"*You are just the same as everybody else*": Uncovering the complexities and multiplicities of Australian early childhood teacher identities.

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Education

June 2018

Graduate School of Education

The University of Melbourne

Abstract

Since 2012, the Australian early childhood education and care sector (ECEC) has been subject to extensive legislative reforms designed to increase quality outcomes for young children and the nation through the implementation of the National Quality Reform Agenda (NQRA). The NQRA was largely informed by the recommendations of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) (2006a) Starting Strong II review. Amongst its recommendations, Starting Strong II (OECD, 2006a) highlighted the impact of stable, expert trained, effective and high-quality teachers on increasing quality outcomes for the learning, development and social participation of young children. Additionally, Starting Strong II (OECD, 2006a) stresses the role of quality early childhood education as foundational to lifelong learning, which is increasingly understood as key to developing effective human capital not only by the Australian government, but governments globally. Subsequently, some of the most significant strategies implemented as a part of the NQRA have intended to refocus attention on the professionalisation of the sector. However, the result of human capital becoming a national priority has led to the dominance of neoliberal education policy in Australia which emphasises standardisation, measurement and the comparison of quality outcomes. For early childhood teachers as the producers of human capital under neoliberal educational policy, what it means to be a good teacher is determined against national and international benchmarks, consequently creating a singular and fixed identity for early childhood teachers.

The intention of this research was to make meaning of the incongruence and sense of unease I experienced working within the boundaries of a fixed and singular early childhood teacher identity prescribed by contemporary Australian ECEC policy. Unable to recognise or reconcile with this identity through the professional learning and circles I had accessed so far in my career, I asked the question: "what are the complexities and multiplicities of Australian early childhood teacher identities?" To explore this question, in-depth one on one interviews were conducted with seven Australian early childhood teachers to uncover their perceptions of their own teacher identities and how their lived experiences with key stakeholders, educational policy and industrial tools informed these identities. The data revealed many commonalities in the teachers' everyday experiences operating within gendered and expert discourses and how these shaped multiple, complex and shifting teacher identities. In illuminating the operation of power in the shaping of teacher identities, this research shows contemporary neoliberal education policy continues to intensify these complexities.

Drawing on Foucauldian understandings of identities as always shifting, changing and multiple, influenced by themselves and others, history, culture and society, the data was analysed in a way that

challenges the prescribed, singular and fixed teacher identity of quality frameworks (Foucault, 1978; Weedon, 1997). Foucault's conceptualisations of power, knowledge and truth are applied to the data to analyse the operation of the dominant gendered and expert discourses that inform those and the performances of disciplinary practices in the circulation of relational power as teachers and stakeholders contend to attribute meaning to teacher identities

Declaration

This is to certify that:

    (i)   thesis comprises only their original work towards the except where indicated in the preface;

    (ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used; and

    (iii) the thesis is fewer than the maximum word limit in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices

Signature………..

Acknowledgements

To the love of my life for your unwavering support, unconditional love and delusional belief in me. You are the best hype boy anyone could hope for.

To my family and friends for persevering with me through the process and waiting for me on the other side.

To Kylie for your boundless patience and uncanny ability to know just what I need and where I am going, especially when I don't know myself.

And to Bruce for your generosity, encouragement, gentle guidance and jumping in the deep end with me.

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Chapter One Introduction

More than ever before Australian ECEC[1], is governed by contemporary quality frameworks and neoliberal policies. As an early childhood teacher working within this landscape, the influence of neoliberal educational policy has come to shape my understandings of what teacher identity, a set of attributes that provide a set of values and characteristics to distinguish teachers as a group, should and shouldn't be. However, I live the messiness of trying to make sense of who I am and what I should and shouldn't be daily. Often feeling frustrated that I can't identify with the image of the good teacher promoted by neoliberal educational policy and a sense of uneasiness about the objectivity of the competencies we report against and are assessed by as valued and good. This has been no more visceral for me than during my experiences of Assessment and Rating against the National Quality Standard (NQS) and the weeks and months leading up to that day long observation, examination and subsequent rating of our ECEC service by a regulatory body authorised officer. During this time, I found my professional judgment torn between maintaining outward markers of calm, objectivity and measurable success while navigating the ethical and relational dilemmas that demand priority in a constantly changing, unstable and unpredictable work environment. Not to mention trying to find time to embrace, or sometimes even resist, those elements or moments of teaching where I find joy. All the while devising and adapting methods of evidencing this fluid and disordered work in structured, linear and measurable ways. I notice myself desperately trying to recognise the good teacher in myself to project to regulatory bodies, and the world, but find it to be fleeting or all together absent, as emotional and moral ways of being often take precedence. This sense of confusion, frustration and self doubt, are things that anecdotally I know other teachers also experience, leading me to see that who we are as teachers is more complex and messy than the singular image we are guided by in ECEC policy, quality frameworks and much of the literature.

But finding limited access to resources enabling me to resolve or make meaning of these tensions from my everyday position in the classroom, my research asks the question; what are the complexities and multiplicities of Australian early childhood teacher identities? Collecting data from in-depth, semi structured, one on one interviews with Australian early childhood teachers, this qualitative research project draws on Foucauldian concepts of power, knowledge and truth. These concepts then underpin

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[1] A full list of acronyms can be found in Appendix A

how I disrupt singular understandings of the knowable expert teacher and make meaning of the complexities and multiplicities of teacher identities and the shifting, relational and knottiness of power.

Why early childhood teacher identities?

In the past decade there has been extensive reform in ECEC policy and provision globally. The historically feminised ECEC landscape is now increasingly outcomes focused due to the neoliberal paradigm's domination of educational policy, privileging profit and loss over moral and ethical considerations in its subversion of social and political spheres into the economic (Connell, 2013a, 2013b; Moss, 2014; Osgood, 2004, 2010; Press & Woodrow, 2005; Taggart, 2011; Vintimilla, 2014). Promising quality for all, neoliberal imperatives shift the responsibility for the individual from the state to the individual themselves through strategic social, political and economic structures, making the individual responsible for acquiring the power to achieve, succeed and contribute to the nation (Brown, Lan & Jeong, 2015; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Fenech, Giugni & Bowen, 2012; Millie & Jones, 2014). The neoliberal one size fits all approach to sociocultural, political, economