decentralize knowledge and the subject by challenging modernist claims of a legitimating centre upon which beliefs and actions are grounded (Hughes, 2001; Lather, 1991a, Usher & Edwards, 1994). Consequently knowledge is viewed as contextual, historically constructed, and shifting, rather than fixed and stable; and the autonomous, rational, unified subject, is troubled.
In general terms, poststructuralism can be applied to the theoretical positions developed by the work of such theorists as Derrida, Lacan, Kristeva, Althusser, and Foucault (Usher & Edwards, 1994; Weedon, 1997), and is a “way of thinking, a theoretical position or mode of analysis” (Usher and Edwards, 1994, p. 18) which is concerned with the relationships between subjectivity, discourse and power (MacNaughton 2000). As a mode of analysis, poststructuralism seeks to investigate how societal and institutional discourses, or “frameworks through which we make sense of our social world” (p. 119), operate to govern how individuals understand themselves and what they believe to be normal. While structuralism also seeks to understand the structures and discourses that shape society, structuralists search for answers that function as truths, whereas poststructuralists seek to disrupt truth itself (Davies, 2000a). Poststructuralism rejects the absolute certainties of structuralism and “takes up and plays with the idea that any truth is constructed” (p. 140), contestable and capable of being acted upon and changed.

Tackling the “questions of how and where knowledge is produced and by whom, and of what counts as knowledge” (Weedon, 1997, p. 7) is fundamental to poststructuralism, but in addition to this, poststructuralists also seek to dismantle and transform the very structures that create and sustain knowledge that functions as truth. When combined with feminist interests, poststructuralism provides a practical and powerful way to examine how discourses operate as truth and how these truths shape what women believe about themselves, how they make meaning, and how they act upon these beliefs and meanings in their world. Not only this, because poststructuralism, at its core, seeks to decentre both knowledge and the subject, disrupting the patriarchal order in society remains a viable possibility. For poststructuralist feminists, “discovering the very mainsprings of power that have held women and other marginalised groups in place” (Davies, 2003a, p. 8) is a very exciting venture, and knowing “how oppression is achieved is the essential first step to knowing how to change it” (p. 8).

**Foucault: Possibilities**

Foucault questioned the relationship between knowledge and power by examining how discourse is produced, how specific discourses reach their status as truth, and how truth functions to shape what individuals and societies come to believe is normal and right. It is probably Foucault’s work on power that has been the most widely discussed and used (e.g. Foucault 1980a, 1980c, 1984a, 1995b, 2000), although Foucault himself asserts that
the main objective of his work “has not been to analyze the phenomena of power” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 208), but rather to “create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects” (p. 208). To do this Foucault studied how power and discourse worked together in domains such as the penal system (e.g. Foucault, 1995a), and sexuality (e.g. Foucault, 1990a, 1990b), for example, and how within these domains, subjects came to understand what was normal conduct, or more precisely how subjects should conduct themselves as they “ought to” (Foucault, 1990b, p. 26).

Foucault (2000) said of himself: “I’m an experimenter in the sense that I write in order to change myself and in order not to think the same thing as before” (p. 240), and his work reflects his troubling and his evolving ideas. To this extent there is very little linearity in Foucault’s work, and no final thesis of his findings. He said that he experimented with ideas so the he would be a changed person, and he invited his readers to do the same; “to share an experience of what we are, not only our past but also our present, an experience of our modernity in such a way that we might come out of it transformed” (p. 242). This is how I have approached Foucault’s work; as a way to provoke my thinking and experiment with ideas, and as a way to challenge how I viewed the world. I grew to love Foucault’s ideas, not only for the way they have assisted my data analysis, but also because they changed me.

Power, knowledge and discourse: An overview

Power and knowledge: A Foucauldian perspective

Knowledge and power are integrated with one another, and there is no point in dreaming of a time when knowledge will cease to depend on power; this is just a way of reviving humanism in a utopian guise. It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power (Foucault, 1980a, p. 52).

Foucault (1980a, 1980c, 1984a, 1995b, 2000) did not view knowledge as separate from power but saw them as interrelated and dependent on each other. He believed that “the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and conversely, knowledge constantly
induces effects of power” (Foucault, 1980a, p. 52). The operation of power affects what is counted as knowledge and therefore what one assumes to be true, and in turn this knowledge can be used as a mechanism of power to shape what individuals and society come to believe is normal and right. In this sense knowledge can never be value-free as it is both created and sustained through power relations, just as power is created and sustained through the production and dissemination of knowledge. A Foucauldian stance on knowledge cannot therefore support claims to objective truth, because when power can influence what is counted as knowledge there is always the possibility of distortion and bias (MacNaughton, 2005).

Much of Foucault’s thinking on knowledge can be attributed to Nietzsche (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000) who insisted that knowledge is an invention with no particular “seed” (Foucault, 2000, p. 8) or origin. Like religion, poetry, and ideals, it is “invented, manufactured, produced by a series of mechanisms, of little mechanisms” (p. 7). Rather than knowledge being a fixed body of information existing in the world and waiting to be discovered, Foucault (1976 cited in Davidson, 2003) asserted that knowledge is more the product of struggles over meanings and interpretations. This struggle is not a passive, nor is it a purely cognitive exercise, but rather an active and sometimes highly charged venture. Nietzsche called this a game of strategy involving passion, and the expression of such emotions as “laughter, lament, and detestation” (Foucault, 2000, p. 11). Because the objective of such games of strategy is typically to win (Foucault, 1983), and winning means that some understandings and meanings become privileged, it is understandable why such interchanges might be highly charged. The important question for Foucault then was not if knowledge could be proven scientifically to be true, but rather who would gain from the production of knowledge.

Foucault’s interest in the complexity of power relations led him to examine at length the “way power is exercised – concretely and in detail – with its specificity, its techniques and tactics” (Foucault, 1980c, pp. 115-116). Foucault believed his approach differed from his counterparts who he contended were more content “with denouncing it [power] in a polemical and global fashion as it existed among the ‘others’ in the adversary camp” (p. 116). Foucault’s “re-elaboration of the theory of power” (Foucault, 1980f, p. 187), has been revolutionary for many who like me, are working towards emancipatory practice, because it has offered ways to think about, question, and analyse power relations in ways
beyond just seeking to eliminate the power of the most powerful. The main points of difference in Foucault's work on power are built around his beliefs about who exercises power, how it is exercised, and power's productive, rather than purely negative, form.

To Foucault (1990a), power was not something external that could be acquired and/or cast aside, but rather a mechanism that "reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (Foucault, 1980a, p. 39). Additionally, Foucault (1990a) did not consider that power is exercised solely from the top down but, he asserted, could also "come from below" (p. 94). Instead of existing in a "binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled" (p. 94), Foucault (1980a) believed that power functions more in "capillary form" (p. 39), moving like a force field through society on multiple levels, in multiple directions and from "innumerable points" (Foucault, 1990a, p. 94). Power in a Foucauldian sense, is everywhere, it operates in many forms and through many techniques, and as a subject, "one is never 'outside' it" (Foucault, 1980d, p. 141). The assertion of Foucault's that power works in capillary form on multiple levels in and through everything, was what drove him to explore power beyond just understanding power as a negative force. He believed, as his point of difference, that power is not only negative but also productive.

Foucault (1980c) found the commonly held notion of power as negative, restrictive and inadequate for the purposes of his studies, essentially because of its repressive nature. In Western society this negative, or repressive, power has its origins in the juridical system, established by order of the monarchy, to create the laws that would govern subjects, and the subsequent judicial system which then enforced the law (Foucault, 1980b, 1990a). The juridical system worked on the basis of prohibition and punishment; it was a form of power that worked to repress by primarily stating what subjects could not do. A power like this, according to Foucault (1990a) "has the force of the negative on its side, a power to say no; in no condition to produce, capable only of posting limits, it is basically anti-energy" (p. 85). It was because of this anti-energy that Foucault set out to examine "power without the king" (p. 91), a power removed from the law and beyond the purely repressive. In doing so, Foucault posited an alternative view of power, one which highlights the active and productive nature of power.
Productive power creates rather than prohibits, it sets in motion rather than halts, and it operates in action by creating what Foucault (1983) called "actions upon other actions" (p. 220); with even a single, very small, or relatively unnoticed act, such as a look, bringing into play a series of actions, all of which affect subsequent actions. For example, a person in a meeting may make a comment that others are unsure about, or which others don't like, evoking from them a look. The response from the original speaker, to this look, could be to refrain from further comment, or to retract the comment, modify the comment, or even argue over the comment; with the outcome from such actions not necessarily being negative. A debate may have ensued with this debate eventually leading to the dismantling of a truth or practice that had previously held a dominant position. Alternatively, the original speaker may have been challenged to reconsider an opinion which others had thought was unjust. Thus through actions upon actions, the circulatory and continuous function of power permeates the entire fabric of society, as people from all walks of life and in all sections of society come together in their work and their play to exchange ideas. The exercise of power, in and through relationships, shapes attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, even when individuals or groups do not understand the impact of their actions, or their actions upon actions. The strategies and tactics employed within such power relations, even though largely misunderstood, are according to Foucault (1983, 1990a) nevertheless always intentional, and most evident when power is resisted.

Foucault (1980d) maintained that resistance is "formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised" (p. 142), at which moment the complex interplay of power relations comes more clearly into focus. Resistance exists "by being in the same place as power" (p. 142) and like power it is not confined to one point of location, it is transitory and multiple, erupting in plural points within the social network through which power circulates. Like productive power, resistance is active; it mobilizes, inflames, disrupts, and it fractures unities. As it does, it makes visible the tactics and strategies that are brought into play through power relations (Foucault, 1983, 1990a). The struggles and confrontations created by resistance are therefore where Foucault (1990a) believed any analysis of the "mechanisms of power" (p. 97) should begin. Resistance exposes and unsettles power relations and it is "the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes a revolution possible" (p. 96). Resistance thus serves as a catalyst for change, and provides a useful starting point for understanding more about how power is exercised.
In contrast to other studies of power, which seek to understand how those in authority dominate others, Foucault (1980b) proposed that one should “conduct an ascending analysis of power, starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms” (p. 99); investigating “the manner in which the phenomena, the techniques and the procedures of power enter into play at the most basic levels” (p. 99). To do this Foucault (1980b, 1990a) suggested that one examines, at a micro level, the multiple points at which power mobilizes, displaces, extends, invests, colonises, involutes, and so on. It is at this micro level that power has its most subtle workings and it is here that the effect of power, in its immediacy, can be most recognised. At a micro level the tactics and strategies employed within power relations, and any forms of resistance to these, are clearly in operation, and therefore most visible. By observing how power operates at a micro level one can learn more about how power works in all spheres of life, top down, bottom up and in capillary form to create overall strategies that seek to transform individuals and society; to normalise (Foucault, 1980c, 1990a, 1995a).

To understand further how power works to transform individuals and society it is necessary to investigate the function of discourse; because, according to Foucault, (1990a) “it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together” (p. 100) to shape what individuals and society at large, believe to be good, true, and normal. All discourse operates through power relations, being inseparable from power; “there is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it” (p. 101). However, while “discourse transmits and produces power” (p. 101), it also “undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it” (p. 101). Understanding more about the relationship between power and discourse makes it possible to unsettle discourse while at the same time using discourse to expose and shake up power relations. Knowing how discourse functions to normalise can lead to the strategic use of opposing and contradictory discourses through which dominant discourses can be destabilised and overturned.

**The power of discourse**

Arriving at a precise definition of discourse is difficult, essentially because of its multiple usages across many disciplines. In linguistics, for example, the term discourse has traditionally been used to mean language text, either written or spoken (Simpson, 1997). In other domains, such as social science, discourse is used more broadly to include not
only the written and spoken text but also the production and use of this text in the social construction of subjects (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). In addition, in poststructuralist theory discourse refers to “the totality of signs that carry meaning” (Wodak 1997, p. 4), and includes “the ideas, feelings, words, images, practices, actions and looks that we use to build our social world” (MacNaughton, 2003b, p. 81). Ball (1990, cited in Usher & Edwards, 1994) describes discourse this way:

Discourses are... about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody meaning and social relationships, they constitute both subjectivity and power relations... Thus, discourses construct certain possibilities for thought. They order and combine words in particular ways and exclude or displace other combinations (p. 90).

Discourses are the thoughts, the words, and the actions, that not only represent the world but which also create “the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). Discourses are active and “to be effective, they require activation through the agency of the individuals whom they constitute and govern in particular ways” (Weedon, 1997, p. 108).

In poststructuralist feminist research, as with disciplines such as social science, discourse is used in the broad sense described above, and like other social research, poststructuralist feminist analysis seeks to understand more about how discourse functions in social situations (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). However, the objective of poststructuralist feminist study is not to uncover reality, or a unified and fixed identity, but rather to understand more about how power works in and through discourse to determine what counts as knowledge and how this affects the constitution and normalisation of individuals. There is no quest for the true and hidden meanings of discourse, nor is there primary concern with uncovering general theories or “absolute axes of reference” (Foucault, 1972, p. 205). Rather the aim is to seek out discontinuities, contradictions, and competitions between discourses so that these can be disrupted, and power relations exposed.

To do this, poststructuralist feminists (e.g. Butler, 2004; Davies, 2000a, 2003a; Gore, 1993; MacNaughton, 2000; Weedon, 1997) seek to reconstruct the distribution of discourse by searching out the strategies and techniques used in the production,
distribution, and regulation of discourse, so that these strategies and techniques can be questioned and shaken up.

...we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. It is this distribution that we must reconstruct, with the things said and those concealed, the enunciations required and those forbidden, that it comprises; with the variants and different effects — according to who is speaking, his position of power, the institutional context in which he happens to be situated — that it implies; and with the shifts and reutilizations of identical formulas for contrary objectives that it also includes (Foucault, 1990a, p. 100).

Discourse as truth
According to poststructuralist feminists (e.g. Butler, 2004; Davies, 2000a, 2003a; Gore, 1993; MacNaughton, 2000; Weedon, 1997) and Foucault alike, not all discourses have the same power to influence widespread thinking and practice (Foucault, 1980b, 1980c); it is the discourses that reach the status of truth that are the most influential, particularly those discourses that weave together to become what Foucault (1980c) called "regimes of truth" (p. 133). Regimes of truth are formulated by discourses that "reveal significant regularity to enable their immanent naming" (Gore, 1993, p. 56), or put in other ways, discourses which come together to form a "blueprint" (Foucault, 1995a, p. 138) or "overall strategy" (Foucault, 1980c, p. 97) for thinking and acting. Regimes of truths are particularly powerful because they become general ways of thinking, and because of this they are absorbed into society influencing what becomes accepted as commonsense.

Discourses reach the status of truth, not so much "because of any inherent truth within them but because they have [both] institutional and personal support" (MacNaughton, 2000, p. 166) adding to their general appeal. Foucault (cited in MacNaughton, 2000), calls these two forms of support the "political" and the "ethical" (p. 166) and they work together adding strength and power to each other. In a university, for example, regimes of truth are created through what is spoken and published, and these truths weave together to form general ways of thinking and being (MacNaughton, 2000). Because these truths are supposedly validated through objective neutral research, which proves their authenticity, the effects of these regimes are further strengthened. Not only do
universities provide a perfect context for creating regimes of truth, universities also have the means to disseminate these truths on a wide scale ensuring that they become more known and accepted. Because of the powerful backing universities give to regimes of truth it is easy for people to take up these truths for themselves believing them to be the best and wisest option. As a result, the regimes of truth established within universities and disseminated throughout society, become accepted as normal and right, and the support then given to them by individuals compounds and further strengthens their influence.

It is not just large institutions like universities that establish regimes of truth, however: there are other social institutions that create and disseminate regimes of truth too; the family is another example. Within a family there are set traditions, values and/or beliefs that are true to this family and these truths influence the way this family thinks and acts. To this family these truths are like regimes because they come together to form general ways of being that are acceptable within this family group. Family members who know these truths pass them on through their actions or by saying, for example, “in this family we always…” With the support of family tradition behind them, these words and actions have the power to shape what newer family members come to believe is normal, and right. To question these regimes then is to question the traditions held in place by the social institution of the family, which makes it difficult for family regimes to be challenged. It is more likely that new family members will learn how to adapt to the regimes that influence the patterns of belief within this family network, and supporting such truths perpetuates their power to determine thinking and actions. Through the social institution of the family, gender roles, for example, are learnt and sustained, and girls grow up in families learning the normal and right way to be women in today’s society.

In early education too, regimes of truth shape how teachers come to understand what is normal and right and this influences what is accepted as the best way to be good teachers; these truths “regulate the practice of early childhood staff on a daily basis” (MacNaughton, 2000. p. 168). It is not just in training where teachers learn these regimes; they also learn them as they are reinforced daily in early education settings where, for instance, trainee teachers, are guided and monitored to ensure that they complete their practice to prescribed standards (Ortlipp, 2005). For example, a child-centred pedagogy, which is based on an ethics of individualism (MacNaughton, 2001a), can be taught in training but it can also be learnt through the practice of teaching. As teachers enter the
field of early education on practicum, and then as trained teachers in the workforce, they are instructed, supported, and monitored to ensure that a child-centred pedagogy is enforced and in this way the regime of individualism is firmly upheld in the workplace. Believing, as poststructuralist feminist researchers do, that the world is constructed through discourse means that any poststructuralist feminist researcher will seek to understand more about how discourse is “produced and regulated” (Gore, 1993, p. 2) and the “social effects” (p. 2) of this. Understanding how regimes of truth operate to affect what is accepted as normal and right, for instance, can be a starting point for exposing and disrupting the power that operates through these regimes and the structures keeping them in privileged positions. Poststructuralist feminists can work towards “a decentring that leaves no privilege to any centre” (Foucault, 1972, p. 205) and by destabilising the very structural foundations of discourse, create openings for alternatives (Davies, 2003a). Actively seeking opportunities for subjects to negotiate positions previously unimagined then becomes a viable option, because unsettling the status of truth makes way for less privileged discourses, and enables the production of new meanings.

It is not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power... but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time (Foucault, 1980c, p. 133).

The function and regulation of discourse in the process of normalisation

I am supposing that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures... (Foucault, 1972, p. 216).

What can be spoken and who can speak, according to Foucault (1972), is largely governed by what he called a disciplinary system which operates around discourse. When individuals and groups come together in social situations, certain rules come into force; controls which determine the discourse that will be privileged within this group. These rules or controls are not written down, or spoken of; instead they are, according to Foucault (1980a, 1980b, 1980c, 1990a), part of a complex disciplinary system of power that functions on all levels of society, in most instances without people’s immediate
awareness. These rules or controls reinforce for subjects what they should say and do in order to act in normal and acceptable ways, and through this process subjects are normalised.

The regulation of discourse through exterior and internal forms of control

Foucault (1972) believed that the function and regulation of discourse occurs through both “exterior” (p. 220) forms of control, which function on the basis of exclusion; and “internal rules” (p. 220) which govern how discourse should be enacted; both forms of control work together to shape what society and individuals come to believe is normal and acceptable. Exterior controls are the structures, systems, and processes that enable some discourses and speakers to achieve wide circulation while at the same time placing restrictions and controls on other discourses and speakers so as to exclude them. A prime example of this is the way that publishers exercise control over who, and what, can be published, which historically meant the voices and discourses of women could effectively be silenced. Exterior control was used in this way by publishers to ensure that the discourses most heard in society were those of white middle-class males, while the voices of others were successfully excluded from circulation. In this way exterior control served as a successful means of regulating discourse that worked by actively setting in place systems that both spread and excluded particular discourses. Exterior forms of control regulate the discourses that the general public, or communities such as the early education community, have access to.

Internal rules are forms of control such as the disciplinary techniques and strategies used to ensure that subjects conform to accepted norms and are enacted on individuals who have said something unacceptable, or who have erred from normally accepted conduct; one such technique is “classification” (Foucault, 1972, p. 220). The classification of a person, for example, as unknowing or untrained can be used to marginalise those who have opinions, or who ask questions other than those that fit within accepted discourses. Classifying someone as unknowing is an effective way to disregard what this person says or does, making way for this person to be shown the right way to do something. Tactics such as the use of totalising statements may also be used to create a context where it is difficult to be other than the norm. For instance, a statement such as, “in this organisation we...” makes it clear to hearers that this is the conduct expected within this particular context.

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Both exterior and internal forms of control regulate discourse and they work hand in hand to shape what society and individuals believe to be normal and acceptable. Foucault spent much of his life exploring how discourse is regulated through both exterior and internal forms of control and he found, amongst other things, this can be achieved by applying the use of “ritual” (Foucault, 1972, p. 225), “doctrinal adherence” (p. 226) and “social appropriation” (p. 227) to discourse.

The use of ritual
Foucault (1972) said that “ritual defines the qualifications required of the speaker... it lays down gestures to be made, behaviour, circumstances and the whole range of signs that must accompany discourse” (p. 225). Ritual ensures that only those who are qualified to speak do so, and that those who are unqualified are excluded as valid speakers. The rules that determine who are qualified to speak will vary depending on the group or organisation applying this ritual. In a family for instance, it may be the father who is qualified to speak because of his designated status, and what the father thinks and says then becomes the accepted norm within this family. In early education a rightful speaker may be the one who is trained in early education and anyone who is not fully trained, or not specifically trained in early education, may be discounted as a valid speaker.

Ritual brings into operation what Foucault (1976, cited in Davidson, 2003) called “the triangle: power, right, truth” (p. 24), and this triangle, Foucault asserted, authorises some as valid speakers. The triangle works from any direction; for example, having access to truth, gives one the right, and with this the power, to share this truth with others. Similarly, if one is in a position of power, one might then claim to know the truth, which then gives one the right to speak. In education this triangle operates in many different settings; one such setting is a university where the position and status that comes from being an academic gives some the right, and with this the power, to make truth claims. Another example might be a school principal who has the power and therefore the right to make edicts that function as truth. The use of ritual in this way ensures that what is spoken is confined to the discourses and the speakers that are accepted within certain contexts, thus serving as an effective means of regulating what can be spoken and by whom.
Doctrinal adherence

Each community has discourses that are specific to them and in some communities adherence to these discourses is a requirement of membership. Foucault (1972) called this kind of allegiance, “doctrinal adherence” (p. 226) because if one does not adhere to the doctrine, one cannot be part of the community. Doctrinal adherence can be as simple as an agreed philosophy or contract, and as complex as devoting oneself to a creed or teaching such as the case in some religious organisations. This allegiance requires “recognition of the same truths and the acceptance of a certain rule... of conformity with validated discourse” (p. 226). Doctrinal adherence requires devotion and loyalty, and in extreme cases doctrinal adherence can create closed communities.

In early education, adherence to certain doctrines, or discourses, ensures that practice is consistent and that teachers are united in their efforts. While a certain degree of commitment to a philosophy, for instance, may be necessary, the need for consensus and unity is nevertheless an effective means of regulating what can be said and done, and this can mean alternative discourses are ignored. Because “doctrine links individuals to certain types of utterance while consequently barring them from all others” (Foucault, 1972, p. 226), what can be said and taught can be successfully controlled and regulated through the practice of doctrinal adherence.

The social appropriation of discourse

The “social appropriation of discourse” (Foucault, 1972, p. 227), refers to the intentional and deliberate dissemination of specific discourses within communities, or society as a whole. Socially appropriated discourse is an effective means of regulating discourse because the discourses that are spread become so well known, and accepted, that they become difficult to dispute. When discourse is socially appropriated on a wide scale, subjects can believe the discourse is true without even realising the discourse exists; subjects just know that this is the way that things are because it this is how it has always been. The social appropriation of discourse is particularly apparent when those who adhere to a specific doctrine feel it is their duty to pass on their truth to others which happens, for example, in religious organisations when evangelicals set out to convert others to their doctrine; but this also happens in the education sector.
The education sector is the perfect place for socially appropriating discourse because it is the task of educational institutions to pass on their knowledge and truths to those who do not know. This is done through such means as education related legislation, curriculum documents and publications, as well as through the teaching and professional learning programmes that are associated with educational training. The social appropriation of discourse also occurs when experienced teachers pass on their knowledge of teaching to less experienced teachers, or those in training such as those trainees on teacher practicum.

Another example could be the way that Western early education teachers share their knowledge of the value of play with their Asian counterparts, believing as they do that they are training those who do not know, what it is that they should know. The more widespread the social appropriation of discourse, the more effective the regulation of discourse is.

Another way to socially appropriate discourse is by creating what Foucault (1990a) calls a "steady proliferation of discourses" (p. 18) or a "discursive explosion" (p.17) around a specific theme, which in his studies was sexuality. Foucault (1990a, 1990b) demonstrated how over the past three centuries, there was an explosion of discourse around sexuality. Rather than control the thinking and actions of subjects in the area of sexual conduct through repression, the tactic used to normalise sexual conduct was, by contrast, to create a proliferation of discourses around correct and proper sexual conduct. Subjects learnt healthy and moral sexual conduct, through the messages that they received over and over again. In this way what subjects heard became "authorized vocabulary" (p. 17) around sexuality, and because subjects heard the messages over and over they believed that what they heard was normal and acceptable sexual conduct.

Summary
To Foucault (1972), ritual, doctrinal adherence, and the social appropriation of discourse together form the "main rules for the subjection of discourse" (p. 227). He wrote that "most of the time they are linked together, constituting great edifices that distribute speakers among the different types of discourse, and which appropriate those types of discourse to certain categories of subject" (p. 227). In most instances those using these techniques and strategies may be unaware that they are doing so, and the recipients of this form of discipline learn to normalise their conduct without even realising what is
happening. The regulation of discourse through exterior and internal forms of control is thus a subtle and powerful way that subjects and society are normalised.

**The regulation of discourse through the organisation and management of time and space**

In the struggle over discourse, time and space are contestable commodities, and how time and space are organised and managed becomes a matter of priority. As a consequence, what is prioritized is typically that which is deemed the most worthwhile to know. This is particularly evident in professional learning situations where designated learning spaces, and the time given to various learning experiences, give privilege to some discourses, making it clear to learners the discourses that are most worthwhile to know. The organisation and management of time and space is an effective disciplinary technique which can be employed to regulate discourse (Foucault, 1995a); for when time and space are organised effectively and efficiently, subjects can be trained and shaped with “minimum expenditure” [for] “maximum return” (Foucault, 1980b, p. 105).

**The organisation and management of time for productivity and efficiency**

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault (1995a) wrote of an eighteenth century soldier who through rigorous training and exercise could, Foucault believed, be “made” (p. 135). In the making of this eighteenth century soldier, the operation of power over the trainee soldier’s time and activity ensured that the trainee’s day was fully occupied with learning the skills required to be a well trained and practiced soldier. Through rigorous training, organised around a full and strict timetable, the trainee became a “subjected and practised” body (p. 137); the ideal soldier. The trainee’s every move was scrutinized, their progress fully monitored, and their activity controlled. There was no time for idleness, or playfulness in the serious business of learning to be a soldier; instead time was organised and managed around productivity and efficiency. What was presumed to be ideal, for example: “holding their heads high and erect” (p. 135), was not questioned, as it was just accepted that training would get “rid of the peasant” (p. 135) and develop instead someone who had the “air of the soldier” (p. 135). The pre-established parameters for becoming a well schooled soldier were firmly established and the structure and programme for learning this, already put in place.
The control of activity for productivity and efficiency based on predetermined outcomes is not limited to the eighteenth century however. Training sessions based on ideals aimed at moulding the learner and moving them forward are still prevalent in education today, and how time is organised and managed affects the knowledge that is produced and reproduced in this context. In New Zealand, for example, predetermined outcomes drive the learning process right from early education through to tertiary learning, in both pre-service and in-service teacher training (e.g. Gaffney, 2003; Ministry of Education, 1993, 1996a, 1996b, 2002). Learning programmes are then planned around the most productive and efficient way to achieve these outcomes, with these determining how time will be organised and managed. Activities are planned to ensure that learning is sequential, fluid and contextual and effort is made to "eliminate the danger of wasting it [time]" (Foucault, 1995a, p. 154). In such a context the discourses that fit within desired outcomes are the ones that are privileged and the ones that then shape what learners come to believe is best practice.

The organisation and management of space for minimum expenditure and maximum return

The organisation and management of space is, according to Foucault (1995a), an additional form of disciplinary power which ensures that maximum benefit can be extracted from individuals working together. To illustrate this, Foucault (1995a) provided an example of a typical eighteenth century factory, where the "distribution of individuals in space" (p. 141) functioned as an efficient and productive way to minimise inconvenience and maximise the potential of available resources. In this typical factory, workers were assigned set positions or individual spaces where they could work with a minimum of disruption from others, and where supervisors had maximum visibility of their actions. This set positioning was such that the movements and output of workers could be constantly monitored, ensuring that productivity was kept at a maximum level, and inconveniences, such as theft and work disturbances, were minimized. Defined and managed spaces ensured a strict adherence to work routines, resulting in increased productivity. The strict organisation and management of space became an effective means of normalising subjects, because any deviance from the norm could be quickly eliminated.
In current professional learning situations it is also common to organise and manage the learning space so that the potential of the group can be optimised. Individuals are grouped and organised so that they can help each other to learn, which according to Foucault (1995a), is an exercise of power. The "individual becomes an element that may be placed, moved, articulated on others" (p. 164), all of which contributes to a "carefully measured combination of forces" (p. 166) working together to enable a smooth and effective learning process. When priority is placed on achieving maximum benefit for a minimum of expenditure, the collective potential of the group to observe, assist, monitor and guide each other’s learning is considered important and priority is therefore given to creating learning spaces that most aptly meet this objective. Any disruption to this space is quickly addressed so that order can be restored, with any deviance from established norms, minimised. When one of the objectives in a learning space is to maintain order and eliminate disruption, then it becomes hard to challenge the taken-for-granted, and to disrupt established truths, because any effort to do so may be viewed as disruptive, and therefore an inconvenience that needs addressing. The organisation and management of space for maximum benefit and minimum inconvenience is therefore an effective means of regulating conduct.

Summary
The organisation and management of time and space for productivity, efficiency and maximum return, ensures that privileged discourses are the ones most heard and is therefore an efficient way of distributing and regulating discourse. Furthermore, as subjects work together in regulated spaces and set timetables they soon learn through the reinforcement of others that adherence to established norms is acceptable conduct. When disruptions occur, and these are quickly minimised, subjects also learn that there is a risk involved if one chooses to act outside of normalising standards.

Subjectivity and the normalisation of individuals

A feminist poststructuralist view of subjectivity
Central to any feminist work is the concept of subjectivity and how women constituted and reconstituted themselves through discourse. Rather than seeking to know oneself in a humanist sense by seeking to uncover a "stable 'self" constituted by a set of static characteristics" (Lather, 1991a, p. 5), in poststructuralist feminist work, the subject is
viewed as multiple, contradictory and in process (e.g. Butler, 2004; Davies, 2000a, 2003a; Luke & Gore, 1992; Robinson & Diaz, 1999; Weedon, 1997). Any search to understand the subject therefore will be in terms of the multiple, contradictory, and shifting ways that women come to understand themselves as active agents within their worlds. Only multiple subjects, according to Flax (1993, cited in Davies, 2000a), are capable of inventing ways to struggle against dominant and normalising discourses; any attempt to do this within a humanist discourse, she believes, is both impossible and dangerous. “Within Western logic, opposites cannot be true” (Davies, 2000b, p. 29), which restricts options; but within multiple and contradictory discourses, there can be creativity.

Feminist poststructuralist theory posits the subject as shifting and changing; in a constant process of becoming. At any given time a woman can be moving in and out of discourses and positions as she manoeuvres and negotiates her way through life (Davies 2000a). This constant constitution and reconstitution occurs because women exist within a world of competing and contradictory discourses, all of which influence how she learns what is the right and acceptable way to speak and act (Weedon, 1997). In certain social contexts, for example the family, a woman will learn how she is expected to speak and act in that particular family, but as this woman moves in other contexts she may receive different and contradictory messages. While this may appear confusing and frustrating for anyone seeking certainty, to others this multiplicity can open up the possibility of being and acting differently. Though the process of becoming may be “shaky and partial” (Walkerdine, 1990, p. 88), and the uncertainty unsettling; the more discourses a woman has available to her, the more choice she has; and the more choice, the more likely she is to resist the discourses that she is uncomfortable with (Davies, 2000a).

To poststructuralist feminists, identity is only ever provisional and tentative, and understood as a site of struggle (Usher & Edwards, 1994). This struggle involves a redefining of the positions historically associated with being a woman, and any effort to understand identity is therefore as much about discovering what women do not have to be, or about who they might choose to be sometimes, as it is about understanding womanhood in general. This struggle for identity redefinition involves “risk and openness to another way of knowing and living” (Butler, 2004, p. 228); it requires “staying at the edge of what we know” (p. 228) and putting “our own epistemological certainties into
question” (p. 228). Instead of the unified identity of humanist discourse the subject of poststructuralist feminist theory is “a fractured subject” (p. 228), and while this might be a precarious position, having an awareness of such disunities enables one to more readily resist those discourses and the positions that one no longer finds desirable (Weedon, 1997). To some this struggle requires “extreme and brave actions” (p. 108), but it is only as one’s identity remains an open question that the previously unimaginable can be grasped (Davies, 2000a).

While poststructuralist feminists believe that a fractured identity creates possibilities, for some this thought can be problematic. As hooks (1990, cited in Luke & Gore, 1992) cautions, “it’s easy to give up identity, when you got one” (p. 6); and those who have fought long and hard to assert their identities as other to the normally defined subject, who is typically categorised in terms of being white, middle-class, and male, may find being asked to abandon a definable identity too difficult. For marginalised groups it may feel preferable to claim a unified and fixed identity in the belief that unity will be a stronger political force. Collins (2000) for example, believes that postmodernism “rejects ethical positions that emerge from absolutes such as faith [and identity]” (p. 41) and this “is at odds with African-American women’s long-standing contributions to Black civil society” (p. 42). The fracturing of identity can therefore be troubling to those who because of their religious faith or political conviction seek to have a strong and unified voice to promote their cause.

Butler (2004) addresses this concern by suggesting that those who are fighting against discrimination, for example, may wish to take up a unified position in order to be validated within a group identity. Butler suggests that it may in fact be necessary for a group such as this to present themselves as “bounded beings, distinct, recognizable, delineated, subjects before the law, a community defined by sameness” (p. 20), but she also cautions that it is a mistake to “take the definitions of who we are, legally, to be adequate descriptions of what we are about” (p. 20). Limiting identification to a legal descriptor, when fighting a cause such as discrimination, makes it possible to embrace, at the same time, an identity which is “an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available” (Davies, 2000a, p. 89). The fragmentation of identity is not so much about getting rid of categories but more about being defined by an ability to cross borders (Butler, 2004), an experience that many Black woman have already had.
Taking a poststructuralist feminist stance can trouble the subject without undermining the efforts of marginalised groups who are seeking, through unified discourse, to fight their cause.

Davies, (2003a) believes that “central to any feminist deconstruction is an excitement about discovering the very mainsprings of power that have held woman and other marginalised groups in place” (p. 8), because “to know how oppression is achieved is the essential first step to knowing how to change it” (p. 8). Beginning with the contradictory storylines of women can be a first step in this process, because storylines that disrupt and displace burst open the power and certainty of old storylines. By exposing the fictions imbued in these storylines, truth is challenged, and when this happens the certainty of these storylines, and the subject positions taken up within them, are opened up to questioning. Questioning how these storylines have contributed to one’s thinking and being, and exploring the instability of their transient scripts, helps to create fracture, and while this can be dangerous work, it is also necessary work for those intent on social justice and equity.

...working on fiction, fantasy and contradiction is to work in dangerous and threatening territory. It is that territory that we have to move into if we are to proceed in the struggle which recognizes that women, after all, can be very powerful indeed (Walkerdine, 1990, p. 145).

To understand more about how subjects are constituted and the function of power in this process I have drawn on Foucault’s work because in his work I have found tools for questioning the relationship between power, discourse, and the subject. Foucault (1980b) suggested that “we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts” (p. 97). What are the processes, he asked, that “subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviours” (p. 97)? It is by asking questions such as these, and seeking out the tactics and strategies used to shape subjects, that Foucault (e.g. 1980a, 1980b, 1995a) believed it was possible to understand more about how the mechanisms of power work together to transform and normalise subjects; and it is Foucault’s work around sexuality that I have found the most useful for doing this.
Foucault and the constitution of the subject

Foucault devoted much of his life’s work to understanding more about “how human beings are made subjects” (Foucault, 1983, p. 208) as he was “curious” (Foucault, 1990b, p. 8) about how individuals learn to fashion themselves as moral beings. This curiosity drove him to explore, in depth, “the games of truth” (p. 6) that subjects play in their relationships with themselves. To do this Foucault chose the domain of sexuality to examine how individuals, specifically males, throughout history have intentionally and voluntarily set themselves codes of conduct and transformed themselves into moral subjects. Foucault called this work the “technologies of the self” (p. 11), and while his work on the technologies of the self is built primarily around sexuality, his findings are by no means limited to this domain. Foucault himself noted that there is a correlation between his work on sexuality and the more general methods one uses to monitor their behaviour. He said:

Rather, it means an effort to treat sexuality as the correlation of a domain of knowledge, a type of normativity and a mode of relation to the self; it means trying to decipher how, in Western societies a complex experience is constituted from and around certain forms of behavior [sic]: an experience which conjoins a field of study (connaissance) (with its own concepts, theories, diverse disciplines), a collection of rules (which differentiate the permissible from the forbidden, natural from monstrous, normal from pathological, what is decent from what is not, etc.), a mode of relation between the individual and himself...” (Foucault, 1984a, pp. 333-334).

It was this relationship of the “self with self” (Foucault, 1990b, p. 6) that captured Foucault’s attention. To Foucault (1990b), the actual codes of conduct, or rules, were of little consequence, for he believed that when codes are broken down they are ultimately only centred on “a rather small number of rather simple principles” (p. 32). For this reason Foucault chose to focus instead on the ways that subjects learn the general “framework” for “everyday conduct” (p. 12) and how, within this general framework, subjects learn to “question their own conduct, to watch over and give shape to it, and to shape themselves as ethical subjects” (p. 13).

This general framework for conduct may begin with a set of prescribed rules, as has been common within Christianity, but Foucault (1990b) postulated that this is not the only way that subjects learn what conduct is appropriate. He said that “there is a whole rich and
complex field of historicity in the way the individual is summoned to recognise himself as an ethical subject of sexual conduct” (p. 32). What intrigued him was how, for instance, in the classical Greek era where sexual behaviour was thought to be “a domain of moral valuation and choice” (p. 32) with “neither obligation nor prohibition” (p. 10), subjects still learnt to conduct themselves as moral and ethical beings. This happened, Foucault (1990b) concluded, firstly as sexuality was problematized and then as subjects learnt to fashion themselves through practices of the self.

Problematization in the process of normalisation

Foucault’s (1990b) work on sexuality illustrates how subjects learn to conduct themselves in appropriate ways when they are continually exposed to images and ideals which have been created as examples to emulate. To show this, Foucault examined how sexuality was problematized within the medical profession of the fourth century B.C.E., and how this problematization affected what subjects came to believe was normal and becoming conduct. As sexuality became questioned, theorized and discussed at length, or in other words problematized, subjects were exposed to continuous information, images, reminders, and cautions about sexuality; all of which added up to a discourse around sexuality that taught subjects moral conduct. Problematization highlighted the dangers of straying from ethical standards and alternatively the rewards of moderation and self-mastery. In this way subjects learnt to conduct themselves as they ought to by learning “the structural, instrumental, and ontological” (Foucault, 1990b, p. 89) conditions operating within society, and the dangers and rewards of opting for these conditions. Without having to use repressive means of correction, the indirect and subtle message of chastity could be promulgated throughout society without subjects’ awareness.

In his work on sexuality, Foucault (1990b) highlighted how effective problematization was for shaping what society accepted as normal and moral conduct. I found this work particularly useful for examining how women teachers learn the messages of what it means to be a good teacher. I have used the ideas of Foucault’s around the problematization of sexuality flexibly, and in places, like Orner (1998), I have bent the ideas to fit my purposes, particularly as this work on sexuality was written from a male perspective and about a male population. The research that Foucault did around sexuality was in an era when “women figured only as objects or, at most, as partners that one had best train, educate, and watch over when one had them under one’s power…” (Foucault,
1990b, p. 22) and I have therefore been selective with the ideas that I have used for this research project.

As sexuality was problematized there were certain "themes, anxieties and exigencies" (Foucault, 1990b, p. 15) that came to the fore, and which Foucault believed contributed to the way that subjects indirectly absorbed the discourses around moral sexual conduct. In particular I refer to:

- The use of "fear" (p. 15) to deter subjects from certain conduct;
- The promotion of an "ideal of conduct" (p. 17) representative of a moral citizen;
- The presentation of "an image" (p. 18) of something undesirable and therefore something to be avoided;
- The placing of esteem on "a model of abstention" (p. 20) making this something to be aspired to.

As sexuality was problematized through these messages, the sexuality of subjects could effectively be normalised.

The use of fear

Foucault (1990b) found that instilling a fear of a sexually transmitted disease in subjects was one way that subjects were indirectly trained to curb their sexual conduct, and become moral citizens. Because promiscuousness carried the risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease and people feared contracting this disease, abstinence became a means of avoiding such a consequence. Today the fear of sexually transmitted disease is not used so much to encourage abstinence, but rather to promote safe sexual practice; with fear remaining a successful means of regulating conduct. The use of fear as a deterrent is not restricted to sexuality however; fear of negative reprisals can be used to deter children from disobedience; to deter motorists from speeding; and to deter women from unbecoming behaviour such displaying anger, or laughing too loudly in a public place (Court, 1995; McWilliam, 2000).

A fear of exclusion or not belonging to the category of good mother, for instance, or good teacher, may mean that some women modify their conduct to fit within these categories,
as Davies (2000a, 2000b, 2003a) asserts they do. Belonging can be a strong and driving motivator, and consequently the fear of not fitting can be a valid reason for curbing conduct. Throughout one’s life one is continually “invited to conform, indeed required to conform” (Davies, 2000a, p. 93) if one wishes to take up certain positions, and once a position has been gained, a fear of losing this position may mean conforming to normalising standards.

**Learning an ideal of conduct**

Another way that the subjects of Foucault’s curiosity learnt appropriate behaviour was by being continually exposed to images of ideal of conduct. Influential writers and orators at the time of Foucault’s (1990b) study wrote and talked at length of the ideals of conduct that they considered most desirable; and subjects soon learned to use these ideals as models for their own conduct. One example cited by Foucault (1990b) was extreme enough to suggest that subjects take up “the example of the elephant and the good morals it manifested with its mate” (p. 17), who “never changes females and it is tenderly loving with the one it has chosen, mating only every three years, and then only for five days, and so secretly that it is never seen in the act” (p. 17). Examples such as these were used to influence sexual conduct by promoting ideals that could be used as models to follow, and as a result the sexual conduct of subjects was regulated.

Women today learn what it means to be ideal through the messages they continually receive from reading material, television commercials, television programmes, and in the conversations they engage in. These ideals become the benchmarks from which women fashion themselves, and these messages are often so subtle that women do not even realise that they are being influenced by them. In education too, teachers learn what it means to be ideal from the messages that they receive in their training, their teaching practicum, and their on-going professional learning experiences. The proliferation of writing and oratory, including research, on preferable ways to teach, or in other words the ideal conduct of a good teacher, abound. How one learns to conduct oneself therefore, can be a result of the messages one has been exposed to about what is ideal, and as these messages are absorbed women teachers, for example, can be normalised and their conduct regulated.
behaviour, the madman to calm, the worker to work, the schoolboy to application..." (Foucault, 1995a, p. 202). Instead, the subject imposed restrictions on themselves through the discipline of self-surveillance.

As Foucault (1995a) also noted, the panopticon and the discipline of self-surveillance were not confined to prisons. Others too learnt to "read the signs" (Foucault, 1990b, p. 41); signs that indicated self-surveillance and self-correction were needed. For example, children learn that signs such as a look, being excluded, or being punished, means that they have done something wrong and that a change in behaviour is necessary (Foucault, 1995a). To avoid the ramifications of erring then, subjects learn to watch over themselves and to change their actions before others need to correct them. Teachers too learnt to read the signs through years of being observed in training and practice, and they quickly realise that to achieve credibility and status they need to maintain certain standards; standards which require a teacher to engage in self-surveillance and self-improvement (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2006a). The discipline of self-surveillance is an effective way to ensure that subjects impose correction on themselves and that acceptable standards are maintained.

**Summary**

The disciplines of self-mastery and self-surveillance ensure that subjects conform to standards of conduct without the need for external monitors. Because those using these disciplines are typically admired for doing so, they can be seen as desirable attributes, and as a result they become a subtle and effective means of normalising subjects.

**The possibility of resistance**

Foucault’s (e.g. 1980e, 1990a, 1990b, 1995a) work on problematization, and the practices of the self, gives readers an insight into the ways that discourse can function to shape what individuals and society as a whole come to believe is normal, right, and true. While Foucault contended that power and discourse work together in subtle ways and that it is impossible to exist outside of power, he did not believe that subjects have no control over outcomes; to the contrary, Foucault (1983) saw individuals as active agents with the freedom to choose between discourses. He did not believe that "freedom disappears everywhere power is exercised" (p. 221), instead he argued that "freedom must exist for power to be exerted" (p. 221) and that the two work together in a "complicated interplay"
Because power functions through discourse in the struggles that exist over meanings and interpretations and these struggles cause confrontations there is, according to Foucault (1983), at the point of confrontation, also "a point of possible reversal" (p. 225). It is these points of possible reversal, and the resistance created by such moments, that are often the catalyst necessary for something different.

Struggles create opportunities for resistance because whenever there is struggle over discourse, and the positions offered within discourse, subjects demonstrate that they are unsettled and/or unsure with what is offered. It is this space between what is offered by discourse and the individual's uncertainty or will for something else, where resistance can occur (Weedon, 1997). While there is a possibility of subordination there is also always the possibility of "escape or possible flight" (Foucault, 1983, p. 225). So while discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, it can also be "a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Foucault, 1990a, p. 101). The spaces created by uncertainty and discomfort may well be the spaces where resistance is most likely to occur and so locating struggle can be the starting point for disrupting dominant and privileged ways of thinking and being. When individuals take up resistance for themselves, it becomes possible to work against normalising practices and to realise the previously unimagined (Weedon, 1997). In this way the work of poststructuralist feminists is a work of possibility.

Conclusions

Poststructuralist feminist theory and the work of Foucault have together provided many ways to understand, question, and challenge, the relationship between power, knowledge, and discourse, and to examine how these work together in the process of normalisation. This has expanded my understanding of knowledge, the learner, and change, and opened up possibilities for thinking about and practicing teacher professional learning differently. However, this research has been about more than illumination; it has also been about disruption and change, which have happened because this has been an action research project. The next chapter is on the methodology of action research and the possibilities presented by using this research method.
CHAPTER 4
LEARNING IN ACTION: AN ACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The development of emancipatory social theory requires an empirical stance which is open-ended, dialogically reciprocal, grounded in respect to human capacity and, yet, profoundly sceptical of appearances and “common sense”. Such an empirical stance is, furthermore, rooted in a commitment to the long-term, broad-based ideological struggle necessary to transform structural inequalities (Lather 1991a, p. 65).

Introduction

This is an inductive research project situated within a postmodern paradigm and conducted using action research as the methodology. The aim has not been to prove or interpret existing truths but rather to take “a more fluid and intuitive approach” (MacNaughton & Rolfe, 2001, p. 12) to exploring the professional learning of early education teachers. Taking an inductive approach has enabled the project to evolve, which is consistent with both action research and postmodernist perspectives on research, as these both seek a constant reassessment and realignment of understandings and practice. Moreover, this approach ensures the project “remains open to a range of possibilities and discoveries as the study unfolds” (p. 24). Not only has this provided a context for celebrating diversity and multiplicity but it has also allowed a reading and writing of the world, and the subject, as provisional and in the process of becoming; all of which are consistent with the emancipatory aims underpinning this project.

Project aims

As already mentioned in the introduction, the aim of this project was to learn more about teacher professional learning in early education by asking the broad question:

- How can we expand our ways of understanding and practising professional learning for individual and social change in early education?
To address this question the project has focused more specifically on knowledge, the learner, and change, guided by the following questions:

- What constitutes professional early education knowledge, who owns it and how can it be generated?
- What are the needs and challenges facing early education teachers as learners, how are these being addressed, and how can professional learning be supported in the future?
- What influences teacher change and how can it be supported in early education professional learning programmes?
- How can professional learning in early education become a force for progressive social change?

To achieve these aims I worked with seven early education teachers in New Zealand over a period of 2½ years, meeting with them both individually and as a group to hear them talk about their experiences as teachers and learners. As a group we discussed and debated many educational issues and these discussions helped me to understand more about the complex world of teaching, and the challenges of teacher professional learning today. From these discussions, I have been inspired to believe that education as a practice of freedom (Freire, 1996) might be possible; but this has only happened as I have been prepared to come face to face with my own shortcomings, in ways that I had not previously imagined.

The time I spent with teachers in this project has helped me to think about knowledge, the learner and change in new ways, and this has not only expanded my understanding and practice of teacher professional learning but has also led me to consider how teacher professional learning might be a force for progressive social change in the future.

**Research Design**

**Action research defined and described**

Action research is a qualitative research approach that is situated within the critical theoretical ideals of achieving a more socially just world (MacNaughton, 1996a) and as a
research method it has its origins in the work of social psychologist, Kurt Lewin (e.g. Burns 1997; Carr & Kemmis, 2002; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; McNiff, 1988; Oja & Smulyan, 1989). Lewin’s early work with communities in post-war America was developed around his belief that those most affected by change should be the ones involved in planning, implementing and evaluating change (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Most of Lewin’s work “focused on helping minorities address psychological and social problems caused by prejudice” (Oja & Smulyan, 1989, p. 2) and moved the emphasis of change initiatives away from doing for others to working with others towards socially just ends. Lewin believed that “by working together, social scientists and practitioners could discover new theory and take action which addressed important social concerns” (p. 3), and it is these emancipatory ideals that continue to drive the work of most action researchers today (e.g. Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998; MacNaughton, 1996a; MacNaughton & Smith, 2001; Zuber-Skerritt, 1996).

The foundational principles of critical theory [and/or critical pedagogy] that underpin action research mean that action researchers will not only be intent on explaining, but also transforming the social order (Carr & Kemmis, 2002; Fay, 1987); always seeking an enlargement of freedom (Fay, 1987) through their work. Action research goes beyond researching ‘‘about’ the present social world to action ‘for’ a more just and wise social world” (MacNaughton, 1996a, p. 30) which “requires commitment to a vision of what an improved social world could be” (p. 31). Action researchers enact this vision, by problematizing social practices and constructions to the extent that these can be disrupted and transformed (Carr & Kemmis, 2002; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998; MacNaughton, 1996a; MacNaughton & Smith, 2001; Zuber-Skerritt; 1996).

At the most fundamental level, this involves working with others in social settings to improve educational and/or social practices in the here and now (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988), which in practical terms means carrying out a systematic inquiry organised around a continuous cycle of planning, acting and observing, and reflecting. Such an inquiry will typically begin with problems of practice and/or issues that arise out of day-to-day happenings (Brooker, Smeal, Ehrich, Daws & Brannock, 1998; Cardno, 2003; Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998) but will not be restricted to the solving of technical problems or to just understanding situations (Zuber-Skerritt; 1996). The objective will always be to
transform the social structures surrounding these problems and because of this any data
generated from action research is not just used for interpretation but also for critically
informing transformative action (Carr & Kemmis, 2002; Fay, 1987; Kemmis &
McTaggart, 1988; Lather, 1991a; MacNaughton, 1996a).

In the 1950s, Oja & Smulyan (1989) maintain, action research lost appeal largely because,
as a research method, it was perceived as unscientific and therefore untrustworthy. In the
1970s and 1980s; however, when “researchers began to question the applicability of
quantitative, experimental methodologies to educational settings and problems” (p. 8),
action research began to regain popularity as it offered an alternative to more linear
approaches. This was particularly so in educational settings where action research
provided opportunities for teachers to engage in research which could enhance their
practice at the same time as it could contribute knowledge to the wider education sector.
From this time on, action research has become more accepted as a “viable method for
conducting educational research” (p. 10); however, because action research is more
concerned with change in the present and in localised settings than it is with making
“claims to produce knowledge of the world that is ‘beyond reasonable doubt’ and
applicable universally” (MacNaughton, 2003a, p. 6), scientific research is still very
much “the ‘in’ educational research” (p. 2). Despite this, action research is an accepted
research method and continues to be used widely today.

There are many strands of action research currently in use and the term is being “used
(and misused) to cover a myriad of activities” (Henry & McTaggart, 1996, cited in
Cardno, 2003, p. 6). Among the many users of this research method there are those who,
despite their commitment to action research, critique some of the positivist tenets
embedded in this approach, preferring to reconceptualise action research within a
postmodern paradigm (e.g. Campbell, et al., 2000; Campbell, et al., 2001; Davis, 2004;
MacNaughton, 1996a, 2003a; Smith, 2003; MacNaughton & Smith, 2001). Like these
researchers I have chosen to reconceptualise my enactment of action research, believing
that by taking a postmodern stance I can most consistently meet my desire for education
as a practice of freedom (Freire, 1996). Moreover, the use of poststructuralist feminist
theory and the work of Foucault as a conceptual framework have been pivotal to the way
I have begun to live this desire in practice.
While my use of action research has been reconceptualised to sit within postmodernism, the basic structure of the research methodology is similar to that of any action research project in terms of how participants were recruited and how data was collected; the main variance has been in the way the data has been selected, analysed and represented.

**Action research reconceptualised**

Choosing to take a postmodern stance on action research has meant that many of the normally accepted conventions of research have had to be challenged and re-defined. For instance, the perspective taken on knowledge production has been different from that of a modernist researcher, as have the perspectives on validity, the position taken by the researcher, and the way that data has been represented.

*A postmodern stance on knowledge production*

The critical pedagogical principles foundational to any action research work mean that both action researchers and postmodernists take a similar stance on knowledge by rejecting the positivist notion that neutral, objective observation and analysis is possible, and that through this value-free knowledge can be created (Carr & Kemmis 1988; MacNaughton, 1996b). Furthermore, both recognize the emancipatory potential of knowledge and so the disruption of oppressive and discriminatory practices becomes central to research work. While the tenets of both action research and postmodernism may be similar, and while researchers in both consider that there is always bias present in the construction of knowledge, postmodernists go a step further by also rejecting the modernist notion that knowledge can be *truth* (e.g. Foucault. 1972, 1980b, 1980c, 1995a; MacNaughton, 1996a, 2003a; MacNaughton & Smith, 2001; Usher & Edwards, 1994), and that this truth can be uncovered and validated as such. Postmodern researchers have "a scepticism of the pursuit of ‘truth’" (MacNaughton & Smith, 2001, p. 32), believing that truth is "never finally fixed" (p. 32). Accordingly, those enacting reconceptualised action research do not seek to uncover truth, nor do they make truth claims within their work.

Researchers taking a reconceptualised approach to action research do not believe their research findings will provide certain and universally applicable knowledge; they contend that any knowledge generated from their research is ever only partial and local (MacNaughton & Smith, 2001). Any other stance on knowledge production has the
potential to “privilege an exclusive meaning” (Brown & Jones, 2001, p. 112), whereas postmodernism “serves as a caution” (p. 114) against universality by “cracking or opening out aspects of the social world” (p. 114) that are fixed and sure; making space for contradiction and uncertainty. This fracturing, according to Davies, (1989, cited in Brown & Jones, 2001) creates a source of new understanding and makes otherness more possible. In reconceptualised action research, data is valued for its potential to emancipate, not by creating answers, but by highlighting the multiple and contradictory, and by showing how these offer the possibility of being and acting differently; and this can be liberating. The anomalies, contentions, and fractures in data are therefore the most valuable because these create interruptions in discourse (Brown & Jones, 2001), potentially destabilising the stable and displacing the dominant. Postmodern action researchers therefore actively seek out multiple perspectives, and they celebrate the contradictory.

In terms of this project, taking a postmodern stance has meant I have refrained from using totalising statements and have instead written with more nuance. Writing in a way that does not make claims to certainty has not been a waste of time, as McLennan (1992, cited in Brown & Jones, 2001) suggests it is, nor has this been constraining. On the contrary, I found I have had to think harder than I might have had I been looking for truth claims, because I have had to explore under, around, and through the obvious, in order to find the hidden. This has required openness and creativity, and an ability and willingness to work within the challenge of complexity, instead of skirting around this as some modernist studies are prone to do. As Lather (1991a) notes, “theory is too often used to protect us from the awesome complexity of the world” (p. 62) and this is particularly so when theory does not acknowledge and embrace the uncertainties and contradictions of life. Working from a postmodern stance has required me to think dangerously and playfully (Davies, 2000a: Foucault, 2000) in order that I might think differently (Foucault (1990b), and understand professional learning from a “new vantage point” (p. 11). I have found it both necessary and pleasurable to think and write playfully and dangerously, and I believe that doing so has equipped me to work better with others towards social justice.

A postmodern stance on validity

According to McTaggart (2005), “the discourse of validity has been colonised by positivist thought” (p. 395), with the concept being used in research to prove the truth
value of data and its analysis. Action researchers and postmodernists oppose this positivist definition, resisting the supposition that the researcher’s task is to uncover information that already exists, and then prove to others the accuracy of interpretations and conclusions (Brennan & Noffke, 1997; MacNaughton, 2003a). As Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) caution, a positivist perspective on validity neglects “the dynamics of the lived world - not to mention the pursuit of justice in the lived world” (p. 151). Moreover, the emphasis in positivist research on proof and evidence “presupposes shared assumptions of validity” (Brennan & Noffke, 1997, p. 25) which prioritises reaching consensus about what will be counted as valid and therefore worthwhile to know; an understanding which itself is imbued with relations of power and privilege.

In postmodern research validity is not about verifying claims to truth or proving agreement, but is instead more about demonstrating rigor (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Lather, 1991a) and trustworthiness (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; McTaggart, 2005; Scheurich, 1997), and the multiple perspectives of participants (Hughes, 2001). Concepts such as triangulation are reconceptualised so that multiple sources of data are not used to prove truth but to “seek [and illuminate] counter patterns” (Lather 1991a, p. 67). Engagement with data is done with respect and appreciation of the Other, without attempts being made to transform the Other into the Same (Scheurich, 1997) and there is always “a willingness to hold open an intersubjective space in which difference can unfold in its particularity” (p. 89). Validity is therefore more about how much the project supports diversity and how the findings serve as a catalyst for change (Fay, 1987; MacNaughton, 2003a).

In keeping with postmodern understandings, I have attempted to represent the multiple perspectives of participants and to offer them the opportunity for multiple readings of the data (Ryan & Campbell, 2001), right from the first interview through till the end of my writing. By actively creating the space for open sharing (Scheurich, 1997) about the data, and about my ongoing and emergent interpretations of this data, participants were able to critique my use of their storylines and have input into the analysis. I did however place boundaries around negotiations (Tripp, 1983, cited in Lather, 1991a), encouraging those who may have wanted to “unsay their words” (p. 58) to consider their thoughts and comments as in progress, and I wrote the storylines accordingly. Additionally, I wrote
around my own words in the same way I did theirs; experimentally and without locking any person or thought into a permanent position.

One way that I encouraged discussion and transparency about the data and my ongoing analysis of it was to send participants my reflections after we had met together. Once I began doing this participants asked me to continue, with one participant saying, “I can’t wait to get them and that’s when I often do my reflections, after getting yours” (SG4/4). In these reflections I wrote my emerging thoughts, information on what I was reading, questions I had, my troubling, and my initial interpretations of our discussions. In these I also invited a response from others, sometimes specifically asking them for their perspective on an interpretation that I had given to what had been said. Participants found these reflections important, not only because it helped them to understand more about where I was coming from, but these reflections kept them in touch with the reading I was doing which helped to bridge the gap between my understandings, for example, of poststructuralist feminist theory, and theirs. These reflections and my ongoing questions usually became the starting point for further group discussions and as we cooperatively negotiated and explored meanings, in a small but significant way, we were “jointly responsible for a process in which all grow” (Freire, 1996, p. 61).

Another way that I endeavoured to include participants in my analysis was to continue to talk to them individually through email, phone-calls, and face-to-face meetings. Because the conversations within the group sessions were often fragmented, I used these one-to-one conversations to not only build my understanding of multiple perspectives, but also as a way to clarify misunderstandings and gather more background information on what had been shared. Sometimes these conversations became a discussion within the main discussion going on within the project, as was the case with one participant who began an email conversation with me.

I sent Louise a long letter which was filled with unanswered questions. I did this to show where my thinking was going and how I processed things and at the time I thought I was helping Louise. Rather than answering my questions, Louise encouraged me to keep asking them and to allow myself the freedom to leave questions unanswered. This feedback prompted me to write more letters with more questions and this eventually led me to keep a journal which was really a series of letters to myself (Con/02/8).
By sharing with participants my evolving thinking and by adding the ongoing thoughts of others to my own, I believe I have kept my research as visible as possible (Lather, 1993 cited in MacNaughton, 2001b). While I have had to draw some conclusions from my work, I have been careful to highlight inconsistencies by foregrounding differences rather than submerging these. I have triangulated my findings, not by proving their truth value but by highlighting “counter patterns” (Lather, 1991a, p. 67), and by viewing my data from multiple and sometimes contradictory positions. I believe that my selection and interpretation of data has not only been trustworthy but my transparency has enabled participants to engage with the data themselves in a way that has energised them to rethink their worlds in order to transform them (Lather, 1991a).

A postmodern stance on the position of the researcher

The role of the researcher in both action research and postmodernism is not that of an objective outsider, but more like that described by Brown and Jones (2001):

I am immersed in that which I seek to disrupt. In other words, the critique is mounted from the confusing position of being and feeling simultaneously the insider/outsider and the observer/observed (p. 104).

In an action research project such as this one, the researcher is very much at the heart of the research process and as Brown and Jones (2001, above) stress, this can be confusing. Positions are constantly shifting between those associated with being the researcher and those that come with also being an active participant. Not only is the researcher often directing the project at the same time as they are collecting data, but they are also, in the words of Lather (1991a), consciously using the research “to help participants understand and change their situations” (p. 57). Because of the participatory and collaborative nature of action research this can create conflict between the aims and obligations of the researcher and the aims of those who have decided to be part of the project. Such a conflict occurred for me when part way through the project participants opted for a completely different direction from the one I had anticipated, making the data collection and analysis a lot more complex than I had envisaged. I wrote about this in my journal.

I was determined right from the beginning that I would work collaboratively with the teachers in this project; after all that is the goal of action research isn’t it - or at least it is supposed to be. Putting this goal into practice is not as easy as it sounds, especially
when the participants are telling me that they just want to talk — with no particular end in mind! How on earth am I going to track action research cycles when everyone is just talking? I thought that this project would have nice neat cycles that I could describe and report on but this isn't happening as I had hoped it would. This has become a real problem... I thought we would be inquirers together, and that I could write up about the progress each one of us was making on a kind of a project but just talking! Oh boy how can I make this work? I need to be able to meet the demands of this project but I am committed to collaboration, this is confounding and stressful and it all feels so loose and uncertain (JE/27/04/04).

As I will explain further on in this chapter, making the decision to follow the collaborative direction the project was taking did make the data collection and analysis more complicated, but because of my postmodern stance, and therefore my “refusal to invoke the practices of the Same” (Scheurich, 1997, p. 89) I encouraged dissenting voices, and that is what I got. My commitment to collaboration and my being “respectful and appreciative of the Other” (p. 88) and their multiple viewpoints, meant that I experienced first hand the tension that comes with such choices (Brooker et al., 1998; Hanrahan, 1998); but in retrospect I realise how vital this choice was to the overall outcomes. Decisions such as this one helped to foster the kind of reciprocity that Oakely (1981, cited in Lather, 1991a) contends is essential for intimacy, and as the following chapters reveal, this project was full of intimate moments.

Laslett and Rapoport (1975 cited in Lather, 1991a) claim that when participants feel a degree of reciprocity between themselves and the researcher, and when this results in a “giving back” (p. 57) to participants, there is more likely to be a deeper level of sharing with the result being far richer data; and this is what I experienced. As the group discussed, and then changed the direction of this project, participants began to treat the research group sessions as if it they were for them and not just for my thesis work. As one of the participants said at the beginning of one session:

I couldn't wait to escape [and come here] tonight to a professional level (SG5/2).

For this participant, coming to the research sessions was a place where she not only gave, but where she also received, and for this participant the research sessions felt like an escape. Another participant reflected on our sessions like this:
In my world of assessment and evaluation, right and wrong, fast forward, I came to sit amongst a group of people and share and often not get a black and white answer... What a wonderful experience... I have developed deep respect and fondness for the members of our group (Con/02/10).

The participants in this project gave to one another, they gave to me, and I tried to give back to them; and this made a difference. One way that I gave back to others was by sharing freely and often intimately from my own journal, deliberately choosing to be vulnerable and risk the consequences. Hooks (1994) says that "when education is the practice of freedom, students are not the only ones who are asked to share, to confess" (p. 21). She believes that "empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks" (p. 21) and that "when professors [or researchers] bring narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing, silent interrogators" (p. 21); and this she says, means taking "the first risk" (p. 21). And so I shared from my heart and because of this I was trusted with the precious storylines of others. One participant shared this with me:

The sharing that you did last time was really beautiful and I think that created trust (SG3/3).

And my honesty and vulnerability helped others to share in a similar fashion:

From the outset Louise encouraged us to bring our personal selves into our learning and this provided me with the permission I needed to explore both my professional and my personal learning journeys alongside each other. I knew that I was facing blockages in my life and I felt that these were hindering my ability to move forward. Because there were no expectations or assessments and the environment was both non-threatening and supportive, I felt the freedom to delve into my personal life and to use the group as a sounding board throughout this journey. I decided that I would track my personal growth and bring it back to the group and see how it related to my professional learning. The group was okay with this (Con/02/11).

The risk that I took by being vulnerable and sharing intimately from my own journal, and honestly in my session reflections, not only encouraged a level of intimacy with others
but also helped to address what Weiskopf and Laske (1996) call "asymmetrical relationships" (p. 129).

In any research the researcher has prior knowledge of both the research process, and the theory being read within this research, which means there is a power imbalance between the researcher and participants, right from the outset (McIsaac, 1999; Ryan & Campbell, 2001; Weiskopf & Laske, 1996). Being prepared to be vulnerable and working reciprocally with others helped to address this imbalance (Brennan & Noffke, 1997; Lather, 1991a; Ochsner, 2001), because it soon became evident that we all knew something, and we all had something to contribute (Freire, 2003a). I found that having a positive regard for others (Rogers, 1961) and being a learner as well as a researcher (Freire, 2003a; hooks, 1994; Royal Tangaere, 1997), made a difference to how others responded towards me, and this in turn had a positive effect on the storylines that others were willing to share.

Being fully immersed in this project also meant being willing to critique myself and change what I thought and did. O'Hanlon (2002) strongly believes that anyone undertaking research, particularly doctoral research, should be prepared to ask themselves how they have been changed by this research. For me this has involved writing myself into my work and being prepared to be open and honest with myself and others about my thinking and actions, particularly when these have been found to be oppressive. I can say with integrity that this research has changed me and because of the women in this project, I no longer "think the same thing as before" (Foucault, 2000, p. 240).

_A postmodern stance on the representation of data_

If it is no longer tenable to aspire to a coherent and unified representation of the world, then what are the possibilities for developing an adequate political programme (Brown & Jones, 2001, p. 25)?

The above quotation cautions those doing postmodern research against thinking they can represent data in a coherent and unified fashion and encourages them to also think about what might therefore be possible. To the postmodernist, "representation can never be innocent or value-neutral" (Kemmis, 1996, p. 207) for it is never "more than a fabrication.
Simulacra (p. 207). Whenever the social is confined to text, Kemmis (1996) contends, the reader “always reads a very different text from the one written by its author” (p. 207), and because of this, postmodernists share a “radical doubt about what can be represented and interpreted” (p. 207). Should all postmodern attempts to research and report on social situations be abandoned then? Is there a purpose for postmodern research or is such work futile as McLennan (1992, cited in Brown & Jones, 2001) suggests it is?

It seems to me that without some universal concepts, without some attempt to see the social world as an evolving totality, without some aspiration to better humanity through improving knowledge, I see no purpose whatever in doing social science at all (p. 25).

As a postmodern researcher I do not share the sentiments of McLennan above. I do share with other postmodernists general doubts about representation and interpretation (Kemmis, 1996), but I am also confident that in my findings I have been careful to represent the multiple and contradictory ways those in this project made sense of their teaching and womanhood during the time we met together.

Postmodern researchers remain open to the question of whose interests are best served by the way they represent data (Jipson, 2000), and this keeps them diffident about representing the storylines of others (St. Pierre, 2000); however, this diffidence does not immobilize. Instead, doubts and concerns are written into the postmodernist’s work, with subjectivity therefore being central to the writing process (hooks, 1994; Jipson, 2000; St. Pierre, 2000). My journal writing highlights some of the deliberating that I did over representation.

Capturing and representing the data is becoming a challenge. I have encouraged participants to share their thoughts in progress, to bring any ideas to the group – and now at the end of the data collection phase I realise that I don’t want to create finite stories around these fragmented ideas and conversations, and I do not necessarily want to capture what I am now thinking should be left un-captured. Should I seize the learning moments that have now evaporated but which have shaped the people we continue to become? Should I take the transient thoughts of others and concretize them for all to read; forever fixed in time. How can I authentically and respectfully retell the beauty that existed as we lived in the learning moment? I have become unsettled and I am beginning
to feel, along with Geertz (1988, cited in St. Pierre, 2000) the "burden of authorship" (p. 262) that comes with attempting to capture and retell the stories of others (JE/27/04/04).

The sense of burden that I felt when I penned this journal entry did not diminish with time but remained as a reminder that I needed to "work at [emphasis added] how [I would] mediate past, present and future" (Brown & Jones, 2001, p. 62) and this helped me to approach the task with the sincerity and integrity it required. Not wanting to spoil the intimacy of sharing that I had experienced with these teachers, I positioned the storylines and moments that I explored as momentary and I presented them back to participants in this manner. I suggested that they view these as temporary; as moments that we did not have to remain attached to. I endeavoured to think and write as if I had an "unsure destination" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 258), writing incompleteness into my work, as if ideas could "spring up anywhere" (p. 265). While there is a measure of linearity to this work ideas are not presented in consecutive order but more as a to-ing and fro-ing between ideas (Brown & Jones, 2001); which is representative of the kinds of discussions that occurred in group sessions. At the end of this work I have been the "main author and creator" (Ochsner, 2001, p. 257), but wherever possible, I have invited the teachers to speak for themselves and give their own interpretation of events.

One way that I encouraged participants to represent their own storylines was by inviting them to speak at a conference with me; where instead of sharing about my data; teachers spoke for themselves. I spent hours working with each participant on their contribution and hearing them reflect on their experiences of this project, and the papers prepared for this conference became part of the data I have used in my findings. After this conference one participant said of this experience:

I would just like to say Louise that the conference that we did was one of the highlights of my professional development and I'd like to thank you very much (SG10/1).

This comment reflected how important it was for this participant to speak for herself in a professional context. As this teacher had been teaching for over 50 years I found her remark both moving and challenging.
In this complex world of teacher professional learning I did not present finite answers or certainty, instead my findings are fragmented and partial. While this presents limitations for how my findings might be used, I nevertheless believe that these findings can create fracture in current understandings about knowledge, the learner, and change in relation to teacher professional learning (MacNaughton, 2000). Because of this I am convinced that postmodern research not only has a practical and worthwhile function, but that this function is vital and necessary to the work of emancipation.

**Research methods and techniques**

This project was divided into two main phases with cycles operating within each phase. The first phase involved semi-structured interviews with ten participants, and the second phase was a series of monthly and then bi-monthly group meetings carried out over a two year period. Participants in the second phase had all been involved in phase one with eight out of the ten interviewed remaining with the project for the first year of group meetings. After the first year one participant left because of other commitments, taking the number of participants down to seven. It is the storylines of these seven participants that have formed the basis of my findings.

**The participants**

The initial plan was to recruit approximately twelve participants for the first phase of the project, using a snowball technique (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982), which in the end was not necessary. All participants joined the project by approaching me directly after hearing me discuss my research at work, socially, or at a New Zealand chapter OMEP (Organization Mondiale pour l’ Éducation Préscolaire) meeting. My sole criteria for selection was that participants should be working in early education. I was hoping for a mix of age, gender, ethnicity, and experience; however, at the time of recruitment I was most interested in interviewing and working with teachers who were particularly keen to explore their professional learning further.

Once teachers indicated their interest I formally invited them to be involved (Appendices 1 and 2), and they were asked to complete an informed consent (Appendix 3). I have only used data from the seven participants (introduced below) who remained for the entire
course of the project, because these participants remained available to work with me on
the interpretations that I gave to their storylines.

All participants were working in early education at the time of data collection; from both
the early childhood and the primary school sectors. They were all women and ranged in
age from their early 30s to mid 60s. Two participants were part Maori and all others were
of European descent. Two participants emigrated from the UK, one emigrated from
Australia and the others were born in New Zealand. I have used pseudonyms for all
participants and I have introduced them in alphabetical order.

Erica

Erica is an Australian who came to live in New Zealand in 1972. She began her training
in early childhood education in 1982, upgrading her qualifications to a Bachelor of
Teaching ECE (early childhood education) in 2005. Erica has been a teacher for
approximately 25 years and at the time of data collection she was in her mid 50s and
working full-time as an assistant supervisor in a day-care setting catering for children
from six months to five years. Erica is still working in this position. I first met Erica at an
OMEP chapter meeting where I spoke about my research; at the end of this evening Erica
asked me if she could be involved.

Jan

Jan was born in New Zealand and when we began meeting together she was in her mid
40s. Jan completed her Primary Teaching Diploma in 1978, upgrading this to a Bachelor
of Education in 1998. Jan had worked intermittently as a primary school teacher for ten
years and at the time of data collection she was a full-time teacher of six year olds.
During the project Jan began working on her Masters degree which she has since
completed. Jan is now a senior teacher in charge of the learning support programme in a
primary school. I have a long association with Jan having first met her when we were at
school together. We trained to be teachers together and we taught in the same school
together in our first year teaching.

Jo

Jo was born in the UK, and immigrated with her family to New Zealand when she was 13
years old. She began working in early childhood in 1990, and completed her Diploma of
Teaching Early Childhood Education (ECE), in 1998 after many years of part-time study. At the time of data collection Jo was in her late 30s and she was working full-time as a supervisor in the under two year old section of a day-care. During the project Jo was working towards a Graduate Diploma in Educational Management which she has now completed. Jo is currently working as an early childhood tutor and she plans to start working towards her Masters degree in 2008. I met Jo in the workplace when I was working on a project with Liz (another participant), and when she found out about this project she asked to be involved.

Liz
Liz is New Zealand born and at the time of data collection she was in her late 40s and working full-time as a director of a large 100 place day-care centre catering for children from birth to five years. Liz is still working in this position and has been for almost 13 years. Liz has a Diploma in Business and a Diploma in Management. I first met Liz in 1992 when she was the chairperson of the kindergarten committee where I worked, and since then Liz and I have worked together on many early childhood projects. I have been contracted by this centre to provide professional learning for staff on and off for 10 years.

Lydia
Lydia is New Zealand born and she is part Māori. She graduated as a primary school teacher in 1990 with a Diploma of Teaching. Lydia was in her mid 40s at the time of data collection and she was teaching full-time in the primary school sector, working with five year olds. During the project Lydia continued working towards her Masters degree and she is currently on a year’s study leave to finish this. I met Lydia because she is the mother of one of my son’s friends and she asked to be part of this project after we talked about my research while we watched our sons play soccer.

Margaret
Margaret is New Zealand born with an Australian father and a Māori mother. When the project began Margaret was in her early 30s and she had not long graduated with a Bachelor of Teaching ECE. When I first met Margaret she was teaching full-time in the day-care where Liz and Jo also worked. Margaret decided to join the research group when, like Jo, she talked to me about what I was doing one day when I was visiting the centre. Margaret is still working at this centre and she is now the supervisor in the over
three year old section. She is currently working towards a Postgraduate Diploma in Education and she is considering going on to complete a Masters Degree.

Roxy

Roxy was born in the UK and she has been working in early childhood since she left school in 1954. Before emigrating and settling in New Zealand in 1963, Roxy completed her Nursery School training in the UK, later upgrading this in New Zealand to a Higher Diploma of Teaching ECE. Roxy owns an early childhood centre catering for children from three to five years old and at the time of data collection she was teaching in the centre four days a week and she continues to do so. I met Roxy at the same OMEP meeting where I met Erica and just like Erica, Roxy came up to me at the end of the evening and said that she would love to be part of this project.

I grew to treasure these women as friends and I will be forever grateful to them for what they have shared with me and for what I have learnt from them.

The process: Cycles and data collection

Because this is an action research project the data collection phase was structured around cycles of planning, acting and observing, and reflecting. However, the project quickly dispersed into many cycles, with all operating simultaneously, and with each converging on the other. The research group described them as a ball of string being tossed around the room and as it was tossed the roll unravelled and began to cross over itself leaving an intricate web of intersecting fibres. Each intersection represented the moments in time when we met and touched each others' lives, and the rest of the tangled web represented the complexity of our learning. None of this could be captured in linear, or even cyclic, form. With this in mind I outline how the project unravelled for us.

Cycle one: A cycle of reconnaissance

The first cycle was one of reconnaissance and involved semi-structured interviews designed to ascertain the experiences and desires of teachers in relation to their professional learning; each interview lasted between 1 ½ to 2 hours. First and foremost these interviews were about hearing what teachers had to say about their teaching and learning experiences, in an open-ended and uncensored context. This information was then used in an emergent way to inform the next cycle. Secondly, these interviews
became an effective means of getting to know the teachers who would continue working
with me. I wanted these sessions to be relaxed and informal and as such the planned
questions (Appendix 4) were only used as a guideline, and to funnel the discussion if it
veered too far from the topic (Burns, 1997). As it turned out these interviews became
more like conversations and the level of sharing that occurred between us helped to build
trust.

Before the interview I didn’t know what to expect, so I was a bit nervous but the process
was relaxing and free flowing and after the interview I realised that this research is going
to help me to develop as a teacher by being able to share my ideas, beliefs, thoughts and
problems with people outside my work environment (FB/28).

Participants somehow seemed to sense right from the outset that this project had the
potential to be very much about them as well as being about my research, and this
stimulated them and motivated them to continue their involvement. As one participant
commented on her feedback form:

I found the whole interview process stimulating and fun, so much so it took quite a time
for me to ‘calm down’ enough to think about sleep (FB/25).

Data in this cycle was mainly gathered through the semi-structured interviews which
were taped and later transcribed. In addition to the taped interviews I also took
handwritten notes which I wrote up as a summary after the interview. I posted this
summary along with a feedback form (Appendix 5) to participants after each interview so
that I could clarify the information that I wanted to use in the next cycle, before I had
time to complete the transcripts. The feedback forms were helpful in that they gave me a
feel for how the interviews had gone and what the participants were thinking about their
learning and involvement once we had had our first meeting together. In cycle one I
coded the data using a numerical code.

**Cycle Two: Beginnings**

In this cycle I met with participants as a group monthly on a week night and sessions
went from 7 pm until approximately 10 pm. While the format of these sessions was to be
collaboratively decided, I used a draft plan (Appendix 6) as a starting point. The first
session was mainly a time to meet each other, to re-address the action research protocol

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(Appendix 2), and to discuss the direction participants might like to take. For this session I had pre-planned questions to guide discussion and I circulated these to participants prior to the session (Appendix 7).

There were two main decisions that came out of the first session. One key decision was to breach the action research protocol clause which stated: “to maintain confidentiality at all times” (Appendix 2), as it was decided that this would be too restrictive. Participants were clear that they wanted to be able to share what we discussed in our sessions outside of the research group. They wanted their learning to be transferable which to them meant being able to tell others what they had experienced in our sessions. So we added a codicil to this clause to the effect that it was the responsibility of members to state for themselves when they wanted what they were sharing to be kept confidential; and this worked well for us.

Another decision made in session one was that group sessions would be based on an action learning format (Dotlich & Noel, 1998; Pearce, 1991; Revans, 1991; Weinstein, 1995). In action learning each person works on a project of their choosing and they can explore this from any angle they choose. Action learning allows for individuals to follow an interest of their own without having to subjugate this interest to the group. At the same time, group learning is enhanced by the discussion that flows from these individual learning projects. Because I was anxious to make good use of the time that these women had devoted to this project and because I wanted to ensure that individual interests and needs were considered, I assumed that such an approach would be a positive move; but in session three this format became problematic (Chapters 6 and 7). As a result, we evaluated our progress in session four instead of session five as originally planned (Appendix 7); and we adopted an entirely different approach (Chapter 7). After this we discussed our progress at the beginning and end of each session and this became the basis for our future planning. As the sessions took a turn after session four I have called this the end of cycle two.

The main source of data collection in this cycle was the taped sessions which I transcribed and circulated for discussion; in these transcripts participants have been referred to by their pseudonyms. As I have already mentioned, prior to transcripts being finished, I posted out a summary of sessions, which included my reflections on the
session and these also became part of the data, along with any one-to-one conversations I had with participants via email, phone-calls and face-to-face meetings. Another source of data was journal entries; however, most of the ones used were my own. Although I asked participants to keep a journal they preferred coming to sessions without having to prepare, and so for them journaling was more of a private activity to which I had limited access.

Subsequent cycles: An intricate web of complexity and possibility

From session four onwards, the cycles merged with no apparent demarcation between them. The planning, acting and observing, and reflecting that are central to action research happened in a more haphazard fashion than anticipated; with shifts being more like points of departure (Freire, 2003a) characterised by uncertainty, unpredictability, and irregularity. While this offered challenges for data analysis the data collection remained constant, with sessions being taped and transcribed and summaries of these being sent to participants. After meeting together monthly for one year the group decided to meet for another year bi-monthly. I extended the data collection into the next year continuing to tape and transcribe sessions.

One irregularity that occurred during the first year was the decision to speak at a conference and as already mentioned this became a momentous occasion, with the preparation for this conference creating rich and very useful data. Preparing for the conference was one moment at which we all paused to reflect on the experiences of this project and from these reflections the conference paper was created. I have used this data, which was written by participants, in my data analysis.

To summarise

Data was collected from the following sources:

- Semi-structured interviews which were taped and transcribed;
- Feedback forms completed by participants after the semi-structured interviews;
- Group sessions which were taped and transcribed;
- My reflections on group sessions;
- Journal entries
- Follow-up phone calls, emails, and face to face conversations;
- The conference paper.
The data collection is described in more detail in Appendix 8.

Data analysis

Consistent with an action research methodology, data analysis was on-going with findings affecting the project as it evolved. The result was a continual interactive movement between the data, my reflections on the data, and the on-going interpretations given to the data by myself and others; all of which provided a myriad of possibilities affecting how each one of us thought about, and acted out, our professional learning.

Theoretical approaches to the analysis

An inductive approach added a degree of flexibility to my analysis allowing me “keep as open a frame of reference as is possible” (Ramsay, 1985, cited in Lather, 1991a, p. 62), and enabled me to foster what Lather (1991a) calls a “reciprocal relationship between data and theory” (p. 62). The data gave me points of reference from which to consider possibilities and the theory helped me to ask questions of the data. While my approach was flexible and changing, I was consistent in my rigorous organisation of data (Edwards, 2001, p. 131), and because I did all the transcribing myself, and reflected on the data as I did so, I became very familiar with what was said, when, and by whom. As a result I could locate specific data with relative ease. Data analysis began with the first interview when I penned my summaries and sent these to participants for feedback, and with each interview, session and transcript this analysis evolved and changed.

Throughout this evolutionary approach to data analysis I have been guided by three main theoretical positions: critical pedagogy, because this is seminal to action research methodology and as such this has kept me focused on what I am seeking to understand and transform; the work of Foucault, because this has helped me to question the relationship between power, knowledge and discourse; and poststructuralist feminist theory, because this has helped me to understand how the data comes together to tell a shifting temporal story of the way that the teachers in this project made sense of their subjectivities, their teaching and their learning.
**Critical pedagogy: A reminder of purpose**

Within reconceptualised action research, the goal is always to understand more about "the social order" (Fay, 1987, p. 27) of teachers’ experiences, so that this could serve as a catalyst for "the transformation of this social order" (p. 27). Keeping this critical pedagogical ideal prominent meant my initial aim became trying to understand more about "the world view of research participants" (Lather, 1991a, p. 63) so that the initial group sessions could at least in part address some of the dreams and desires expressed by these teachers. So one of the main purposes of data analysis was always to listen and learn; and to think about what I heard I was guided by the critical pedagogical questions posed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) which are located in Appendix 9. Keeping critical pedagogy in focus also meant being prepared to question my own actions (Cochran-Smith, 2003) and to ask if these were consistent with the ideals that I was working for (Ellsworth, 1992; Evans & Policella, 2000; Gore 1993), such as checking how prepared I was to be collaborative in this project.

**Foucault: A way to locate and question**

Critical pedagogues are interested in disrupting oppressive power relations and for this work I found Foucault really useful. His work provided very specific and practical strategies for locating and understanding more about the function of power, particularly in relation to knowledge, the learner, and change. In the area of knowledge, for example, Foucault provided a number of ways to examine the relationship between power, knowledge and discourse and these not only helped me to locate the function of power on multiple and co-existing levels but also provided me with a lens through which to question this. For example, locating points of resistance (Foucault, 1980d) and battles over interpretations (Foucault, 1976, cited in Davidson, 2003) were ways to spotlight this relationship. Another was seeking examples where regimes of truth (Foucault, 1980c) functioned to regulate what could be said, and by whom.

In relation to the learner, Foucault offered numerous ways of examining how the subject is constituted through normalising discourses and practices of the self (Foucault, 1990b). Locating and questioning instances where discourses and practices had become normal, for instance, was one way I used Foucault’s work in this regard. Another was by illuminating instances where the use of regulating techniques resulted in silencing and marginalisation. Foucault’s work on the function of power in the normalisation process

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made his work particularly useful for questioning what works for and against change, adding further to the value of this work as a conceptual tool for analysis. Foucault thought dangerously, and he experimented with ideas in order that he might think differently (Foucault 2000). Moreover, he encouraged others to do the same, and because I was inspired by his work to do this; I did. How I have applied Foucault more specifically to the data analysis is located in Appendix 10.

Poststructuralist feminist theory: A means towards understanding

Poststructuralist feminist theory kept my analysis centred on multiplicity and contradiction and reminded me that any attempts to understand the data, or the subject within this data, could only ever be partial and provisional. In practical terms this meant actively seeking out and highlighting the contradictions and struggles encountered by teachers as they attempted to make sense of their worlds and their constitution within this world. This included being inquisitive about the ways these women negotiated and manoeuvred in and through the competing discourses to which they had access. Combining poststructuralist feminist theory with the work of Foucault enabled me to use the tools of Foucault around, for example, the problematization of sexuality (Foucault, 1990b) to examine how the messages received by women, such as what makes a good woman and teacher, affected how those in this project, including myself, positioned themselves within such discourses.

As poststructuralist feminist theory posits the subject as always in the process of becoming (Davies, 2000a), I had to ensure that any understanding and subsequent portrayal of the subject was done within this caveat. As a result the storylines that I have privileged must be read as temporal and partial; a moment in time that helped me to make more sense of teacher professional learning and the challenges and possibilities therein. How I applied poststructuralist feminist theory more specifically to the data analysis can be located in Appendix 10.

Methods applied to data analysis

Edwards (2001) contends that the main “virtue of qualitative studies is their capacity to tell a well-substantiated story” (p. 133), and Lather (1991b) would add that this story should be told through many voices. How one arrives at this story, Edwards (2001) says, is varied, and I found a mixture of methods the most useful way to approach analysis. As
a result I cannot define one particular method that I applied to data analysis, because I just worked with the data in many ways until it spoke back to me; trying to see the data from multiple perspectives, including those of participants. Analysis was a continuous process which began at the conclusion of the first interview and continued right through into the writing stage where, as is usual in qualitative research, I sought for themes and patterns (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001) particularly in relation to knowledge, the learner, and change; but where I also sought vigilantly for anomalies, contradictions and contentions.

I began the analysis process by using the constant comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), because this method allowed for themes to evolve as the research progressed, with each new piece of data being viewed against existing themes. I found this worked particularly well in the beginning during and after the interviews, because at that point I had a completely open slate and I wanted data to stand out, which it did. Firstly, I pulled out words and phrases that stood out from these interviews, coded them numerically, and then arranged these thematically on A3 coloured card so that I could discuss these with participants in session one. Participants then added their comments which were recorded and included in the transcripts. From this a general list was made of the expectations that we, as a group, had for the sessions. This became stage one of the data analysis process and the information gathered at this point affected the plans that were made for the overall project and the next few sessions in particular.

As we progressed I continued with this thematic type approach to analysis, recording my emerging thoughts on mind-maps, in my journal, in my reflections which were posted to participants, and alongside the transcripts as annotations. At times themes were “data-driven” (Edwards, 2001, p. 132), as was the case after the interviews, and sometimes data was just left to speak for itself (Beattie, 1995; Brunner, 1994; Cherry, 1999; McIsaac, 1999) instead of adding a potentially prescriptive interpretation to what had been spoken. Sometimes analysis was “theory-led” (p. 132), which involved viewing, selecting and interpreting the data alongside what I was reading and categorising findings under the broader headings of knowledge, the learner and change. With a theory-led approach I asked the data the questions, such as those included in Appendices 9 and 10, and recorded my emerging thoughts on mind maps which eventually became the process of recording that I favoured. Throughout this data analysis I avoided including only data that
sat neatly within categories or which appeared to offer simple explanations to the questions I was asking; ensuring that I also included isolated comments, data that was contradictory and unanswered questions; using mind-maps enabled me to highlight such anomalies.

Mind-maps became a fluid way for me to make some sense of my findings because I could draw connections as well as disconnections, and I could add, move, and remove information using, for example, pencil scribbles, post-it notes, additional pages, erasures, thinking bubbles, and photocopies of quotations. I could include questions with no answers and circle these; I could connect a piece of data with other data or with a thought or with theory, and then write on top of this what participants thought about my thinking. This enabled a going back and forth between the data, participants, the theory, and previous mind-maps and this produced over 200 mind-maps. For me, mind-maps were consistent with the overall aims, design and approach of this project, and enabled analysis to be “fluid and intuitive” (MacNaughton & Rolfe, 2001, p. 12), and in keeping with the rest of the project.

Conclusions

Rather than reducing professional learning to simplistic positivist notions of knowledge, the learner, and change, which attempt to provide certainty and universal answers, this investigation has been open-ended, dialogic and emergent, with findings being situated as partial, and local. Moreover this approach has provided a research context where oppressive discourses and practices could not only be located but also disrupted and transformed at the time of their location. As this project is “rooted in a commitment to the long-term, broad-based ideological struggle necessary to transform structural inequalities” (Lather, 1991a, p. 65), it is my belief that the chosen approach was the one best suited to achieving this objective. The next three chapters explore the data findings in relation to the place of knowledge, the learner, and change in professional learning for the participants in this project. Whilst I initially used these analytically as discrete foci for exploring professional learning, in the next three chapters I show how they interrelate and intersect in the lives of the teachers in this project.
CHAPTER 5
IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING: NORMALISATION, RESISTANCE AND SUBVERSION

This is not a linear story about women’s subjectivity that has as its central organizing feature a rationally planned and executed argument. Rather, this story is a mixture of rational argument, emotion, and lived bodily experience, intertwining what we think of as fantasy and reality, and embracing contradictory positions. Although each fragment is illuminating in and of itself, together they represent the complex interplay of a woman’s subjectivity and feminist stories (Davies, 2000a, p. 69).

Fragmented storylines

The fragmented and incomplete storylines in this chapter come together to “represent the complex interplay of a woman’s subjectivity” (Davies 2000a, p. 69), and to show how the women in this project, including myself, have struggled and triumphed daily in their take up and refusal of the discourses defining what a woman and teacher should be. The story of our collective journey begins with a poem that was written by Liz near the beginning of the project.

I'm struggling to find my voice
Been struggling for a long time to find my shape
I've looked high and low, inside and out
But I just don't fit
Like a seasoned shopper
Looking for that perfect garment to reflect my inner beauty to the world
I've tried on the garments of other people's words

I've draped myself in the words of psychology and psychotherapy
Found and lost myself in the words of religion and spirituality
Honed my thinking in the words of management, science and education
Cushioned myself in the words of society, marriage and family
And yet... here I sit many years on with this ache to express my own knowing
My own intuition, which doesn't feel fully expressed through other people's words
Trouble is I can't seem to settle on the words that my voice wants to speak
What do I know?
What do I have to say?
Do I have anything original to say?
Or have I become so alienated from old disciplines
That I have become trapped in a fantasy about my own self-importance?

Like a chameleon I have drifted across and around other people’s truths
I listen and hear while their words give voice to my knowing
This excites me - for a time ...
Gives my knowing value ... importance
However without their words I seem like nothing

Am I destined to be the testing ground and fertile soil where other people’s seeds of
knowledge germinate and flower?
Can the seeds of my own knowledge flower to create a glorious canvas of colour?
What would that look like I wonder?
Why am I in education at the moment when I can see no clear future or place for myself
there?

I long to be able to express what I know in a way that will make someone stop and listen.
I’m tired of feeling like
The quiet catalyst for other people’s knowledge
The enabler
The good listener
The caring boss
The good wife
The loving daughter
The accepting friend
The cool mother
The silent lover
The lonely sister
Changing my face and shape
Easily
Gladly
Authentically
Seldom settling for long on my own solid ground
What is the solid ground of my own knowing?
Where can I find a safe learning place where my voice can rise from the depths to soar wild and free? © JE 2002 (SG4/23)

When Liz joined this project, she was hoping to find a professional forum where she “might fit” (Con/02/3). Although Liz was directing an early childhood service, and had been doing so for a decade, she felt that she did not fit within education circles because she was not a trained teacher. Liz said, “Being an educational leader, who is not teacher trained, I often felt like an intruder, an outsider in educational circles, and I felt I needed a place where I could belong; a place where I could explore the issues bubbling around in my head about education” (Con/02/3). As the project progressed Liz continued to ask the questions contained in the words of her poem, but rather than finding answers to these questions Liz continued to grapple with these issues. She told me nearly four years after penning these words that, “The issues are different and the anger has subsided, but there is still a struggle” (PC/12/15/07/06). For Liz this struggle involved continually negotiating and manoeuvring within the meanings and positions that gave her a sense of identity and belonging; and even though the signifiers may have changed, for Liz the struggle remained constant.

Liz represents the woman of poststructuralist feminist theory who is provisional, partial and contradictory and always in the process of becoming. Unlike the subject of humanist discourse, who is fixed, unified, and stable, Liz is shifting; constituted and reconstituted with frequency (Davies, 2000a; Lenz Taguchi, 2005; Robinson & Diaz, 1999). She exists within a world of multiple, competing, and often contradictory discourses, which shape her thinking, speech, and conduct and which influence how she understands what it means to be a woman in education today. In the process of becoming, Liz is “revised and (re)presented through images, metaphors, [and] storylines” (Davies, 2000a, p. 137), some her own, and some those of others, with these images, metaphors, and storylines calling “into question” (Butler, 2004, p. 19) the person that Liz once believed herself to be.

The very “I” is called into question by its relation to the one to whom I address myself. This relation to the Other does not precisely ruin my story or reduce me to speechlessness, but it does, invariably, clutter my speech with signs of its undoing. Let's
face it. We’re undone by each other. And if we’re not, we’re missing something (Butler, 2004, p. 19).

Through the telling of our lives, the women and teachers in this project have been shaped by one another, and as the interpretations that we have given to our lived experiences have been “called into question” (Butler, 2004, p. 19), we have experienced the pain and the pleasure of being “undone by each other” (p. 19).

**Images of the ideal teacher: Rumblings of discontent**

**A profession of sacrifice; a profession of value**

The teacher is someone who is eminently understanding, and accepting, and nurturing, really supporting the intrinsic individual and uniqueness of a child and celebrating them in their journey of life and discovery (Grant, 1968, cited in Middleton & May 1997, p. 335).

I first met Lydia in 1996 when our sons became friends at primary school and at the time we were both teaching. One wet and cold Saturday morning in 2001, we were both cheering for our sons at a soccer game when we began talking about my research. At the time Lydia was a senior teacher in an early education classroom within the primary school sector, and as we talked, in-between our cheers, Lydia decided that she wanted to be part of my research.

Lydia is a teacher who works hard to be the best that she can be because she believes that, “You make a difference by being your best every day” (SG5/20). To be the best Lydia has internalised images of the ideal teacher and educational leader that she wants to be and she strives to achieve this standard. Lydia has learnt and absorbed these ideal images through many years of training, practice, and postgraduate study, and she believes that these ideals are indicative of best practice. Throughout the course of this research Lydia struggled to maintain this ideal as the contradiction between what she desired and what it was possible for her to achieve came into conflict.
Lydia was born into a family of teachers, a lineage which includes great aunts who taught in the 1800s when women teachers were forbidden to marry. These aunts, according to Lydia, “had a real devotion to teaching”, in a profession with a “history of sacrifice” (IS/210/1). Rather than follow in her heritage, when Lydia left school she avoided teaching because she wanted to “break new ground” (IS/210/1). It wasn’t until Lydia was 28, and a mother, that she felt drawn to teaching, a career that she described as “a profession of value, where you are doing something worthwhile with your life” (IS/210/1).

As a child Lydia had teachers who really inspired her, and these teachers have contributed to her beliefs about teaching today. These teachers stood out to Lydia as “beautiful people with endless patience, who had a natural ability to teach and they made people happy” (IS/210/1). The example of these teachers helped to form Lydia’s belief that, “Good teachers need to be well educated and learners themselves” (IS/210/2). Lydia told me that she tries to do a really good job and she likes to keep her teaching light and fun, because she thinks that for children, “learning should be easy” (IS/210/2). She says her rewards are the “cuddles and kisses and cards I receive from the children; this is the appreciation that I get for the nurturing side of teaching” (IS/210/2).

Lydia said that when she began teaching eighteen years ago, “as a purist young teacher I was going to be everything [to everyone]” (SG210), and throughout her teaching career she has conscientiously endeavoured to live up to this; seeking to be the type of teacher that her favourite teachers were to her. Throughout this teaching career Lydia has continued to study in order to keep abreast with knowledge, and she joined this research project because alongside her studies she wanted “a place to share and get feedback on a more personal level” (C/02/10). Reflecting back on her experience in the research group Lydia said this:

Not only have I been able to raise any issue I chose to raise, I have been supported in my growth as a leader. I feel that to be a good leader one needs to maintain both health and well-being. The use of a reflective diary and a group such as we have had is a very accessible way of maintaining a high level of mental health, with humour. This group has been a place to rethink my values and reactions; without a group such as this, the depth of reflection I have had, would never have happened (C/02/10).
In all of the comments above Lydia reflects her conscientious desire to be the ideal teacher. She models herself on her predecessors, puts into practice what she has learnt, keeps abreast with current knowledge, and engages in deep and meaningful self reflection, all in the quest to be the best she can be. Lydia has positioned herself within the discourses that have been persistent throughout her life and she has learnt her lessons well. She has modelled her conduct on the messages that she has absorbed over time in much the same way that the Grecians, in fourth century B.C.E. (Foucault, 1990b), did. These Grecians learnt to conduct themselves as moral and ethical subjects not because of set rules but because of the images and ideals that they had absorbed over time; messages that they had learnt through the widespread problematization of sexuality and morality to which they had been exposed.

As with sexuality, the domain of teaching has been problematized, indeed “overpopulated with other contexts; with other people; with competing forms of knowledge; and with desires, pleasures and fears” (Britzman, 2000, p. 36). The sheer proliferation of such discourse means the ideal kind of teacher is just “so obvious it doesn’t require discussion” (MacNaughton, 2000, p. 53) and as a result, teachers like Lydia just develop a “sense” (p. 53) of what is normal, right, and best practice. Foucault (1995a) described the process like this:

A multiplicity of often minor processes, of different origin and scattered location, which overlap, repeat, or imitate one another, support one another, distinguish themselves from one another according to their domain of application, converge and gradually produce the blueprint of a general method (p. 138).

The many messages that Lydia has received throughout her life about good teaching practice converged to create a blueprint for her actions against which Lydia measured her practice.

**Contradiction and impossibility**

To be her “best every day” (SG5/20) Lydia modified her actions, put her own desires and needs aside in favour of others, and conducted herself with the kind of self-restraint and mastery that she believed was fitting for the teacher she wanted to be. This was not easy for Lydia, and as the following statements illustrate, Lydia was grappling with the
contradictions she was experiencing between what she believed as ideal and what it was actually possible for her to achieve.

God knows how many people I've talked to today in a very positive way, very caring, very listening and then I get home and I'm still doing it with my family and I haven't actually thought my own thoughts through very well at all at any point today and probably for a month you know (SG5/37).

I do sort of feel, um, confined to certain ways of behaving because I'm in a position that demands certain behaviour and sometimes that's fair enough but every now and then when you're a bubbly person you can actually lose it can't you and those days are quite challenging... I barged through the principal's office with this note going... not a good look for a lady in leadership and I was beginning to crumble a bit today you know... I was behaving myself and I sort of lost it a bit, in the moment... that's where one's personal belief comes in like a ton of bricks... there are times that are very serious but one does have to be able to go there but its like... I don't want to be this false person in my life and I think that's what a woman is challenged with... (SG5/17).

The struggle to maintain the standard that Lydia had set herself, and her reluctance to get it wrong, is evident in the discussion below.

Lydia
I've got stuff which I haven't shared [with my team] because I've been reluctant to put my foot out. I've been hesitant; I don't want to get putting my foot out in this way and it not work you know.

Louise
What's wrong with it not working?

Lydia
Well I'm getting hung up on the leadership role, that's why... It's just that I'm highly aware of what I'm doing with them and I don't want to go wrong because I've read enough to know that while one - um - how do you say oh your - um - how people value you, what's the word?

Jan
Esteem?

Lydia
Yes or - um - it's like your bank of goodies that you have, it's like your credence, credibility, that's the word - um - it's built up. You slowly get your credibility over a long
time, so slowly I've been building my credibility and I've read enough to know that credibility can be absolutely shot down in one bad move and you can be back down here and you have to build up that credibility again.

Louise

Why don't you just say to your team, 'that's not worked so lets find out why; then plan the next step?

Lydia

That's quite brave (SG7/38-39).

In this conversation Lydia highlights the struggle she feels as she works to maintain her credibility; the credibility that she believes is necessary for a leader. In a similar fashion to the school girl in Davies, Dormer, Gannon, Laws, Rocco, Lenz Taguchi, & McCann (2001), who realises that “one blot of ink [on her school work] is enough to indicate that mastery is incomplete” (p. 177), Lydia faces the constant prospect that her mistakes will render her inadequate or lacking in self-restraint and mastery (Foucault, 1990b). There are things that Lydia wants to say to her team and there are ideas that she would like to introduce to them, but her self-restraint is restricting what she feels she can, or should, do. Even though Lydia has worked “hard at achieving the right signifiers... she is [always still] at risk of running up against definitions of correct practice that she does not [yet] know about” (Davies, et al., 2001, p. 175). This makes it difficult for Lydia to maintain a standard of practice that she thinks is ideal, even if these ideals are built around what Walkerdine (1990) calls “an impossible dream” (p. 18).

On the one hand Lydia believes a teacher “needs to maintain both health and well-being” (C/02/10) and that “depth of reflection” is important (C/02/10), and yet she has no time for herself admitting, “I haven’t actually thought my own thoughts through well at all at any point today and probably for a month” (SG5/37). While Lydia is a well-read, experienced and highly skilled teacher, she is worried about “putting her foot out” (SG7/38), admits that she is “confined to certain ways of behaving” (SG5/17), and she works at “behaving herself” (SG5/17). Like the teachers in Duncan’s (2001) study, Lydia is “positioned at the bottom of the bureaucratic system, and expected to work within the rules” (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, cited in Duncan, 2001, p. 121), and because Lydia was “reluctant to put [her] foot out” (SG7/38) or “go wrong” (SG7/38), breaking the rules, even if these were self imposed, was not the most viable option for her at the time.
Osgood (2006) believes that teachers like Lydia live and work in what Foucault (1983, cited in Osgood, 2006) calls a “double bind” (p. 10). These teachers are caught in a history that positions them as nurturing, caring and subservient (e.g. Walkerdine, 1990; Singer, 1992; Court, 1995; Middleton & May, 1997; Tamboukou, 2000), while they are expected to work in an industry that measures teaching success against a masculine construct (Osgood, 2006), which is top-down, outcomes-based, and driven by economic rationalism (Grieshaber, 2000). In a society where women have fought long and hard to “prove themselves equal to men – that is, as rational” (Walkerdine, 1990, p. 70), it can be costly to challenge the beliefs, practices and structures that have granted approval, recognition and credibility. Indeed, as both Lydia and Weedon (1997) contend; this takes bravery.

It may well take extreme and brave actions on the part of the agents of challenge to achieve even small shifts in the balance of power (Weedon, 1997, p. 108).

**Resistance: Challenges and possibilities**

**Risk and resignation**

For Lydia, and others like her who are living within the contradiction that comes from being “guardians of an impossible dream” (Walkerdine, 1990, p. 25) while claiming independence as professional working woman, admitting that something is not working can be risky (Snow-Gerono, 2005). For example, even though Lydia worked daily to fulfil sometimes impossible ideals, she still believed that with just “one bad move” (SG7/38), she could lose her credibility. Because she believed credibility was necessary in leadership, for Lydia to admit then that she had made a bad move was for her, a risk. Not only did Lydia believe she risked losing her credibility, but also her position as leader, a position that she had worked long and hard to achieve. Because of this it was important that Lydia avoided making mistakes, and so she worked hard to get it right.

Lydia learnt, like many others throughout their life, that rewards accompany those who get it right. From infancy through to adulthood, getting it right is rewarded by such affirmations as affection, recognition and remuneration, and in many instances getting it right is a requirement of continued employment. In New Zealand, for example, because teachers all need to have Teacher Registration by 2012 (Ministry of Education, 2002), it
is important that teachers follow this edict even if doing so means following a prescriptive criteria. Within such a system, failing to get it right may mean the loss of employment (Cochran-Smith, 2001b; MacNaughton, 2005), which goes some way towards explaining why getting it right was so important to Lydia (MacNaughton, 2003c). Lydia had learnt that getting it right brings rewards, and that getting it wrong can mean punishment or exclusion (Foucault, 1972, 1995a); even if this punishment is self-induced by feelings of failure as was the case with Jan.

Jan

All the wonderful thoughts about individually planning for each child, have made me feel a failure for years cause I couldn’t do it, you know. And it’s not real, it’s an unreal expectation, some of it – not all of it, and so for me now I think okay well within what I can manage, what is important to me? (SG9/18) It’s taken me courage to admit that I’m not God’s gift to 30 children all at once you know... (SG9/37).

After ten years of trying to get it right and feeling a failure, Jan admitted to herself that she just “couldn’t do it” (SG9/37) and this took “courage” (SG9/37). Even though Jan realised meeting the individual needs of 30 children was in fact an “unreal expectation” (SG9/37), she still needed courage to admit, even to herself, that she couldn’t meet this expectation. Is it any wonder then that Lydia felt it would be “quite brave” (SG7/39) to admit to her team that things had not worked; for Lydia it felt better not to take such a risk. Instead, Lydia tried harder to be like the women teachers she had admired in her youth.

The sacrifice of self-mastery

I wrote about this in my journal when, part way through this project, my mother-in-law Dora passed away and I began to think about what makes a remarkable woman and the sacrifice that this can involve.

Today I have been thinking about why all the tributes at Dora’s funeral had been about how she put everyone else first. It seems to me that her selflessness was all that seemed to matter. What, I wonder, makes a woman remarkable? (JE 15/06/04).
Dora was a woman who had lots of ideas, who was well-read, and who had an open mind and a zest for learning, right up until her death at age 89. Why was it that these attributes were mostly overlooked? Why didn’t people talk about these?

I know that everything that was said at the funeral was indeed a beautiful tribute to a wonderful woman who had indeed led a selfless life, but somehow this has unsettled me and made me angry. Why was it that in the tributes to Dora, it was the selflessness that others seemed to think represented a remarkable woman? I guess I am just thinking about my own life and what I think a remarkable woman is (JE 15/06/04).

Dora once told me that she felt she was a woman born ahead of her time; a career woman who in an era when women got married and had children in their early twenties, had her first of four children at age 35 years. Dora was a woman who as a teenager came top in a New Zealand, nationwide, accounting exam only to be told it was of no use because women can’t work in this field. Instead Dora ran a book shop and her love for reading and ideas kept her mind alive right up until she died. I have never met someone who, in their late 80s, is still excited about the new things she is learning; and yet Dora’s life had been a selfless one. In order for her to continue to fulfil her dreams and to use her active and intelligent mind she learnt to juggle her life, so that she could put the needs of her family and friends ahead of her own; and only then did she believe she could pursue her own interests.

I am sad and angry and grateful all at once, mourning not only for the loss of a remarkable woman who was certainly one born before her time but for women everywhere, who like Dora are remembered not for their contribution to the world of ideas or for their great achievements but only for the times that they have selflessly put others first. It’s not that I don’t appreciate what Dora did; it’s just that well she was much more than just a server of others (JE 15/06/04).

Dora’s funeral made me think about my own mum, who along with Dora and others like her, has learnt to manage a heavy workload, putting the needs of others before her own. In a sense my mother too was born ahead of her time.

My dear mum Valerie, you left school to work and help pay the bills when you could have gone to university because you are so clever. You travelled the world as a single woman when it took 6 weeks on a ship to reach Europe, you rode on camels and loved adventure,
you fell in love with a sailor, married him in London and then continued on your OE without him. I admire you. You came back to New Zealand and raised four children and worked and did everything for everyone so perfectly. You are a woman caught between generations, a woman that has had to be all to everyone, and you have managed it all so perfectly. I am grateful to you mum; you are clever and remarkable and despite all the hardship you have managed to keep your spirit alive (JE 15/06/04).

If women like Dora and Valerie had decided as working mothers in the 1960s and 1970s that living in a double bind was too difficult, and they had chosen to put their intellectual endeavours before their mothering and service to others, they faced the risk of being classified as selfish and indulgent, a most undesirable image for a woman (Foucault, 1990b). If they dared to admit that balancing both was not working, they faced the scorn of those who thought they should not be working at all. As Walkerdine (1990) notes, women like Dora and Valerie are “caught inside what they are: the unique combination of worker and woman, dependent and independent, free and trapped” (p. 28); a risky and tenuous place to be.

In order to survive within this unique combination, women like Lydia, Dora, and Valerie have had to learn to manage it all. “In almost a magical way, they combine housework, childcare and [work]... In the time and space of a workday, they continually move in and out of personal and public boundaries” (Tamboukou, 2000, p. 470); and to do this they have had to bring their own desires, and bodies, into subjection (Foucault, 1995a). In a Foucauldian sense Lydia, Dora and Valerie have become “practiced bodies” (Foucault 1995a, p. 138), who through discipline have learnt the self-mastery needed to maintain credibility within their worlds. They have learnt to juggle their time; to subject their bodies tirelessly to the task at hand; and to keep the interest of others at the forefront of what they do. To their credit these women have kept their spirits alive even if they have become somewhat resigned to their world as it is. For some, however, the paradox of being a woman has left them feeling suffocated, powerless, and inadequate (Tamboukou, 2000).

**The cost of subjection**

The cost of such subjection and self discipline has not escaped teachers, with Duncan (2001, 2002, 2004) reporting that some teachers are feeling disillusioned and indifferent towards their work. In her doctoral work with early education teachers in New Zealand,
Duncan found that the constant changes of the past two decades, along with the continuing demands from Government for accountability, has left teachers feeling “overtaken and misplaced” (Duncan, 2004, p. 165). Teachers in her study had “become resigned to the fact that they were powerless to change or influence many of the issues and policies and practices that were occurring” (Duncan, 2002, p. 42), and because of this they had decided to just do the “best they could” (p. 42).

Duncan’s findings are mirrored in the research of Long (2004) who reports that some of the teachers in her study felt “sucked into systems that rob them of their vigor [sic], their drive to make a difference, and their thirst for continued growth” (p. 142). And Jan found this too, commenting about her colleagues:

I’m sure some teachers think that they are doing everything right, some teachers have just given up, some teachers just do what they can do and go home and try to forget about it, and other people feel bad that they’re never quite making it no matter what they do (SG9/37).

On one occasion we discussed why it is that some teachers have become resigned to the way things are, accepting things without protest.

Jan
And it’s the practice that challenges and supports theory isn’t it you know; they can’t theorise without us practising really.
Jo
No that’s right.
Jan
But teachers, anyway that I have seen, are reticent to stand up against the flow and - um - I mean being able to stand up and say that all sounds wonderful ‘but’, you know, I’ve tried that and I can’t see it working or whatever, I think is something that teachers need to start doing because I think teachers are very threatened, like if I haven’t got it working, it’s my inadequacy not the theory’s inadequacy you know what I mean and more and more I can’t believe that good strong people, we’ve got really strong minded people at school and they sit here and just let it happen to them... I don’t know whether it’s because of who we are or because we’re so used to fitting in and being flexible...
Louise
Is it too hard to fight? The indifference, is it linked to surviving and a lack of confidence that makes us think it must be me that's wrong, it can't be the theory that's wrong?
Jan
Yeah.
Erica
And the tiredness... there is so much coming down... we have to write about, record, and we are spending hours and hours and hours on it and hey its not even worth that paper its written on.... (SG10/4-5).

Why is it indeed that "good strong people... strong minded people at school...just let it happen to them" (SG10/4)? Is this because these teachers felt the way the teachers in Duncan's study felt; "powerless to change or influence" (Duncan, 2002, p. 42) decision making. Or was it because of the tiredness that comes from being "practiced bodies" (Foucault, 1995a, p. 138) who have learnt through sheer hard work and sacrifice the art of self-mastery (Foucault, 1990b)? Resistance after all requires effort, and change can take a long time; and all of this takes energy.

Jan
I think the thing with disagreeing is that it takes energy and it takes sort of, like when you are tired.
Jo
It's easier just to do it.
Margaret
And maybe because if you do want to change something it takes so long you're thinking why bother.
Jo
Yeah and the effort that's involved (SG11/39).

The experience of the teachers in this research project, and those in Duncan's (2001, 2002, 2004) study, positioned alongside the experiences of Dora and Valerie, have helped me to understand more about why it is that resistance is so costly for some. Not only does resistance require effort, energy, and time, but for some, resistance may be a risk they are not sure they are ready to take. Even though some have learnt that self-mastery has not brought the freedom and pleasure they had hoped for (Foucault, 1990b), they nevertheless want to retain what they have worked hard to achieve. The risk of losing
what one has worked a lifetime to gain may be enough to deter some from resistance, even if this means experiencing the disappointment and disillusionment that can accompany being caught between what is desired, and what is possible (Walkerdine, 1990, Davies, 2000a).

Life-shattering experiences

That the girl [teacher] appears willingly to accept the position to which she is classically fitted does not, I would argue, tell us something basic about the nature of the female body, nor the female mind, but rather tells us of the power of those practices through which a particular resolution to the struggle is produced (Walkerdine, 1990, cited in Davies, et al., 2001, p. 177).

The fact that “strong minded people” (SG10/5) are willing to accept the double bind within which they teach, says more about the power of the discourses that have shaped their teaching than it does about the teachers themselves. While it might be a risk to admit that one’s practice is not working, it can also be daunting to realise that the very foundations one has come to believe exemplify excellence, are in fact built around fictions and impossible dreams (Walkerdine, 1990). Confronting, challenging and resisting the practices and positions that one has spent a life time trying to achieve with excellence - for example, being a remarkable woman, being a good teacher, or engaging in best practice - is therefore not without its difficulties.

Disrupting and forsaking beliefs and practices that have provided certainty, security and verification can be a frightening, emotional, and life-shattering experience, as MacNaughton (2005) found when she first encountered the work of Walkerdine.

Walkerdine’s work shattered my beliefs (built at that time over almost twenty years in the field) that child development offered a true and neutral picture of the child. Her work also shattered many of the truths of the child that were at the heart of my understanding of ‘good’ early childhood practice. In response, I struggled to produce new meanings of the child (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 38).

Once MacNaughton (2005) realised that many of the truths at the heart of her practice were just privileged discourses that had reached their status through institutional and
personal support (MacNaughton, 2000), she was left struggling to find new meanings. These privileged truths were after all, the truths that had given MacNaughton certainty that she was teaching properly, and that she had trained well and was therefore qualified to be the teacher she was. Once this certainty was removed it was no wonder that MacNaughton felt shaken. Teachers who find themselves in this position may well feel that their world as they had known it, has shattered, leaving them questioning what they should do next. Furthermore, when someone like Lydia has her practice troubled to the extent that she questions whether or not she can be sure of anything, this can be unsettling to say the least.

Teachers who discover Smith's (2003) work on observation in early education may feel this way, because Smith's reconceptualisation of the observation process troubles the teacher as expert. While Smith's work has been an important contribution for those working towards social justice and equity in early education, teachers who come across this work for the first time may feel their expertise is under threat, and as a result, they may hold on to their knowing more fervently than ever. Some may have built a career around their knowledge on observation, for example, even training others in this field, and because of this they may feel the need to retain what they have worked long and hard to achieve. As teachers are already typically at the bottom of both the bureaucratic and academic ladders (Schon, 1983, Ayers, 1993, Gore, 1993, Duncan, 2001), the threat of losing expertise and recognition may not only feel life-shattering but also frightening.

Fear, according to Foucault (1990b), is a strong and effective deterrent, and the fear of losing what one has spent a life time believing and working for may be enough to stop some people from challenging the accepted truths governing their practice. It may feel safer remaining attached to familiar places and understandings (St. Pierre, 2000), even if this does mean living within a double bind requiring subjection and self-mastery. The paradox is that those wishing to challenge the fictions they encounter are more able to do so when they are capable in the same system that they are seeking to challenge. As Davies et al. (2001) so aptly put it:

One must submit in extraordinary ways in order to gain mastery. Yet mastery need not bind us to the very terms and conditions of our subjection... Mastery — of language, of the body — provides the conditions of possibility for inventing something new, of seeing
afresh, of creatively moving beyond the already known... Subordination is thus the precondition for resistance and opposition... (p. 181).

Self-mastery then, according to Davies et al. (2001) above, does not necessarily work against resistance, but can also enable it. This was so for Jan, when after ten years of feeling a failure, her knowledge, experience, and ability, gave her the distance she required to be able to say, “It’s an unreal expectation” (SG9/18). This was also the case with MacNaughton (2005) who, when faced with the realisation that her experience had been build on fictions, was able to use her intellectual mastery to entertain and develop alternatives. For both Jan and MacNaughton, having a level of self-mastery enabled them to see the contradictions for what they were and this, along with their years of teaching experience, was enough to enable them to resist what had once been certain and normal. Coming face to face with uncertainty and realising that what one used to believe may not actually be as it seems, takes courage and for some, like MacNaughton, this may be life-shattering. My own experience was very different, as I found coming face to face with uncertainty a liberating experience.

Celebrating uncertainty
For me, realising that I was “not duty-bound to accept existing truth conditions” (Walkerdine, 1990, p. 70) was a huge relief. Rather than struggling to hold on to what I understood, I was excited about the possibility of letting it go. Becoming aware that the dream for early education was actually impossible to achieve was for me just as Davies (2000a) asserts it is; “enormously liberating” (p. 166). This is how I first described the experience:

I remembered how I felt when first I discovered that I no longer needed certainty – it was like taking off a heavy winter coat and stepping out into the sunshine of spring (Taylor, 2003, cited in MacNaughton 2003a).

The relief that I felt was largely because of the doubts and uncertainties that I already had, and which I had harboured for 25 years of my teaching career. I was frustrated and sometimes angry at the inconsistencies, the stupidities, and impossibilities that I worked with every day, and yet because others seemed certain, I mostly kept this to myself. This was especially so in early childhood professional learning situations where, as a primary
trained teacher transferring to early childhood education, I already felt on the fringes. I shared with Liz the feeling of being an outsider (Con/02/3), and along with Lydia I felt that early childhood trained teachers believed that primary school teachers needed to catch up (SG4/22). And so I carried on doing the best that I could until I discovered feminist poststructuralism; and then everything changed.

Until I came across feminist poststructuralism I thought that I was alone in my thinking. Because I had “no alternative discursive practices with which to resist” (Davies, 2000a, p. 25) I found “myself being carried along by the force of a discourse that I [did] not, at that point in time, have the skill or resources to question” (p. 168). What feminist poststructuralist theory gave me was the permission I needed to question and doubt, and to see that this was a necessary and valuable exercise. Feminist poststructuralist theory took me to what if questions which were the sorts of questions I remember asking as a child, and with this questioning to be a little subversive – and enjoy it! I no longer felt the compulsion to comply and this was indeed “enormously liberating” (Davies, 2000a, p. 166). Feminist poststructuralist theory opened up a new world for me; one that was exciting, possibility driven, and tremendously energising (Davies, 2000a).

Unlike Jones’ (1997) students who found poststructuralism contradictory and confusing, I was not deterred, because I found my world confusing and contradictory anyway. Instead, I began to use the confusion to sharpen “my reflexive gaze” (Davies, 2000a, p. 143), and because I chose to no longer “rely on the certainties that others have put in place” (p. 170), I developed a more “acute awareness of life” (p. 170). For instance, I became more acutely aware of my surroundings and I seemed to hear more clearly the statements around me that had been shaping my enactment of life. As I became more aware of what had become naturalised in my thinking and actions I was more able to question and “resist [my] take-up in discourses [I found] undesirable” (p. 143). I became more inquisitive and more sceptical, and I discovered how much fun this could be. For the first time in my life I felt that it was not only okay to critique structures and discourses external to myself, but I began to realise how important this actually was. I began to ask questions about the ideologies that had shaped what I believed, finding as I did that these ideologies became weakened (MacNaughton, 2005). Poststructuralist feminist theory awakened my secret desires to be mischievous, to rebel, and to test the boundaries of what had become acceptable for me; and to find this pleasurable.
Angry woman, naughty girl

Throughout my life I have taken up images of what it means to be, for example, an ideal daughter, wife, mother, friend, and teacher, and I have worked hard to attain these ideals, often subjugating my own desires to those of others. I once believed, for instance, that it was my main purpose in life to support the dreams of others, and that through this I could achieve fulfilment and pleasure. While I can't deny that I have indeed gained some pleasure from seeing others succeed, I also became weary and disillusioned over time. As my life expanded to include more and more people the weight of my ideals became too heavy for me, and as I could no longer manage the standards that I had set myself, I began to feel incapable. Through my encounter with poststructuralist feminism I entered a new phase in my life, and as a result I began to speak to the discourses and the fantasies that I had willingly taken up as the true and natural way for me to be a woman and teacher; and I got angry.

I am angry at what I feel has been imposed on me by external expectations of what a woman should be, where her priorities should lie and how I should act, think and speak and I am angry at myself for allowing myself to be regulated. I am angry at society for defining femininity in a way that makes me feel loud, bossy, arrogant, and 'wearing the pants'. I hate passivity – it kills me. I am angry and there is fire in my belly (JE/26/8/03).

I am sick of the structures and powerful institutions that determine and confine the practice of teaching. I am tired of the way I have always felt that I don't fit and the way I've always felt that I 'don't get it!' I am sick of the inner circle who know, and gets to tell others. I am sick of early childhood speak. I hate the way I have been defined and marginalised as a primary trained teacher. I can't stand the way early childhood teachers 'follow'. I am angry at the child centred pedagogy that places women in a passive nurturing role and recently I am furious about the male theory that still dominates early childhood thinking and speech. I am angry and there is fire in my belly (JE/26/8/03).

These are two of the eight entries that I made in my journal that day and while I was beginning to experience the liberation that came from realising things could be different, as these journal entries clearly demonstrate I was also experiencing rage. Whenever I had been so angry in the past it was usual for me to feel like a naughty girl (Court, 1995) afterwards, mainly because of my belief that anger was harmful; but this was different,
and it felt fantastic. Rather than being destructive, this anger "opened my eyes, seared my heart, ignited my passion, and steepened my fierceness" (Kidd, 1996, p. 186); it generated energy and strengthened my resolve to resist what I had once found normal and natural. In this very small act of personal defiance, my world shifted. In the spirit of Foucault (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983), I no longer sought to discover who I was, but rather to refuse the I that I had become. My refusal to accept what had once been normal and natural was a definitive moment in my reconstitution.

I did not abandon my life as I had known it, however, because I soon realised that the norms that I was seeking to disrupt were the very norms that had created my life as I knew it; a life that had been mostly happy and relatively satisfying. I also realised that to continue to survive within this world I was dependent to some degree on maintaining some of these norms. Even when one resists norms, according to Butler (2004), these norms are upheld simply because one has chosen to stand outside of them; the very act of resisting a norm confirms its existence as a reference point. In this sense "the "I" that I am finds itself at once constituted by norms and dependent on them but also endeavors [sic] to live in ways that maintain a critical transformative relation to them" (Butler, 2004, p. 3). So it was that I chose to live in a critical relationship with the norms surrounding my personhood.

Questioning what I had once accepted as normal and becoming angry over this seemed to give me a renewed vigour for life, I found this an interesting contrast to the teachers referred to earlier, who had become tired and resigned to the status quo. This anomaly made me curious about the relationship between the active desiring subject that I was becoming, and the passion and energy that this seemed to generate. In the storylines of Roxy, which are discussed next, I began to make some sense of these connections, and this has opened up possibilities for me in relation to how I might work with teachers towards social justice and equity.

Subversion in the act of desiring

Woman can be a subject who realizes, speaks, writes her subjected condition, and searches out the ways in which the patterns holding that subjection in place can be subverted, turned to her own ends (Davies, 2000a, p. 48).
Roxy is a teacher who actively pursued her desires and to do so she acted as an "autocratic leader" (R/25/04/04/2), putting her own desires before the needs of her staff even when others did not approve of her actions. When Roxy did this she subverted the image of an early education teacher as "nurturant, facilitating, sensitive and supportive" (Walkerdine, 1990, p. 71). Not only this, Roxy subverted the historically held notion that pleasure comes from self-restraint, self-denial (Foucault, 1990b), and putting the needs of others first.

Subverting images of the early education teacher

When I first met Roxy I was captured by her passion; it was at an early childhood research evening where I was sharing about my research. After interviewing Roxy I made it one of my goals to find out as much as I could about the passion that she told me had been with her for over 50 years of teaching. Roxy began her teaching in Great Britain after leaving school in 1954. She told me:

I was born to be an early childhood teacher, I just know it. Before I even started my training in the UK, to be a nursery nurse, I would spend all my school holidays helping out at residential nurseries, day nurseries and nursery schools. I just couldn't get enough (Con/02/5).

After emigrating from Great Britain to New Zealand in 1963, Roxy continued to work in early education. She opened her own nursery school in 1967 and she owned this until 1980. The nursery school closed for school holidays which, conveniently, ended up being when Roxy gave birth to each of her three children, enabling Roxy to work without a break away from teaching. After selling her business in 1980, Roxy got involved in a voluntary parent led preschool group, called playcentre, before rejoining the workforce in 1989 when she became an employee of a large early childhood centre. During this time Roxy did further training and completed her Diploma of Teaching ECE (IS/25/1). It wasn’t long before she decided she wanted to run her own centre again, telling me, “I found it hard working in another centre after having my own; in my own centre I could work within my own philosophy” (IS/25/1). So in 1995 Roxy set up another early childhood centre and this is the centre that she still owns and operates. Roxy believes that, “Once you have a philosophy that empowers you, it is very hard to adapt to another's philosophy” (FB/25).
When I first talked with Roxy I could not help but admire this woman, who for virtually her entire life had taught children and who still had so much energy, enthusiasm and passion. Roxy told me that, "Once I’m passionate about something my energy levels have no bounds" (R/25/03/02). She said, "I love working with children, I love how honest they are and how they just tell you how it is and I love the way they talk to each other" (IS/25/2). Roxy sees children as “little vessels; sponges who love to learn and we haven’t yet realised their full potential or how to extend their knowledge” (IS/25/2). Roxy thrives on “us all learning together” (IS/25/2) and because of this Roxy has continued to study and be involved in professional learning throughout her teaching career. Roxy told me she believes that “all forms of learning are fun and valuable” and because of this, “I get something from every learning opportunity I attend, even if it is only something small” (IS/25/2).

After I had known Roxy for two years I noticed a change in her; she seemed to have lost her passion; the passion which she attributed to her high levels of energy. In her journal Roxy explained it like this:

On returning to my centre after a six week visit to the UK, I found that my kindergarten had somehow changed. I felt like a stranger in my own kindergarten. Regular routines and practices which we had established over the past eight years were slightly altered; enough to take the edge off my beliefs that were reflected in the kindergarten philosophy (R/04/04/1).

Roxy told the research group:

I sort of felt that they didn’t want me to be there. I think they quite enjoyed me not being there (SG11/28).

As a group we discussed Roxy’s plight, suggesting to her that she should find out more about what her team wanted and that she might like to consider handing over the leadership role (SG11/29-32). What stood out to me during this conversation was how inert Roxy seemed, and as I had never seen her this way before, I became curious about this. Reflecting back on this time, Roxy told me that this was when she had struggled with a loss of passion (R/25/04/04/2).
A month later, at our May 2003 meeting Roxy seemed more vibrant and alive. She told us:

I feel that my whole centre has lost its focus and gosh I had to pull everybody into rein (SG12/17).

Roxy explained this further in the reflections she posted to me:

To bring the kindergarten back into the way that my philosophy and parents’ expectations were heading, I had to very much be the autocratic leader, as being ‘a friend’ obviously was not creating the desired affect. I ended up agreeing to one staff member walking out of her employment and another receiving a verbal warning (R/25/04/04/2).

The actions of Roxy were somewhat surprising given that they were not typical of an early education teacher who is more prone to “subordinating their personal power to the group” (Raymond, 1989, cited in Kenway & Modra, 1992, p. 162). Our suggestions to Roxy had been nudging her towards a more peaceful and consensual resolution but she did not take up this advice; instead she became, in her own words, “autocratic” (R/25/04/04/2). One participant in particular found this difficult to comprehend, commenting to me later, “I can’t understand why someone with so much passion wants to hold so much power” (R/28/09/03/1). While Roxy’s actions may have been unexpected, and difficult for some to understand, the deliberate and autocratic action that she had taken seemed to have restored her passion and energy.

As I continued to reflect on Roxy and her passion and energy I couldn’t help but compare her to the teachers in Duncan’s (2002) study, and the “strong minded people” (SG10/5) Jan had discussed at one of our meetings; the teachers who had become tired, disillusioned, and resigned to things as they were. At the time I was reading Walkerdine (1990) and thinking about passivity in early education teaching and Roxy’s experience brought some of these ideas together for me. I was keen to share my thoughts with the research group and so at our next meeting, July 2003, I put this quote up on the whiteboard, hoping to provoke conversation and debate. It was a comment that I found in a book by Penny Brownlee (1991) on encouraging creativity in children’s art work.
Neither should adults create for their own pleasure, with children's materials, in front of the children (Brownlee, 1991, p. 22).

This quote brought different responses, one of which was to tell me that I had taken this out of context, which of course I had in order to be provocative. I then introduced the group to some of the work I had been reading from Walkerdine (1990), for example:

At what cost the fantasy of liberation? I suggest that the cost is borne by the teacher, like the mother. She is passive to the child's active, she works to his play. She is the servant of the omnipotent child, whose needs she must meet at all times (p. 24).

The mother and the teacher both become part of the environment. They are defined by the very qualities that are opposite to those of 'the child', who is active, inquiring and whose activity leads to 'real understanding'. The teacher and the mother, by contrast, are necessary not to instruct but to watch, observe, monitor, and facilitate development. They are defined as 'passive' in relation the child's 'active' (p. 71).

The regulation of female sexuality and its medicalization in the nineteenth century pathologize passion in favour of nurturance. Passion and desire become problematic... attachment, bonding and nurturance replace passion and desire (p. 73).

The ideas of Walkerdine created lengthy debate, especially as these thoughts were new to most of those present. The thought that teachers might be passive servants, as Walkerdine (1990) suggests, was troubling for some; creating strong reactions. After discussing these ideas at length, I asked Roxy if she would mind me sharing some of the parallels I was beginning to see between her experiences and this work by Walkerdine. Roxy was keen for me to do so and the conversation went as follows.

Louise
I've been thinking about when you [Roxy] got back to your centre and the things that had driven you that you were active in, you know what I mean, had been taken away from you.
Roxy
Exactly, exactly!
Louise
And you were put in a passive role...
Roxy
Yes.
Louise
And what happened to your passion?
Roxy
It was gone.
Louise
And we said to you, "Oh Roxy its time you gave some control to the others teachers, blah de blah..."
Liz
I think we did.
Louise
We did, but what stood out for me is what had happened to Roxy's passion. The thing that I found in you the very first time that I met you was 'passion, passion, passion' and I'm thinking what has driven your passion and then I thought hey I get bored sometimes in early childhood when I'm doing too much of the nurturing stuff because I'm not a passive person (banging the table) I am not!
Roxy
No exactly!
Louise
And when I am active and I am passionate I come alive!
Roxy
Yes, yes exactly!
Louise
When I am passive I'm bored!
Roxy
Yes well that's how I feel.
Louise
Now if we want intelligent people and we want to raise the standard of the profession of early childhood, why are we creating passive nurturers, when we should have active passionate people?
Roxy
Exactly, hear, hear!
[All erupting at once in excited chatter]
Louise
We can still nurture, but not all the time (SG13/14-15).
Roxy was excited by what I had shared, confirming her thoughts later in writing.

That evening at our research group meeting when we spoke about passion/nurturance and active/passive, I understood why I felt the way I did when I returned to the kindy; can you remember Louise? It felt so right the way that we talked about it (PR/04/04/2).

Roxy’s storylines, the work of Walkerdine, the resignation of the teachers we had discussed, and my own experiences were coming together and challenging me to think further about the image of early education teachers. It was time for me to consider how teacher professional learning might be affected if the image of early education teachers could be re-imagined.

**Active desiring teachers**

Passion and desire become problematic... attachment, bonding and nurturance replace passion and desire (Walkerdine, 1990, p. 73).

In order for Roxy to feel passionate about her teaching again, she temporarily put her desires above those of her staff, thus subverting the image of an early education teacher as passive and subservient to the needs and desires of others. The actions of Roxy were the “antithesis” (Ryan & Ochsner, 1999, p .14) of the widely accepted norm of early education teachers as “good, sensitive, and nurturing” (p. 14), dependent on the expertise of others (Schon, 1983; Singer, 1992; Ayers, 1993; Hatherly, 1999; Carpenter, 2001) and voiceless (Bethell, 1999). After all “traditional culture rewards adults who are able to discern the needs of others rather than articulate their own feelings” (Silin, 1999, p. 43), but instead of conforming to this cultural expectation Roxy was thinking, articulate, confronting, passionate, actively defiant, and desiring; the kind of teacher more likely to get involved in the type of activism required by those pursuing social justice.

Continuing to position teachers as subservient, nurturing, and passive is problematic in terms of driving a social justice agenda (Ryan and Ochsner, 1999; Sumison, 2005; Lee-Thomas, Sumison & Roberts, 2005). Working towards social justice involves debating, critiquing, and challenging the social structures that sustain unjust practices. This requires actively engaged teachers who are prepared to think deeply about issues (Barnes, 2005).
cited in MacNaughton, 2005); debating them even when faced with the scorn of those who may label them “odd, abnormal, and wrong” (MacNaughton, 2001a, p. 70). According to Sumsion (2002), not many teachers are prepared to do this, and recruiting such teachers may be difficult if those attracted to teaching continue to position themselves as primarily passive and nurturing. If the majority of early education teachers feel unwilling or incapable of vigorously contesting issues, and if they do not feel it is their place to challenge the status quo, then those who are seeking a social justice agenda may feel isolated (Sumsion, 2002). As working against oppression on one’s own can be difficult (MacNaughton, 2001a), it may be necessary to re-imagine the image of early education teachers if a social justice vision is to be realised.

The historical notion of woman as unable to reason and therefore more fit for mothering and nurturance (Walkerdine, 1990; Singer, 1992, Kenway and Modra, 1992; Lyons, Quinn & Sumsion, 2005) is no longer suitable in a profession which has been founded by pioneering and strong woman (Snyder, 1972; Singer 1992; De Lair & Erwin, 2000; Bethell, 2001). While these women were prepared to accept, and even promote, the fact that education and teaching would help them to be better mothers (Singer, 1992, Bethell, 2001), it was necessary for them to do so in order to gain access to the world of learning; but this ideal is no longer necessary. To continue to uphold this ideal is not only detrimental to early education in terms of the types of teachers being recruited and retained (Sumsion, 2002), but also in terms of the ongoing aims of feminism. Traditional images of early education teachers keep women firmly fixed within patriarchal notions of what it means to be a woman, and give children in early education services a view of women as those most fitting for caring and serving. How much better it would be for these children to grow up believing that women can be thinking, articulate, confronting, passionate, actively defiant, and desiring, just as Roxy was.

What would have happened if Roxy had given up her own desires, or if she felt that her pleasure could only be found in the success of others? Did Roxy have to learn to take her “pleasures within reason” (McWilliam, 2000, p. 165), without being self-serving, before she could experience the freedom promised to those who achieve self-mastery and excellence (Foucault, 1990b)? If Roxy had spent a lifetime gaining her pleasure reasonably (McWilliam, 2000), I wonder if she could have sustained such passion and
enthusiasm in her teaching for as long as she has done; or would she have just become another person who was once a teacher (Sumsion, 2002).

What if Roxy had taken the advice of the research group when we suggested she hand over leadership to someone else (SGl1129-32); even if she didn’t really want to? Would Roxy have ended up like the teachers in Duncan’s (2002) study; resigned to the fact that she couldn’t really do anything about the changes because she had to be the kind of teacher that accepts and adapts? Maybe Roxy could have worked harder to become a more democratic leader; one that seeks consensus and who is willing to subjugate her desires to those of the group. If Roxy had tried harder she might even have got accustomed to the changes, maybe even eventually agreeing with them. Instead, Roxy fought for what she believed in and in doing so she subverted the predominantly held image of a good early education teacher.

Teachers who leave the important decisions to others (Ayers, 1993), who are “passionless, non-thinking, uninvolved” (p. 19), are not the teachers likely to fight for social justice; nor will these teacher be the ones to bring about progressive social change (MacNaughton, 2001a, 2005). These teachers are more likely to have difficulty taking action against injustice, just like the teachers in Duncan’s (2002) study who, unlike Roxy, lost their fight, accepting impositions from Government without question or protest, even when these mandates meant that they could no longer fulfil their dreams for children. How can teachers like this fight with vigour for the issues that they are passionate about when they believe that their pleasure and desire should be subjugated to that of others?

Will a radically different view of teachers change what teachers are prepared to debate, and make possible a profession more willing to fight for the issues that they are passionate about? What if images of good teachers could be expanded to include teachers who are radically opinionated and defiant in relation to what they believe is in the best interests of those they teach? What might redefining the image of early education teachers mean for teachers like Roxy who need to become active and desiring in order to be reignited with passion and energy? What if teachers could more actively influence decision making directly affecting the way they teach; could they find renewed passion and energy? Will “good strong people… strong minded people at school… [who] just let it happen” (SG10/4) then be reenergised to fight for what they believe in?
The irony in all of this is that even though Roxy had put her desires first, she believed that her desires were for the children and not herself, and even though Roxy admitted that it was passivity that left her feeling despondent and listless, she said she loves the nurturing and caring aspect of teaching (IS/25/02). It is interesting that of all the teachers in this research project, Roxy was the one most vehemently opposed to the ideas of Walkerdine when I first introduced them. She argued, saying that she was not “running around after children” (SG13/3), or at their “beck and call” (SG13/4); but that she was a “facilitator” (IS/25/2). Roxy thought that early education teaching had “nothing to do with status or sex” (SG/13/5) and that she was “privileged to be working with children” (SG13/4). All of these comments highlight the contradictory ways that Roxy has made sense of the complex world of teaching, and they reflect the high esteem she placed on her position as a teacher of young children. So if Roxy saw herself as a nurturer and carer (IS/25/2) and a facilitator who was not directive (IS25/02), what was it that drove her to be “autocratic” (R/25/04/04/2), firmly fixed and willing to fight for what she desired?

**Potentially in multiplicity**

Through Roxy’s teaching experience, spanning over 50 years, she has seen many trends come and go, giving her broad experience. Over her years teaching in both the UK and New Zealand Roxy had been exposed to many different discourses about teaching, making it possible for her to draw on any number of discourses in her practice. The availability of alternative discourses enabled Roxy to make choices about her practice based on the fact that she had a range of options available to her. Even though her practice may still have been guided by widely held notions of what makes a good teacher, Roxy had at her disposal alternative discourses; discourses other than the privileged discourses circulating within the New Zealand early education teaching community at the time. Because of this, Roxy could position herself within the discourses that she found the most desirable.

Having access to alternative discourses made it possible for Roxy to achieve what Foucault (1990a) calls “reverse discourse” (p. 101). When a discourse such as the discourse that positions early education teachers as passive becomes “a stumbling-block” (p. 101), as it did for Roxy, an opportunity is created for resistance. Through “an opposing strategy” (p. 101), such as the one Roxy employed when she actively pursued her own desires, the distribution of discourse can be reconstructed. For example, when
Roxy drew on alternative discourses, she rendered the power invested in the discourse of passive teacher “fragile” (p. 101), thus “thwart[ing]” (p. 101) it. And because discourse functions “as a multiplicity of discursive elements” (p. 100), within a “field of force relations” (pp. 101-102), it was possible for Roxy to employ contradictory discourses at the same time; which explains how Roxy was able to being a nurturing and caring teacher while being autocratic, active and desiring.

Working within multiple discourses not only renders the power of predominant discourses fragile as Foucault (1990a) contends it does, but having options opens up possibilities. When I began reading poststructuralist feminist literature, for example, I realised that there were alternative discourses available to me and this gave me options that I had not previously considered. Being exposed to multiple and sometimes contradictory discourses created possibilities; possibilities which shifted the way I positioned myself as a woman and teacher. When I became angry and I opposed the discourses which had positioned me as gentle and peaceful, the power of these discourses became fragile and as they did, the stable foundations of my being were fractured, creating the potential for otherness.

A poststructuralist analysis does not invent a new structure to replace the old, but provides insights into the discursive mechanisms which hold existing structures in place. Those insights allow a different relationship to the structure, a recognition of it as something which is not absolute, which can be acted upon by individuals and by collectivities. While its constitutive power must be recognised, the possibility that it can also be laughed out of existence, played with, disrupted, or used to manufacture new possibilities, can also be recognised. (Davies, 2003a, p. 200).

For Roxy and I, having access to multiple discourses brought “insights that allow[ed] a different relationship to the structure” (Davies, 2003a, p. 200) shaping what makes a good woman and early education teacher. Insight made it possible for us to laugh out of existence, play with, and disrupt the power of discourse (Davies, 2003a), because this insight helped us to understand the fragility and illusion of the beliefs and practices influencing our becoming. Exposure to a multiplicity of discourse made resistance possible, even if at first this resistance was only a very small act.
Resistance and the possibility of otherness

Being resistant to normalising practices and subverting the normalised image of teachers as passive and nurturant does not mean that one has to completely change everything about one’s job or lifestyle. For me, resistance started with the simple act of journal writing where I began to redefine and to undo what had once been acceptable to me. In this very private act I allowed myself to be angry with my past and the decisions I had made about what it meant for me to be a remarkable woman and teacher. This involved becoming enraged; an emotion not generally ascribed to good girls (Court, 1995) and one that is certainly frowned upon in some of the circles that I move in.

Without anger I doubt that I would have had the impetus to confront the issues that I did, as this anger activated my energy and created in me a desire for something different. As Roxy’s storyline intersected with my own I understood more about how the active nature of anger had helped me to reposition myself as a desiring woman, and this awakened in me a renewed passion for social justice. As a child I had a strong sense of justice (albeit self-centred at times), but I had learnt over the years to tone this down and to quieten my opinions because I would sometimes be overcome and display this in an unwomanly fashion. In a sense the flame had gone out, as I had fashioned my efforts to fit what others considered to be reasonable (McWilliam, 2000). Once I no longer felt the need to be peaceful at all costs, or subservient to what others defined appropriate, my desire for social justice was reignited.

Once I felt that it was okay for me to a “disorderly woman” (Russo, 1994, cited in McWilliam, 2000, p. 170) when required, the way I envisaged myself enacting my desires for social justice shifted. It’s not that I became an obnoxious person who had a total disregard for others, because this would have been defeating my desire for socially just relationships. It is just that I began to see what I might be capable of as the parameters that I had defined for myself were redefined. Believing, along with McWilliam (2000) that, “disorderly women may incite and embody deviance as well as being the means for bringing it under control” (p. 170) opened me up to possibilities. Instead of being afraid that I might transgress boundaries, I now began to believe that at times I would have to transgress boundaries in order to incite deviance.
In my own way I resisted the passive, good, and gentle aspects of womanhood that I had accepted as appropriate for me, deciding as I did that my womanhood would no longer be defined by others. I have continued to be a loving daughter, mother, and wife, and I continue to give sacrificially to others, but no longer because I believe it is my place to do so, or that this is my sole or major function in life. I now take more risks, am less afraid of the consequences, and I no longer feel the need to be orderly and peaceful at the cost of equity. In practice the changes that I have made may appear to be small but I believe that they make difference. If I challenge just one person because of the way they treat another human being, then to me that is worthwhile.

For Lydia resistance was different. She may not have been ready to admit to her team that she had it wrong, or that she was striving to fulfil an impossible ideal, but Lydia’s rumblings of discontent were nevertheless the beginnings of resistance for her. Rather than passively accepting her situation Lydia had taken a step towards changing it by confronting what was not working for her, even if this was done in the safety of this research group. In the very act of opening herself up to the ideas and challenge of others Lydia exposed herself to alternative ways of thinking which in turn opened up possibilities for her. In the rumblings of discontent Lydia stopped to ask: is this good enough? And then: what might be different? Questions such as these are life changing.

Resistance for Roxy came in a relatively small but deliberate and defiant act, but one which had huge ramifications for her workplace, and for my own learning in relation to this. Resistance did not mean that Roxy had to give up one way of being in order to be another; instead she was engaging “in pleasurable deviation” (Davies, et al., 2001, p. 173), and as she was, she challenged what it means to be an ideal early education teacher. Roxy could be “nurturant, facilitating, sensitive and supportive” (Walkerdine, 1990, p. 71), but she could also be autocratic and directive. Roxy chose not to submit passively to others at the cost of her own desires, even though this eventually led to the resignation of one of her staff. Roxy followed her desires in active defiance and as she did she was reenergised, enabling her to continue to work with and love children as she has done for over 50 years.

Resistance is a powerful weapon of change that women for generations, regardless of age or race, have employed to overcome the constraints with which they are faced
Women have found amazing and diverse ways of resisting their limitations and I have been inspired by the courage of the women I have read about, and those in this research project who have acted in resistance, even in small ways. I wonder what would happen if more early education teachers were to decide to re-imagine the images they have taken up as representative of remarkable women and teachers and if this could change the face of education as I know it today. For now I am happy that the women I know are learning that they can “reinscribe, discover new storylines, invert, invent, break the bounds of old structures and old discourses” (Davies, 2000a, p. 47) and with Davies I celebrate the fact that:

Woman can be a subject who realizes, speaks, writes her subjected condition, and searches out the ways in which the patterns holding that subjection in place can be subverted, turned to her own ends. She can begin to reclaim herself as whole, entire, capable of loving not from lack or need, but from a desire located in the whole of her embodied being. She moves thus to a celebration of desiring – as opposed to being the desirable object – playing with new words, new patterns, new meanings, breaking up old patterns, old storylines, finding the texts of words, of body, of interaction that make the idea and the ideal of whole, embodied woman as active subject a lived reality (Davies, 2000a, p. 48).

Concluding thoughts

The individual and fragmented storylines included in this chapter highlight the struggles and triumphs encountered by a small group of women as they took up and refused the discourses available to them. These storylines illuminate the daily challenges faced by these women and the risks they encountered as they resisted the images normally associated with being the ideal teacher. For some, the prospect of losing credibility by taking up a new discourse was a fearful move requiring strength and bravery. For others, realising that their beliefs and practices had been built around privileged discourses that were in fact fictions (Walkerdine, 1990) was a liberating experience. These women were not resigned to the status quo, they were not passive and docile learners, but were instead active desiring agents, capable of negotiating and manoeuvring through multiple and contradictory discourses, sometimes at the same time. Each one in their own way resisted the pull to be normalised, at times engaging in active subversive resistance; and as they
did they began to redefine for themselves what it might mean to be an early education teacher in New Zealand today.

I learnt a lot from these women. I learnt that resistance can be costly, and because of this some people may feel it necessary to hold on to what they have worked hard to achieve, even if this is uncomfortable. I learnt that it can be life-shattering to realise one’s certainties are in fact fictions and that disrupting certainty can cause some to hold on more tightly than ever to the discourses that have given them credibility and assurance. I also learnt that one does not have to give up everything that one has worked a lifetime to achieve in order to resist a take up of the discourses that one no longer finds desirable; it is possible to slip between the familiar and the unfamiliar with regularity and to celebrate uncertainty without having to forgo all. I also learnt that resistance can be in the smallest of acts, even writing in a journal, and that each act of resistance can have ongoing and life changing effects.

These women have given me hope for progressive social change in teacher professional learning and this has strengthened my resolve to seek out opportunities for resistance in any situation where I find dominant and privileged discourses acting to silence and marginalise. While this has been a significant step forward for me, it has also been important that I understand more about how discourse becomes privileged and how this affects knowledge and learning. It is one matter understanding more about how the subject of woman resists and subverts normalising practices, but it is another matter understanding the structures of power that operate to privilege and marginalise.

It is not enough to inquire into how women might become more fully represented in language and politics. Feminist critique ought also to understand how the category of “women”, the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought (Butler, 1999, p. 5).

The next chapter seeks to do this by troubling some of the truths shaping the practice of early education teaching in New Zealand today.
CHAPTER 6
TROUBLING TRUTH

Well I guess it was the feeling that it is okay for me to share from my heart here so
it was an expectation I guess that it is acceptable whereas it's not always
acceptable is it, not that anyone says that it's not acceptable... I thought that was
the deal here but I wanted to go to a place of silence because I thought well if I
can't say what I feel then I won't say anything (SG4/5/Jan).

A good many people, I imagine, harbour a similar desire to be freed from the
obligation to begin, a similar desire to find themselves, right from the outside, on
the other side of discourse, without having to stand outside it, pondering its
particular, fearsome, and even devilish features... Inclination speaks out: 'I don't
want to have to enter this risky world of discourse... Institutions reply: 'but you
have nothing to fear from launching out; we're here to show you discourse is
within the established order of things... What is so perilous, then, in the fact that
people speak, and that their speech proliferates? Where is the danger in that? ... I
am supposing that in every society the production of discourse is at once
controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of
procedures... We know perfectly well that we are not free to say just anything, that
we cannot simply speak of anything, when we like or where we like; not just
anyone, finally, may speak of anything... (Foucault, 1972, pp. 215-216).

Seeking an emancipatory vision

When I first planned to have a research professional learning group I imagined that this
group would be a place of vibrant discussion and debate. In my research aims I had even
stated that I wanted teachers to think the unthinkable, discuss the un-discussable, and
question the unquestionable (MacNaughton, 1999, cited in Taylor, 2001), but as early as
our third session together I began to realise just how problematic it might be to achieve
this aim. Like Ellsworth (1992) and Gore (1993), I learnt that it is one thing to desire
emancipatory practice but another thing to actually achieve this desire. While my goal
may have been to discuss and debate issues such as power, equity, and diversity with
openness (Taylor, 2001), as Jan highlights in the opening quotation, what is said, who
speaks, and the questions that are asked are not always as acceptable as one might hope they are.

Is this why Foucault (1972), in the above excerpt, associated words such as fearsome, risky, perilous, and danger with discourse; and why he suggested that people desire to find themselves “on the other side of discourse” (p. 215)? Is discourse really “controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures” as Foucault (1972, p. 216) asserted that it is, and is this why he contended that many people “desire to be freed from the obligation to begin” (p. 215) in discourse? This chapter explores such questions by troubling over what happened when Margaret, an early childhood teacher in this project, invited discussion around her ethnicity, and Jan a primary teacher, responded to this invitation with a seemingly simple question. From this simple question a complex interplay of power relations came into force which determined the discourses that would be privileged as truth, how these discourses would be regulated, preserved and reproduced, and who could rightfully pass these truths on to others (Foucault, 1972, 1976, cited in Davidson, 2003, 1980d, 1990a.).

The dialogue in this chapter represents a struggle over truth and highlights the difficulties and the conquests encountered as this group of teachers sought to think the unthinkable, discuss the un-discussable, and question the unquestionable (MacNaughton, 1999).

To sum up, the main objective of these struggles is to attack not so much “such or such” an institution of power, or group, or elite, or class, but rather a technique, a form of power (Foucault, 1983, p. 212).

Discussions around biculturalism

Background

In sessions one and two the teachers and I had been getting to know one another and settling in. We had discussed our expectations for the research group sessions and we had agreed to begin with individual learning projects (Chapter 4, p. 98). In session two each participant shared what they were thinking of focusing on for this project and it was in this session that Margaret first shared her desire to understand more about her heritage as a young Māori [the indigenous peoples of New Zealand] woman, and with this,
biculturalism. Biculturalism is the term used in New Zealand to describe Māori and Pākehā [non-Māori/European Caucasian] living and working together. The New Zealand Ministry of Education describes biculturalism as the development of “two world participation and mutual respect for Māori and Pākehā” (Ministry of Education, 2004b, p. 7). Margaret began the discussion by sharing this:

I’m really passionate at the moment about biculturalism probably because of myself. I’ve started to understand, well believe, that I am Māori and be happy with it, so that is a passion at the moment. I’m trying to learn the language, which I wasn’t supported at home with it, cause my mother wasn’t supportive [even though she is Māori herself], and my dad’s Australian. He tried to push me into learning the language but I never did, but now as I’m learning it, I’ve noticed how it hasn’t been an effort for me. I’ve noticed too that now the kids at preschool are learning it too.

I’m in a supportive environment at work, so that’s not the issue, but when I was out at other centres, as a student, and a reliever, I saw it [using Māori language] was a challenge for people. So it’s sort of like, I want to make a difference in that area for myself and for others as well. So it is probably what I am focusing on in my journal (SG2/22).

Margaret was particularly interested in biculturalism because, as a young Māori woman, she was exploring her dual identity. Margaret had been raised by a Māori mother and Pākehā father in an environment that, while accepting of Māori ways, had mainly supported European traditions and practices. As an adult Margaret was seeking to understand more of her Māori heritage and to learn the Māori language. Additionally, Margaret was seeking to understand more about biculturalism and how she could support this in early education.

In New Zealand, biculturalism is a fundamental requirement of any government institution, primarily because New Zealand is bound by the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi, an agreement signed by both Māori and Pākehā in 1840. This agreement allowed for British governance while supposedly protecting the sovereignty of Māori. However, this treaty was largely neglected until 1985 when the Labour Government introduced the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi Amendment Act (1985). Since the introduction of this act the New Zealand Government has begun to acknowledge injustices towards Māori and to establish processes to address some of these (Minogue,
As a result, government institutions around New Zealand now have a commitment, at least in theory, to bicultural practice.

In early education this commitment to biculturalism is reinforced by the early childhood curriculum document known as Te Whāriki [the mat] (Ministry of Education, 1996a), and the Revised Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices (Ministry of Education, 1996b), which are the mandatory objectives for any early childhood service receiving Government funding. Both of these documents are based on the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and inherent in their text is a bicultural focus.

When Margaret raised this issue of biculturalism she was troubled over whether change could be possible. At the time, Margaret was upset by what she had been reading in the local paper where letters to the editor expressed anger over the decision by the local council to include a Māori marae [meeting place] in the proposed local People's Park. Margaret was struggling with the sentiment of these letters and wondering if she could ever make a difference, telling us:

I guess I'm getting angry with the Western Leader [the local newspaper] when reading these letters from adults - it's about the people's park and um the fighting that is going on, it's never going to change. That's one thing I'm thinking; can you change it? When you see these things... it's coming from both sides but um I probably didn't, I didn't, I mean I always knew that I was Māori but I didn't focus on it and I, probably because of my mum, she didn't push it, she wasn't happy with it and I think you know you wouldn't get anywhere. But now I am, I'm happy with being Māori and yeah, that's where I am at (SG2/22).

Discussing biculturalism was important to Margaret, and so a month later at our third meeting she raised the topic again and invited others to join her in discussion.

**What is the meaning of biculturalism?**

Margaret introduced the discussion around biculturalism as follows:

I am still interested in getting views on biculturalism - um - 'cause I wonder if it's just a problem that I have so I want to know what other people think. Is it a problem; like my problem? I feel it's [biculturalism] not been practiced enough in centres. I felt like I could
talk about it a lot when I was at school [university], when I was training, but now I'm in a centre, where I like what we're doing, but now I am worried about what's going on outside the centre (SG3/29).

Discussion on bicultural issues is common within the early childhood community in New Zealand largely because of the bicultural intent of the early childhood curriculum document Te Whariki. However, in a context where primary school and early childhood teachers are working together, discussions like this, at least within the experiences of this group, were rare. Margaret had altered this by creating an opportunity for both education sectors to come together in a climate of open exchange and debate, although on this particular occasion the other primary school teacher, Lydia, who is also part Māori, was absent. Right at the beginning of the discussion, Jan, the only other primary school teacher, sought clarification about the term biculturalism. Conversation went as follows:

Jan
Could you just explain the term please?
Margaret
Biculturalism?
Jan
Yes just so that I am very clear on what you're saying.
(SG3/29).

Margaret tried to explain what biculturalism meant to her.

My idea of it is promoting Māori, I'm thinking early childhood but in education - um - incorporating it into the programme like it is a natural thing and not a token thing - um - yeah just recognising it and acknowledging it but I'm not going back to the; like we have to acknowledge the Treaty of Waitangi but I don't really want to go into that cause I don't understand it myself, I just want it to be a natural progression and for it to be out there. But I wonder what people think, like at school [university] there was a lot of talk about confidence and support and like not enough support and things like that so who is practicing it and who's helping these people so there's a lot of things I worry about (SG3/29).

Roxy joined Margaret:
Roxy
Practicing it...
Margaret
Who is practicing it and who’s helping these people s there’s a lot of things I worry about?
Roxy
I feel that as long as my children have an awareness that there is another language in New Zealand... I think that is a very important part so we do basic counting and we do colours and it’s part of our programme but I just want them to know and I find them, they’ll be outside - um - counting leaves – tahi [one] rua [two] toru [three] – it’s all part of their lives and that’s what I’m hoping...
Margaret
And that’s where we’re at too.
Roxy
That’s what I want... with my teaching... I just don’t want it to stop when they get to school, this is my fear and I went to a new entrants classroom and there was nothing on the walls there’s no, I mean, just a few paintings... but nothing that the children, there’s no basic Māori interaction in the new entrant classroom (SG3/29-30).

Then others joined in the conversation, adding, for example:

- It’s about children having an awareness that there is another language in New Zealand;
- It’s about Māori language being part of our programme;
- I see biculturalism as different from multiculturalism; it should be the second official language, or the other official language of New Zealand;
- There are two countries side by side and that’s what biculturalism should be isn’t it? (SG3/30-31).

Then Erica made a comment about Māori being law:

By law Māori is our second language; it’s there in the statute books (SG3/31).

But instead of this comment being discussed further, the early childhood teachers continued to speak about how to put biculturalism into practice and they were clear on why this was important. During the conversation Jan remained silent which was
uncharacteristic as on all other occasions, before and after this session, Jan was a confident, enthusiastic and articulate contributor to discussion.

Margaret went on, seeking more from the group. She wanted to explore barriers and areas that are not usually spoken about:

But I want to know, like, I want to know where people are at, what the barriers are for this. I have done this research on this actually but - um - it seems to be the same things coming up all the time and they, there is nobody willing to - um - do something about it, it's like it is tapu [sacred, forbidden] - um - and you don't talk about it, like I read that article on racism and who can be bold enough to say the word racism, you know things like that (SG3/31).

But the conversation didn't go to the tapu; instead talk remained focused on how to put Māori language into everyday programmes. Having a feeling for Māori issues was also touched on when Roxy said:

I didn't get it all clear until I did a paper on the Treaty [The Treaty of Waitangi] and then I went right back to the feelings of it and because I got feelings of wanting to promote the language then it didn't come as a token, it was coming from my heart and I was giving it to children and my children just do it (SG3/32).

At one point Jan tried to re-join the discussion by beginning:

I was going to say...

(SG3/30)

But she was interrupted and the conversation moved on, leaving Jan silent once again. After more than 20 minutes Jan once again tried to share her thoughts:

I consider the language thing a choice really in the sense that my father is a Dutchman he chose to come and live here and speak English and he was happy to do that and he never taught me Dutch but if I want to learn Dutch I can do so, and my daughter has a real passion for Europe and she's learnt German, and she wants, you know, she's learnt Finnish and now she wants to, you know, now she is trying to learn Russian and I sort of think that's the draw she has to her heritage but I don't feel responsible for that or the
lack of not providing it because that's the draw she has, it's a passion for her. Just the same way if I had a draw to a language I would probably learn it but when you force things on people - um - not that I'm saying the Māori does, but I would not like to see it forced on people I think that we live in a democracy where things are offered and if people have a feel for it they can (SG3/35).

To which Jo replied:

But aren't we forcing English on them, aren't we forcing English on... (SG3/35).

At this point the conversation became impossible to hear as people began talking over one another in what I will describe as heated emotion. As it was nearing 10.00 pm and two other teachers had indicated at the beginning of the session that they also had issues to discuss, I chose this moment to bring the discussion to a close; a decision which I later questioned and one which I discuss further in the next chapter. Suffice it to say here that this decision caused me to come face to face with the "inconsistencies between the pedagogy I was arguing for and the pedagogy of my argument" (Gore, 1993, p. 5).

While much of the reflecting that I did on this session was focused on my own actions (Chapter 7), I also began looking for examples of power functioning in and through the group in "capillary form" (Foucault 1980a, p. 39). To do this, I started by focusing on Jan's silence, asking both Jan and the others who had been present in the discussion to reflect on what had happened. Two very significant comments came out of these reflections; one by Margaret and the other by Jan.

Margaret
I think we all sort of do speak the same in early childhood, you know we do have an understanding. I don't know whether they do, [primary school teachers] whether it [biculturalism] is in schools, whether it's the same. I think we all spoke quite positively about it and then all of a sudden Jan was lost because we were talking early childhood really... (SG4/8).

Jan
There was nothing for me to say, the others spoke with such confidence and certainty, they seemed to feel that they knew exactly what biculturalism meant and there was no room for me to add anything more (PC/29/23/11/05).
The next section of this chapter is built around these two statements.

**Learning to speak the same: The production of truth**

I think we all sort of do speak the same in early childhood, you know we do have an understanding... (SG4/8).

The early childhood community in New Zealand, like any community, has in circulation discourses which are specific to this community; discourses which influence beliefs and which eventually become a "blueprint" (Foucault, 1995a, p. 138), or "overall strategy" (Foucault, 1980c, p. 97) for general practice. The discourses that most influence practice are those discourses that weave together to form what Foucault (1980c) terms a "regime of truth" (p. 131) because these regimes are "held in place by complex webs of power" (MacNaughton, 2000, p. 168), such as the power that institutional backing can bring to what is spoken (Foucault, 1980c, Gore, 1993, Weedon, 1997, MacNaughton, 2000, 2005). Institutions, and their representatives, not only create regimes of truth, but they also have the means to disseminate these truths widely; ensuring that these "officially sanctioned 'truths'" (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 32) become accepted as the right and the best way to teach (MacNaughton, 2000), for example; and for the early childhood teachers in this project, what it meant for them to be bicultural.

The truths circulating throughout the early childhood community in New Zealand are created and sustained through the legislation, documentation, and training that pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers are exposed to on a regular and ongoing basis. The institutions that create, support, and disseminate these truths are primarily: the Ministry of Education, a department of the New Zealand Government; the universities and training providers that are funded by the Ministry of Education to deliver training; and the Education Review Office (ERO), which is the body appointed by the Ministry of Education to audit centres. The most widely used and most influential document currently circulating within the New Zealand early childhood community is *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996a); the New Zealand early childhood curriculum.
Te Whāriki: The New Zealand early childhood curriculum


Te Whāriki weaves in and through all early childhood training and practice and is familiar to all early childhood teachers in New Zealand (Hill, 2005) because it is a widely published and used document. Even though Te Whāriki is not a mandatory curriculum, it is the intention of the present Government to change this. In the Government’s ten year strategic plan for early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 2002), Government states that they will “promote the effective delivery of Te Whāriki” (p. 15), and moves to legislate Te Whāriki are under way with new legislation already drafted. This draft, known as the Draft Criteria for the Licensing or Certification of ECE Services. Discussion Document (Ministry of Education, 2006c) is currently being circulating within the New Zealand early childhood community for discussion.

In the meantime, the goals of Te Whāriki are included in current legislation as part of the Revised Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices. (Ministry of Education, 1996b). Early childhood services that receive Government funding are contracted to the Government through a charter agreement which includes the twelve objectives outlined in the Revised Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices. More widely known as DOPs, these twelve objectives describe the practices that all chartered and funded services must adhere to, and when services are reviewed by ERO, they are measured against these objectives. So while Te Whāriki may not be legislated at the moment, it is very much a part of the New Zealand early childhood community and will continue to be so.

Te Whāriki has been acknowledged, both locally and internationally, for its achievements as a non-prescriptive, bicultural document (Garbett & Yourn, 2002, Haggerty, 2003); one which has been developed in consultation with Māori (Ritchie, 2002, Garbett & Yourn,
The philosophy behind *Te Whāriki*, according to May (2001, cited in Ritchie, 2003), is “one that resisted telling staff what to do, by ‘forcing’ each programme to ‘weave’ its own curriculum pattern” (p. 96); allowing for individual interpretation. As a curriculum document *Te Whāriki* “attempts to avoid the pitfalls of over-prescription by providing a framework that each setting can apply in its own unique way” (p. 91). However, while the document does not give specific directions, it does have a strong suggestion of practice woven throughout its many pages. For instance, *Te Whāriki* has “four broad principles at the centre of the early childhood curriculum” (Ministry of Education, 1996a, p. 14) which are: empowerment; holistic development; family and community; and relationships. The curriculum also contains strands, goals and learning outcomes.

The strands and goals arise from the four principles. The whāriki [mat] is woven from these four principles and from the following five strands, or essential areas of learning and development. The principles and strands together form the framework for the curriculum. Each strand has several goals. Learning outcomes have been developed for each goal in each of the strands, so that the whāriki becomes an integrated foundation for every child’s development (Ministry of Education, 1996a, p. 15).

Alongside the learning outcomes there are examples given for ways these can be put into practice; for infants, toddlers, and young children. In addition, for each goal there are reflective questions which encourage teachers to think about how they might apply these goals in different ways. All of these guidelines, even though not prescriptive, provide teachers with an extensive resource from which to build their practice; one that could possibly be seen to be all-inclusive. In addition, *Te Whāriki* provides teachers with Māori concepts, and guidelines to assist teachers towards bicultural practice.

**The bicultural intention of Te Whāriki**

*Te Whāriki* has been hailed as the first really bicultural curriculum in New Zealand (Ritchie, 2002, Haggerty, 2003) and incorporates the aspirations of both Māori and Pākehā. According to Ritchie (2003), the curriculum is “a deliberate attempt at a Treaty-based model of bicultural partnership” (p. 86), and this has only been possible by working in partnerships with the indigenous peoples of New Zealand (Ritchie, 2002). Bruce (1996, cited in Haggerty, 2003) believes that in *Te Whāriki* “radicals have been allowed to speak” (p. 45) and as such *Te Whāriki* has been an innovative and
New Zealand is the home of Māori language and culture: curriculum in early childhood settings should promote te reo [the language] and ngā tikanga Māori [the custom of Māori], making them visible and affirming their value for children from all cultural backgrounds. Adults working with children should demonstrate an understanding of the different iwi [tribe] and the meaning of whānau [extended family] and whānaungatanga [relationship]. They should also respect the aspirations of parents and families for their children (Ministry of Education, 1996a, p. 42).

And under the principle Empowerment, for instance:

Particular care should be given to bicultural issues in relation to empowerment. Adults working with children should understand and be willing to discuss bicultural issues, actively seek Māori contributions to decision making, and ensure Māori children develop a strong sense of self worth (Ministry of Education, 1996a, p. 40).

While Te Whāriki is not overly prescriptive, it does have enough information within its pages to ensure that teachers who have learnt and are applying the principles, strands and goals, are working towards biculturalism in their teaching practice. Tilly Reedy (2003, cited in Ministry of Education, 2004b), a prominent Māori who was consulted in the writing of Te Whāriki, believes that Te Whāriki encourages:

...the transmission of my cultural values, my language and tikanga [custom] and your cultural values, your language and customs. It validates my belief systems and your belief systems... (p. 5).

Te Whāriki: A privileged truth

Te Whāriki’s widespread implementation, strong institutional backing, worldwide acclaim, and general appeal add to the strength and power with which this document has entered the education arena. Te Whāriki is studied in every year of pre-service teacher training and it is used extensively in professional learning, which includes the resources produced to support teacher professional learning (e.g. Ministry of Education, 2006a). Te Whāriki also drives Government initiatives. In the current Government’s ten year strategic plan (Ministry of Education, 2002), for example, one of the strategies that Government identifies for “improving the quality of ECE services” is to “implement the curriculum (Te Whāriki) effectively” (p. 3). Apart from legislating Te Whāriki, to achieve
commendable endeavour to work in partnership with indigenous peoples to bring bicultural practice into the everyday practice of early education teaching in New Zealand.

The Ministry of Education, (2004b) states that, “Te Whāriki is a bicultural document that incorporates Māori concepts” (p. 2), and this bicultural intention is upheld in a number of ways. Firstly, the document was created in consultation with Māori (e.g. Ritchie, 2002; Garbett & Youn 2002), being a joint venture between the two dominant cultures within New Zealand. The document states that:

In early childhood education settings, all children should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge and an understanding of the cultural heritages of both partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi [The Treaty of Waitangi]. The curriculum reflects this partnership in text and structure (Ministry of Education, 1996a, p. 9).

Secondly, Te Whāriki is written in two languages, both English and Māori.

The English and Māori texts parallel and complement each other... The Māori curriculum is an integral part of the document and provides a basis for bicultural early childhood education in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1996a, p. 10).

Te Whāriki reflects the aspiration of both Māori and Pākehā in both the written word and in its intention. The desire of Te Whāriki’s authors was for the document to teach, both directly and indirectly, the culture of Māori.

This document recognises the distinctive role of an identifiable Māori curriculum that protects Māori language and tikanga [custom], Māori pedagogy, and the transmitting of Māori knowledge, skills, and attitudes through using Māori language (Ministry of Education, 1996a, p. 12).

While the principles of Māori are woven throughout Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 2004b), they are also included more specifically through the four curriculum principles which are stated explicitly within the document. In addition, for each of these four principles there is a written paragraph specifically explaining ways biculturalism can be enacted. For example, under the principle Family and Community, Te Whāriki states:
this goal Government also plans to “review and strengthen the provision of professional development so that it is aligned with the Government’s strategic goals”; which, as stated above, is to ensure that Te Whāriki is implemented effectively. Even “programmes to strengthen leadership” (p. 15) are planned within the scope of promoting the effective delivery of Te Whāriki. One Government initiative, introduced in 2002, is the Centres of Innovation project (Meade, 2004, 2005).

When the Centres of Innovation project was first introduced, six early childhood centres from within New Zealand were selected to, “Work with researchers to undertake action research related to innovation in teaching and learning” (Meade, 2004, p. 2) and then to, “Open their doors to show others their innovation and to share their research findings” (p. 2). Once centres had been selected to be part of the Centres of Innovation programme they entered into a contract with the Ministry of Education, and they then received Government funding to complete their action research projects over a period of three years. Since its inception in 2002 a further ten centres have been selected to be part of the Centres of Innovation project (Ministry of Education, 2006d, 2006e).

One of the purposes for establishing the Centres of Innovation was to “build the use of innovative approaches that result in improved early childhood learning and teaching based on Te Whāriki” (Meade, 2005, p. 2). While all services may apply to become a Centre of Innovation, only those services that are already demonstrating innovative practice that “supports the effective implementation of Te Whāriki” (Ministry of Education, 2006d, p. 2) are considered. While Te Whāriki is hailed as the “stimulus for innovation” (Meade 2005, p. 2) it is also innovation that is expected to improve the delivery of Te Whāriki. So Te Whāriki both drives, and is sustained by, the practice of early childhood education in the New Zealand, creating what Foucault (1980c) calls a circular relation of dependence between the two; the document and practice working hand in hand.

The Centres of Innovation initiative is only one example of how Te Whāriki is embedded in early childhood practice and Government planning within New Zealand. Te Whāriki is also central to current assessment practices in New Zealand, and is dominant in the Government sanctioned and funded assessment projects which developed Learning Stories (Carr, 2001) and the recent initiative: Kei Tua o te Pae, Assessment for learning.
Early childhood exemplars (Ministry of Education, 2004a). In short, almost all Government projects in the early childhood sector in New Zealand come from and build on Te Whāriki, making it difficult to work outside of these parameters. Because of this, early childhood teachers in New Zealand who aspire to best practice need to have a working knowledge of Te Whāriki and be applying it innovatively in their work with children.

Even though advocates for Te Whāriki believe the curriculum allows for meanings to be negotiated and renegotiated (Keesing-Styles, 2003, Ritchie, 2003, Hill, 2005); the continued emphasis on “the effective delivery of Te Whāriki” (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 15) means that there is a tendency in New Zealand for teachers to just do the curriculum with little negotiation of meanings (Nuttall, 2002). Understandings of the intent and philosophy of Te Whāriki are, in many instances, only superficial, with the curriculum document simply overlaying what has always been done (Hill, 2005). Instead of grappling over meanings, such as biculturalism, teaching remains a technical task centred on putting into practice the accepted and taken-for-granted knowledge produced by others. Although “cultures are constantly changing, shifting, and borrowing from each other, and this process includes the re-assignment of meanings” (Ritchie, 2003, p. 94), the extent to which this is occurring in New Zealand is questionable.

This kind of acceptance of Te Whāriki at face value is evident in the response made by the early childhood teachers to Jan’s question about biculturalism. These teachers knew Te Whāriki well, they were experienced at applying Te Whāriki effectively, and they had learnt how to put biculturalism into practice; so they shared this with Jan. There was no attempt to examine how the culture Māori might be changing and shifting and no attempt to reassign meanings (Ritchie, 2003). Nor was there any discussion of the complexities associated with what it means to be a bicultural teacher in New Zealand today. Instead, definitions of Māori and bicultural remained fixed, unified and taken-for-granted and the truths embedded in Te Whāriki were firmly held in place.

Te Whāriki: The answer
The kind of commitment to Te Whāriki required by early childhood teachers in New Zealand can be likened to what Foucault (1972) calls “doctrinal adherence” (p. 226), a mechanism used in the control of discourse. The strong position that Te Whāriki has
within the New Zealand early childhood community, because of its institutional backing through legislation, pre-service training, and professional learning initiatives, means that adherence to this document has become an essential requirement for anyone who is an early childhood teacher in New Zealand. The fact that Te Whāriki and DOPs work together as an integrated whole, adds further strength to the discourses embedded within these documents, including those that relate to being bicultural. Once Te Whāriki is legislated and the requirements for accountability that this will require come into force, the authority of Te Whāriki will increase even further.

Because of the authority behind these documents it is easy for early childhood teachers in the New Zealand to believe that the content of these documents is right and therefore worthy of its status as truth. While the content of Te Whāriki may indeed be well researched and worthwhile to know, this document nevertheless operates as a privileged truth within the early childhood community in New Zealand; a truth which has become taken-for-granted as normal and right practice. Because of this, it is more common for teachers to “learn to tame, create or style” themselves (MacNaughton, 2000, p. 166) to fit within the normal and right practices suggested in Te Whāriki, than it is for them to seek new ways of being and acting. Rather than exploring new understandings of, for example, biculturalism, teachers can instead “close ranks around these truths and use them to induct new teachers into the profession” (Lubeck, 1998, cited in MacNaughton, 2000, p. 169), or to instruct those who need to know.

This closing of ranks around truths, and the allegiance and devotion required towards truths such as those within Te Whāriki is reminiscent of the kind of “doctrinal adherence” (Foucault, 1972, p. 226) usually ascribed to institutions such as the church.

Lydia, who is primary trained, discovered this when she attended a session where some early childhood trained teachers were present.

I did an education management paper and there were some early childhood people there, and I got that evangelical expression, that love of Te Whāriki... I’m not talking about the philosophy within it, I’m talking about the way they present it... and I felt I wasn’t living up to it and she went as far as to say that we believe Te Whāriki, early childhood people believe that they are leading the way in education and that primary people had to catch up; primary is damaging for children in the way we are teaching. I just, I felt - um - I felt
what's the word, affronted, and then alongside that was the learning stories and I was sitting there thinking how will I do it, how would I do that" (SG14/22-23).

The allegiance that these teachers demonstrated towards Te Whāriki left Lydia feeling "affronted" by the inference that the primary sector was behind and needing to catch up. In a separate but similar discussion two teachers within the research project shared how they experienced this type of evangelical allegiance in respect to Learning Stories (Carr, 2001), which is now one of the most widely accepted and used early childhood assessment practices in New Zealand.

Teacher one
We went to a speaker a month or two ago and this guy was speaking on the way you see children; how you've got to critique the way you see children before we can decide how we assess them. It was really interesting and then these women started up about learning stories and like this guy is starting to introduce some really interesting stuff that challenged some of the ways everybody thinks about education and they were straight in and said but learning stories do this and learning stories does that. Well I tell you I nearly walked out because everyone started going oh oh oh and clapping and yahooing, just like a pentecostal church.

Teacher two
The same thing happened at a session I went to the other day and this woman got up and she starting presenting her learning stories portfolio of this child and everyone started oooing and arrring... and she laid a heavy on teachers because she said people ask me well how much time does it take and she said if a child's learning is involved it's worth doing - find the time. I was offended that she put so much pressure on people and this expectation that we have to live up to... (SG14/4-5)

The separate discussions above illustrate how strongly the early childhood teachers in these discussions felt towards the truths they held dear. The "doctrinal adherence" (Foucault, 1972, p. 226), and the evangelical zeal that these teachers demonstrated towards Te Whāriki and Learning Stories highlighted the certainty they felt about their teaching practice. This certainty not only gave them the confidence that their practice was on track but it also motivated them to share their knowledge with others. Having learnt the right and true way to teach, it was only natural for these teachers to then pass on their knowing to others, but rather than opening up dialogue this confidence and certainty left Lydia feeling ‘affronted’ and less than enthusiastic towards their ideas.
Believing that *Te Whāriki* represents the true and right way to be an early childhood teacher means that those who ascribe to its teachings may feel compelled to pass on this knowledge to those who have not yet discovered the truth. Much the same as an evangelist sets out to share the truth with those who do not yet know, it is the mission of some within the New Zealand early childhood community to share their understandings with others, or in Foucauldian terms, to ensure the “social appropriation” (*Foucault, 1972, p. 227*) of *Te Whāriki’s* discourse. In doing so the speech and practice of early childhood discourse in New Zealand can be successfully regulated and replicated.

What is an educational system, after all, if not a ritualisation of the word; if not a qualification of some fixing of roles for speakers; if not the constitution of a (diffuse) doctrinal group; if not a distribution and appropriation of discourse, with all its learning and its powers (*Foucault, 1972, p. 227*)?

The education system within the early childhood community of New Zealand is, as *Foucault* (1972) asserts above, a system which has successfully ritualised the word; a system that has regulated the speech and practice of its early childhood teachers through doctrinal adherence and the widespread circulation of *Te Whāriki*. Additionally, as the following discussion illustrates, the social appropriation of early childhood discourses within the wider education sector is a further attempt by some to circulate these truths more widely.

Teacher one
I was told the other day that there was someone at the university trying to shame teachers into learning stories.
Teacher two
Shame teachers into learning stories – did they use the word shame?
Teacher one
Yes, because they think teachers [primary trained teachers] are not doing a good job.
Teacher two
Did you hear people say that?
Teacher one
Well that was what the lecturer said, you know how people talk, it’s their interpretation of what is happening and that is what the lecturer said, her interpretation, her understanding of what was happening (SG14/15).
While this conversation is about hearsay, it nevertheless reflects the sentiment held by some in regard to the early childhood sector's desire to socially appropriate its truths. Even though it is impossible to know how widespread this feeling may be, this example, along with the others in this section, are enough to illustrate the strong support that Te Whāriki has in the New Zealand early childhood community; adding strength to its status as truth.

The predominance of Te Whāriki in New Zealand and the belief that Te Whāriki is "leading the way in education" (SG4/22) and should therefore be passed on to others, means that there is very little space in the New Zealand early childhood learning community for alternative discourses. The support that Te Whāriki receives through other early childhood initiatives, such as the Centres of Innovation, Learning Stories and the recent Exemplars Project, means that the privileged status of Te Whāriki remains firm. The discourses embedded within this document, and those that circulate through the initiatives that support Te Whāriki, have all woven together to form regimes of truth that shape how early childhood teachers in New Zealand "think, act and feel" (MacNaughton, 2000, p. 164) about the best way to teach, and the right way to be a bicultural teacher. It is therefore understandable why early childhood teachers in New Zealand may feel certain that their practice is right and best practice, and why this may encourage teachers to share this knowing, with confidence and certainty, to others.

This is what happened when the early childhood teachers in this project shared their knowing about biculturalism with Jan, when she appeared to be lost (SG4/8). These teachers were, after all, trained and experienced early childhood teachers, and they had been exposed to the institutional discourses governing early childhood practice in New Zealand over an extended period of time. These teachers had learnt well the truths shaping what it means to be the best kind of bicultural teacher and they were prepared to share these truths with others.

The regulation, preservation and reproduction of discourse

Institutional and personal support
The discourses of truth that weave together to form regimes, or general ways of being an early childhood teacher in New Zealand, are held in place by both the institutional and
the personal support they are given. As MacNaughton (2000) explains, “ways of being and acting in our social world stand out as truths not because of any inherent truth within them but because they have institutional and personal support” (p. 166). Foucault (cited in MacNaughton, 2000) calls these two forms of support the “political” and the “ethical” (p. 166) and they work together adding strength and power to each other. The power and support that Te Whāriki has in the New Zealand early childhood community, for example, is largely because of both the institutional/political and personal/ethical support that this curriculum document now has, with each adding weight to the other.

The enthusiasm attributed to Te Whāriki gives extra weight to its discourses, without which the institutional/political initiatives would have little value. While the initial impetus for Te Whāriki and further initiatives came from Government, the ongoing power of these discourses is sustained through the zealous following of its advocates; with the one supporting the other. Government support for Te Whāriki coupled with the widespread belief in Te Whāriki’s ability to meet all the needs facing early childhood in New Zealand at the present time, has become a powerful and effective means of sustaining and reproducing discourse. The regimes of truth that now govern early childhood practice in New Zealand are held firmly in place because they have become naturalised through this reciprocal dependence, and because of this it is difficult to challenge the regimes that govern practice. It is more likely that these regimes will be regulated, preserved, and reproduced and that professional learning will be focused on how to apply these regimes more effectively (Ministry of Education, 2002).

When Jan asked for the term biculturalism to be explained this, research group had the opportunity to critically examine what biculturalism means. Margaret had created an opening for us to do just this when she explained how she was feeling “passionate” and “angry” (SG2/22), and when she commented that she wanted us to discuss the tapu (SG3/31). But instead of taking up Margaret’s comments and Jan’s question as a starting point for discussing the complexities of biculturalism today, we followed the patterns of professional learning that we were accustomed to, and focused on how to put the accepted truths of biculturalism into practice. Had we more critically examined biculturalism we could have grappled over the contradictions between Te Whāriki’s intention and the continuing westernised implementation of this curriculum. This discussion may have included questioning how the discourse of individualism, and the
belief that the child is knowable, is still a strong regime of truth in New Zealand, even though Te Whāriki is supposedly based on sociocultural theory (Ritchie, 2002). We might have discussed other related issues that were topical in New Zealand at the time, such as the debate about women’s place in traditional Māori ceremonies (e.g. Rudman, 2005) and what it might mean for a feminist teacher to enact biculturalism. Questions could have been asked, along with Stuart (1995), about the right of Māori to represent themselves, rather than Pākehā attempting to speak for them, and what this might mean for teachers of young children. Who knows, we may even have taken up the challenge offered by Margaret in the beginning when she asked:

...who can be bold enough to say the word racism? (SG3/31).

But instead of disrupting the taken-for-granted, and forging new understandings of, for instance, racism, the discourses around biculturalism in this instance were “controlled, selected, organised and redistributed” (Foucault, 1972, p. 216) in a way that inhibited the free exchange of ideas. The institutional/political and personal/ethical support given to the truths circulating within the New Zealand early childhood community meant that these truths were regulated, preserved and reproduced without question. The use of disciplinary techniques such as classification, exclusion, and ritual, added further to this regulation, preservation and reproduction of discourse.

**Classification, exclusion and ritual**

In the production of knowledge, who can speak and what can be spoken is, according to Foucault (1972), largely governed by a disciplinary system which operates around discourse and which includes the use of classification, exclusion and ritual. When Jan asked for biculturalism to be explained, this disciplinary system worked to regulate who could speak about biculturalism and began with the classification of Jan as lost and therefore unable to contribute further to the discussion further.

I think we all spoke quite positively about it [biculturalism] and then all of a sudden Jan was lost because we were talking early childhood really... (SG4/8).

The fact that Jan was classified as “lost” and therefore unknowing, invited what Foucault (1972) called a “ritual” (p. 225) into the discussion; a ritual that determined Jan was no
longer a rightful and valid speaker due to the fact that she did not understand the discourses of biculturalism that others in the group already knew. Because those present “were talking early childhood” (SG4/8), and because they knew the truth embedded in Te Whāriki, they were therefore designated as the rightful speakers and it was then their task to pass on their knowledge to Jan. When this occurred there was a polarisation between those who were early childhood trained and those who were not, or between those who knew and those who didn’t.

The polarisation that occurred when Jan asked her question can be likened to what Foucault (1984b) called “polemics” (p. 382). Polemics occurs in a discussion when the objective is to prove one is right, which in turn positions those with opposing views as adversaries. When this happens, Foucault (1984b) believed it is difficult to discuss issues openly because there is “no possibility of an equal discussion” (p. 382). Foucault (1984b) viewed “polemics as a parasitic figure on discussion” (p. 382) and he questioned whether it was ever possible to create a new idea out of such an exchange. Risk taking is not encouraged in polemics instead, speakers “fall back continually on the rights that they claim” (p. 383) as speakers, assuming that this right means they can make claims to truth. In the case of this research group, in this instance, there was no risk taking in conversation; instead, it became the right of the early childhood trained teachers to teach Jan how to be bicultural, and Jan was excluded as a knowing and therefore valid speaker.

The exclusion of Jan as a qualified and therefore valid speaker in relation to biculturalism, made way for the discourses around biculturalism that are prevalent in the New Zealand early childhood community to be repeated. In this way the discourses spoken in this session could be regulated, preserved, and reproduced further, through the mechanisms of classification, exclusion and ritual (Foucault, 1972). The exclusion of Jan as a valid speaker meant that the opportunity for disrupting current understandings was diminished and instead current beliefs were upheld with such confidence and certainty that Jan felt:

There was nothing for me to say, the others spoke with such confidence and certainty, they seemed to feel that they knew exactly what biculturalism meant and there was no room for me to add anything more (PC/29/23/11/05).
In actual fact Jan's silence was not due to her lack of understanding as had been assumed, but no one in the group, including myself, thought at the time to ask her about this. It wasn't until the next session that this became clearer when Margaret made a statement which Jan then refuted.

Margaret
Especially from early childhood, I think it [biculturalism] is really alive, but then I'm thinking well what's going on in schools as well you know, why isn't it? Cause it's part of what we have to do in early childhood, why don't they have to do it in schools? Is it true, that they are leaving early childhood and going to nothing?

Jan
No it's not nothing, we definitely have something, I mean I definitely... I mean I do tokenism Māori at school, but they also go off to Kapa Haka [traditional Māori performing arts] where they learn songs and um you know a bit more of the language and things like that but as I said to you and I mean I can sit there and do numbers and do the days of the week and you know those sorts of things which um... (SG4/8-9).

It was not that Jan had no understanding about biculturalism or that she could not put biculturalism into practice as others did; it was more that she felt her efforts were just tokenism. But this was not the only reason that Jan asked the question that she did. When I asked her about this later she said:

I am sick of discussions where people just assume that everyone thinks the same way from the start and I guess in a way I wanted to challenge this. I wanted us to begin by knowing what each of us meant by the term and not just take it for granted. Looking back I knew I had asked a challenging question; or at least one that is not usually asked, but I asked it anyway (PC/29/21/06/06).

Jan knew that her question had disrupted the natural order, but she went ahead and asked it anyway, believing that:

If we don't say things that push people's buttons do we actually have something to reflect on (SG4/7)?

While Jan wanted to challenge the taken-for-granted and she knew that she might be pushing people's buttons, she nevertheless did not expect the discussion to take on the
direction that it did. Nor did she expect to feel excluded from the discussion. What happened next is also problematic in terms of creating a context for new learning. As Jan also discovered; even sharing from the heart is not always acceptable, and when this happens, and one goes to a place of silence, it is hard to change perceptions and grapple over understandings.

Transgressing the boundaries of acceptability

After Jan’s initial silence she did re-enter the discussion, commenting on her Dutch heritage and her feelings about language and being forced to teach Māori; saying:

... if I had a draw to a language I would probably learn it but when you force things on people - um - not that I’m saying the Māori does, but I would not like to see it forced on people I think that we live in a democracy where things are offered and if people have a feel for it they can (SG/3/35).

Jan tells me that as soon as she spoke these words she realised that she had said something unacceptable. At our next session a month later, as we reflected on the events of the previous month, Jan commented:

... I thought it was acceptable to explore areas that maybe we haven’t thought through clearly... I guess it was the feeling that it is okay for me to share from my heart here so it was an expectation I guess that it is acceptable whereas it’s not always acceptable is it, not that anyone says that it’s not acceptable... I thought that was the deal here but I wanted to go to a place of silence because I thought well if I can’t say what I feel then I won’t say anything... what is wrong if we are open and honest and that was I think the frustration that I went away with. I thought that was the deal here and because [of that] I wanted to go to a place of silence from that because I thought well if I can’t say what I feel then I won’t say anything... (SG/4/3-5).

And further on in the conversation Jan said:

... if you want me to say what somebody wants me to say, you have to tell me what it is you want me to say you know because I don’t know what the rules are... (SG/4/10).

Jan knew that when she made her statement about her Dutch heritage she had crossed the line of acceptability, but she had thought it okay to share what she “hadn’t thought
through clearly" and to "share from [the] heart", but apparently it was not. How did Jan know that it was not acceptable? What happened to make her feel that she "wanted to go to a place of silence"?

Foucault (1995a) believed that in addition to the regulation, preservation, and reproduction of discourse through measures such as political and ethical support, and the use of disciplinary techniques such as classification, exclusion and ritual, discourse can also be controlled through the use of punishment. Punishment is typically directed at those who transgress the boundaries of acceptability, as Jan did, by speaking and acting outside of socially acceptable norms. Unacceptable conduct may involve, for example, "inattention, negligence, lack of zeal... impoliteness, disobedience... insolence... incorrect attitudes..." (Foucault, 1995a, p. 178), or in Jan's case, speaking what should not be spoken; and the punishment for such conduct can be direct or more subtle.

At the same time, by way of punishment, a whole series of subtle procedures was used, from light physical punishment to minor deprivations and petty humiliations. It was a question both of making the slightest departure from correct behaviour subject to punishment, and of giving a punitive function to the apparently indifferent elements of the disciplinary apparatus: so that, if necessary, everything might serve to punish the slightest thing; each subject find himself caught in a punishable, punishing universality (Foucault, 1995a, p. 178).

This punishment may be a very simple act such as a look, but leaves the recipient in no doubt that they have erred.

By the word punishment, one must understand everything that is capable of making children [and adults alike] feel the offence they have committed, everything that is capable of humiliating them, of confusing them: ... a certain coldness, a certain indifference, a question, a humiliation, a removal from office (La Salle, cited in Foucault, 1995a, p. 178).

Jan told me that she knew too well what this kind of punishment was like because she had learnt, through a life-time of experience, what such measures as "coldness", the "indifference" the "humiliation" and the "removal from office" felt like. She said:
I'm wondering if it's my sensitivity to people's responses that made me aware of nuances, so other people may get them too and not be aware of them, but I am aware of them and I think that I learnt as a child and as a teacher, that, let me give you an example, a flashback. When I was a child I remember my father telling me he never had to give me a smack because just a look and I would be crying because I am a people pleaser at heart. And then later as a teacher I learnt that when I have challenged things at school I have come to grief... it's the shutting out, block walling, and feeling that sense of feeling isolated and no response being made to my response. And I have been told too - we don't do that here... (PC/29/23/08/06).

Life had taught Jan what it felt like to say the wrong thing and be punished for it. As a result, when she commented on her Dutch heritage and the session erupted in heated emotion, and I then closed the discussion, Jan was in no doubt that she had broken the rules, even though she did not really know what the rules were. Jan later told the group:

I felt after I said it shut up or you know don't say anymore (SG4/5).

The reaction of others to what Jan had said, my closure of the discussion, and the looks she received, all added up as a warning for Jan not to say any more. Through years of self-surveillance and self-regulation Jan had learnt to stop herself when she realised that she had crossed the line of acceptability and when she came under the critical gaze of others, Jan went to the place that she had learnt to go to; that is a place of silence (Foucault, 1980e, 1990b, 1995a). And when Jan went to this place of silence, the discourses about biculturalism embedded in the regimes of truths governing the early childhood practice of New Zealand were further regulated, preserved and reproduced.

Summary

The successful regulation, preservation, and reproduction of early childhood truths in New Zealand means that there are challenges ahead for anyone wanting to disrupt these truths. The "[closing] of ranks around these truths" (Lubeck, 1998, cited in MacNaughton, 2000, p. 169) and the zealous induction of those who have to "catch up" (SG4/22), means that the practice and speech of early childhood in New Zealand may be difficult to change. In addition, when disciplinary techniques such as classification, exclusion, ritualisation, and punishment are employed to regulate who may speak and what may be spoken, the difficulties are compounded.
Whilst this research project is focused on the local, and it does not attempt to make universal claims, the use of disciplinary techniques in the practice of teaching are not confined to this research group. For example, Gore (1998) found that "no site was free of power relations and no site "escaped" the use of techniques of power" (p. 245). While she found that "this functioning of power remains largely invisible in our daily practices, unless we are looking for it" (p. 248), disciplinary techniques of power are nevertheless present in many educational contexts. Other educationalists (e.g. Davies et al., 2001; MacNaughton 2000, 2005; Ortlipp, 2005; Silin, 1995; Tamboukou, 2000; Walkerdine, 1992) can also attest to the fact that Foucault's work on disciplinary techniques can be applied in varied educational settings. This more widespread use of such measures to regulate, preserve and reproduce discourse, raises questions about the extent to which critical inquiry is possible; particularly in a context where the proliferation and replication of specific truths takes priority over the creation of space for vigorous and ongoing debate and critique.

Troubling Truths: Towards critical inquiry

Is critical inquiry possible?
The successful proliferation of early childhood discourses (Foucault, 1990a) within New Zealand makes it difficult to stand outside of these discourses. When professional learning is predominantly about putting the theory and initiatives of others into practice, rather than critiquing what is presented as truth, it becomes hard to think and work outside of the norm. The continued emphasis in New Zealand on the successful implementation of *Te Whāriki*, and on the zealous proliferation of the discourses inherent in this curriculum, is producing a nation of teachers who are thinking and speaking a similar discourse. Because these discourses have been accepted as truths, they are very rarely questioned, and their truth status "makes it hard to innovate" (MacNaughton, 2000, p. 169). The danger is that teachers can become complacent and believe that what they know and what they are doing is sufficient; and in relation to biculturalism, this can mean that what is already happening is believed to be good enough.

Thurlow (cited in Gunn, Child, Madden, Purdue, Surtees, Thurlow, & Todd, 2004) experienced this kind of complacency about biculturalism, when she visited an early childhood setting in New Zealand and she was told by one of the teachers there, "I think
we've done enough now" (p. 300). To this teacher, speaking a few Māori words representing colours and numbers was enough. Davis (2005) encountered a similar response from a New Zealand early childhood teacher attending a session in Australia where Davis was talking about her doctoral research. After Davis had spoken about whiteness theory (Davis, 2004), one of the New Zealand early childhood teachers responded to Davis by saying, "we don't need that, we have Te Whāriki". Both of these comments highlight the tendency for early childhood teachers in New Zealand to believe that Te Whāriki contains everything they need to know, and that anything beyond this is not necessary. Although these comments cannot be generalised to fit an entire nation, they nevertheless provide a cautionary reminder of the challenges facing the New Zealand early childhood teaching community.

If New Zealand is to keep abreast with world wide innovations and the work of social justice and equity globally, then believing that Te Whāriki contains all the answers, including how to address issues of race, is a dangerous and tenuous position for New Zealand teachers to be. Aversion towards alternative discourses, and the continued fixation on "improving the quality of ECE services" (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2) by “implement[ing] the curriculum (Te Whāriki) effectively” (p. 3), is problematic in terms of the ability of New Zealand early childhood teachers to be critical and reflective. The modernist notion of a fixed, certain and universally applicable interpretation of learning and race no longer sits comfortably with those at the forefront of educational change (e.g. Davies, 2000a, 2003a, 2004; MacNaughton, 2000, 2003b, 2005; Davis, 2004; Ortlipp, 2005; Moss 2001a, 2001b, 2006a, 2006b). Instead of creating a context for critical inquiry and innovation, modernist approaches are at best only reformist, and at worst focused on conformity (MacNaughton, 2003b). Being critical and imaginative involves thinking differently (Sumssion, 2006), and being open to a range of possibilities.

Truly transformative education (MacNaughton, 2003b), the type that confronts issues such as the complexities of biculturalism, does not happen when teachers feel it is their responsibility to preserve and reproduce accepted discourse. Critical inquiry and innovation is only possible when those involved are prepared to challenge dominant and oppressive regimes, and disrupt the taken-for-granted if necessary (MacNaughton, 2003b). The proposed mandating of Te Whāriki, and the funding and energy being invested in this initiative, may ensure consistency of practice and produce clear lines of
accountability, but this emphasis on achieving quality standards is problematic in terms of critical inquiry. According to Dahlberg, et al. (1999), any initiative aimed at achieving quality measures carries an "assumption that there is an entity or essence of quality, which is a knowable, objective and certain truth waiting 'out there' to be discovered and described" (p. 93). At the heart of this is a "striving for universality and stability, normalisation and standardization" (p. 93), all of which are at odds with critical discourse (Fenech, 2006). Instead of encouraging critical inquiry and theoretical debate, this is more likely to support the continuation of teaching as a practical endeavour, where teachers are positioned as technicians within a world where knowledge is believed to be certain, predictable and measurable.

Moss (2006a) contends that teachers who operate as "technicians may have varying levels of skill and qualification" (p. 35), but despite this, their main function "is to apply a defined set of technologies" (p. 35), which works against, not for, critical inquiry. Moss advocates for a different type of teacher, one he calls a researcher, who is less intent on applying accepted knowledge, and more interested in "deeper understanding[s] and new knowledge" (p. 36). This kind of teacher will not be certain of their knowing, as the early childhood teachers in this project were about biculturalism, but will instead value "doubt and uncertainty" (p. 36). This will be the teacher who is "open to, indeed welcomes, the unexpected, that which takes her by surprise and by doing so provokes new thought" (p. 36). In order for this to happen, Moss suggests that teachers need to engage with different theories from "many different fields; in short, through frequent border crossing" (p. 36), which is difficult in the New Zealand early childhood community when Te Whāriki is often viewed as the answer to teaching.

The tendency towards accepting Te Whāriki as the answer encourages a teaching workforce that might be expert at reading the document and applying it innovatively, in a technical sense; but without critiquing the very foundations of where this teaching and theory is coming from, innovation will be limited to finding alternative ways to put accepted truths into practice. This is what happened when Jan asked for the term biculturalism to be explained, and the early childhood teachers proceeded to talk about the more technical aspects of being a bicultural teacher. It did not occur to these teachers, including me, to take this question as an opportunity to disrupt the taken-for-granted and
to critically examine the complexities of what this term might mean in a postmodern, uncertain and shifting context.

Critical inquiry requires “a suspicion of the writing of all documents and texts” (Rhedding-Jones, 2002, p. 95), which includes Te Whāriki. Maintaining a “sceptical and critical attitude about what we do” (Fendler, 2003, p. 23) is essential to critical inquiry and the discovery of new ways of being and doing, including new ways of approaching biculturalism in education. While it may seem easier and safer to “take up the discourse of the cultural normalisation marking the pedagogy... [and to] repeat rather than critique” (Rhedding-Jones, 2002, p. 103), the “habit of non critique is hard to break” (p. 103). Is this the future of professional learning in New Zealand; a future where teachers “repeat rather than critique” (p. 103)? Will this be a habit that is “hard to break” (p. 103)?

What opportunities for new understandings of, for example, biculturalism and racial tensions, might be missed if learning to be a good early childhood teacher in New Zealand means learning to “implement the curriculum (Te Whāriki) effectively” (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 3)? When will it be the right time to ask, along with Rhedding-Jones (2002), how New Zealand can move “toward[s] fluid multiplicities, where people belong to a range of simultaneously operating categories, beyond a binary” (p. 94)? I think it is time for such discussions.

Concluding thoughts

When I first envisaged teachers meeting together for this research project I hoped they would think the unthinkable, discuss the un-discussable, and question the unquestionable (MacNaughton, 1999). However, at the time I did not realise the challenges associated with such a goal. When we first started meeting together, I naively believed that I was creating a discussion group where it was safe and acceptable for anyone to say anything, and yet as this chapter has shown, “we are not free to say just anything” (Foucault, 1972, p. 216). What can be said, and by whom, is very much associated with power, right, and truth (Foucault, 1976, cited in Davidson, 2003), and as a result, disrupting accepted and privileged truths can be difficult. I now understand how power functioned in our discussions on multiple levels to regulate, preserve and reproduce discourse, and that this affected the thinking and discussions that took place in relation to biculturalism.
Professional learning, in this instance, was more about how to apply the same privileged truths in better ways, than it was about disrupting and transforming taken-for-granted understandings.

I had desired to work with teachers towards education as a practice of freedom (Freire, 1996), and while this chapter highlights just how far from this goal we originally were, the tensions that occurred in this session ended up being the points of departure (Freire, 2003a) for many of the shifts that subsequently happened. But before we could move on, I had to go back over my own actions on the night in question to ask why it was that I had closed the discussion right at the point when teachers were about to dispute each others' opinions. I found that the choices I made about how I would organise and manage the time and space on this occasion were also enactments of power that worked to sanction some knowledge and speakers. As I came face to face with my own actions, and challenged these, possibilities began to present themselves. While it has not been possible to function outside of this power, it has been possible to work differently within these power relations (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983).
CHAPTER 7
TOWARDS CRITICAL DIALOGUE, DEBATE AND DISRUPTION

Through the coming together of this small group of teachers I came face to face with the contradictions between my hopes for education as a practice of freedom (Freire, 1996) and the practices that were working against my own goals. As a result I challenged and disrupted what had become normal and commonplace in my own practice; questioning how my actions were being “used to support hierarchical power relations” (Collins, 1998, p. xvi), instead of being employed towards socially just ends as I had hoped. In the process I redefined what I valued as a productive use of time and I reconceptualised what I once viewed as a safe learning space, which took deliberation, humility, and a willingness to really listen and learn from others. I did not discover universal methods, nor did I create innovative models for professional learning, but I did learn how to work with these teachers towards critical dialogue, debate and disruption; and in a small but significant way I believe this made a positive difference.

The trouble with disruption

We can’t get into this or we’re going to be here until 11 o’clock (SG3/35).

I said this in session three during the discussion on biculturalism that forms the basis of the last chapter (a more detailed transcript of this discussion is included in Chapter 6). I had no idea that such a small comment could have such an impact. Not only did this affect the discussion at the time but my reflections on these few words changed the course of this project and the way that I work with others.

We had been talking for some time and it was heading for 10.00 pm when Jan said:

I consider the language thing [speaking Māori] a choice really in the sense that my father is a Dutchman, he chose to come and live here and speak English and he was happy to do that and he never taught me Dutch, but if I want to learn Dutch I can do so, and my daughter has a real passion for Europe and she’s learnt German, and she wants, you know, she’s learnt Finnish and now she wants to, you know, now she is trying to learn...
Russian and I sort of think that’s the draw she has to her heritage but I don’t feel responsible for that or the lack of not providing it because that’s the draw she has, it’s a passion for her. Just the same way if I had a draw to a language I would probably learn it but when you force things on people - um - not that I’m saying the Māori does, but I would not like to see it forced on people. I think that we live in a democracy where things are offered and if people have a feel for it they can... (SG3/35).

And Jo responded by saying:

But aren’t we forcing English on them, aren’t we forcing English on... (SG3/35).

At this point everyone began talking at once, making it impossible for me to hear what was being said, and this is when I decided to end the discussion by saying:

We can’t get into this or we’re going to be here until 11 o’clock (SG3/35).

Why was it that I chose to end discussion right at the point when beliefs and dominant views were being disrupted? Hadn’t I wanted teachers to critique each other’s thinking and beliefs, and didn’t I want to disrupt the taken-for-granted? So why did I say what I did? Was it possible that the kind of disruption created by Jan’s comment was not the kind of disruption that I had in mind when I embarked on this research? The trouble is, disruption is inconvenient and it creates tension, disorder, and sometimes pain; and in the early stages of this project I was not ready for this. Disruption at this point threatened all the plans that I had for this project; plans that I had worked hard to achieve and plans which until this moment had been working well. However, this disruption also became an opportunity for me to challenge my actions and beliefs so that I could begin to imagine professional learning differently.

**Planning for learning, planning for freedom**

When I planned this research project I thought carefully about the learning space that I wanted to support. I had written in my ethics application that I wanted “to engage in learning which challenges taken-for-granted practice and allows for possibility thinking” (Eth/01/1.3), and this was at the forefront of my thinking when we began meeting together. Just before I met with teachers as a group for the first time, I wrote this in my journal:
I love the way LaBoskey & Cline (2000) refer to the people they teach as beautiful people. Isn't that what education is about - beautiful people exploring their existence together? How can I open up spaces for people, beautiful people, to be openly different and to feel good about it? (JE/13/0202).

Taking my lead from some of my favourite authors, I determined that I would create a learning space that was pleasurable, exciting and experimental (Freire, 2003a, 2003b; hooks, 1994); one where teachers could have a voice (e.g. Belenky et al., 1997; hooks, 1994), and one where reflection and critical dialogue would be central to learning (e.g. Brookfield, 1995; Freire, 1996). I wanted to celebrate difference and encourage a sense of community (e.g. hooks, 1994, 2003); and I worked hard to achieve this kind of learning space.

I spent the first two sessions engaging with participants in affirmative and motivational activities; for example, I gave each teacher a box of goodies - some useful, some funny, but each one having some significance to the project. We had a fun session going through these artefacts and relating each one to the project, and by the end of this session there was a general sense of excitement about what was ahead. We also discussed expectations, created a group contract, and we talked about our hopes and dreams for education in general. We discussed trust and safety and what this meant to those involved, and we talked about critical inquiry and what this might look like for our group. I also took the advice of hooks (1994) and Brookfield (1995), who exhort those leading teachers in critical reflection to: be fully present; be vulnerable; and be honest. So I also shared from my journal:

> Thoughts after chatting with my son about ordinary people and grand decisions:
> Life is just made up of ordinary people all making decisions, people like you and me. Everything is the product of human decisions. We were born into existing infrastructure we take for granted as given as fixed, as authoritative - but we forget these institutions, like education, have been formed by people like you and me. Grand things are made up of ordinary people, making decisions about ordinary things. Grand things can also be changed by ordinary people making decisions about ordinary things. Grand things are not necessarily grand - they may actually be ordinary. What is grand and what is ordinary anyway? (JE/28/02/02).
Overall, I felt that I had worked hard to put participants at ease and to create a learning space conducive to critical inquiry. I demonstrated that I was an honest and flexible teacher who was willing to be vulnerable and to learn from others. The immediate feedback that I received suggested I was on track to fulfilling my plans:

I lacked hope for change but I’m starting to see that my passion could be aroused, something you said last time Louise, made me think; that just by sharing with other people, change can happen and I haven’t believed that before. I can really feel positive about that (SG2/3).

By session three I was receiving feedback that indicated participants were feeling motivated, safe, and able to share freely;

The way we can talk and bounce ideas off each other, it’s a comfortable environment for that (SG3/1).

I have hopes for the education system that I didn’t have when I came here. It was like an impasse to me and it was only one person’s thought, the thought about the ordinary; that actually changed that thinking, which was very interesting, wasn’t a big thought, it was a little thought (SG3/1).

People appreciated my honest sharing and this helped to build up a sense of trust;

The sharing that you did last time was really beautiful and I think that created trust (SG3/3).

Participants knew what they were getting into before they chose to join the group and this helped them to feel safe;

Well I think with the safety thing, we knew what we were getting into; it was clear SG3/4).

Having a choice about participation also contributed to a feeling of safety;

And I think the fact that we chose to come to this group... it wasn’t like professional development at work where you have to be involved... (SG3/4).
Overall, teachers felt that in this group they didn't have to conform;

I would probably feel uncomfortable if I didn't really, if that's not really the way that I thought, but I was expected to think that way (SG3/8);

That whole idea of a dominant view and conforming to things... if you don't agree with someone who is quite aggressive in their approach or quite dominant, you tend, well I tend to do less talking... (SG3/10).

All in all, by session three I was feeling confident that we were making progress towards my desire "to engage in learning which challenges taken for granted practice and allows for possibility thinking" (Eth/01/1.3). By the end of the project I was sure that I would be able to describe, in measurable terms, the many changes that would occur through this project and I was excited by the prospect. But all of this changed when Jan's comment disrupted my plans, and I came face to face with the "inconsistencies between the pedagogy I was arguing for and the pedagogy of my argument" (Gore, 1993, p. 5). It was only then that I asked just how prepared I was for the inconvenience and discomfort of disruption, and how willing I was to forgo my own agenda for the sake of learning. It wasn't until this happened that I really began to understand what it means to engage with others in education as a practice of freedom (Freire 1996).

**Humility in the act of troubling**

I shall start here with humility, which here by no means carries the connotation of a lack of self-respect, of resignation, or of cowardice. On the contrary, humility requires courage, self-confidence, self-respect, and respect for others (Freire, 1998b, p. 39).

Davis (2004), in her thesis findings, exhorts those working towards social justice to be consciously aware of their responsibility towards others; a responsibility that involves careful consideration of one's actions, and the effects of these on others. In line with this exhortation, and in keeping with the words of Freire (1998b) above, I made a decision to step back from my actions so that I could question how these had affected others. I began by going back to the moment when I resisted the disruption created by Jan's comment, because it was in this moment of resistance that I believe my use of power was most visible (Foucault, 1980d). It took humility and courage for me to scrutinize my actions.

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and to question my intentions, but I am convinced, along with Freire (1998b, 2003b), that my choice to do so was the key to the changes experienced during this project.

**Troubling my use of time**

In session three we had begun working on individual projects (Chapter 4, p. 98). At the beginning of the session I asked participants who would like time to share, and I organised the time accordingly. When Margaret began to talk about her project we were already running behind schedule, and as it was 9.30 pm and there were two more teachers who wanted to share after Margaret, I was feeling stressed about the time. The comments below reflect the tension I was experiencing throughout the evening as I said:

Well what will happen now is we will have about 15 minutes each to talk about our projects (SG3/11);
We need to watch the time (SG3/20);
Is it because we have run out of time? (SG3/36);
I don't want you to feel like you have been pushed into a corner 'cause we've run out of time (SG3/36).

As well as the comment that eventually brought the discussion on biculturalism to an abrupt end:

We can't get into this or we are going to be here until 11 o'clock (SG3/35)

Through the entire session I had been anxious because we were continually getting sidetracked from discussing the projects, and the pressure on time that this created brought inner conflict for me. On the one hand I wanted people to be free to discuss whatever they wanted, but on the other hand I wanted to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to discuss their project if they wanted to. The tension created by this conflict was one reason that I felt it necessary to bring the meeting back to the agenda, even though I regretted this decision as soon as I had made it.

Choosing an action learning format (Chapter 4, p. 98) had been a deliberate attempt on my part to organise and manage time fairly, and to give those who might normally be silent the opportunity to speak; and I felt that my intentions were honourable, given that I was seeking the space for otherwise marginalised voices to be heard. However, until I
stood back and reflected on my actions, I had not really realised that I had also chosen action learning because it meant that I could track and record progress systematically and efficiently, making it possible for me to effectively combine the resources within the group to a productive end (Foucault, 1995a). What surprised me on reflection was just how important productivity and efficiency were to me, and how much my teaching practice was inclined towards observable, achievable and measurable outcomes.

Even with the best of intentions my actions could be likened to those employed in the training of an eighteenth century soldier (Foucault, 1995a); training which involved a rigorous regime of controlled activity planned to fill every moment of the trainee soldier’s time. Nor were my actions any different from the many educational providers who begin their planning with set outcomes and who then organise and manage the time to ensure these outcomes are achieved. Because I had been a professional learning facilitator myself for many years, I had learnt well how to meet Government objectives and to plan meetings for productivity and efficiency. I had learnt how to do this so well that planning for productivity and efficiency had become natural, normal and commonplace to such an extent that I was surprised by my own actions.

While my motivation in this research may have been different from the past, the eventual outcomes were the same; what was discussed, and the knowledge produced in this session, were directly affected by the way that I organised and managed the time. My actions had clearly demonstrated what Foucault (1995a) meant when he said that “power is articulated directly onto time” (p. 160), as the power articulated onto time in this session had determined the knowledge and learning that was given priority. Although I had specified in my research aims that I wanted to “challenge[s] taken-for-granted practice” and encourage “possibility thinking” (Eth/01/1.3), when the time to do this was contested my choices gave way to other priorities. On reflection, I now see that I really only saw these aims as an optional extra to the obligations that drove me towards a productivity and efficiency of a different kind.

Although I have realised how important it is to question my use of time, I also understand that the organisation and management of time for productivity and efficiency cannot be viewed in purely negative terms. In a world dominated by outcomes and achievement, it is not possible to simply eliminate productivity and efficiency from planning agendas. It
is possible, however, to reframe what is meant by productive and efficient outcomes, and with this to examine what one counts as valuable and worthwhile to know. The articulation of power over time does not have to be repressive; as Foucault (1983, 1980c, 1990a) asserts, power can also be productive and can function as a strategic and positive means of achieving socially just ends. Employing power strategically and positively over the use of time can, for example, ensure priority is given to disrupting taken-for-granted and privileged knowledge, and when this happens and openings are made for the disruption of privileged knowledge, the possibility of thinking differently becomes a viable option.

The challenge for me has been finding positive and strategic ways of working within the tensions and contestations of time. Rather than working to eliminate the tensions and contestations that exist over time, I began to position them as openings from which to explore the use of time differently. This involved working towards a different use of time; one that honoured the voice of the teachers I was working with and which placed the disruption of dominant discourses at the centre of my planning. Along with this I also had to reflect on, and challenge, my concept of a safe learning space.

**Troubling my concept of safety**

When Margaret used her learning space to invite discussion around biculturalism, I felt confident that the right kind of space had been created; a safe space for open and honest discussion, free from the need to conform to dominant views. It then became my task, I believed at the time, to ensure that this safe space was maintained. So when I felt this safety was challenged, I believed it was my place to restore peace, and when I did, I believed that I was working in the best interests of those present.

My intervention to restore peace is a modern day example of what Foucault (1995a) meant when he explained how power can function over space. As I worked to ensure that the inconvenience of disruption was minimised and that maximum benefit could be achieved from the way the space was organised and managed, I executed power over the learning space, power that determined what was permitted and what would be discouraged. While I believed at the time that I was working in the best interests of those present, I was in fact making unilateral decisions about what a safe learning space should be. Firstly, I defined a safe space as one of order and harmony, and secondly, I assumed
that by restoring these to the learning space, everyone would in fact feel safe to speak. The irony of course is that the restoration of order and harmony to the group actually brought silence from those who thought, up until this point, that it was safe to speak.

It did not occur to me until much later in the research project that my construction of self as a nice lady, a good teacher, a participatory group member and a fair and collaborative professional learning facilitator, had affected how I defined safety, and subsequently how I responded when I perceived that safety was threatened. Grounded in patriarchal, white, middle-class images of what it means to be a good woman and teacher, I had learnt the behaviours associated with these categories (Davies, 2000a) and practiced these behaviours in the context of this research group. While I had been devouring feminist literature at the time of this incident, and had been challenged by these writers to redefine for myself what it means to be a woman and teacher, when confronted with disruption and the possibility of an angry and heated discussion, I instinctively acted to retain a peaceful learning space.

According to Ortlipp (2003, 2005) my desire to keep the peace is shared by other teachers who, like me, make choices daily about what should be kept silent, if order and harmony are to be maintained. In her doctoral studies Ortlipp (2005) found that tertiary supervisors on practicum assessment visits would modify their feedback, or remain silent about some issues, to “maintain friendly relationships” (p. 194). I was like the women in Ortlipp’s study because I also wanted to maintain friendly relations with the women in my research, especially as some of them had been associates and friends for many years. Maintaining friendships was important to me, and because I worried that feelings might be hurt this affected what I tried to silence. My actions not only mirror those of the tertiary supervisors in Ortlipp’s (2005) study, but also the findings of Davis (2004), whose doctoral work, in part, explored whiteness theory and the impact that whiteness has on teachers’ responses to issues of race.

Davis (2004), found that politeness is a learned strategy associated with whiteness, known as “hyperpoliteness” (p. 181), which is employed to avoid discussion around subjects that are taboo, such as those associated with racism. In Davis’s (2004) doctoral work she found that hyperpoliteness is used to disengage from issues of culture or to ensure that when discussion around race did occur, conversation remained polite. Davis
found that strategies such as “deflecting and silencing” (p. 232) were used to avoid subjects, and that discussions around personal perceptions were “protected” (p. 233) through the use of these hyperpolite strategies. Just like the teachers in Davis’s study, I had used hyperpoliteness to ensure that when the discussion around biculturalism got “tricky” (SG4/10), the conversation was kept within safe, polite boundaries, and to do this I made sure that certain issues were avoided.

When I diverted the discussion away from racial issues, I now believe that I was not only acting out of my gender construction as a good woman and teacher, but also out of my whiteness. Using the strategy of hyperpoliteness I had effectively moved the conversation away from the taboo areas of racism, so seldom discussed in depth, to a safer and more acceptable topic. When the group discussion brought harmony and consensus on what it means to be bicultural, I let the discussion go, but when the talk moved towards dissensus and emotions were becoming heated, I was uncomfortable. And yet this discomfort and the growing dissension within the discussion was the space where I now believe the disruption of dominantly held viewpoints was most likely to occur.

My concern with maintaining friendly relationships, ensuring politeness, and keeping the session peaceful and harmonious resulted in the disruption, and its inconvenience, being immediately and effectively minimised. The operation of power over space in this session worked to inhibit discussion around the taboo subject of race and eliminated the chance for dominant discourses to be confronted and ruptured; even though disruption had been one of the main aims of this research project. My actions had polarised safety and disruption, and the tension and contestation that this polarisation brought became the opportunity from which I began to challenge and question my perception of a safe learning space. This meant redefining safety, stepping into the uncertain, and taking a risk. But before I did this, I decided that I would step back from my own agenda for a while so that I could really listen to what the teachers in this project were telling me about their professional learning. I come back to the risks that I took over safety later on in this chapter.

**Listening as an act of humility**

Until undertaking this research project I had not considered that my organisation and management of time and space was an enactment of power which could work against
emancipatory learning. Nor did I realise that what I chose to include and exclude in the
time and space allocated to learning within the research group sessions could work to
privilege some discourses. In fact, I thought that in my planning and organisation I was
enabling freedom of speech and thinking outside of the normally acceptable. The
realisation that my practice was not as liberating as I had hoped it would be became an
opening for me to think differently about professional learning. As a starting point I
decided to suspend my own plans for a while and to really listen (Freire, 2001; McNiff,
1996; Poland & Pederson, 1998) to what the teachers in this project had to tell me about
themselves and professional learning. The rest of this chapter is devoted to the shifts that
occurred in my thinking and practice because of this listening, and how these changes
enabled me to work with teachers towards critical dialogue, debate and disruption, and
towards my goal for emancipatory education.

Towards critical dialogue

The struggle for rights often ends in political action, but it begins with simple
conversations, and small meetings (Melbourne Museum, 2003).

Listening to learn: We just want to talk

The first thing that I learnt from these teachers was that most of all, they wanted the
opportunity to engage in professional conversations without the need for outcomes. My
decision to introduce individual learning projects was a surprise to them, and one they
found constraining.

I was surprised that you asked everybody to do projects (SG4/37);
I was a bit surprised too (SG4/38);
Tonight has been really nice just talking about what we’re thinking about and exploring
(SG4/38);
Well we are conversing and dialoguing aren’t we (SG4/38);
Isn’t that what we said in the beginning, that we wanted a place to talk about what we
don’t usually talk about (SG4/38).

It didn’t take long for everyone to decide that they no longer wanted to work on
individual learning projects, and once I realised this we agreed to let the meetings evolve.
We never went back to individual projects, because the teachers confirmed again and again that it was the professional talk that they valued most highly.

I couldn’t wait to escape tonight to a professional level (SG5/2);
It’s been good and it helps me have a different perspective other than my own (SG5/22);
Even though we started off like having a project each and we have gone way off that, we’ve still each time got something different from listening to everyone else (SG5/23);
Since we began these sessions, I’ve had, going around in me this little voice inside questioning whatever I do (SG5/23);
When you leave your training you get out of touch, it’s good to keep in touch (SG5/25).

The shift away from the individual learning projects was a natural move for participants, but as I shared in Chapter 4 (p. 87), letting go of the observable and measurable was difficult for me. Just talking did not seem to offer the outcomes that I had hoped for in this project. The disjointed and discontinuous nature of the discussions that followed left me with data that was fragmented and difficult to hear. When I played taped sessions back I heard unfinished conversations and sentences that either merged with those of others, or which trailed off. Ideas came and went, thoughts were stated then retracted, beliefs were formed and reformed and no-one had a complete story to tell. When I opened up the learning space for teachers to determine their own agenda I took a risk, because anything and everything became a possibility. As a result we discussed a wide range of issues including current events, career planning, spirituality, training and assessment, women in society, power, family life, conformity, holidays, leadership, and personal struggles; with no certainty, no completeness, and no unified direction.

As we moved away from learning projects to unpredictable and immeasurable professional conversations, I often felt “insecure and frightened” (Con/02/2). The time spent talking professionally did not provide me with the answers I had hoped for, but it did “open up the space for us to trouble over our learning together” (Con/02/2). And in this troubling, and the tension created from this troubling, I discovered invitations to rethink the way I practiced professional learning. As our sessions moved away from measurable outcomes towards unpredictable dialogue, I discovered that what I valued the most changed.
Changing perspectives: Valuing professional talk time as productive

The teachers in this research project taught me about the value of professional talk time and how necessary this is, if dominant and taken-for-granted discourses are to be disrupted. I had to learn to trust these teachers when they reassured me again and again that professional talk time would be enough to sustain the research on a long term basis (SG5/23). As it turned out, these discussions provided me with rich and colourful data which, while not linear or specific in its focus, gave me a privileged window into the world of these early education teachers. These conversations turned out to be so valuable that we continue to meet every six months for a welcome and very special reunion.

Valuing the personal and professional together

To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naïve and simplistic. It is to admit the impossible: a world without people (Freire, 1996, p. 32).

I continued to get feedback from individuals about the value of this professional talk time and the importance of being able to talk on both an academic and a personal level. Take, for example, Erica, who in her 20 years of teaching found:

It has been important finding a voice in the academic world. In the centre the conversations are so directed to the children and there is so little time for adult conversation, even at morning tea you’re at the children’s level [having morning tea with the children] or if you can get away for morning tea, because of the ratios you are on your own, so there is a real lack of academic conversation (SG9/13).

Erica said that before joining this research project she felt she was, “in a mental vacuum and [she] had come to a standstill in [her] life” (Con/02/11). For Erica, just being able to talk academically with other teachers, away from children, was in itself worthwhile; but not only this, being part of this research project gave her the opportunity to “explore [her] future direction within a safe, supportive and stimulating environment” (Con/02/11). Erica told me that being able to “explore both [her] professional and [her] personal journeys alongside each other” (Con/02/11) enabled her to “track [her] personal growth and bringing it back to the group [to] see how it related to [her] professional learning” (Con/02/11). This eventually allowed Erica to “move forward” with “rekindled passion
for learning and for working with children” (Con/02/12), at a time when she had been considering leaving the profession.

Lydia, too, treasured the opportunity to talk about teaching on a more personal level without the need to focus on specific topics.

I was completing an Education Management Diploma and really enjoying it. It was professionals, talking professionally, but conversation was directed, issues were generated out of the study. These papers have helped me grow, but there was still a need for a place to share and get feedback on a more personal level (C/02/10).

In the beginning, Lydia says that she was expecting the sessions to be “more intellectual” (C/02/10), but in the end she found them to be “that and more” (C/02/12). She felt that she could “raise any issue [she] chose to raise” (C/02/10), and that she was “supported in [her] growth as a leader” (C/02/10). Lydia says of her experience:

In my world of assessment and evaluation, right and wrong, fast forward, I came to sit amongst a group of people and share and often not get a black and white answer. Often sharing fell into a realm of being privileged to hear views different from my own, allowing me a 360 degree view of a situation. What a wonderful experience. I have developed deep respect and fondness for the members of our group (C/02/10).

For Lydia, the conversations within this project gave her time to pause and hear other perspectives and this challenged her to think differently. Lydia ended up questioning many of her ideas and beliefs, some of which are explored in Chapter 5 (e.g. p. 111). Erica and Lydia together taught me that professional talk time can be valuable for pausing, stepping back from the world for a moment, and thinking about ones’ personal and professional lives as they merge together. They taught me that time spent engaging with others on both a personal and professional level might be immeasurable in terms of outcomes; but this time is most definitely productive and worthwhile.

The value of practicing professional talk

As I listened I also learnt that because these teachers lacked the opportunity to engage in extended professional talk, some of their ideas and beliefs had been “left untouched and buried” (Con/02/6). As a result, when asked to talk about issues or debate theory they felt
incapable of doing so, and because their conversations were mostly related to the children it had become difficult for them to formulate and express their opinions clearly. Roxy, for one, joined the research group specifically so that she could learn to articulate her thinking (SG1). Even though Roxy had been a teacher for over 50 years, she felt unable to speak clearly about what she did, or to engage in debate. She told us:

You have this passion within you but you've got no one to share it with and you keep it to yourself and then the time comes, like I had, when ERO visited me, I just blurted out a load of rubbish because I hadn't had time to practice it... (SG9/17).

When Roxy joined this project she had just had an unpleasant experience with a Government audit, where she was challenged about what she did in her practice and she was completely lost for words. Afterwards she was quite unsettled about this, because even though she was an experienced and reflective teacher she was not used to talking about teaching in a professional capacity. This had left her feeling completely inadequate to express her opinion or debate the issue. Roxy told me that when she first heard about the research group it was like:

A light turning on inside my head, and I thought ‘wow!’; this is just what I’d like to do. This could be an opportunity for me to go back into the past and recapture the memories and knowledge that had been buried and lay hidden in me for so long, but had made me the teacher I am today (C/02/05).

For Roxy, having the opportunity to engage in professional conversations about her teaching and the long-held beliefs that guided her practice was exciting. As Roxy began talking with others, she soon realised that it was not that she lacked the ability to express herself; it was just that she very rarely engaged in the kind of professional talk where she could draw on her own understandings and express herself in her own words (C/02/06). To practice doing this, Roxy talked about something different each session; something that was current and relevant to her. Her thoughts at times appeared to be disconnected and randomly chosen, but they gave her the opportunity to speak what she felt had been hidden for so long (C/02/05). As Roxy later said:

I have learnt the importance of writing my thoughts down, this enables me to think even deeper and in turn enables me to express myself more clearly (C/02/06).
Roxy believed that what she learnt “filtered through [her] in everything” and that “even [her] staff meetings [were] far more interesting” (SG9/18). As a bonus, at the next scheduled Government audit Roxy was able to confidently explain how postmodernism had impacted on her thinking and how this had affected her practice. I was witness to what she said, and this was an exciting moment for both of us.

Roxy was not alone in feeling she could not clearly articulate herself; four of the seven teachers in this project admitted to feeling this way, citing this as one of the reasons they had joined this research group (SG1). Each one of these teachers wanted to experience talking about teaching from a more theoretical perspective. Jan, for instance, was tired of talking about the practical day-to-day aspects of teaching and she was ready to explore her teaching in more depth. Having trained in the late 1970s, Jan said:

I knew that for me to change my practice I had to explore the foundations of my practice (C/02/12).

To do this, Jan believed that she needed to be part of a community of learners such as the community provided by this research group.

I needed to be part of a community of learners where I could deconstruct how I had come to where I was and how I could reconstruct my future practice. I realised that I needed to be able to explore my existing ideas and to articulate and defend them in argument, frustrations and all, so that I could see how my current pedagogical beliefs could be modified. Recapturing and redefining what I believed to be important about my practice has made me feel confident to try different techniques and change my mind – free to take risks and dance in any direction that I choose (C/02/13).

To be able to reframe her pedagogy, Jan found it necessary to formulate her beliefs to such an extent that she could articulate them to others. Jan believed that articulating her thoughts forced her to think more deeply about what she was thinking and doing, and that this challenged her to modify her practice. Learning to articulate her pedagogy thus became an important step in the change process for Jan.

Professional talk for Roxy and Jan needed to allow for engagement with their histories, and the beliefs and passions guiding what they did. They wanted to practice expressing
their ideas, they wanted to be able to change direction, and they wanted to be able to express themselves clearly so that they could debate and argue ideas. They needed to be able to talk at times with no particular end in mind, other than to express themselves clearly.

Redefining what I valued as productive

Having the time for professional talk on a personal yet academic level, where the objective is simply to share and debate ideas, is rare in early education today; there just never seems to be enough time to talk (e.g. Ayers, 1993; Hammerness, 2003; Hatherly, 1999; Kincheloe, 1993; Kitchens, 2004; MacNaughton, 2004; Mitchell, 2003; Shin, 1995). Because just talking can be viewed as “wasted time” (Power, 2003, p. 66), professional talk time is usually spent discussing routines and programme planning (Hatherly, 1999; Nuttall, 2003), and time for extended and open-ended discussion and debate is scarce.

In New Zealand, for example, most professional learning time is spent in Government funded programmes, largely because these are free or run at a minimal cost. These funded programmes are provided by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, and independent professional learning providers who are contracted to Government. Funding is provided on the basis of met objectives which are predetermined by Government and linked to Government strategic plans. Accountability to Government objectives means that most professional learning time is spent working towards these objectives and to learning how to put Government initiatives into practice. Time for professional talk is therefore highly contested.

When I made the decision to really listen to what the teachers in the project were telling me, this was a turning point not only for the way the project progressed but also in terms of what I came to value as a productive use of time. I found out firsthand how rare it is for teachers to practice the art of professional talk and how highly valued and desirable this is to them. Not only this, I soon realised that in this research group professional talk was actually the prerequisite to critical and disruptive thinking. To expect teachers to critically examine and disrupt taken-for-granted and commonsense discourses, when they have little or virtually no professional talk time was, I discovered, problematic. If professional learning, and the professional talk that occurs within this learning, remains...
focused on routines, programme planning, and the practical aspects of putting Government legislation and theory into practice, is it any wonder that teachers like Roxy are left struggling for words when asked to debate a theoretical issue, or defend their practice (SG/9/17)?

The professional talk time that this group experienced, not only gave teachers the opportunity to practice talking, but also provided a context for critically examining the discourses that had shaped the practice of teaching as they knew it. This professional talk time became the beginnings of critical dialogue, debate and disruption, because not only did this give teachers the opportunity to express their knowing, but this also exposed teachers to the ideas of others which challenged them to think differently. When ideas and beliefs have been "left untouched and buried" (Con/02/06), it is difficult for these to be challenged. When these ideas and beliefs surface and alternative perspectives are offered, it is much more possible for disruption to occur.

When the organisation and management of time for productivity and efficiency is reframed as a positive means to achieving socially just outcomes, then the operation of power over time becomes a way to do this. Just as power can function to close discussion, so too can power be used to open up discussion, and to expand the realm of what might be possible. While it may not be feasible to work outside of externally determined outcomes per se, it is nevertheless possible to examine what is given priority, and to organise and manage time as a strategic means of incorporating socially just agendas into professional learning.

Towards debate and disruption

While I had listened and learnt from these teachers about the value of professional talk time, I was not entirely passive in my approach. Although the teachers had taken hold of the discussions and were able and willing to take the conversation in any direction they chose, I nevertheless continued to have input. It wasn't until further on in the project, however, that I began to consider just how important this input was, or how valuable my strategic use of time and space was becoming. When we had been meeting together for almost a year Roxy asked a question which caused me to think further about how my use of time and space might be contributing to our developing ability to debate and disrupt.
We have just started a teachers’ support group in our area but we’re not talking on this level, we’re talking about just practical [sic] and the things we do with the children, we’re not up here talking like we do here; theories or why we do things - so why, what’s wrong (SG9/17)?

Roxy’s question challenged me to consider just what it was that made the discussions in this research group different. Her question highlighted the fact that just meeting together to talk does not necessarily create critical and theoretical debate. In this research group the professional talk time proved to be necessary, but it was not an end in itself. Having the opportunity to practice talking about teaching, and the beliefs and theories shaping this teaching, enabled teachers to move outside of the customary talk around routines and programme planning; and this opened them up to new ideas. But engaging in dialogue of a critical nature also required my ongoing and active involvement as the facilitator of this group (Freire, 1996, 1998b, 2003a, 2003b).

Throughout the research project it became more and more evident to me that my actions, words and responses all affected the discussion and the outcomes that ensued. Roxy’s question about why the teachers in her support group did not think or talk as we did caused me to stand back and consider the positive and productive effects of the choices that I made. While I realised early on that individual projects were not going to work and I stood back to listen and learn, I nevertheless did not take on a completely passive role within the group. Adopting the notion of Foucault’s (1995a) that “power is articulated directly onto time” (p.160) helped me to stimulate and provoke critical and disruptive thinking and discussion. From this I made it my aim to actively challenge thinking, and I worked to provide playful, non-threatening, and creative ways to do this.

Taking my lead from Freire (2003a), I brought along articles that I was reading and just offered them out for participants to take away. More than once I read out small parts of these articles or wrote up one or two quotes that I found provocative. Sometimes I would read a current and topical newspaper clipping, or share a dilemma that I had come across in my work; and sometimes I would simply read from my journal. At other times I brought more abstract ideas to the group through pictures, charts or artefacts, and I encouraged others to do the same. None of these ideas were meant to detract from the
professional talk that these teachers desired, but were introduced in order to add to teachers' thinking, and to stimulate and provoke new thoughts and ideas.

Creating a climate of inquiry
As this project progressed I realised more and more just how important my input was, and that the more openly and honestly I shared, the more others felt encouraged to do the same. The expressions of uncertainty that I had written in my own reflections and shared with the group somehow created the space for others to be uncertain too. The questions that I continued to ask encouraged others to ask similar questions, and the excitement and curiosity that I had for learning and exploring alternatives seemed to have a flow-on effect.

Questioning and uncertainty
Early on I shared from my journal, and I chose a piece that demonstrated the uncertainty that I was learning to embrace as a novice poststructuralist researcher. I also read from a conference paper written by MacNaughton (1999). In this paper MacNaughton says:

In seeking truth we seek certainty that we have it right. In seeking knowledge we embrace the uncertainty of never knowing what is right. In seeking truth we seek one way forward for all. In seeking knowledge we embrace the possibility of many ways forward. In seeking truth we produce answers. In seeking knowledge we produce questions (p. 8).

The uncertainty that I expressed in my own writing, along with the conference paper of MacNaughton (1999), created an opening for uncertainty and questioning and this helped to generate energy and excitement. The response from Jo, below, demonstrates the impact that this had on her professional learning. Jo said:

This is the first place that I have actually felt that it's not only acceptable but it's encouraged to ask questions and we don't have to have the answers, you ask whatever you want and just put it out there and that's what's really exciting I think to me... once you start you just can't stop... when we ask a question we actually generate excitement...

(SG2/4).

This excitement led Jo to write her questions down and send them to me by email. This is what she told the group later:
Rather than answering my questions, Louise encouraged me to keep asking them and to allow myself the freedom to leave questions unanswered. This feedback prompted me to write more letters with more questions and this eventually led me to keeping a journal which was really a series of letters to myself. I had tried to keep a journal in the past and I had always had trouble with this. I had used a journal to reflect on my practice but I always felt that I was writing what others wanted me to say. These letters to myself allowed me to write whatever I wanted and they became a way for me to trap, not only what I knew but also what I didn’t know. I began to play around with, and explore, questions (C/02/8).

For Jo, being able to ask questions without having to find answers opened up a completely new way of exploring her world. In this questioning Jo found a freedom to explore educational issues in more depth, because she could ask question after question without having to find answers that she could apply to her practice. Because of this, her questioning opened her thinking up to new possibilities, as this comment highlights:

Asking open-ended questions and exploring why certain questions come up again and again, has resulted in me starting to reflect more on my beliefs and values and not just on my practice alone. I have started to look behind my practice to why I respond the way I do and this has added a new dimension to my professional learning (Con/02/8).

As we continued together Jo kept asking questions, and she came back to issues that continued to puzzle her. As long as Jo did not feel the need for closure on ideas she continued to examine teaching and learning from different perspectives. She remained an excited questioner for the entire project and her enthusiasm, her honesty, and her openness to new ideas continued to add depth to our discussions. With growing confidence Jo became an active provocateur within the group, one who continued to challenge herself and others.

Sharing from my journal and being open and honest about my own uncertainty and questions helped to establish a climate of inquiry. The conference paper by MacNaughton (1999) added to this by theoretically positioning questioning and uncertainty within postmodern thinking, thus exposing teachers to new and challenging ideas around knowledge and learning. Instead of a traditional banking approach to professional learning where knowledge is deposited in the learner who then puts this knowledge into
practice (Freire, 1996), the dialogic nature of discussions supported the critical inquiry that I had sought for this group.

The questioning and uncertainty that I actively sought to bring to the professional talk time, and the time that I strategically employed for this to happen, enabled these teachers to entertain teaching in a way they had not previously done. The critical thinking and the ongoing dialogic exchange that resulted from this, was one example of how power articulated over time became a positive and productive means of working towards socially just practice. Although the discussion at times created unrest and even despair, for the most part, the energy and excitement generated from the questions kept the discussions experimental and pleasurable. The experimental nature of our conversations and the pleasure gained from being curious about teaching and learning helped to sustain the critical nature of this dialogue over an extended period of time, which in turn created a context for debate.

Pleasurable curiosity
To keep meetings alive and interesting I endeavoured to create opportunities for what Freire (2003b) calls “epistemological curiosity” (p. 75). Being epistemologically curious, Freire contends, involves “a critical reading of the world” (p. 75), which is more than just talking about ways to put accepted theories into practice. Epistemological curiosity is about disputing understandings and about asking where ideas come from; it is about asking what if questions and considering what has not previously been considered. Epistemological curiosity involves immersing oneself “pleasurably in a challenge” (p. 95), and wondering with all one’s senses.

To encourage epistemological curiosity, Freire (2003b) suggests that those motivating learners create an educational space where it is possible to take an epistemological distance from the subject or object under investigation. Foucault (1984b) calls this thinking with distance “problematization” (p. 388), and he describes this as a form of thought beyond the representational. He talks of stepping back, questioning the object of thought, making it uncertain and unfamiliar, and creating a problem with and from it. This kind of distancing allows learners to stand back from the object of their curiosity, encircle this object with attentiveness and get to know as much a possible about the object (Freire, 2003a). Distance enables a temporary reprieve from being attached to a
stance, and gives license to cross the boundaries that might not otherwise be crossed. Distancing makes it possible to circumnavigate an idea, put the idea under scrutiny and experiment with possibilities; all in an atmosphere of playful pleasure.

Had I understood more about epistemological curiosity in session three when we discussed biculturalism, I might have suggested that we become epistemologically curious about this, and I might have encouraged a detachment from the subject so that we could have explored biculturalism in new ways; maybe even crossing boundaries as we did. As with many other areas of this research, however, I was just beginning to realise the potential for epistemological curiosity towards the later stages of the project; but even so, we did experience many pleasurable and curious moments. As we did we were more able to take up temporary positions and deconstruct and reconstruct what we thought and did (SG9/49); all of which helped to create a climate of inquiry conducive to debate and disruption.

**Risking the dangerous and unfamiliar**

After reflecting on my actions in session three I realised that my idea of a safe learning space needed redefining. If I was to engage with teachers in debate and disruption then I would be faced with inconvenience and discomfort, and I needed to be able to work with this. Realising that hyperpoliteness had guided my actions and that keeping friendly relations was impeding our ability to challenge dominant viewpoints shifted me even though this meant uncertainty. This also meant taking the risk that participants could withdraw from the project if sessions became disruptive to the point that they felt too uncomfortable or threatened; leaving me with little or no data. If this happened I risked losing the project altogether. But I was committed to the pathway that we were on, and so at the next session, session four, I decided to revisit my actions from the previous session.

Before we met again I sent participants my written reflections.

> I was amazed at my reaction to Jan's comment - how I immediately 'shut this down' to save 'opening a can of worms' and to prevent us from being there all night! What was I really doing - keeping the peace maybe. Here I am talking about difference and dissensus creating new thinking and immediately this REALLY happened, off went all the safety checks (JR/ SG3/3).
When I sent these reflections I suggested that we discuss this more at our next meeting, but before doing so I checked that Margaret and Jan were okay with this, which they were. At the beginning of session four I asked if anyone would like to open the discussion and Jan began.

Jan
What is wrong if we are open and honest? I thought that was the deal here and yet I felt like I wanted to go into a place of silence because I thought, well if I can't say what I feel then I won't say anything; that was where I went.

Roxy
I don't recall any sort of friction or anything did you [to others]?

Margaret
I sort of noticed the cut off and I said to Jo [another participant] the next day, that's what I wanted, I wanted that feedback, like what you gave me [speaking directly to Jan].

Jan
You were comfortable with what I said?

Margaret
Yeah I was comfortable with it but I can't remember what you said now (SG4/4-5).

I was surprised to hear that my feelings about a safe learning space were not reflected in the comments of others and this became a point of departure (Freire, 2003a) for me. From this moment I began to redefine the types of learning spaces that I worked to organise and manage, and to do this I began by rethinking what I believed about safety.

Dangerously safe spaces

Confronting one another across differences means that we must change ideas about how we learn; rather than fearing conflict we have to find ways to use it as a catalyst for new thinking, for growth (hooks, 1994, p. 113).

To rethink my beliefs about safety I went back to a comment that Jan made, one where she spoke about having a feeling that something was not okay. Jan said:

I think there probably was a feeling 'cause I felt after I said it 'shut up' or you know, don't say any more (SG4/5).
Ascertaining with certainty the source of Jan’s feeling is difficult, but from subsequent discussions with Jan, and with her permission (PC/29/10/02/06), I have entertained the possibility that this feeling may have been similar to the feeling experienced when faced with impending danger.

Entertaining the thought that Jan’s feeling was one of impending danger opened up new ideas for me in relation to safety. In most instances where I have considered danger I have positioned danger as the polar opposite of safety; that is, one feels either danger or safety. However, as I thought this through I was challenged by Davies (2000c) to consider danger and safety in alternative ways; not as polar opposites but more as being hand in hand. Davies contends that “danger is understood in relation to safety” (p. 57) and that they can be experienced together. Writing of landscapes Davies (2000c) says that a forest, for example, “is inscribed both with safety and with danger” [and that] “awareness of one rarely exists without some awareness of the other” (p. 57). With these ideas in mind I began to consider that the research group, in session three, had begun to experience safety and danger simultaneously, and that in fact both safety and danger were necessary if movement towards uncharted waters in thinking and understandings was to occur.

When describing danger, Davies (2000c) uses phrases like “alarm and separation” (p. 54), “being pulled towards” (p. 55) and “not knowing” (p. 55), and she says that “even familiar landscapes become strange when the others in them vanish” (p. 56). These phrases indicate a moving away from what is comfortable, predictable and certain, to a place of uncertainty, unpredictability and discomfort, where aloneliness replaces the comfort and surety usually provided by the assent of others. The feeling that Jan experienced may just have been her awareness that she was moving to a place of temporary danger away from the certain, the comfortable and the predictable, and my response was to return the group to what was known and familiar. My use of hyperpoliteness to bring the group back to what I perceived to be a safe space not only misrepresented what others had determined as safety, but it also inhibited the possibility of dangerous thinking.

Focusing on safety without danger “undermines the possibilities of creating the necessarily risky but potentially productive openings” (Keating 2005, p. 93) needed for
new thinking to take place. Creating spaces for the usually unspoken or what Margaret called the “tapu” [sacred, forbidden] (SG3/31) can, and almost certainly will, involve risk, and with this risk the possible feeling of impending danger. But when danger is no longer viewed as a threat to safety but as a necessary and beneficial part of learning, then the inconvenience that danger once posed to the learning space no longer exists, and the power that operates over space then becomes a positive means of producing new knowledge.

Reopening the dialogue around biculturalism in session four was a risk for me; it felt dangerous and unsafe. Sending my reflections to participants meant that they knew my uncertainties and this disclosure left me feeling somewhat exposed and vulnerable. But what I had not anticipated is how this honesty and vulnerability would open up a new kind of learning space; one where others could also be honest and vulnerable (hooks, 1994; Lather, 1991a). As the following conversation shows, participants also took risks and became vulnerable:

Roxy
I feel myself churning a bit.

Jan
What’s the churn?

Roxy
Um because it has been such a mono Pakeha society in New Zealand; everyone thinks it’s the norm and that’s where I - um - feel I’m on the outer often in conversations and discussions because I don’t feel like - um - Europeans feel so I don’t feel like that; I feel different.

Jan
But do you know how I feel?

Roxy
I used to feel like that, I used to feel like that, it’s very like, it is superior; never mind.

Jan
So you’re telling me now that cause of what I said that! think I’m superior?

Roxy
No not you; I think it is the mono culture thing. They [Europeans] have only known one culture... and I come from England and we were awful, we were shocking. We came here and we were everything, we knew everything and we pushed everything (SG4/10-11).
The discussion continued for a while longer and then Jan said:

I think we have actually got into a worse place for actually bringing it up again, cause you see now I can actually feel that people think that I don’t have a feel for the Māori cause I’ve had nothing to do with them. I’m not saying this in the least cause I don’t actually think that is what I’m saying. What I’m saying is it’s not part of a culture that is innately me, so I can experience it, I can hear it, I can live amongst it, but it’s not innately me... I’m very happy to see Māori spoken in school, I would be very happy to learn it and all the rest of it if that’s the way it goes, but what I’m saying is that I don’t innately have a feel for it (SG4/11-12).

Roxy and Jan were sharing honestly about their feelings even though this left Jan feeling that we were in “a worse place” (SG4/11). The tension and discomfort being experienced at this point and the exposure of vulnerability was indeed a dangerous and risky place, and it was certainly unfamiliar territory for me. Rather than intervening to relieve that tension at this point, however, I let the conversation take its own course, coming back into the conversation further on when there was the space for me to share from my personal experience.

The first time I read the book *Teaching to Transgress* (hooks, 1994) I couldn’t understand it because she is quite intellectual; but I cried. I cried because something went deep inside of me with what she had suffered, and now I read it and I can understand it but when I first read it, it was just so far away from me. But I think that day I began to understand in some way the oppression that other people feel and I cannot be there but I can definitely [contemplative pause], it is linked to feeling and it changed my life, and the same thing is happening with the feminism I am reading, the same thing (SG4/12).

My comments about feminism reminded Jan of the journal reflections I had written and sent to the group after our last session, and I was asked to read these out:

*Until recently I have been uninterested in exploring feminism believing it to be unimportant in my life because I have always felt free to be who I am. However, I now believe that my ignorance of the wider issues surrounding the oppression of women has caused me to do what Kidd (1996) calls “trivialise” (p. 33) the problem and she says that this is one of the primary forms of resistance to issues of oppression. As long as feminist issues are trivialised there will be resistance to change. I have a growing feeling of*
obligation to explore the lives of women and their struggles and to begin by un-naming my own existence. I may not feel the pain many women feel and I may not struggle as some may do, but I can walk with them on their journey (JR/SG3/12).

When I had finished Jan spoke again:

That was really powerful, that, I am beginning to feel the pain, now just, that's all. There's somewhere I think in this biculturalism and this feeling is the key, no I'm not sure (SG4/12).

In this very personal space, and in this very special moment, Jan experienced a shift, one that she could not explain but a moment that for her was powerful and life-changing.

Enchanted spaces and magical moments

When Jan said, “that was really powerful” and “I am beginning to feel the pain” (SG4/12) I realised that this kind of change could not be measured or even observed in progress. I began to understand that the deepest changes can be unseen and that a point of departure (Freire, 2003a) can occur in an instant. Even those experiencing change may not be fully aware of what is happening to them at the time. Jan ended her comment by trailing off with the words, “I’m not sure” (SG4/12), because she wasn’t aware of the implications of this shift at the time that it happened. For me, realising this meant learning to trust the process (MacNaughton, 2002) of learning and change, without being able to track or report on these with certainty, and this has involved embracing the unfamiliar, the dangerous, and the risky. As I have sought to create contexts for debate and disruption, I have had to believe that in one magical moment, in what seems like an enchanted space, something magical and transformational can happen.

Enchanted spaces

Ortlipp (2005), in the conclusions of her doctoral thesis, says that safe spaces are important but that in education today there may be a need for “different spaces” (p. 239). While she was referring specifically to generating critical dialogue around practicum assessment, the idea of a different space has challenged me to consider what this might mean in professional learning. In feminist and religious literature this kind of space is sometimes referred to as a third space (e.g. Khan, 1998; Licona, 2005; Novinger & O’Brien, 2003). Licona (2005, citing Sandoval, 2000) describes the third space as a space
of transition and movement, where dichotomous thinking is opposed and fixed positions avoided. The third space, she says, is a fertile and productive space and those who move within this space are always in search of something new. This space can be entered at random and one can, according to Licona (2005), “slip and slide” (p. 105) to and from it. Rather like the smooth spaces described by St. Pierre (2000), these transient, fluid spaces provide the context for discussion around the complex, the intangible and the contradictory.

When I read from my journal about my feminist journey I believe that as a research group we moved to a different space, one temporarily removed from the cognitive, the rational, and the certain. This was a more intuitive and experiential space one which was tentative and unpredictable; it was a space of exposure, vulnerability and emotion. In this different, this enchanted, this ephemeral space, there were no boundaries to thinking and no restraints on creativity. This was a free space (hooks, 2003), a breathing space (Freire, 2003a), where the unexpected and out of the ordinary could occur. A fluid transition into this enchanted space allowed us the temporary freedom to examine life and its meaning from a different vantage point and to return with a new perspective. In the hustle and bustle of life moving to an enchanted space, if only for a moment, created a pause from the everyday, and this gave us an opportunity to see life differently. It was also in these pauses that life-changing moments occurred.

Magical moments
In this project, I learnt about the power of a single moment, and how in a flash, life can change forever. In a near-death experience an entire life can flash before one’s eyes in a single instant, and in this moment time stands still. In such moments, when time stands still, one is momentarily transported outside of the boundaries normally associated with time, and as the obscured comes into focus, life can change. When this happens, when one experiences what Davies (2003b, 2004) calls a syncopic moment, something magical can happen.

Syncope is a term used in both medicine and music, and has been used by Davies (2003b, 2004) to describe the moment when time stands still, or a moment of “miraculous suspension” (Clément, 1994, cited in Davies, 2004, p. 71). In medicine, syncope refers to the “temporary loss of consciousness” (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 2002), for
example, when fainting; and in music, syncopation is the term used to explain the way a strong or accented beat is displaced becoming instead the weaker beat and vice versa (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 2002). In the syncopic moment, for an instant, conscious thinking gives way to the unexpected thought, and the beats and rhythms that usually dominate thinking and actions are replaced, if only temporarily, with the unnatural and less familiar. The syncopic moment is the moment when the deliberate gives way to the spontaneous and the stronger is displaced by the weaker.

The magic and power of a syncopic moment lies in its potential for creating instant shifts in thinking. Syncope occurs when one steps outside of the ordinary everyday world, and sees, if only for a fleeting moment, the world differently. In the syncopic moment, when time falters, Davies (2003b) maintains that one can absorb difference, and in a flash, see the world as never before. Being immersed in a single moment is not, however, valued in education as much as looking back and planning ahead (hooks, 2003; Silin, 1995). The need for observation, measurement, and reporting distract from the value of living in and savouring a moment. Hooks (2003) believes that this “displacement of meaning into the future makes it impossible for students to fully immerse themselves in the art of learning” (p. 166), and inhibits a student’s ability to experience a “complete, satisfying moment of fulfilment” (p. 166); a moment such as that experienced by Jan.

For learners to become fully immersed in the moment, facilitators like me need to be able to trust in the power of a moment to bring about life-changing shifts in thinking, and to make changes to agendas so that these moments are not seen as interruptions and moments of inconvenience. Pausing, changing direction, and slipping and sliding between spaces, all enable syncopic moments to emerge. When such moments do occur, sensitivity to this moment is required, along with a deep respect for both the learner and the potential of this moment for change. Change in these moments may not be visible, and may therefore be unusable in terms of justifying learning outcomes, but this should not discount from the potential of such moments for rupturing thinking and creating points of departure (Freire, 2003a). Because magical moments are not always visible and are usually unspoken of, these moments will often pass by unnoticed, but the knowledge that at any time a syncopic moment is possible places value on the present and encourages a savouring of the moment. As Liz commented:
Sometimes life is just about savouring your own little thought, you know there’s a
dilemma isn’t there, do you have to put it out there, why do you have to put it out there?
What’s wrong with putting it in here (pointing to heart), isn’t that more valuable?
(SG9/24).

Savouring the moment might be difficult in a world driven by outcomes and
accountability, and creating learning spaces for this to happen may involve taking risks
and living with uncertainty. There may well be no evidence of change, but if the magical
and transformational are to happen, spaces must be created for the unexpected, and these
moments must be valued as crucial to learning. It took bell hooks (1994) “time and
experience... to understand that the rewards of engaged pedagogy might not emerge
during a course” (p. 206), and anyone wanting to do this kind of work must also learn this
lesson.

**Tension and discomfort as possibility**

When Jan experienced a shift, in what I believe was a magical moment, it was not long
after she had felt that we were in a “worse place” (SG4/11). Had I abandoned the debate
before we got to this “worse place” in favour of a safer space as I had done in session
three, Jan may not have reached the point where she felt that something powerful was
happening. The risk and the danger that came with moving to an unfamiliar space and the
tension and discomfort that this produced was, in the end, the point of departure (Freire,
2003a) that brought change. Openly discussing race, especially when this had previously
been avoided due to factors such as hyperpoliteness (Davis, 2004), opened the space for
new ways of seeing the world. The diversity of opinions, which created a “churning”
(SG4/10) and a feeling of being in a “worse place” (SG4/11), also made possible the
displacement of certainties, thereby opening up the space for alternatives.

Differing opinions, or dissensus, according to Lubeck, 1998 (cited in Hughes &
MacNaughton, 2000), is the space where “contradiction, ambiguity and complexity” (p.
255) are accentuated, and when this occurs the seemingly commonsense and true can be
shaken and displaced. Even if displacement is not immediate, the doubt and tension
created by being immersed in diverse opinions can pave the way for new thinking and
changes in perspective to occur at a later date. Simply being exposed to different ways of
thinking can be enough to unsettle the firmly established; creating doubt and making the

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space for seeing things differently. While we were just beginning, in session four, to
debate the issues surrounding biculturalism in any depth, we nevertheless began to
unsettle firmly established ways of thinking around issues of race, and this “put a stutter”
(Moss, 2006b, p. 128) in dominantly held thinking. The dissension experienced in this
session became a valuable and strategic means of working towards socially just practices
(Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000), even if only in a very small way.

Not only did this diversity of opinion help to build tolerance to alternate viewpoints, but
the displacement that occurred in session four contributed to the transformative thinking
that occurred throughout the 2 ½ years that we worked together (Derman-Sparks, 2002).
Derman-Sparks (2002) believes that working towards transformative thinking involves
actively seeking out contradiction and continually challenging the knowledge and the
structures that continue to give privilege to some. This involves, among other things,
helping learners to see bias and injustice, challenging hegemonic knowledge, and
complicating pedagogy; all within a spirit of activism. Remaining in safe learning spaces
where any disruption to thinking is avoided is not only limiting, but is also at odds with
the kind of debating and disruption required for more widespread activism (Kenway &
Modra, 1992).

Throughout the rest of this project we continued to debate issues in education, and we
learned to experience safety and danger alongside each other; and as we did, predominantly
held views were unsettled, fixed ideas became loosened, and minds were made fertile for
new ideas. I continued to struggle with uncertainty and immeasurable outcomes but I
believe change happened and will continue to happen as a result of our dialogue, debate
and disruption. I remember how I challenged teachers to think critically about a popular
child assessment method in New Zealand known as Learning Stories (Carr, 2001),
encouraging them not to accept this without question, and I remember how they
disagreed and argued with me about this, telling me that I didn’t really know because I
wasn’t teaching children any more. I remember the pain I felt in some of these
discussions, but I also remember the excitement when one of the teachers took me aside
towards the end of the project and told me, “I get it, it took me a long time but I get what
you have been trying to say” (PC/24/3/10/03). It had taken a long time, but exposure to
other ways of thinking can, and did, make a difference.
Early on in this project, Jan commented:

I don’t even really know what racism is, that’s how confusing it all is to me, because I just haven’t really been there. So that’s where I come from, that’s where I stand, I’m open to you changing anything [about me] any of you, so… (SG4/10).

For teachers like Jan who have not been exposed to racism, understanding a perspective other than their own requires talking with others and being exposed to difference. Until this happens, ideas can “remain buried, and lay hidden inside” (Con/02/05) as they were for Roxy, unspoken, not fully formulated, and unchallenged. Jan sought challenge, she wanted to change, and it was extended dialogue that enabled her to do so. Without exposure to the world of other, how could Jan see that the world might be different from what she had imagined internally? It is difficult to understand difference when one has never “really been there” (SG4/10), but dialogue, debate and disruption makes change more likely; for when the din of dominant and commonplace thinking is quietened by the sound of another voice (Brodkey, 1995 cited in McCoy, 2000), the unexpected and transformative can happen.

If there is one thing I have learnt from your project it is that one small change can make a big difference; but it takes time (PC/29/20/10/06).

Towards beginnings

The future is created by us, through transformation of the present (Freire, 2003b, p. 79).

Working with others towards the kind of transformative change that brings life-changing shifts in what one knows, thinks and does takes time and patience, and a determination to work outside of the limits of finite agendas (hooks, 1994). In this project it took many unplanned and disconnected conversations, over an extended period of time, and an exposure to many different perspectives before this kind of change happened. This chapter has shown how a rethinking of my own practice, for instance, took the entire project, and how this involved many personal and professional shifts. However, what this chapter also showed was that once teachers had been exposed to alternative perspectives over time, and they had experienced otherness for themselves, life-changing shifts occurred in an instant and magical moment, as they did for Jan. When this change
happened it was unpredictable, and in some instances, as it was for Jo when she changed her position on *Learning Stories*, unseen.

As I grew to appreciate the power of a moment for transformative shifts in knowing, thinking and being, like the few mentioned above, I began employing time and space strategically so that I could provide a context for these transformative moments to occur. Previously my practice had been more focused on observable and measurable outcomes, even though I had been mostly unaware of this. Realising that this kind of change is unpredictable and often not visible changed the way I worked with others. Instead of prioritising technical learning, I shifted sessions towards a more active and dialectical engagement with some of the theories underlying teaching practice, and as Freire (1996, 2003a, 2003b) contends it would, this became a key to realising my vision for emancipatory practice. As I invited more uncertainty and “epistemological curiosity” (Freire, 2003b, p. 75) into teachers’ professional learning, this generated excitement and encouraged teachers to experiment with ideas, and gave some the permission they needed to think and act differently.

Jo was one teacher who benefited from this change in direction. Because she no longer felt the need to apply her reflections to practice, she was enabled to think about teaching and learning in ways she had not previously done; and she said that this caused her to think more deeply about what was underlying her practice. This more dialectical discussion also helped Roxy to articulate herself with more confidence, and this enabled her to debate with others, and to defend what she believed. As mentioned, it was also through these discussions that Jan was able to talk through her beliefs and to entertain being other to what she had always been; and this helped to shift her out of old patterns of thinking. In many instances these changes can go unnoticed, and they cannot be measured in terms of student outcomes. These changes are nevertheless productive and worthwhile, because life-changing shifts in thinking and being are not restricted to time or place, making them transferable across contexts.

I began to value learning spaces that were more open to the unexpected (hooks, 1994), and more conducive to the kind of discussions that lead to transformative change. This entailed learning to trust the process of learning (MacNaughton, 2002), rather than depending on observable and measurable proof that learning and change had occurred;
and this was a major shift in focus for me. Changing what I valued also involved inviting danger into safety; and this changed the kinds of conversations that we had, and my role within these. I no longer felt it was my responsibility to maintain a safe learning space, and I invited the dangerous, the unfamiliar, and the uncomfortable into discussions. It was through these uncomfortable conversations that bicultural practice was troubled, as were Learning Stories and the position of Te Whāriki in New Zealand. It was also in discomfort that I came face to face with my own practice, and this changed how I work with others.

As we worked through the tense moments together, we experienced what Manning-Morton (2006) describes as “the pleasure and pain that feeling close to another person entails” (p. 47), and this created the kind of connectedness that made otherness possible. Otherness was no longer just something we learnt about in a technical sense; otherness was lived. As Manning-Morton (2006) says, this was sometimes pleasurable and sometimes painful, but it was also vibrant and energising. We were touched and changed by each other, and as a result, “the future [was] created by us through [the] transformation of [our] present” (Freire, 2003b, p. 79). Each shift in thinking, each intimate encounter with otherness, became a beginning that continues to be lived out daily in the teachers who were part of this project.

The next chapter addresses more specifically how this project has informed my understanding and practice of professional learning for progressive social change, and the place of knowledge, the learner and change within this.
CHAPTER 8
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL CHANGE

How can we expand our ways of understanding and practising professional learning for individual and social change in early education (Chapter 4, p. 79)?

When I began this project I had a desire for emancipatory learning (Chapter 1, p. 1), and throughout the course of this project I have learnt many things that have helped me to work towards this desire in my practice. In this chapter I examine how the storylines presented in the previous three chapters have helped me to do this, and I return to the research questions outlined in Chapter 4 (pp. 79-80) as a starting point. I show how the experiences shared within this project have informed my understanding and practice of teacher professional learning, and how this has affected both individual and social change in early education (Chapter 4, p. 79). I have attempted to differentiate between knowledge, the learner, and change (Chapter 4, p. 80); however, because these are so closely interrelated, the demarcation between them is blurred. The themes of knowledge, the learner and change, weave in and through the storylines represented in this thesis, and as such these storylines reoccur in different sections; each time from a slightly different angle. It is my belief that this project will inform how teacher professional learning can be a force for progressive social change (Chapter 4, p. 80), and that this will inspire others who, like me, have a desire to realise an emancipatory vision in their practice.

Knowing more about knowledge

What constitutes professional early education knowledge, who owns it and how can it be generated (Chapter 4, p. 80)?

This project confirms what poststructuralist feminists argue, that knowledge is not value-free and neutral, and that what becomes counted as worthwhile to know is closely associated with the discourses that reach the status of truth. In this project it was the discourses that functioned as truth that had the most power to shape thinking and actions; with the New Zealand early childhood curriculum document, Te Whariki (Ministry of
know, and the tensions experienced within such contestation, were most evident when learning became a pursuit of truth.

**Learning as a pursuit of truth**

When learning is a pursuit of truth, or what Foucault (1972) called a “will to truth”, groups or individuals will have a desire to find the right ways to think and act (MacNaughton, 2003c). In this project such a pursuit of truth was most evident in two instances; one, when teachers sought the truth about what it means to be bicultural (Chapter 6, p. 143), and the other, when Lydia focused her learning on the truth about what it means to be the ideal teacher (Chapter 5, p. 108). Both of these instances highlight how a pursuit of truth created what Foucault (1983) called “actions upon other actions” (p. 220), all of which affected what was counted as worthwhile to know, and the knowledge that was privileged and subjugated as a result.

**In pursuit of truth: Seeking right answers**

In session three, Jan asked a question (Chapter 6, p. 143), a simple question but one that became crucial to my understanding of learning as a pursuit of truth. Jan’s question about biculturalism - “Could you explain the term please” (SG3/29) - could have been an invitation for teachers to debate and contest biculturalism in-depth; but instead, what became most important was defining the right way to be bicultural. When this became the focus, the response to Jan’s question was to answer her question with the right answer, and when this happened, those who felt they knew the right way to be bicultural became the authorised speakers (Foucault, 1976, cited in Davidson, 2003). In this instance, pursuing the truth about what it means to be bicultural took priority over any other discussion. Instead of disrupting taken-for-granted perceptions and understandings, the truth about being bicultural, as the early childhood teachers understood it, was firmly upheld; even if only temporarily.

Another instance where learning became a pursuit of truth can be found in the storylines of Lydia (Chapter 5, p. 108) where, in her quest to be the best that she could be, Lydia sought to get her teaching right. Lydia based getting her teaching right on the images that she had taken up for herself throughout her life. Lydia was “reluctant to put [her] foot out” (SG7/38) or “go wrong” (SG7/38), because she believed this would indicate incompetence. For Lydia there was credibility in getting her teaching right, and this
Education, 1996a), being one example of this. As Chapter 6 (p. 148) demonstrated, *Te Whāriki* weaves in and through all early childhood training and practice and it is familiar to all early childhood teachers in New Zealand (Hill, 2005). Because of its extensive support, both institutional and personal, *Te Whāriki* now has a privileged position within the New Zealand early childhood community (Chapter 6, p. 158). As a result, the discourses embedded within this document function as truths, or in other words; privileged knowledge. These truths have now become what Foucault (1995a), called a general “blueprint” (p. 138) or “overall strategy” (Foucault, 1980c, p. 97) guiding the thinking and practice of early childhood in New Zealand.

The widespread allegiance to *Te Whāriki* (Chapter 6, p. 154) makes it difficult for the truths embedded in this document to be disrupted; especially when some teachers are prone to thinking *Te Whāriki* contains enough knowledge that other alternatives are unnecessary (Chapter 6, p. 166). Because of the privileged position of *Te Whāriki*, it is now difficult for early childhood teachers in New Zealand to experience professional learning outside of the parameters of this curriculum document (Chapter 6, p. 153-154). Instead, most professional learning is built around learning to implement *Te Whāriki* in more effective and innovative ways (Ministry of Education, 2006d), and the emphasis is on the regulation, preservation and reproduction of accepted and privileged truths (Chapter 6, p. 158). There are few spaces for alternatives.

The privileged status of truth ascribed to *Te Whāriki* is, however, only one example of how privileged truths function in the production of knowledge. *Te Whāriki* was not the only privileged truth influencing the teachers in this project. Both teaching communities and each individual within these communities had different truths shaping their being and acting in the world (MacNaughton, 2000). So when the teachers in this project came together for their professional learning, they each gave different meanings and interpretations to discussions. As they did they drew on their truths, and when meanings and interpretations were different and truths were contested, this created tension. At times this tension gave rise to emotional and highly-charged moments (Foucault, 2000), and at first this troubled me (Chapter 7, p. 177). But as time progressed, I grew to value these highly-charged, tension rich moments for the potential they offered for disruption and transformation. In this project, the contests over what would be counted as worthwhile to
depended on what she believed was the right way to be the best kind of teacher. For Lydia these truths affected what she counted as important to know, and what she used as a measurement in her reflective practice (Parker, 1997). Lydia made the choice to uphold the truths that she had come to trust, even though her certainty about doing so was disrupted by the exposure to alternative discourses, such as those of Walkerine (1990).

In both of these instances, the pursuit of truth took precedence over critical debate and the disruption of dominant and taken-for-granted discourses. As a result, professional learning remained firmly rooted within positivism and focused on interpreting and learning to apply existing truths (Chapter 2, p. 32 & 35). While this was not the case throughout most of the project, the pursuit of truth at times presented challenges in terms of realising an emancipatory vision. When the focus of discussion and learning became a pursuit of truth, and these truths had the strong support of institutions and individuals, it was difficult to disrupt the dominant, in order to create the other, particularly when those who felt they knew the right answer were prepared to defend their truths vehemently.

In defence of truth
When being knowledgeable about truth brings validation and assurance that one's teaching is best practice, it is understandable why someone who has attained a level of expertise may feel it necessary to defend this expertise when it is contested. If the alternative means risking a loss of credibility or worse still job loss, and one is fearful of such a consequence, then claiming certainty about what one knows may feel a safer and wiser option (Chapter 5, p. 120). This becomes particularly so in discussions where right and wrong are polarised and the objective of discussion becomes winning (Foucault, 1983). If admitting that someone else is right also means admitting being wrong, then it is highly probable that one will defend their truth, rather than be seen to be wrong and potentially incompetent. This is the kind of dilemma Lydia faced when she was afraid to put her foot out or admit that she had got it wrong (Chapter 5, p. 111). A person of Lydia's ability, with all her study and practical experience should know what best practice involves. Because of this, if Lydia had been challenged in her thinking and practice, she may have felt it necessary to defend her position and the truths shaping her choices.
Similarly, studious early childhood teachers in New Zealand may not want to admit that they have it wrong about bicultural practice because all trained early childhood teachers are expected to know how to practice biculturalism. To admit otherwise is to admit a failure to understand the most basic of requirements. It is much more likely that a trained early childhood teacher in New Zealand will learn such truths and be prepared to pass on their knowledge to others, maybe even feeling that it is their responsibility to do so (MacNaughton, 2003b). Chapter 6 (p. 156) showed how the early childhood teachers in this project did this when they shared their knowledge of biculturalism with Jan; effectively socially appropriating the discourse of Te Whāriki (Foucault, 1972). When this happened the desire to defend and pass on the truth to others temporarily eclipsed any desire for otherness and difference, and as a result this moment for disruption and transformation slipped by.

**Summary**

When the learning in this project was a pursuit of truth and the focus became getting right answers, learning was limited to the interpretation and application of established truths, even if these truths were not inherently true but instead privileged discourses. Had learning remained a pursuit of truth for the entire project, my desire for emancipatory learning would have been subjugated to more technical learning. Instead, we struggled over meanings and interpretations (Foucault, 1976, cited in Davidson, 2003), and as we did, we experienced many tense moments. It was learning to work with this tension that became a turning point in my work towards emancipatory practice.

**Possibilities within tension**

When we first experienced tension in session three I was unsettled by this, believing that it was adversely affecting the safe learning space that I had worked so hard to create (Chapter 7, p. 172). But with time I learnt to value tension as an opening for otherness. Understanding the value of tension, particularly in the disruption of truth, became the first step towards realising and enhancing the potential of tension for transformative thinking and change.

**The likelihood of tension**

Communities develop their identity through the truths which define them, and in some instances it is necessary to remain loyal to community truths in order to attain, and retain,
membership (Davies, 2000a; Foucault, 1972). When this applies, community members may feel it necessary to show loyalty to community truths and support these in public, even doing so with such gusto that others find this disturbing. This is what Lydia experienced in her postgraduate group when the early childhood teachers there defended Te Whāriki with such zealousness that she found this “evangelical” (SG4/22) and “affronting” (SG4/23). This kind of loyalty to truths may bring validation within one’s community, but when communities with different truths come together this kind of allegiance can create tension, as it did in this project.

Not only do communities have different truths but the individuals within these communities also hold to different truths; truths which they have take up as their own and through which they feel defined. In this project, the different backgrounds, experiences, ethnicities, and ages of participants, meant that each teacher had been exposed to, and held, different truths about what it means to be a woman and teacher. At times it was these individual truths that were contested, and this created further tension within the group. For instance, Roxy had a different perspective from others when it came to leadership, which created tension over her decision to be autocratic (Chapter 5, p. 127). Lydia ascribed to different truths than others about what it means to be an ideal teacher, and this created internal tension for her (Chapter 5, p. 111), and Jan had different experiences and perspectives on biculturalism which created multiple moments of tension (e.g. Chapter 6, p. 146; Chapter 7, p. 196). Additionally, there were moments of tension when I first introduced the work of Walkerdine (1990) (Chapter 5, 128), because these ideas about passivity contested the firmly held truths of an early education teacher as “good, sensitive, and nurturing” (Ryan & Ochsner, 1999, p. 14).

When individuals and groups come together as these women did, to share their lives, their learning, and their ideas about education, in sometimes very personal ways, there is a certain amount of inevitability about the tension that will be experienced. I now realise that believing I could disrupt dominant truths while maintaining a learning environment free from tension and discomfort was both illusionary and naïve. It may be possible to eliminate the appearance of tension, but when one’s truths are contested, there will inevitably be some tension. This tension does not need to be viewed as negative, though; I found that tension is both worthwhile and necessary to disruption and transformation.


**Tension as worthwhile and necessary**

When I first encountered tension and potential disruption my instinct was to try to restore peace, believing that this would maintain a safe learning space (Chapter 7, p. 177). At the time I was unaware that I was drawing on my beliefs about safety and hyperpoliteness (Davis, 2004), from within my whiteness (Chapter 7, p. 178). When I intervened in the discussion, my actions privileged the truths that I held dear and inhibited our ability to entertain alternatives. My concept of a safe learning space and my belief that keeping the peace would maintain safety worked against the possibility of difference because it was in the tension that we began to unsettle truth, and my actions to minimise this tension worked against this unsettling process. My decision to reopen the discussion around biculturalism in session four, regardless of the tension (Chapter 7, p. 193), was a turning point in this project, and if this had not happened, the outcomes could have been very different.

For instance, if the truths about biculturalism that are embedded in *Te Whāriki* had not been unsettled by Jan’s question (Chapter 6, p. 143), Margaret may have continued to believe, as she first did, that:

> In no time I will have every centre promoting biculturalism as a natural part of their curriculum (Con/02/7).

Instead, Margaret found that issues of race are indeed “tricky” (SG4/10), and that changing perceptions, and disrupting long held white middle-class perspectives takes more than just learning how to put *Te Whāriki* into practice. She said later:

> It was not as simple as I thought it would be (Con/02/7).

Without tension, the privileged position of *Te Whāriki* within the New Zealand early childhood community may not have been unsettled. While the long-term outcomes of such an unsettling are well beyond the scope of this project, for me it was enough at the time that these teachers realised not everyone views *Te Whāriki* and its contents as the answer. From my own perspective, this unsettling of *Te Whāriki* helped me to understand more about how the early childhood discourses that are precious to the early childhood community in New Zealand are created, regulated, preserved and reproduced (Chapter 6, p. 157), and how this makes problematic the creation of alternative discourses. Moreover,
if biculturalism had not been unsettled through tension, Jan may never have questioned her understandings of race as she did, or felt the way she felt when she said:

I am beginning to feel the pain, now just, that’s all. There’s somewhere I think in this biculturalism and this feeling is the key, no I’m not sure (SG4/12).

Tension was also one of the reasons that Lydia began to question the contradictions of her practice and to name the impossibilities that she was facing (Chapter 5, p. 112). Tension drew her attention to her situation, and from this she began to question the “double bind” (Foucault, 1983, cited in Osgood, 2006, p. 10) in which she worked and lived. While Lydia may not have changed anything immediately, the tensions she experienced, both in the contradictions and the subsequent challenge of others, shifted Lydia’s thinking. Hearing perspectives other than her own prompted Lydia to consider the cost involved in change and to make the comment that to do so would mean being brave (SG7/39). Such a response required Lydia to consider her situation in a way that she had not previously done, and to imagine how this might affect her in practice. In this way tension was a necessary and worthwhile first step towards new understandings for Lydia.

The effect of tension on Roxy had an altogether different outcome, but one where truth was nevertheless unsettled. Rather than challenging Roxy to rethink and possibly change her practice and the truths guiding these, Roxy ended up feeling more convinced of her truths, even against the advice of others (Chapter 5, p. 127). The tension Roxy experienced in her workplace, and the added tension created by the discussion she had with us, caused her to reflect on her truths and to defend these with more vigour than ever. While Roxy’s response was different to others’ in that she did not change her stance but remained more convinced of it, it was tension that gave her the resolve to fight for the issues she was passionate about. Furthermore, it was because of Roxy’s tension that I introduced the group to the feminist theory of Walkerdine (1990), and even though this created further tension, this also opened up discussion and thinking, to the possibility of being otherwise.

In each of the instances above, tension was both worthwhile and necessary to the unsettling of truth. While the effects of tension were different in each of these examples,
the unsettling of truth in its different forms did occur, and because of this, space was created for other ways of thinking about early education.

**Making truth fragile: Possibilities for professional learning**

While these findings cannot be generalised, they nevertheless offer one explanation as to why professional learning that is intent on the regulation, preservation, and reproduction of discourse remains the predominant focus of professional learning in New Zealand (Chapter 6, p. 158). If disrupting the firmly established truths of *Te Whāriki*, for instance, can cause such tension and potential conflict between individuals and communities (hooks, 1994), it is understandable why some may prefer not to risk the consequences of such disruption (Shor & Freire, 2003, Tamboukou, 2000). What this project taught me, however, is that this kind of risk is essential to critical pedagogical work. The creation of knowledge will involve struggles over meanings and these can create highly-charged moments (Foucault, 1976, cited in Davidson, 2003), but challenging and dismantling the structures that continue to give privilege to some truths will mean learning to work with these highly-charged moments. Otherwise, privileged knowledge can remain uncontested, and professional learning will likely continue to be about learning how to apply established and privileged truths.

Derman-Sparks (2002) believes any work towards transformative thinking should involve complicating pedagogy. I found that making truth fragile is a way to do this, and that locating tension is an effective place to begin this process. Tension can be an indication that people are thinking differently, and that truths are being contested; and this is a moment of possibility. Stopping and exploring this tension is a simple but effective means of putting “a stutter” (Moss, 2006b, p. 128) in dominantly held truths, just as we did in session four when we explored the tensions around biculturalism (Chapter 7, p. 195). Tension might be viewed as a quiet invitation to suggest alternative ways of thinking, or tension could be taken as an opening for overtly discussing these contestations and debating the truths and structures giving privilege. When there does not appear to be any tension, tension can be deliberately provoked through the introduction of multiple and contradictory discourses.

Working with tension to make truth fragile might be risky (Freire, 2001, hooks, 1994; Shor & Freire, 2003), but it need not be unpleasant work. There may be moments when
learners feel they are in a “worse place” (SG4/11), as Jan did (Chapter 7, p. 196), but tension can also create something “powerful” (SG4/12) and magical (Chapter 7, p. 197). Just as a guitar needs tension in its strings to bring the beauty of music to the ears of listeners, so too can tension be a vital and necessary means of bringing the beauty of new ideas and understandings to learners.

**Learning with the learner**

What are the needs and challenges facing early education teachers as learners, how are these being addressed, and how can professional learning be supported in the future (Chapter 4, p. 80)?

Teachers work within an education system that is increasingly about accountability (Duncan, 2002, 2004; Fromberg, 2006) and standardisation (Chapter 2, p. 12), creating constraints that have left some teachers feeling tired, disillusioned (SG 10/5), “overtaken and misplaced” (Duncan, 2004, p. 165). The continuing technical focus of much of the professional learning offered to teachers, which involves learning to put Government initiatives, such as *Te Whāriki*, into practice in better and more innovative ways, has created a climate of learning which is more conducive to normalising practice than it is to innovation. Keeping teachers “imprisoned in routines” (Silin, 1995, p. 43), methods and techniques, where there is no space for “uncertainty, indeterminacy, and contingency” (p. 43), or disruptive debate, does not induce critically thinking teachers. Rather than engaging in intellectual thought, the teacher continues to be a learner who can “remember and repeat” (Palmer, 1998, p. 101) what others have named as worthwhile to know.

Despite this kind of climate, the teachers in this project showed me how they are able to negotiate and manoeuvre through such constraints with regularity. At times the challenges of doing so caused resignation (Chapter 5, p. 113) and momentary retreats into silence (Chapter 6, p. 162 & 164), but at other times teachers found creative ways to work within these constraints, sometimes even openly resisting them (Chapter 5, p. 127). Despite the contradictions and seemingly impossible dreams for education today (Walkerdine, 1990), there were moments in this project when teachers experienced excitement, renewed hope, boundless energy, liberation and transformation. These teachers demonstrated that when given the opportunity they were far from docile, but
were instead active creative agents in their worlds, and that with the right support, anything was possible. This section on the learner follows some of the struggles and triumphs that these teachers experienced as professional learners.

**Tentative negotiations**

The three women’s storylines represented here have been chosen because they highlight the provisional, partial ways that these women negotiated their becoming. Unlike the subject of humanist discourse, who is fixed, unified, and stable, these women constantly grappled with their becoming; strategically and skilfully negotiating and manoeuvring within the discourses available to them (Davies, 2000a; Lenz Taguchi, 2005; Robinson & Diaz, 1999). As they were “revised and (re)presented” (Davies, 2000a, p. 137) with frequency, they demonstrated how the active subject of woman and teacher can resist normalising practices.

**Negotiating normality: Lydia**

Lydia had received instruction throughout her entire life about what it means to be an ideal teacher, and as her storylines have shown, this helped her to develop images for herself of the type of teacher she wanted to be (Chapter 5, p. 108). All of the messages and images that Lydia had been exposed to throughout her life became the lessons from which she, as a learner, had learnt the art of good teaching practice; and because Lydia was a conscientious teacher she had learnt these lessons well. In these chosen storylines, Lydia has positioned herself within humanist discourse as a reflective teacher, capable of interpreting accepted truths and applying these in her own practice. She has tried to live up to the expectations of such authors as O’Connor and Diggins (2002) who claim that being a reflective teacher is a positive choice, because to “stop, think, change” (p. 9) one’s practice to fit prescribed standards makes a better teacher. Through active reflective engagement with established knowledge, Lydia worked hard to apply this knowledge to her practice, fearing the consequences of doing otherwise (Foucault, 1990b).

At the beginning of this project Lydia did not appear to stand back and question the impossibility of her endeavours (Walkerdine, 1990), as her reflection was more about how she could improve her practice. Had she done so, she might have critiqued the contradictory discourses within which she worked, and troubled these. She could have asked, for example, why it was that she believed a teacher “needs to maintain both health
and well-being" (Con/02/10) and that "depth of reflection" is important (Con/02/10), and yet she had no time or space to do so. At the time Lydia was locked into a system whose traditions worked against the kind of critical reflection that might have brought transformative change in her practice (MacNaughton, 2003b; Parker, 1997). Lydia's reflection was more intent on conforming to established and privileged truths which at best could only help Lydia to reform what she did to fit within prescribed standards (MacNaughton, 2003b). This was not the kind of reflection that might have disrupted the restrictive discourses shaping the way she practiced teaching.

Despite Lydia's initial position, she did not remain fixed to this, but was instead on the brink of departure, moving towards a state of transience. Because of the inconsistencies and impossibilities that Lydia had experienced and the discomfort that this had created, Lydia was beginning to manoeuvre within the alternative discourses that she had been exposed to; and as she did she was slowly being reconstituted (e.g. Butler, 2004; Davies, 2000a, 2003a; Weedon, 1997). Lydia's internal uncertainty and her exposure to Walkerdine's (1990) idea of the impossible dream made her practice and thinking unstable. Instead of her raised consciousness leading to the kind of enlightenment that would make her a better teacher, this consciousness unsettled best practice itself. When this happened, the confident, knowing and certain teacher that Lydia had once been was shaken, and her practice became unstable and uncertain. Because Lydia was no longer seeking to put into practice the discourses defining for her what an ideal teacher should be; had she failed at reflection and best practice, or was she now adding a more critical dimension to her reflection (MacNaughton, 2003b)? I think Lydia was a woman learning to negotiate and manoeuvre her way between multiple and contradictory discourses, and finding creative ways to do this.

_Negotiating the boundaries of acceptability: Jan_

Foucault's contention that "we know perfectly well that we are not free to say just anything, that we cannot simply speak of anything, when we like or where we like" (Foucault, 1972, p. 216), can be observed in the experiences of Jan, who as a woman and teacher had learnt through life's experiences that speaking the unacceptable has consequences (Chapter 6, p. 162). Right from childhood Jan had learnt that even a glance (Foucault, 1995a) can be punishment for speaking out of turn (PC/29/23/08/06), and this punishment was enough to make her feel she wanted "to go to a place of silence"
In order to feel accepted, Jan had learnt the disciplines of self-surveillance and self-mastery (Foucault, 1980e, 1990b, 1995a). This had helped her to monitor her actions and speech to the point where she could stop what she was saying even when she only had a feeling that she had said something unacceptable, and even though she did not at the time know what the rules were (Chapter 6, p. 163).

Looks, feelings and the actions of others were enough to shift Jan towards self-corrective behaviour, the kind indicative of the behaviourist learning patterns that she had grown used to throughout her life. Just as Jan the child had practiced self-correction and learnt that this was the best and safest option for her, so too had Jan the teacher learnt that changing her behaviour was the way to become a better teacher. As Jan had trained in the 1970s, when behaviourist learning was the predominant model, she was well schooled in the techniques of self-corrective behaviour, and could apply these readily to her own practice. As a reflective and self-regulating learner Jan sat between the positivist and interpretivist paradigms of learning (Chapter 2, p. 32 & 35), moving between the two. Along with Lydia, her main task as a learner was to learn what was right and proper and then to modify her actions to fit this. The predominance of this type of learning is so pervasive (Parker, 1997) that learners conform to what is right and proper even when unaware of the rules governing acceptability, or how these rules are created and sustained through dominant and privileged discourse.

Jan, however, was not solely intent on conforming to acceptable boundaries and the unspoken rules that governed her actions, and so she negotiated ways to transcend these boundaries by doing what she called pushing people's buttons (SG4/7). While Jan worked hard to be acceptable, she also believed:

If we don't say things that push people's buttons do we actually have something to reflect on (SG4/7)?

Jan's question about biculturalism did push buttons and as Jan told me later, her question was a deliberate attempt to challenge normally accepted definitions (Chapter 6, p. 161). Jan made an active choice to ask this question, but she had not anticipated the confidence and certainty that this question would elicit from the early childhood community. This response quickly reminded Jan that she had crossed a line and she found herself going to
a place of silence with nothing more to say. On the one hand, Jan believed that it was important to challenge the taken-for-granted and she manoeuvred the conversation so that she could do this; but on the other hand, Jan had learnt when to silence herself and when to moderate her actions to fit within the acceptable. In this example, Jan exhibits the contradictory and tentative ways that she negotiated her becoming.

Jan represents a learner who is transient; moving in and out of ways of being, constantly grappling with and negotiating how to speak and act within uncertain and unspoken rules. She departs from the acceptable, returning at times to the safety of silence, fully aware that she is experiencing a form of punishment and that she is engaging in self-regulatory practice when she does. Jan the teacher, woman and learner is continually transitioning between conforming to predetermined, and yet not fully understood, norms; and actively resisting the norms imposed on her. She places herself at risk when she crosses the line of acceptability and yet at the same time she is able, willing, and desiring to cross that line.

**Negotiating multiple and contradictory positions: Roxy**

Roxy is a subject who deviated from the normally accepted image of an early childhood teacher who is passive and subservient, and she does this while she continues to be nurturing and caring. Roxy was able to accommodate multiple and contradictory discourses simultaneously as she negotiated her way through her teaching practice because she had been exposed to many discourses throughout her long career, spanning over 50 years. This meant that Roxy could move in and out of contradictory discourses with regularity, so that she could be both nurturing and caring at the same time as she was autocratic and directive. Roxy did not see these in a binary opposition but rather as alternatives from which to make choices about how she could be and act in the world.

To successfully manoeuvre her way through the challenges she encountered, Roxy had to be somewhat “disorderly” (McWilliam, 2000, p. 170) in her practice, even against the advice of others (Chapter 5, p. 127). Roxy deliberately chose to defy the advice of others as she made radical and directive choices, resulting in a staff resignation. To an onlooker Roxy may have appeared self-indulgent and selfish, and even within this research group one participant was concerned that Roxy wanted to “hold so much power” (R/28/09/03/1). It took determination for Roxy to make the choice to actively resist the
advice and direction of her peers, and to resist a history that continues to position early education teachers as predominately passive (Ryan, & Ochsner, 1999).

Roxy was a reflective teacher but not the kind described within an interpretivist paradigm (Chapter 2, p. 37). Roxy knew the discourses related to the type of leader that one should be and yet she chose to be an autocratic leader knowing that this was not the accepted or preferred option; and as she did, she subverted the normal image of an early education. Had Roxy been intent on self-correcting behaviour she might have acted differently, but instead, she determined that the dominant discourses surrounding early education leadership were not fixed truths but ideas that could be accepted or resisted.

Contrary to the dominant images of the reflective teacher who puts theory into practice, Roxy positioned herself as a desiring and self-determining subject who had learnt that her becoming was a continual reconstitution. Roxy was not reliant on current and dominant discourses to dictate her conduct, instead she manoeuvred within the multiple and contradictory discourses to which she had access; moving fluidly between these and as she did, she resisted the predominant and normalising discourses of the New Zealand early childhood community.

**Negotiating manoeuvres**

These teachers strategically negotiated and manoeuvred through the challenges and constraints that they faced daily; struggling and triumphing in their take up and resistance of the discourses available to them. As they did, they worked not so much to find out the person they were, but more to refuse the person that they had become (Foucault, cited in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983); and at times they did this with defiance. These women showed how today's early education teachers need not take up the traditional image of "good, sensitive, and nurturing" (Ryan & Ochsner, 1999, p. 14) teacher as the only way to be effective; these women could be that – but they could also be much more. While the take up and refusal of discourse was a constant challenge, requiring skill and courage, the storylines included here reflect just how capable these women were at negotiating and manoeuvring within the choices available to them. What this project also taught me was that this process of continually becoming other was made more possible when teachers' learning spaces offered them flexibility of movement.
Creating spaces for freedom

In the opening poem of Chapter 5, Liz expresses her yearning to think and speak her own words. When she wrote this poem she was tired of feeling “like a chameleon” that had “drifted across and around other people’s truths”, and she had an “ache to express [her] own knowing” (SG4/23). Liz had decided that it was no longer desirable for her to continue “changing [her] face and shape” to fit what others determined she should be; it was time for her to:

Find a safe learning place where my voice can rise from the depths to soar wild and free (SG4/23).

How possible was it for Liz to find such a learning space? She told me four years after penning these words that she was still struggling with the same issues, although she saw these differently (Chapter 5, p. 107). So did this mean this project had failed Liz or that such a dream was in fact futile? I think Liz found that resisting normalising truths is a constant struggle and that “we cannot simply speak of anything, when we like or where we like” (Foucault, 1972, p. 216); there will always be constraints that inhibit being able to soar wild and free. However, through this project I learnt that is possible to experience moments in learning where one can move more freely within these constraints. This is more likely to happen when the constraints that are normally associated with teacher professional learning are eased, and teachers can experience temporality and experimentation in their learning.

Easing the constraints

The important question here, it seems to me, is not whether a culture without restraints is possible or even desirable but whether the system of constraints in which a society functions leaves individuals the liberty to transform the system (Foucault, cited in Rabinow, 1997, p. 147-148).

As this project progressed, I learnt that it may not be possible, or even desirable (Foucault, cited in Rabinow, 1997) to remove the constraints that I and others had become familiar with. But it was possible to temporarily ease some of the constraints around what it was acceptable to say and question, and this gave teachers breathing space (Freire, 2003a). I became aware of this after session four, when I noticed how easing the
constraints around what it was acceptable for Jan to say about biculturalism, made a difference to what was discussed, and the changes that occurred as a result (Chapter 7). When I invited Jan to reopen the discussion that I had closed off during session three (Chapter 6, p. 146) and the constraints that had previously inhibited what could be said were eased, it became possible for Jan to negotiate the boundaries of acceptability in ways that she had not previously done in this group, even though initially this made her feel that we had gone to a worse place (Chapter 7, p. 196).

Inviting Jan to go back to the issues that had been left unsaid gave her the opportunity to explain her position more fully, and even though this was not a comfortable place for her, she nevertheless managed her way through the discomfort and because she did, there was movement. Offering Jan the space to discuss her position helped others to understand more about why she had the perspective that she did, and that like us all, Jan was learning to manoeuvre differently within the history that had shaped her becoming. It was this easing of constraints that eventually enabled Jan to rethink her position in a way that she might not otherwise have done. During the discussion Jan commented:

Just because I am here now doesn’t mean I’m going to be there tomorrow and it doesn’t mean that I’m going to be there in a year but I am here now and nothing will change that until I move... we’re all where we are now because of many, many, many, reasons and nothing will change that until we decide to move on through many processes and that’s why I like talking and that’s why I like to be honest (SG4/21).

As Jan says here, and Chapter 7 explains in more depth, it was learning to manoeuvre differently that enabled Jan to take up a new perspective, and this changed the world as she knew it. Had the discussion on biculturalism remained closed, or if Jan had not been able to negotiate her way around the constraints of acceptability, the outcome may have been completely different. Instead, Jan was given the time and space to explain her views and when she did, the discussion around the “tricky” (SG4/10) issues associated with racism became more transformative. As the quotation by Jan above shows, talking through the issues was a necessary step towards Jan’s movement, and when she had the space to do this, transformative change was made possible for her.
Jo is another teacher who benefited from having the constraints around her learning eased. This happened for Jo when she realised that she did not have to find answers to her questions, and as a result Jo learnt to question and challenge teaching in a way that she had not previously done (Chapter 7, p. 190). Jo had always asked questions to find out the right answers so that she could better her teaching practice, but when Jo no longer felt compelled to find answers the world of learning opened up to her. She began to relish the opportunity to ask questions where there were no answers, saying:

This is the first place that I have actually felt that it's not only acceptable but it's encouraged to ask questions and we don't have to have the answers, you ask whatever you want and just put it out there... (SG2/4).

Jo found that having the constraints eased around what she could question encouraged her to think more deeply about the beliefs underlying her practice. Instead of focusing on improving her practice in a way that she usually did, she began to critically examine teaching in general, without the need to find answers that she could/should put into practice. Questioning without needing to find answers gave Jo the space to think about her teaching in new ways;

Asking open ended questions and exploring why certain questions come up again and again, has resulted in me starting to reflect more on my beliefs and values and not just on my practice alone. I have started to look behind my practice to why I respond the way I do and this has added a new dimension to my professional learning (Con/02/8).

And as an added bonus, Jo found this exciting:

That's what's really exciting I think to me... once you start you just can't stop... when we ask a question we actually generate excitement... (SG2/4)

The excitement that Jo experienced as a result of questioning in an unrestricted manner motivated her to challenge her learning in ways she had not done before. Until this project, most of Jo's professional learning had been about improving her teaching in practical terms, by interpreting and putting into practice accepted truths in much the same way that Lydia had done. Jo had found this limiting, saying that her reflective journal had really only been about “writing what others wanted me to say” (Con/02/8). Once Jo
began to question without answers, her thinking started to move in multiple directions and as she said above, she just couldn’t stop (SG2/4). Because this process was exciting, Jo was energised, and this kept up her motivation for new learning; and unlike the quote below, the disruption that this created did not work against but for learning.

*Excitement* in higher education was viewed as potentially disruptive of the atmosphere of seriousness assumed to be essential to the learning process (hooks, 1994, p. 7).

The excitement Jo experienced in her learning “could not be generated without a full recognition of the fact that there could never be an absolute set agenda governing teaching practices” (hooks, 1994, p. 7). Jo’s learning became exciting because some of the restrictions that she had normally associated with reflection, for example, had been confining her learning to how she could better her practice, and this had become constraining for her. Having a more flexible agenda, which allowed for an infinitum of questions without the need for outcomes, gave Jo the space, even if only temporarily, to think differently about her life and her teaching, and this moved her towards new ways of being.

While the constraints around professional learning could not be removed, creating the space for a degree of unrestricted movement in relation to what could be said and questioned did benefit learning. Having the constraints eased gave teachers the opportunity to explore their learning in more depth than they had before, and this gave us all the opportunity to entertain perspectives that we had never previously considered. Not only this; learning also became more exciting.

**Freedom in temporality**

The typical professional learning experiences of the teachers in this project had emphasised the technical/practical aspects of teaching and involved interpretive reflective exercises to improve practice. In much the same way as the subjects of classical Greece in fourth century B.C.E. (Foucault, 1990b), these teachers had worked hard to bring their desires and actions into subjection in order that they might achieve self-restraint and self-mastery. Just as the subjects of Greece were promised that this kind of mastery would result in freedom from “the enslavement of the self by oneself” (p. 79), these women had been led to believe that hard work, self-restraint and self-mastery would make them the
best kind of teacher (Chapter 5, p. 114); and that this would be fulfilling (Walkerdine, 1990). Contrary to such promises, I found that the pressure of self-restraint and self-mastery more often resulted in teachers experiencing what Tamboukou (2000) describes as feelings of suffocation, powerlessness, and inadequacy; not what Lydia expected, I’m sure, when she dreamed of being a teacher.

Working diligently to be the right kind of teacher and finding that even with the hardest of work and the best of intentions, just one mistake could “indicate that mastery is incomplete” (Davies et al., 2001, p. 177), was the kind of pressure that Lydia faced constantly. Even though Lydia continued to do the best that she could, and she stayed positive as she did, being positioned as one who should/could work harder to apply the truths of others in better ways was restricting Lydia from disrupting the very truths and practices that were inhibiting her from doing so. Instead of Lydia functioning as the capable and intelligent thinking woman that she was, she admitted that she had had no time to think for at least a month (SG5/37), and she was just going through the motions of survival. Self-restraint and self-mastery had not been rewarded by freedom, but had restrained and restricted Lydia’s ability to move in creative ways (Chapter 5, p. 112); for Lydia the promise of freedom, like many other dreams in education, had become just another fiction (Walkerdine, 1990). So how did Lydia negotiate ways around such a predicament? How did she find ways to move freely within the restrictions of her profession?

One way that Lydia and the others in this project were able to move more freely within their learning was by resisting the kind of professional learning that limited their thinking and learning to the practical application of assumed truths; even if only temporarily. This project offered them the opportunity to do this and they had joined the project ready to change shape. Had I continued with the projects as I had planned to do (Chapter 4, p. 98; Chapter 7, p. 175), and insisted on a structure where outcomes could be more easily measured, the experimental shape changing that occurred in this project may not have happened. Fortunately, I heard these teachers telling me that they were ready for something different and they wanted this difference to encourage movement. As I observed the changing shapes of teachers from a distance, and from within my own experiences, I found that shifts occurred more readily when learners took up temporary
positions, and when they took a more experimental approach to their learning and becoming. As Jan once said:

I am giving myself permission to reconstruct my pedagogy... deconstruct then reconstruct it... like I started off being compliant and then got intrinsically motivated... I think you know a lot of teachers are docile because they are compliant, so its how you kick yourself out of that... (SG9/49).

As teachers gave themselves permission to change their perspectives, they were more able to "kick [themselves] out of" (SG4/49) the habits and ways of being that they had become accustomed to. Moving away from the limitations of practical learning, even if only temporarily, and viewing learning as in process enabled a shift away from attachments to certain ways of being and acting. Moving between discourses and pedagogical beliefs somehow seemed to make it safer to be dangerous (Chapter 7, p. 193), and to take the kinds of risks associated with being transformed (Freire, 2001, hooks, 1994; Shor & Freire, 2003). While many of the changes experienced did have long term and life-changing effects, approaching change from a temporary position enabled teachers to play around with their positions and ideas in much the same way that Foucault (2000) did when he said of himself, "I'm an experimenter in the sense that I write in order to change myself and in order not to think the same thing as before" (p. 240). Taking temporary respite from the usual, more structured professional learning that is linked to standardisation, outcomes, and evidence (Chapter 2, p. 12 & 15) allowed teachers to be more flexible in their learning, and enabled them to be more creative about the possibilities opening up to them.

Moving more freely within the usual limitations of professional learning facilitated movement between discourses and positions, and not only did this open up opportunities for teachers, but this also reenergised them and renewed their passion for teaching. Moving more freely enabled Roxy, for example, to accommodate multiple and contradictory discourses simultaneously, and this gave her renewed passion and energy. For Erica, this movement meant that she could examine her personal, professional, past, and present worlds together, and this helped her to move forward in her learning, in areas where she had previously faced blockages (Chapter 7, p. 182). The outcome of Erica's to-ing and fro-ing between worlds was a "rekindled passion for learning and for working
with children” (Con/02/12). Taking a temporary and experimental stance in learning made room for teachers to move more freely and spontaneously between positions and options, without the pressure of having to be one way or another.

Taking a temporary distance from the kind of professional learning that requires technical change became an opportunity for experimental movement. Being able to move in and out of positions as learners unsettled permanent attachments to truths, and this gave way to the unexpected. When there was no sense of “departure or arrival” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, cited in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 265), because there was no need to measure learning, and the learning space allowed for the “unpredictable” (p. 265) to “spring up anywhere” (p. 265), it did. The result was learning that could not be observed or recorded or reproduced; but learning that was nevertheless worthwhile and necessary to the work of critical pedagogy. While this learning was challenging and sometimes uncomfortable, for the most part, the creativity that resulted from movement was an enjoyable and exciting experience (SG2/4) that gave teachers renewed energy (SG13/14) and hope (SG2/3); all of which Freire (1996, 2001, 2003a, 2003b) believed are essential to any critical pedagogical work.

Becoming otherwise: Possibilities for professional learning

Teachers work within many constraints such as those associated with standardisation and accountability, and as Chapter 5 highlighted, some of these constraints can cause “good strong people [to] just let it happen to them” (SG10/4). For some this may mean docile thinking (Freire, 1996; Foucault, 1995a) and cognitive passivity (Kincheloe, 1993), but not for the teachers in this project. These teachers were far from docile and cognitively passive; when given the opportunity they were active, desiring and sophisticated thinkers (Belenky et al., 1997; Fleet & Patterson, 2001), capable of negotiating and manoeuvring through the complexities of being a woman and teacher today. I learnt from these teachers that providing them with something as simple as some breathing space (Freire 2003a) where constraints were temporarily eased, gave them the possibility of experiencing education as a practice of freedom (Freire, 1996), even if only for a moment, and this gave them the energy to experiment with their becoming.

Easing some of the constraints normally associated with professional learning, such as the boundaries determining what can be said and questioned, was one way of providing
this kind of breathing space (Freire, 2003a). This did not mean that teachers could say anything, but this did mean that wherever possible teachers were given the opportunity to take their thoughts to an end and explain themselves. Doing so enabled teachers to gain a better understanding of the discourses shaping the beliefs and practices of others; and this became a vehicle for transformative thinking. Creating breathing spaces (Freire, 2003a) also meant allowing teachers to challenge what had been said, for themselves, instead of confining their ability to do so by stepping in to keep the peace, as I had done in the discussion around biculturalism (Chapter 7, p. 177). While these are simple measures, they require an understanding of the very subtle workings of disciplinary power; such as the practices employed to normalise conduct (e.g. Foucault, 1990b), which are evident in the storylines of Lydia (Chapter 5, p. 108), and those used to punish, such as the methods used when Jan spoke the unacceptable (Chapter 6, p. 162).

Understanding more about the operation of power also meant being prepared to critique how my own use of power affected the way I organised and managed time and space (Chapter 7, p. 174). Having my own assumptions about learning shaken heightened my awareness of the function of power, and this helped me employ power more strategically to ensure that time and space were used for movement, experimentation and discovery. When I did this, and the constraints around learning were eased, teachers began to talk more of their “thoughts in progress” (Taylor, 2002, p. 13) and they were able to take up more temporary and experimental positions; slipping and sliding (Licona, 2005) between ways of thinking and being. On occasions teachers were “irreversibly traversed and shaken by new discourses” (Davies, 2000a, p. 143) and sometimes this felt “fascinating” (p. 143), and at other times this felt more “dangerous” (p. 143). But whenever there was creative movement and experimentation there was always the opportunity for teachers to emerge without thinking “the same thing as before” (Foucault, 2000, p. 240).

**Changing perceptions of change**

What influences teacher change and how can it be supported in early education professional learning programmes (Chapter 4, p. 80)?

Most of the research reviewed for this project clearly demonstrated a preference for professional learning that could provide evidence of change and better outcomes for
students (Chapter 2, p. 8). While much of this research purports a move away from linear approaches to change, I suggest that this is not really the case. Whether it be changing teacher behaviour in order to change beliefs (Guskey, 1986, 2002; Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavis, 2005), or changing teacher beliefs in order to change behaviour (Ingvarson, 2003, 2005; Kennedy, 1998, cited in Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005; Stewart, 2000, cited in Mitchell, 2003), or engaging in cyclic interventions; the objective is primarily to achieve observable, measurable change. As such this process will inevitably involve learning, doing, observing, and measuring, which is essentially a linear process.

Even reflective practice, particularly the kind promoted by O'Connor & Diggins (2002), where teachers are encouraged to “step, think, change” (p. 9), is essentially linear; as are the workshops that continue to dominate teacher professional learning (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 2005; Haycock & Robinson, 2001; Long, 2004; MacNaughton, 1999). The predominance of positivist thinking has pervaded all spheres of professional learning (Parker, 1997), perpetuating the need for evidence that proves “beyond reasonable doubt” (MacNaughton 2003a, p. 6) that change has occurred. This continued focus on evidence, and the predominantly linear approaches taken to achieve this, became problematic in this research when teachers chose to assert their collaborative right to change the focus from measurable projects to random, fragmented and discontinuous conversations (Chapter 4, p. 99). Even the cycles of action research were confining in that they assumed a linear progression of monitoring and recording change.

In this project change did occur, but it was not predictable, or measurable; and it was most definitely not reproducible. The changes in this project happened at the most random and unexpected moments; moments that were fleeting and magical (Chapter 7, p. 197). The best that I could do was to provide a context that could support change and let learning take its course; I had to learn to trust the process (MacNaughton, 2002), and what happened surprised me.

Creating contexts for change

The literature on professional learning, particularly any that has a critical pedagogical base, is clear about the importance of learning in dialogue and in community (Chapter 2, 25 & 27). This project confirmed that this is so, and found that change more readily occurred in contexts rich with diversity.
Changing in dialogue

The teachers in this project taught me the importance of professional talk time and how this is necessary for change. For many years these teachers had experienced very little professional dialogue outside of the practical and day-to-day routines of their profession, and when they joined this project they were seeking something different. It took me a while to realise just how important it was for them to be able to talk without an end in mind, but I learnt that these disconnected, fragmented, and unfinished conversations were vital to their learning. For example, the kind of discussion where questions could be left unanswered meant that Jo shifted the focus of her learning and reflection away from the technical aspects of teaching to a deeper and broader exploration of education. Jo said that this added a “new dimension to [her] professional learning” (Con/02/8); and for others, these conversations helped to fill a gap in learning that had been present for over 20 years.

Erica, who joined the project after teaching for 20 years, had experienced very few adult conversations throughout her teaching career, other than those directly related to the children (SG9/13). As a result, she said she was “in a mental vacuum” and she had come to a “standstill” in her life (Con/02/11). For Erica it was the combining of personal and professional conversations that moved her forward, and this enabled her to continue teaching at a time when she was feeling tired and she was considering leaving the profession. It was also engaging in professional talk that helped Roxy to move forward when she had been experiencing difficulty articulating what had been “left untouched and buried” (Con/02/6) for most of her 50 years of teaching. It was in the group conversations that Roxy learnt to express herself more clearly, and this gave her the impetus to defend her passions and desires in a way that reenergised her. Both Erica and Roxy experienced different conversations in this group, and these conversations helped them to move forward.

The professional conversations experienced in this project meant these teachers talked and thought about teaching in ways they had not previously done. At times these conversations encouraged curiosity and they were playful and pleasurable; at other times these conversations were more dangerous and uncomfortable, as they were for Lydia and Jan. As Chapter 5 (p. 111) showed, for Lydia these conversations meant thinking differently about the image of an ideal teacher that she had spent a lifetime believing and
this was something that, for her, required bravery (SG7/39). For Jan, there were many moments of discomfort as we discussed biculturalism (Chapter 6, p. 162; Chapter 7, p. 195); times when she had a “feeling” (SG4/5) that she had said something unacceptable, and when she experienced being in “a worse place” (SG4/11). As a result, Jan sometimes went to a “place of silence” (SG4/3), and at other times she felt “the pain”, which she described as “powerful” (SG4/12). For Lydia and Jan, conversations were sometimes uncomfortable and painful, but they created a context for life-changing shifts.

We all learnt and changed through dialogue, even though this was not always evident, and it was certainly not measurable. These changes could not be attributed to one specific event or moment because they happened at the most unexpected times, often outside of the research group itself. The dialogue made a positive difference not because this dialogue provided answers but because it unsettled the taken-for-granted. Sometimes this happened through the curious and playful exploration of ideas, and sometimes because tensions brought differences into focus, and this troubled what had been accepted as true and fixed. Engaging in dialogue did not create change so much as it provided a context for change to happen; and change did happen but in surprising and unexpected ways, as Margaret found out. At the beginning of the project Margaret thought that:

This would be the perfect opportunity to share my concerns [about biculturalism] with the research group and they would be able to give me the answers needed to solve my dilemma. In no time I thought I would have every centre promoting biculturalism as a natural part of their curriculum (Con/02/7).

But instead of finding answers, Margaret said later:

I began to feel like change would never happen (Con/02/7).

This was not what Margaret had expected when she invited us to discuss biculturalism, and at the time this was discouraging for her. Since then, however, Margaret has continued to follow her passion, but she is no longer seeking simple answers. Instead, she is grappling over deep questions and exploring the complexities of biculturalism from multiple angles; writing her thinking into her postgraduate work. The depth that Margaret is now bringing to her work on biculturalism is because she is changing as a person and this, in part, can be attributed to the conversations that she had in this project.

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Dialogue is a powerful means of bringing about change because change that occurs through and in dialogue is not restricted to time and place; change can continue to occur years after any discussion has finished; in any place and at any time. I now believe that providing a context for learners that is rich with dialogue is like giving them a gift that lasts for a lifetime.

Changing in community

The teachers who joined this project were all seeking, in their own way, a professional learning community that was alternative to what they had experienced. However, as it turned out, the community created through this project was not what any of us first envisaged. Liz, for one, wanted “a professional forum where [she] might fit” (Con/02/3), because she said she had all of these “issues bubbling around in [her] head about education, power, equity, inclusion, visions for the future” (Con/02/3) that she wanted to talk about with others. However, in some respects, this community did not provide Liz with what she was looking for because this was not a place where she could fit. But in the end, as her poem highlights (Chapter 5, p. 105), Liz decided that she didn’t want to fit anymore anyway. The events of session three caused us all to reflect on how easy it is for dominantly held truths to silence alternative perspectives, and these reflections led us to resist more actively the normal conventions associated with belonging such as being “required to conform” (Davies, 2000a, p. 93).

Margaret, too, was looking for something other than her usual professional learning. She told me in her interview that she wanted “to mix with teachers outside of her own [work] setting” (IS/28/2), because she felt that “when teachers stay in their own setting all the time, they get into same thinking” (IS/28/2). However, it was Margaret who admitted with surprise that even outside of her usual work place “we all sort of do speak the same in early childhood” (SG4/8), and this speaking the same happened naturally and without the immediate awareness of those present. The way the early childhood teachers responded to Jan’s question had been a normal response for them, given the circumstances (Chapter 6, p. 143), and this response may have gone unquestioned in other contexts. Had we continued without questioning the way the dominant discourses of Te Whāriki had created same thinking and speaking, the diversity within this community may have been overshadowed by the “din of commonsense” (Brodkey, 1995 cited in McCoy, 2000, p. 241).
We did become different, but only as we shifted from the normal and commonplace practices we naturally gravitated to. This happened more readily as we began to appreciate the diversity that was already within the group, and as we became more open to this diversity displacing the normal patterns of speech and behaviour that we were used to. We worked in different educational sectors of the community, in different settings, and we had trained in different decades and countries. Moreover, we were a mix of backgrounds, ethnicity, age and beliefs, all of which added to the wide range of opinions we shared. We were not a community formed around a common philosophy, or a group working on a jointly agreed project. We had no set outcomes that had to be achieved, and no funding accountabilities which constrained what we did. Participants did not have set tasks, and they did not have to put anything into practice as a result of our meetings together. Instead, we were a transient community connected only by a desire to engage in critical dialogue and to experience a different kind of professional learning.

The sense of detachment and transience that this community had meant that it was easier for teachers to take up temporary positions and change their opinions. There was no need for the kind of loyalty required by “doctrinal adherence” (Foucault, 1972, p. 226), or the kind that some organisations require of its members. So when Jan decided to “push people’s buttons” (SG4/7) and this created the reactions that it did, Jan was not held to her position or displaced from this community. When Roxy decided to be an autocratic leader she was not hindered from doing so because she feared that she would no longer be accepted within the community. Lydia could admit mistakes without the fear of losing credibility, and Jo could ask questions without having to find answers that she could put into her practice. No-one was checking up on these teachers, no-one was measuring their progress, and no-one was expecting them to show evidence of their learning. This provided more freedom in learning than those experiences where there is an expectation of loyalty, and where learning is constrained by standardisation, technical training and the expectation of outcomes (Chapter 2, p. 12 & 15).

If we had not reflected on the incident around biculturalism as we did (Chapter 7, p. 193), or if I had not been prepared to forego the projects and take the risk that this involved (Chapter 4, p. 87), we may have become more like other communities. But instead we became a detached and transient community, who entered a temporary space of learning.
which was made richer through its diversity. Because of this we were more able to be critical and disruptive, all of which contributed to later change.

Changing perspectives

We have just started a teachers’ support group in our area but we’re not talking on this level, we’re talking about just practical and the things we do with the children, we’re not up here talking like we do here; theories or why we do things - so why, what’s wrong (SG9/17)?

Roxy asked this question when we were almost through the first year of meeting together, because she was wondering why this research group was different from the newly formed teacher support group she was attending. In other respects these groups were similar as they had been established for teachers to come together for discussion and support. One particular difference, however, was that Roxy’s support group was talking about “the practical and the things to do with children” (SG9/17), whereas this research group had extended the borders of discussion and thinking beyond the familiar talk of early education that limits learning to the practical application of truths.

Extending the borders of familiarity

When this group reflected on the incidents of session three (Chapter 7, p. 193) this not only “put a stutter” (Moss, 2006b, p. 128) in the privileged discourses of Te Whāriki, but these reflections also created stutter in the practical focused discussions that we had been having until this point; as did the decision to end individual projects. Until this point discussion had naturally gravitated to the practical aspects of teaching, even though the desire had been to engage in critical debate. Through years of participation in professional learning and reflective exercises that have been technically focused, these teachers became accustomed to talking about teaching from the perspective of improving their practice, so that this is where the conversation naturally went. As Moss (2006a) contends, limiting learning to the technical application of theory works against critical inquiry; but once we transcended this boundary, the nature of our discussions changed.

Of course the teachers in Roxy’s support group would be inclined to talk about the practical aspects of teaching when they rarely have the time to do so (e.g. Ayers, 1993;
Hatherly, 1999; Kincheloe, 1993; Kitchens, 2004; Mitchell, 2003); and especially when the best teachers are expected to reflect on their practice and learn how to apply *Te Whariki* more effectively and innovatively (Meade, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2002; O’Connor & Diggins, 2002). With the Government drive towards more standardisation and outcomes based professional learning (Chapter 2, p. 16), and with the predominantly modernist approaches taken to this, teachers may well choose to talk about being a better teacher when given the opportunity to do so. Talking dialectically about knowledge, and debating education with the purpose of disrupting the taken-for-granted, is not the usual talk of teachers (Sumsion, 2002); and because of this it takes active and intentional border crossings to break with familiar patterns.

Moss (2006a) suggests that if teachers are to expand their learning beyond the technical it is necessary for them to engage with different theories, from “many different fields; in short, through frequent border crossing” (p. 36). This implies moving beyond the familiar towards the unfamiliar, and breaking with the patterns associated with normal practice in order to experience the other. In this project it was this moving beyond the familiar that brought the most change, because it was in this movement that perspectives were challenged. Normal professional learning for the teachers in this group had been meeting with other teachers from their own work setting or education community, and learning had been primarily focused on the technical application of truths. Coming together in this project broke some of these normal patterns and moved these teachers towards unfamiliar professional learning territory. Additionally, the coming together of the primary school and early childhood sectors for professional learning created tensions over meanings, and unsettled the familiar within both communities.

Moving towards the unfamiliar happened in other ways too, and at times this meant crossing the boundaries that had previously limited thinking and practice. For instance, we extended the borders of the New Zealand education community as a whole, because my involvement with the University of Melbourne brought overseas perspectives to discussions. This helped teachers to think beyond the New Zealand borders and to open their thinking up to a wider-world of ideas. We also shifted the boundaries of learning and change that require evidence of outcomes, and we did this by talking without the need to apply our conversations to practice (Chapter 7, p. 180). We crossed some of the conventions normally associated with research when we broke the traditions of
confidentiality and anonymity by changing the contract and speaking at a conference (Chapter 4, p. 92 & 98); and when I decided to use time and space differently, I crossed some of the boundaries I had placed around my own practice (Chapter 7, p. 179).

While none of these border crossings (Moss 2006a) may seem significant on their own, together they shifted this group beyond the normal discussions of professional learning towards unfamiliar territory. As the borders of learning were extended, and the unfamiliar became more familiar, the opportunity for teachers to gain a wider perspective on education increased, and this created a context for more critical inquiry. Opportunities for this to happen were further enhanced when learning moved into the kind of spaces where thinking was not limited to the rational. For example, in session four (Chapter 7, p. 196) after Jan felt that we had gone to a “worse place” (SG4/11), I added one of my reflections to the discussion. When I did this Jan remembered a journal entry that I had previously written, and this connected the familiar to the unfamiliar in an unexplainable and irrational way, to the point where she commented, “that was really powerful” (SG4/12). In this discussion we moved towards an enchanted space where magical moments could be experienced, and in this moment we transcended the boundaries of rational thought and entered what Palmer (1998) calls “a sacred landscape” where “surprise is a constant companion” (p. 112).

Crossing the borders of the familiar shifted the focus and scope of learning beyond the narrow confines of practical and individual thinking towards more diverse understandings. Instead of looking at education from the perspective of individual ideals, as Lydia (Chapter 5, p. 109) and Jan (Chapter 7, p. 202) had first done, or from within just one community, as the early childhood teachers had done in session three (Chapter 6, p. 146), or from a practical perspective as the teachers in Roxy’s support group did, teachers were able to critically reflect on education from a much broader vantage point. Being moved beyond the familiar towards and across unfamiliar terrain opened up teachers’ minds, and “the more they expanded their critical consciousness the less likely they were to support ideologies of domination” (hooks, 2003, p. 8). As thinking expanded beyond the familiar, and openness to the unfamiliar became part of the natural discussions within this group, teachers began to practice what Palmer (1998, citing a Japanese self-defence technique) calls “soft eyes” (p. 113) towards the work of social justice.
Discontentment, disappointment, and desire

Some of the changes that occurred in this project happened as a result of the kind of excitement that came from learning that one has possibilities. This is the kind of excitement and liberation I felt when I realised that things in my life could be different (Chapter 5, p. 121). Being exposed to the work of feminist poststructuralist theory broadened my perspective on life and gave me hope for something other than what I had become accustomed to. However, while I was excited about the prospects offered by this theory, this theory also led to discontentment with the positions that I had previously assumed, and it was eventually this discontentment that led to change.

Erica is another teacher who experienced discontentment before she made changes in her life. When Erica joined this project she was already feeling discontented because of the “mental vacuum” (ConJ02/11) she was in. This discontentment made Erica ready for a change, but at first the only option for her seemed to be leaving the job she had worked in for most of her life. As Erica was exposed to alternative discourses she realised that she had more options, and that she could resist the discourses she no longer found desirable; and she began to entertain possibilities other than leaving teaching. Discontentment stirred Erica and made her ready for change, and the exposure to alternatives made change, when it did occur, more transformative for her. While this exposure to alternatives helped to ease the discontentment Erica was experiencing, for Lydia it was the exposure to different perspectives that actually created discontentment.

Being exposed to perspectives that made the familiar unfamiliar created a dilemma for Lydia, because now she knew that she did not have to accept the status quo. It is much easier to accept the status quo when one feels contentment, but discontentment often precipitates resistance and change, as it did for Erica. While Lydia was not altogether accepting of the status quo, she was nevertheless more resigned to it before she was exposed to alternative perspectives. But once the contradictions and impossibilities within which she was working were illuminated, and once Lydia was exposed to alternative perspectives of what a teacher and leader could be (Chapter 5, p. 111), she was unsettled. It was this unsettling, and the discontent that Lydia felt as a result, that became the opportunity for her to begin imagining something other than the familiar. Discontentment became for Lydia the beginnings of resistance, and this gave her the opportunity to experience being otherwise.
Being exposed to a wider perspective can also be disappointing, which it was for Margaret. The discussions on biculturalism made Margaret realise that "promoting biculturalism as a natural part [the] curriculum" (Con/02/7) might not be as easy as she first thought, and she felt disappointed and thought that "change would never happen" (Con/02/7). Realising the world is not as she first thought it was initially led to disappointment for Margaret, but rather than immobilising her as this might have done, this awareness eventually led Margaret to think more strategically and innovatively about how she might work towards reaching her goals. New perspectives can bring disappointment, especially if new understandings lead to a life-shattering experience like they did for MacNaughton (2005) when she first read the work of Walkerdine (1990). When MacNaughton realised that her teaching practice had been built on fictions (Chapter 5, p. 119), she may well have felt disappointed, but this life-shattering experience also helped her to ask the questions that have led her to the groundbreaking work that she is doing in early childhood today.

Being discontented and disappointed can and may lead to resignation, but when these feelings are combined with an exposure to alternative ways of thinking and being, and this opens up the possibility of being otherwise, this can create hope and a desire for something else (Freire, 2003a). Roxy, for example, was discontented with her situation, but because she had been exposed to many discourses over decades of teaching, she realised that there were many courses of action that she could choose to take. Because of this, her discontent did not lead to resignation but rather to an active desiring that eventually meant she put her desires, temporarily, over those of others (Chapter 5, p. 130). Roxy's wide perspective on education, from many years of teaching experience, gave her possibilities which both encouraged her desiring and which gave her the resources to realise this desire. Had Roxy's view of education been more limited, she may have accepted the position that she was in, but instead, her multiple perspectives enabled her to operate outside of normally accepted discourse.

Exposure to a range of discourses unsettles, and this can create the kind of responses that precipitate change. Being exposed to a range of discourses and finding out that the world is not as one always thought it was may bring discontent and disappointment, but this can also bring about resistance to the status quo, and a desire for something else. Having access to a range of discourses gives one options and opens the world to possibilities that
may not have been considered within normal, commonplace and comfortable discourses. Experiencing alternative discourses may be unsettling but this does not have to be a painful experience; realising, for instance, that one is "not duty-bound to accept existing truth conditions" (Walkerdine, 1990, p. 70) can also be a wonderfully liberating experience (Davies, 2000a). This, too, can create the kind of energy that makes change possible.

**Giving time and space to change: Possibilities for professional learning**

The change that happened during this project took time, but when shifts occurred, they could happen in just a moment, randomly and unpredictably. Unlike much that the literature on professional learning suggests, particularly that on reflective practice (Chapter 2, p. 35), the change discussed in this thesis did not happen as a result of teachers working harder at self-restraint and self-mastery. This change was not about putting theory into practice more effectively and innovatively, and it was not technical in nature. Instead, change was about shifts in thinking and attitudes that created points of departure (Freire, 2003a) from old habits of thinking and being. Sometimes these points of departure were visible, but most often they were very private moments. Because of this, my main focus became providing a context that made change more possible; and this happened as I began to redefine what I valued as productive and worthwhile.

Giving time and space for extended dialogue within a context rich with diversity made possible the entertainment of difference, and enabled a crossing of borders into the unfamiliar. The diversity within the group meant that there was plenty of opportunity for such border crossing to happen and my main task was to allow this to happen, rather than inhibit this through the disciplinary practices I had previously employed over time and space (Foucault, 1995a). Not only did having access to multiple and sometimes contradictory discourses give individuals more choice about their own becoming, but this also increased an understanding of the world of others. Being exposed to diverse opinions in every discussion helped people to find out more about the reasons behind peoples' opinions and the "pain" (SG4/12) others were experiencing. This helped people to work together, not just out of tolerance, but because they really cared for each other; and this made change more transformative (Derman-Sparks, 2002; MacNaughton, 2003b).
Discussing education from broader and more diverse perspectives also encouraged teachers like Jo to include a “new dimension to [her] professional learning”, helping her to go “behind [her] practice” to ask “why” questions (Conl02/8). Once teachers lifted their heads above the practical day-to-day routines and events of teaching and explored education from a wider and more theoretical perspective, they became more inquisitive and critical. Because they did not have to assimilate theory into their practice they were able to think and talk more dialectically about theory, and this enabled them to see the structures and discourses shaping the practices of teaching they had become accustomed to. Until doing this, their relationship with theory had been more distant and accepting, but this changed when teachers no longer felt the need to accept theory and apply this without question to what they did. As Jo found, once she began to question, there was no end to these questions and she became a provocative thinker as a result. When there was no foreclosure on the “sometimes confusing, often provocative, moments” (Silin, 1999, p. 42), and when boundaries were pushed and risks were taken, innovation and change became more likely.

It became my role to provide a context where extended dialogue and border crossings could happen with regularity. Sometimes this meant standing back and trusting others with their own learning (hooks, 1994), sometimes this meant engaging and debating with teachers as another perspective, and sometimes this meant actively provoking thinking. But most of all, this meant being conscious of how productive and worthwhile this kind of exchange between teachers can be, and valuing this for its potential to bring about transformative change. I also had to accept that working towards transformative change can result in feelings of discontentment and disappointment, and that others may not always be thankful to me for this (e.g. Freire, 1996, 2003a 2003b; hooks, 2003; Hinchey, 2003; Silin 1998). This happened when I first introduced teachers to the work of Walkerdine (1990) and teachers aggressively opposed these ideas (Chapter 5, p. 128), and when I challenged Learning Stories (Carr, 2001) and was told that I couldn’t know because I no longer taught (Chapter 7, p. 202). On both of these occasions, I remember questioning my decision to be provocative; but when one of the teachers said to me years later, “I get it, it took me a long time but I get what you have been trying to say (PC/24/3/10/03), it was all worthwhile.
Working towards transformative change is challenging work that involves risk taking (Freire, 2001, hooks, 1994; Shor & Freire, 2003), and being prepared to forgo measurable outcomes that provide certainty of improved learning for students. This work also involves accepting that change may never be visible, but that trusting the process of learning and providing contexts for learning that are rich with possibility is the work of the critical pedagogue. As hooks (1994) says, it takes time and experience “to understand that the rewards of engaged pedagogy might not emerge during a course” (p. 206), and anyone wanting to work towards transformative change needs to be able to work within this limitation.

**Working towards progressive social change: Some conclusions**

How can professional learning in early education become a force for progressive social change (Chapter 4, p. 80)?

This project taught me that working towards progressive social change is more than a technical exercise, and that legislating for social justice is only a beginning to such work. Working towards progressive social change in professional learning requires thoughtful intentional work with teachers, where the same critical pedagogical ideals that are sought for society are first employed with teachers themselves. Otherwise the work of social justice can end up being rather like “disciplining teachers to practice critical and feminist pedagogies” (Gore, 1992, p. 67), which is at odds with critical pedagogical intentions. Working within emancipatory ideals requires an immense regard for humanity and a caring for others that cannot be taught in a technical sense; this must be experienced. As Margaret discovered when she had emancipatory goals, working with others to realise these goals took more than just learning how to put these into practice.

Margaret had the dream of “every centre promoting biculturalism” (Con/02/7), but this did not just happen because she had this desire. Margaret found that working towards this goal involved more than just learning how to do biculturalism. She found that the work of social justice is more possible when teachers understand the need for such work, and when they really care about the injustices that others suffer. Without this kind of conviction, social justice becomes just another educational requirement that needs to be applied to practice. When teachers are already tired, overworked and maybe feeling
inadequate, as Jan admitted that she was (Chapter 5, p. 114), having to learn more and do more may just seem too much. The work of social justice becomes much more powerful when teachers want to do this work because they believe for themselves that such work is necessary, and when changes come from the inside out. When teachers experience diversity in such a way that this challenges them to think about otherness in life-changing ways, then social justice becomes integral to life itself instead of being just learnt and applied. When this happens it is less likely that teachers will say as they did to Thurlow (cited in Gunn et al., 2004), “I think we’ve done enough now” (p. 300).

Working for progressive social change is not easy work; critical pedagogical work “asks much of the practitioners who embrace it” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 2), and this can be costly work (e.g. Freire, 1996, 2003a 2003b; hooks, 2003; Hinchey, 2003; Silin 1998). Inviting others into this work should be done with regard to the risks involved (Freire, 2001, hooks, 1994; Shor & Freire, 2003) and with consideration of the consequences that emancipatory practice requires. Had I considered this more carefully I might have been more prepared for the consequences of suggesting that teachers think the unthinkable, discuss the un-discussable, and question the unquestionable (MacNaughton, 1999 cited in Taylor, 2001). But without realising the implications of such a vision I not only worked against my own goals, but I was unfair to Margaret who wanted to discuss the tapu [sacred, forbidden] and didn’t get the opportunity (SG3/31); and to Jan, who thought being open and honest about what she really felt “was the deal” (SG4/4). Until I came face to face with “the inconsistencies between the pedagogy I was arguing for and the pedagogy of my argument” (Gore, 1993, p. 5), working towards progressive social change had been like any other goal setting in professional learning workshop; it was planned for and taught in a technical way.

Coming face to face with the inconsistencies between my ideals and practice meant asking hard questions about the function of power that had worked through my actions to normalise and silence. This also meant examining how power had circulated within this group to regulate, preserve and reproduce discourse, and the “social effects” (Gore, 1993, p. 2) of this on professional learning. It was only when I did this that we began to work differently within these power relations (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983). Being prepared to challenge the function of power and then employ power more strategically over time and space, for example, meant that teachers began to experience the kind of learning that I
was expecting them to provide for others. Until this time social justice was being conceptualised within the limits of technical learning and this restricted possibilities. When I offered teachers the kind of learning space that enabled them to transcend the normal and the familiar, this made a difference to how they saw themselves and others, and ultimately to how they viewed education and their position within the teaching profession.

In this different kind of learning space, where tensions were valued for their potential to disrupt and used as invitations for this to happen, teachers learnt about the truths of others and about how fragile truth is; and this made them ready for alternatives. When the constraints were eased around what could be said and asked, and teachers began to move more freely and take up temporary positions, this enabled them to negotiate and manoeuvre more easily through the discourses that were available to them; and this made becoming other more possible. When the borders around learning were extended so that teachers were exposed to otherness in very intimate moments, and when this exposure unsettled the familiar, in both pleasurable and painful ways, teachers became more desiring, and they found creative ways to achieve these desires. When teachers experienced the opportunity to think otherwise in these “different spaces” (Ortlipp, 2005, p. 239), and they could experience, if only for a moment, what having a heart for the work of social justice might mean, then my desire for progressive social change in teacher professional learning came closer to being realised.

It may not always be possible for professional learning to occur outside of the boundaries of standardisation and accountability, as this project did; but providing a context where this is possible, even if only for a time, can make a difference. A simple shift in thinking such as no longer viewing disruption as unproductive, unsafe, and inconvenient, can make all the difference to the kind of learning that is possible. If the “tricky” (SG4/10) issues are not submerged but brought out into the open, and if teachers are provided the space to grapple with such issues, even if this creates disappointment and discontentment, the learning space “remains a location of possibility” (hooks, 1994, p. 207). Creating spaces for this kind of learning, no matter how small these spaces may be (O’Brien, 2005), is a worthwhile and necessary step in the work towards progressive social change. When someone comes so close to diversity that they no longer think “the same thing as
before” (Foucault, 2000, p. 240), then this, for me, is experiencing education as a practice of freedom (Freire, 1996); if but for a moment.

In the next chapter I discuss the possibilities that poststructuralist feminist theorising brings to the work of teacher professional learning. Rather than offer answers, I suggest ways that this project might be used to generate the kind of questioning and dialogue that “run[s] against the grain” (Davies, 2000, p. 169) of current professional learning opportunities for early education teachers in New Zealand. I have structured this discussion around an imaginary interview with myself, in which I reflect on this project and the implications of what I have learnt for teacher professional learning and the work of progressive social change.
AFTERWORD
AN INTERVIEW WITH MYSELF

In the introduction to this thesis you said that you hoped this research would challenge the discourses shaping teacher professional learning, and contribute to progressive social change. How do you think you have achieved this?

Firstly, I believe that this project sits within the gaps in research that were identified in the introduction and literature review (e.g. Cochran-Smith, 2001a, 2005; Education Review Office, 2000; Woodrow and Brennan, 1999), in that it has a feminist perspective and has emancipatory ideals. Secondly, this research centralises the storylines of teachers in a way that Mepham (2000) believes is rare; so overall, I believe that this project is unique. However, while this might be so, it has not been my intention to generalise the findings, or to attempt to prove "beyond reasonable doubt" (MacNaughton 2003a, p. 6) answers to questions about professional learning and progressive social change. My objective has been to generate discussion and to create openings rather than closures, and in this regard I feel that the intentions of this project have been met.

Can you give some examples of the kinds of openings that you refer to?

Take diversity for example, this project does not attempt to find answers about how to work for diversity, but it does create openings for discussion. One area of discussion could be the challenges presented by taking a technical approach to the work of diversity, and in New Zealand how this might affect the work towards biculturalism. The tensions that were experienced in this project and the changes that came out of this tension could generate discussion about a number of issues such as: who determines what teachers should know and learn; what happens to tricky questions; and how more provocative moments (Silin, 1999) could be used to encourage against the grain (Cochran-Smith, 2001b; Davies, 2000a) thinking and teaching. There are plenty of other issues; for instance, discussing how it might be possible to bring diverse communities together more regularly in learning situations where the objective is not to pass on truths but to engage in the curious exchange of ideas. This is where I see my work being useful; for opening up discussion.
What about the work of critical pedagogy; in the literature review you mentioned how Kincheloe (2004) and MacNaughton (2003b, 2005) believe that postmodern perspectives on critical pedagogical work will help to move this work forward? How do you think your work meets this challenge?

Bringing a “poststructuralist suspicion” (Lather, 1998, p. 489) to the work of critical pedagogy is useful, I think, because doing so challenges the way that positivism has so pervasively infiltrated all areas of education (Parker, 1997), even the work of emancipation. In this project this was particularly evident in my attitudes to productivity which were challenged by poststructuralist feminist theory and Foucault’s work on power. I agree with Masschelein (1998) that “critical pedagogy has to reconsider seriously and theoretically its own concepts” (p. 525), and I think that this can begin with facilitators like me challenging their own critical pedagogical work. It is important that the practice of teacher professional learning comes under scrutiny, because as this project highlighted, there can be oppressive and controlling practices operating even under the guise of emancipation (Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1992, 1993). I think that this project has helped to move the work of critical pedagogy forward in this regard; bringing a suspicion to ones’ work is always a positive move in my mind.

What do you think about Lather’s (1998) assertion that critical pedagogical work is “still very much a boy thing” (p. 488)?

I agree with Lather, I found that male perspectives still dominate the literature on critical pedagogy, although this is being challenged, particularly by poststructuralist feminist thinkers (e.g. Ellsworth, 1992, Gore, 1992, 1993; Lather, 1998; MacNaughton, 2003b, 2005). Bringing a poststructuralist feminist perspective to professional learning is certainly not common, as the literature review showed. Positioning the storylines of teachers within poststructuralist feminist theory focused my attention more specifically on the way women teachers are shaped by discourse, and how the structures supporting discourse work to normalise the practice of teaching. As Chapter 5 in particular showed, the teachers in this project were skilful in their negotiation within these discourses, but resistance and subversion could be costly. I think it is time to challenge more openly the predominant images that confine teachers to specific ways of being, particularly when
notable researchers such as Sumsion (2002) believe this is adversely affecting teacher recruitment and retention, and the work of social justice in general.

**How do you think the trend towards standardisation relates to this?**

There are many reasons for standardisation, especially if one considers how the "lack of a 'system'" (Lubeck & Jessup, 2001, p. 245) of consistency in the US, for example, means that the most needy communities can end up with teachers who are the least trained and prepared for the challenges of such work (Fromberg, 2006). As the literature review so clearly showed, teachers are important to outcomes for children (e.g. Anderson & Olsen, 2006; Bransford, et al., 2005; Buchanan, et al., 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Farquhar, 2003; Mepham, 2000; Ministry of Education, 2006a); so I'm not advocating that anyone do away with standardisation. What I am suggesting is that those reading this work reflect on how the teachers in this project changed when some of the constraints such as standardisation and the need for outcomes were eased. This could be another opening for discussion; where are the spaces for teachers to experience moving more freely within their learning and practice? I think this is a very important question for the future direction of teacher professional learning, especially when the focus of professional learning is still very much about finding right answers (e.g. Cochran-Smith, 2001b; MacNaughton, 2003a, 2003c).

**Talking about outcomes; you were very clear in your work that the change that occurred in this project was not measurable, nor reproducible? How do you see your work fitting within a system that is increasingly about outcomes?**

You're right; this work was not about measurable change or methods of professional learning that can be reproduced, so I don't see the professional learning experienced in this project as a *method or model* that is necessarily preferable to other approaches. Like I have already said, I rather see this project as an invitation to think about professional learning differently. Keeping this in mind, it is worth considering how much difference it made in this project to the work of social justice when teachers had the opportunity to stand back and gain a wider perspective on education, and when they experienced diversity in ways other than learning how to do social justice in a more technical sense. The problem with the trend towards outcomes is that this has a tendency to keep learning
focused on the technical, because the technical is more observable and measurable. But as many others along with me continue to say; training teachers to be technicians does not encourage critical inquiry (e.g. Freire, 1996; Foucault, 1995a; Kincheloe, 1993; Moss, 2006a; Sumsion, 2002), and is less likely to result in transformative change (MacNaughton, 2003b).

**So do you see your work as additional or maybe an alternative to other professional learning?**

I see my work more as complementary and supplementary to current professional learning opportunities. I realise that funding a programme such as mine, with no guarantee of outcomes, may not be an attractive option for those in policymaking positions. However, I do think that this project highlighted a need and a gap in the current professional learning opportunities being offered to early education teachers. It is safe to say that teachers in general do not have enough time to talk. This is not just a problem encountered by the teachers in this project; there is plenty of literature that shows how common this problem is (e.g. Ayers, 1993; Hammerness, 2003; Hatherly, 1999; Kincheloe, 1993; Kitchens, 2004; MacNaughton, 2004; Mitchell, 2003; Silin, 1995). So this is a real need in professional learning - the space for teachers to just talk; but more than this, to talk about the wider issues of education, beyond the borders of the safe and familiar, and in New Zealand beyond the boundaries of *Te Whāriki*.

**Do you think some of the ideas that worked in this project could be tried in existing programmes?**

I would like to think so, but of course the outcomes could be totally different to those experienced in this project. A starting place could be considering how to use some of the learning time and space differently, even if only for moments. For instance, how might some of the constraints normally associated with professional learning, such as keeping to time, or using time to reflect on practice, for instance, be eased? How might the constraints around what can be said, and questioned, be eased? How can teachers experience learning spaces where they can move more freely and experimentally with their ideas and their becoming? And how might the borders of familiarity be extended so that teachers are challenged to think about teaching and learning in new ways? I believe
that all of this is possible within existing professional learning, but what I am suggesting here is not a method, this kind of work takes changed perspectives.

**How are you working differently in your own practice as a result of your research?**

I am doing much the same as I have just suggested, but mainly continuing to question what I consider worthwhile to know and whose interests are being served by what I am doing. One thing that I am doing differently is seeking more opportunities to make truth fragile, even if I am not always thanked for this. However, wherever possible I try and do this by encouraging teachers to be epistemologically curious (Freire, 2003b); placing an emphasis on the pleasurable exploration of ideas. When there is tension though, and there is a certain amount of inevitability about this, I try to work strategically to trouble truth, always keeping in mind that feeling worse, disappointed, and discontented, can precede change. There are plenty of other ways I am working differently, but for me the main issue is not what I do so much as what I value as worthwhile. One very important thing that I value more is the potential that one moment has for life-changing shifts, and how these moments can be crucial to emancipatory work.

**Speaking of emancipatory work, you mentioned more than once in this project how critical pedagogy can be risky work. Have you got anything to add to this?**

Freire taught me, in his very special way, that critical pedagogical work can involve risks. For instance, critical pedagogical work in early education can be lonely work, particularly when the image associated with an early education teacher is more that of peaceful compliance than active critical disruption. As one of Sumsion’s (2002) students found, there are not many early education teachers prepared to engage in critical debate where the taken-for-granted is challenged, especially if this is seen to be rocking the boat (Tamboukou, 2000). It can be lonely for the teacher who wants to challenge the status quo and transgress boundaries (hooks, 1994), particularly if doing so risks the kind of punishment that Foucault (1995a) contends is used to normalise conduct and speech. Additionally, it can be difficult for just one person to sustain the change that social justice endeavours require, especially as this work requires the kind of social activism (MacNaughton, 2003b) that needs the energy that is generated from the support of others (Beatty, 1999).
What happens then, if only one teacher in a team is seeking the kind of change that critical pedagogy requires, the kind that involves extended dialogue and disruption; where does this teacher go for support? These are the questions that I am now considering in my future work with teachers, particularly in the work of social justice. I believe it is crucial for the work of social justice in New Zealand early education that such questions come out into the wider arena for debate, in much the same way that they are through the work of the Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC) at the University of Melbourne (see CEIEC website for more information). I can see myself doing more work in this area.

Where do you see a need for more research?

There is still a need in early education for more research on professional learning, especially any that has social justice intentions; nothing much has changed in this respect from when I began this project. My work only fills a small gap in the research done in this area; particularly if you consider poststructuralist feminist perspectives as well. In education in general, there is still very little research using poststructuralist feminist theory, and yet the majority of teachers, particularly in early education, are still women. Poststructuralist feminist theory will help to reconceptualise the predominant discourses in early education that work against the kind of activism required in the work of social justice (Barnes, 2005 cited in MacNaughton, 2005). Moreover, I think poststructuralist feminist theory can offer possibilities in the recent debate about men in early education (e.g. Farquhar, Calk, Buckingham, Butler, & Ballantyne, 2006), simply because in this kind of work, predetermined concepts of the teacher and teaching naturally come under scrutiny.

I would like to see more research done with teachers not just research done about or for teachers. Even though the Centres of Innovation (Meade, 2004) project in New Zealand has teachers actively involved in research, which is fantastic in this regard, the emphasis of this work is on the innovative implementation of Te Whāriki, and so there is still a lack of teacher voice (Mepham, 2000) affecting professional learning in general. Most of the research on professional learning continues to be about what will help teachers to do more, and be better, at what they do, in a technical sense. I personally would like to do some work on what Davies (2006) calls “collective biography” (p. 1), beginning where
this project has ended, with teachers talking about their teaching from multiple and contradictory perspectives; telling their stories together. I would like to see teachers speaking more for themselves.

In relation to teachers speaking for themselves, didn’t the teachers in this project speak at a conference with you?

Yes, this was a very special time in this project and as one teacher said later, it was one of the highlights of her professional learning (SG10/1). But this was costly; by the time we all paid to go and to stay and the plane fares, it was a huge undertaking. However, we are thinking of doing this again as a kind of part two to this project. The most significant part of this for me was the fact that the data could speak for itself, and the conference paper made up quite a lot of the data that was eventually used in this thesis. As I explained in Chapter 4, I had trouble all the way through this project with how I could authentically represent the storylines of others, often feeling what Geertz (1998, cited in St. Pierre, 2000) calls the “burden of authorship” (p. 262) that comes when we speak for others. This troubles me in general when research seems to just load more and more expectations on teachers; I guess this gives me more to think about. What this burden did do was make me vigilant about sharing my ongoing interpretation with others, even though this was very time consuming.

How realistic is it really to expect that participants will be part of the interpretations?

For me, it was essential. Participants always knew that at the end of the day I would be the one making decisions about what data I would use and ultimately how this would be represented, but making this visible and discussing this on the way through made a huge difference. We did have some disagreements, but in the end we all came to realise that none of us were the person we once were, and we kind of saw the work as about people who were, a long time ago. Making myself vulnerable in the text also helped, because this showed that I was prepared to position myself in the same way I was positioning them; as active and competent teachers who were constantly in the process of becoming. Sharing at the conference made a big difference, because this kind of troubled ownership;
instead of this being my thesis, this was about all of us and we could all take and use what we learnt along the way.

What you just said reminds me that in Chapter 8 you mentioned that this project crossed the borders of research convention in the areas of confidentiality and anonymity, tell me more about this.

Well, New Zealand is a small country, and once we all attended the conference anonymity was pretty much out of the question. I have used pseudonyms, but it would not be too difficult for anyone to work out who participants were if they wanted to. But I saw this as a positive thing; why should the wonderful storylines of these women be subjected to the secrecy that dominates research? These were open storylines that could and should be told by the teachers themselves. This is why we modified the confidentiality agreement so that we could, and we did, share with others what happened in group sessions; this way others could be part of this learning too. The learning and changes that happened in this project were not restricted to the sessions we had together; everything was connected in a very beautiful and ongoing way with the world outside of this project.

I suppose because this was an action research project there was more involvement by participants anyway?

Exactly, as I shared in Chapter 4, one of the reasons that I chose to use action research at the outset was because of emergent and collaborative nature of this work and so, yes, this did mean that teachers were more involved and I loved this; even if this did make things difficult for me when teachers decided to disband with projects and I was left with more random data and no cycles.

Did you find this worked against the principles of action research?

To the contrary, in a way this just accelerated the process, because instead of one spiral of engagement (Fleet & Patterson, 2001), the project went into a spin with multiple spirals all tangling together – it was actually fascinating; messy, but nevertheless fascinating. Because I had taken a postmodern approach to action research I was expecting the
unexpected anyway; so when the cycles seem to disperse in all directions and this was a challenge, it was not totally unexpected. The underlying principles of action research were supported, particularly Lewin's belief that those most affected by change should be the ones involved in planning, implementing and evaluating change (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988); and to me this was the most important issue. I am more convinced than ever that action research, especially when it is conceptualised within postmodernism, is the kind of research approach that will enhance the work towards emancipation.

Are there any final words that you would like to add?

Reflecting on this project has been worthwhile as it has pulled all the threads together and given me more to think about. As we end this interview I would like to mention just one more thing. I think it is important here to go right back to the beginning; to what I shared in the opening pages of this thesis. Remember how I said in the introduction that when I first encountered the work of hooks (1994) I cried, but I didn't know why, and that until this time I hadn't felt a need to work towards social justice in my practice? I want to remember this, because this is where I think my work after this thesis should begin; with the teachers who, like me, have no idea that inside of them there is the possibility of practicing teaching differently, and that this can make a difference to the work of social justice globally. There are so many other openings... so much more to discuss... this is just the beginning...
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Plain Language Statement

This letter invites you to participate in a research project that is being run by Dr Glenda MacNaughton, Associate Professor, The University of Melbourne and Ms Louise Taylor, student, The University of Melbourne as part of a Master of Education Degree for Ms Taylor.

The title of this project is: Re-imagining professional learning for early childhood teachers

This project will address some current issues concerning professional learning for practicing early childhood teachers in New Zealand. Current professional learning programmes are often focused on technical knowledge, delivered by ‘experts’ in a context that is removed from everyday teaching. Demands on teachers for accountability to national standards has seen much professional learning time set aside for training teachers how to put new legislation and government initiatives into practice. Little time is set aside for teachers to engage in sustained dialogue about their own practice and educational issues in general. If teachers today are to assist children towards critical reflection, creative problem solving and divergent thinking, then they too need opportunities to engage in learning which challenges taken for granted practice and allows for possibility thinking.

The aim of this project is to create new knowledge about what practices best support teachers' learning and growth. This will be done in a collaborative action research project with a group of early childhood teachers in New Zealand, in which we will share our stories, pose problems, and explore issues such as power, equity and diversity and how these have an impact on learning and growth. By engaging in sustained dialogue without the need to meet set criteria, we will begin to do what MacNaughton (1999) suggests, to think the unthinkable, discuss the undiscussable and question the unquestionable. We will seek to find new ways of being, learning and growing, in the ever changing and complex world of education.

Information for this project will be gathered in the following ways:

- Individual interviews at the beginning of the project with 12 - 15 participants which will be taped and transcribed using coded pseudonyms
Group sessions for 6 – 8 participants, held over a period of 9 months, once a month, which will be taped and transcribed using coded pseudonyms
- Focus group discussions which will be taped and transcribed using coded pseudonyms
- Participant stories and journal writing extracts.

For this project we would like you to participate in the following ways:

- Participate in an interview for 1 – 1½ hours, which will be taped, transcribed using coded pseudonyms and later used for analysis. Interview questions will focus on participants’ backgrounds, teaching and learning experiences and times in your life when you have made personal and/or professional changes.

And / Or

- Attending a total of nine, 2-3 hour group sessions, held monthly over a nine month period.
- Six of these group sessions will be focused on your experiences, learning and growth as an early childhood teacher. At these sessions you will be asked to share your teaching stories, to share from a professional journal and to engage in discussion around current educational issues, which will involve challenging current beliefs and commonly held assumptions about early childhood practices. These sessions will be taped, transcribed using coded pseudonyms and later used for analysis.
- Three of these group sessions will be specifically devoted to evaluating and planning the process and content of the above six sessions, and will be run as ‘focus group discussions’. As participants you will be given a list of questions prior to these meetings, which will be used to guide the discussion. These focus group discussions will take place on the first meeting, mid way through the project and on the last meeting and they will be taped, transcribed using coded pseudonyms, and later used for analysis.
- Participants will be asked to keep a reflective journal throughout the process.

This project will expand understanding and practice of professional learning for early childhood teachers. It will give participants the opportunity to experience innovative professional learning opportunities, and to contribute to the development of new theory associated with professional learning in early childhood education.

To protect your privacy, all information collected during the project will be recorded in the form of coded categories, avoiding the need to use respondent’ names and addresses. All information will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the office of Ms Louise Taylor. Due to the small number of people involved in the action research group, complete anonymity of participants cannot be
guaranteed. However, the above measures will ensure participant confidentiality, subject to any legal requirements.

Participation in the project is voluntary and you can withdraw from it at any stage. If you do so, your responses in the group discussions will be destroyed at your request. In addition, any stories and/or journal extracts that you have contributed, will be returned to you at your request. After the interviews, group sessions and focus group discussions, transcripts will be given to participants for verification and any immediate reflections or analysis done by the researcher will be included for participant critique.

Participants will be able to read the ongoing project by request.

All the project data will be destroyed five years after the project is completed.

If you have any concerns arising from the conduct of this research project, please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, Parkville, 3052, Australia. Phone 613 93447507, Fax 613 93476883.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Glenda MacNaughton
Dept of Learning and Educational Development
University of Melbourne, 234 Queensbury St, Melbourne 3053, Australia
Ph 613 8344 0985, Fax 613 8344 0995

Ms Louise Taylor
PO Box 104 053, Lincoln North, Auckland 8, New Zealand
Ph 643 836 1191, Fax 643 836 1181

Reference


** This project was later renamed: Re-imagining professional learning in early education. This was done because of the primary school teachers who joined the project.
APPENDIX 2

Action Research Group Protocol

This protocol will be given to prospective participants along with the 'Plain Language/Information Statement' so that any queries and/or concerns can be addressed at this stage. The protocol will be discussed again at the first group session.

Rationale:

"Action researchers must pay attention to the ethical principles guiding their work". (Kemmis & McTaggart 1988, p 106)

Aims:

- To maintain a high standard of ethics throughout the research process;
- To establish an agreed group contract that will ensure the commitment and safety of all group members.

Guidelines:

The group contract will be formulated using the following guidelines.

Group Member Responsibilities

- To maintain confidentiality at all times;
- To respect the right of any group member to withdraw at any time;
- To respect the individual contributions of members even when opinions differ;
- To participate in agreed activities, discussions and data collection;
- To participate in group decision making and adhere to group decisions.

Data Collection and Analysis

- Sessions will be taped and transcribed using coded pseudonyms and agreement to this will be sought at the first meeting;
- Transcripts and any relevant notes, reflections and analysis will be circulated to group members for verification;
- Time will be set aside at the beginning of each session to discuss any notes and changes will be agreed by group members.
- Amended notes will be circulated to group members for verification;
- Negotiation of what shall be included and/or excluded will take place throughout the project.

Reporting of Findings

- The final results of this research will be reported as part of a graduate thesis;
- Individual permission will be sought before using direct quotes;
- All reporting will be available to group members before being made to the public;
- The researcher retains the right to individual interpretation of results and to report findings when they have been verified as a fair and accurate representation.

The above principles, and any added by the group, will form a binding contract.
Consent form for research project

PROJECT TITLE:

Re-imagining Professional Learning for Early Childhood Teachers**

Name of participant:

Name of investigator(s): Dr Glenda MacNaughton  ph 613 8344 0985, fax 613 8344 0995, email g.macnaughton@edfac.unimelb.edu.au and Ms Louise Taylor ph 649 836 1191, fax 649 836 1181, email louise.taylor@xtra.co.nz

1. I consent to participate in the project above, the particulars of which - including details of individual interviews, group sessions, individual narrative, focus group sessions and journaling - have been explained to me. A written copy of the information has been given to me to keep.

2. I authorise the researcher or her assistant to audio-tape interviews and group sessions, and to collect samples of my journaling and stories, (that I have chosen to contribute), referred to under (1) above.

3. I acknowledge that:

(a) the requirements that will be asked of me for the individual interviews, group sessions, individual narrative, focus group sessions and journaling, have been explained to me, to my satisfaction;

(b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied;

(c) The project is for the purpose of research and not for treatment;

(d) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements. Transcripts will be coded using pseudonyms and that codes will be kept separately from my name and address. Access to raw data will
only be by the principal researcher, secondary researcher and typist. I understand that due to the small number of people involved, complete anonymity of participants cannot be guaranteed, although the above measures will be in place to ensure the confidentiality of my contributions to this research;

(d) I understand that transcripts will be returned to participants for verification and any immediate researcher reflections on these transcripts, included for critique.

** This project was later renamed: Re-imagining professional learning in early education. This was done because of the primary school teachers who joined the project.
APPENDIX 4

CYCLE ONE
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

PURPOSE
As this is the reconnaissance cycle of the data collection process, the purpose of this interview is to gather as much information as possible on the lives and professional learning experiences of the teachers who are interviewed. The aim is for these sessions to be relaxed and informal, with participants sharing freely rather than answering a list of set questions. For this reason, I will have four broad questions with a list of subsequent questions if the discussion needs funnelling (Burns, 1997).

INTRODUCTION
• Thanks for participating;
• Check that I have contact details;
• Summary of research and purpose of this interview;
• Discuss confidentiality and anonymity, and request how they would like to be identified;
• Remind participants that they can stop the interview at any time and withdraw;
• Reassure participants that there are no right and wrong answers;
• Assure them that they are free to choose what they share or do not share and that they can request me not to use parts of, or all of what they have said in the interview;
• Check that they are happy for the session to be taped, if they are not, then I will need to take handwritten notes as an alternative.

INTERVIEW
Questions adapted from Belenky et al (1997)

A  Background
I would like to learn a bit about your background. What stands out for you in your life over the past few years that has touched on your learning as a professional?

• How have you arrived at where you are today as a professional?
• What things have been important to you?
• What stays with you?
• What things have influenced you?
• What values are important to you?
• What relationships have been important to you?
• What does being a woman mean to you?

B  Teacher
Having talked about your life, I would now like to hear about your teaching journey. What teaching experiences have been significant to you?

• How did you decide on teaching as a profession?
• Why did you choose to work in early childhood?
• What are your passions in education?
• What challenges do you face as a teacher?
• What would you like to change?

C  Learner
You have described your life as a teacher, now I would like to focus on you as a learner. Looking back over your life, what learning experience have stayed with you, (good or bad)?
What has been a powerful learning experience for you?
In your learning experiences, have you come across an idea that made you think differently? Tell me about this.
When you want to learn something new, how do you go about it?
Are there things that you would like to learn but feel that you can’t?

**D Change**

Tell me about a time in your life when you reached a turning point. When was this and what happened?

- How are you different from what you were? What led to this change?
- What has changed the way that you think about yourself and the world?
- How do you see yourself changing in the future? What will help this process? Make this process more difficult for you?
- What changes would you like to see in early childhood education in the future? How do you think this can happen?

**CONCLUSION**

- Check that participants are happy with how the interview went, and ensure that they do not have any concerns that are not addressed;
- Thank participants for their valuable contribution to my research;
- Let participants know that they will be contacted by letter, with a copy of my reflections and initial analysis of their interview, asking for their critique.
Dear

Thanks so much for the time you gave for my research interview.

Attached is an overview of your interview as I remember it. When the interview is fully transcribed you will also receive a copy of the transcript.

I would appreciate you having a read/skim of the content and adding/deleting/changing anything you would like to, write all over it if you like.

In addition I would appreciate your reflections/feedback on both the interview process (how it was conducted etc, suggestions) and what we discussed. Maybe you had some thoughts after the session, or something we discussed has given you an idea, troubled you or stood out as significant. It would be great for you to comment on these issues as I would like to include your voice in my analysis so how you interpret/feel about your story is really important to me.

I do however realise that this is more work for you, so please see this as an ‘option’ rather than a ‘have to’. Much appreciated.

Louise Taylor
REFLECTIONS ON THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Please comment here on how you found the interview process including how you felt prior to and after the interview. Any suggestions are welcome.

REFLECTIONS ON YOU INTERVIEW STORY

Please comment here on our discussion, anything that stood out as significant, troubled, excited you or caused you to think/question etc

Please comment here on further thoughts you may have on professional learning/development and how it relates to you, e.g. what is important to you, anything new you have realised about yourself as a learner, teacher.
APPENDIX 6

PLANNING FOR GROUP SESSIONS

As this is an action research project, these sessions will be planned collaboratively and will evolve through a continual process of planning, acting, observing what we do, reflecting on the outcomes and planning the next step of the process.

It is however envisaged that the sessions will be structured as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 1</td>
<td>Introductions, readdress group protocol (Appendix 2), discuss action learning format** and general discussion guided by focus group questions (Appendix 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sessions 2, 3 and 4</td>
<td>During these sessions, we will begin working on projects following the action learning format discussed in session 1**. As we do will explore our beliefs about practice and seek to identify the influences that have shaped who we are as women and teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 5</td>
<td>Focus group discussion (Appendix 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 6, 7 and 8</td>
<td>Continue with projects and adjust the programme according to the feedback received in the focus group discussion in session 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 9</td>
<td>Final focus group discussion (Appendix 7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sessions will be influenced by an action learning format, where each person will have a chance to work through individual issues, while receiving from and contributing to the group (Dotlich & Noel, 1998; Pearce, 1991; Revans, 1991; Weinstein, 1995).
APPENDIX 7

PLANNED FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Purpose

The purpose of a focus group discussion is to gain an insight into individual and collective opinions on a given topic. While individuals have a chance to give their perspective, the group synergy will add depth and insight to comments that are made, by potentially exhausting the subject of discussion Anderson (1990).

There will be three focus group discussions, which will involve planning and evaluating the content and process of the group sessions throughout the project. One will be the first time the group meets together, one mid way through the project and one at the end of the project.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION ONE – FOR SESSION 1

This will be held on the first group session. The purpose of this discussion is to introduce participants to each other, to establish participant aspirations and needs for the coming sessions, to clarify what the project entails (including going over action research protocol Appendix 2) and to plan what we will do together in future sessions. Discussion will focus on the following broad questions, which will be circulated to group members prior to the first meeting.

Please consider the following questions in preparation for our first meeting together as these will guide our discussion.

Who are we?
✓ What is my background in relation to professional learning?
✓ What do I understand about this research project?
✓ What do I understand about action research?
✓ What experience have I had using a reflective journal?

Why are we here?
✓ What are my personal interests in this research project?
✓ Why did I decide to become involved?

What can we expect?
✓ How do I feel about being involved in this project?
✓ What are my questions, expectations and needs of this project?
✓ What commitments am I comfortable within this project?

What areas of education are we interested in exploring further?
✓ What would I like to discuss, explore over the coming months?
✓ What current issues are important to me?
✓ What questions are on my mind?
✓ What would I like to learn through this project?

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION TWO – FOR SESSION 5

This will be held on the fifth session. Time will be set aside to reflect on the content and process of the group sessions to date. The group will also plan the following sessions at this time. Discussion will be guided by the following broad questions, which will be circulated to group members prior to the meeting.

Please consider the following questions in preparation for our meeting, as these will guide our discussion.

How are we going?
What is the general feeling about what we are doing?
What is working, not working?
What has been a challenge?
What stands out as significant?
What conflicts have arisen?
What new and or exciting things are happening?
How is the process working for the group and individuals?

What have we learnt?
What have I taken away from these sessions?
What have I personally been challenged by?
What has been new to me?
What perspectives of mine have changed?
How has my practice been influenced?
What is causing tension for me?
How would I describe to a colleague what I have been involved in?

Where to next?
What issues are currently on my mind?
What would I like to explore further?
What will assist me in my teaching practice?
What support do I need?

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION THREE- FOR SESSION 9
This will be held on the final session. Discussion will focus on the overall process, what was effective, challenging, useful, and not very helpful. The group will spend time reflecting on the content and process of the entire process. Discussion will be guided by the following broad questions, which will be circulated to group members prior to the meeting.

Please consider the following questions in preparation for our meeting, as these will guide our discussion.

The Process
How did I find the process overall?
What were the challenges, frustrations, joys, heartaches?
What processes best supported my learning and growth?
What tensions arose?
How do I feel about this process as a valid form of professional learning?

The Content/Issues Discussed
What did/didn't I enjoy exploring?
What challenged me, was new to me, was interesting?
What was new learning for me?
What has benefited my teaching practice?
What has unsettled me?
What was most useful/least useful?

The Product
What new knowledge did we create together?
What changes have resulted from this project?
How do I see this project influencing professional learning for early childhood teachers in the future?
APPENDIX 8

ORGANISATION OF DATA

Data was gathered, filed and used in the following ways:

- The first source of data came from the semi-structured interviews which followed the guidelines outlined in Appendix 4. These interviews were taped and transcribed by me (Louise Taylor). Ten people were interviewed between the beginning of November 2001 and mid-February 2002. Interviews lasted between 1 and 2 hours averaging 1 ½ hours. Data was stored in individual files** and was dated and coded numerically. The only data from these interviews in analysis was that collected from the seven teachers who were with the project for its entirety.

- During the semi-structured interviews I took handwritten notes and the day following the interview I typed these up as an interview summary. These were sent back to participants for verification and so that participants could add or delete parts of the interview. These summaries became part of the data and were stored in individual files** and dated and coded numerically.

- Along with these interview summary sheets participants were sent a feedback form (Appendix 5) so that they could offer their reflections on the interview process. I received back three out of the ten forms sent out and these three were from the teachers who continued right through the project. Feedback from these forms have been used in the body of this work and were dated and coded numerically. These were stored in individual files**

- The monthly and bimonthly group sessions that occurred between late February 2002 and the end of October 2003 were taped and transcribed by me. These were stored electronically and in hard copy in a data file containing all group sessions**. These sessions were dated and coded, and pseudonyms were used to refer to participants.

- After each group session I typed up my reflections on these sessions and posted these out to participants. Participants sometimes responded to these by email, but usually these were used to open discussion at the next session. These were stored with the transcripts of each session**. Any feedback from participants was dated and stored in individual files**
• Additional data came from journal entries, follow-up phone calls, emails, and face to face conversations. My own journal entries were stored in hard copy journals and additional individual data was dated, coded numerically and stored in individual files**

• The final source of data came from a conference paper that was prepared with participants between September and November 2002. This paper was presented at the New Zealand Research Network annual symposium, held in December 2002 in Palmerton North, New Zealand. Individual papers prepared as part of this joint paper were stored in individual files** and the collective paper stored with the transcripts of group sessions. When referring to these papers in the body of this thesis, pseudonyms have been used.

**Data was filed in a secure office at the residence of Louise Taylor.
CRITICAL PEDAGOGICAL QUESTIONS GUIDING DATA ANALYSIS

Cycle One
Questions for consideration are adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, p. 54)

✓ What is happening for these teachers now?
✓ How is this informed by theory?
✓ What values do teachers hold dear?
✓ What patterns of activities have emerged?
✓ What has changed for teachers over time?
✓ What have been the constraints on change?
✓ What similarities and differences are emerging?
✓ How can these teachers' stories help to shape future thinking?

Cycle Two
The following questions will guide ongoing analysis (adapted from Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, pp. 56-63)

✓ What are the key words, concepts, ideas and themes that are emerging?
✓ What underlying beliefs and assumptions have been identified?
✓ How have these influenced thinking about early childhood education?
✓ What theories and philosophies have influenced language and practice?
✓ What are the agreements and disagreements over interpretation?
✓ What conflicts are arising?
✓ What patterns are being identified?
✓ What alternatives are being suggested?
✓ What learning activities are early childhood teachers currently involved in?
✓ What learning activities are regarded as most important?
✓ What is regarded as knowledge?
✓ What are the key factors supporting learning and change?
✓ How do social relationships affect the development of knowledge, learning and change?

Final analysis will seek to answer my question “How can we expand our ways of understanding and practicing professional learning in early childhood education” and will focus on the following broad questions (adapted from Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, pp. 96-99).

✓ How have human interactions between early childhood teachers and their knowledge about practice, been socially and historically constructed?
✓ What cultural and traditional practices have been taken for granted?
✓ What contests exist over language and teaching practices?
✓ How have language and practice become institutionalised?
✓ What are the opportunities for and constraints on change?
✓ What forms of control and resistance are evident?
✓ How can this knowledge be used to create new ways of understanding professional learning?
✓ How can early childhood practices be influenced in the future?
APPENDIX 10

Applying the conceptual framework to data analysis

The following has been used to guide data analysis.

Power knowledge and discourse
Examining the relationship between power, knowledge and discourse enables poststructuralist feminist researchers like me to understand more about the function of power in social situations which Davies (2003a) asserts is a prerequisite for disruption. In my data I therefore:

- Locate the function of power at work in capillary fashion within the research group meetings, in order to understand what this produces;
- Use points of resistance to spotlight the interplay of power relations acting upon actions;
- Locate the tensions and the battles over interpretations and meanings and observe the impact of these on knowledge production and learning;
- Seek out privileged discourses and investigate how these have been produced and perpetuated through both institutional/political and personal/ethical support;
- Locate incidents that make disruption possible.

The function and regulation of discourse in the process of normalisation
For those seeking education as a practice of freedom (Freire, 1996; hooks, 1994), understanding more about how the function and regulation of discourse works to normalise, opens up the possibility for disrupting normalising practices. In the data I therefore:

- Highlight incidents where exterior forms of regulation, such as legislation and publications function to privilege knowledge;
- Observe how internal rules function in and through discourse and how these rules are used in the process of normalisation;
Illustrate how classification and exclusion work to sanction some speakers and silence others;

Locate the use of ritual, doctrinal adherence, and the social appropriation of discourse in order to examine how these have functioned to regulate what can be spoken and by whom;

Ask how I managed and organised time and space and the affects of this on what was counted as worthwhile to know;

Highlight incidents where discourse functioned to normalisation and the affects of this on knowledge production, learning and change;

Examine how the process of normalisation could be disrupted as I expanded my understanding of the function and regulation of discourse.

Subjectivity and the normalisation of individuals

In poststructuralist feminist theory the subject is central to any research that seeks to challenge oppression in any form. Understanding more about the subject who is woman, learner and teacher has helped me in my search to expand what it is that I can do with teachers in order to achieve socially just outcomes. In my data therefore I:

- Highlight the multiple and contradictory ways that the women in this project continue to be constituted as women, learners and teachers;
- Track the movements of the women in this project as they manoeuvre and negotiate the take up of positions daily;
- Seek out examples where problematization and practices of the self have contributed to how women think and act in the process of becoming;
- Locate struggles and examine the relationship between these and resistance;
- Highlight acts of resistance and instances where the take up of discourse is refused;
- Place my own storylines alongside those of the women in this project.
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TAYLOR, LOUISE

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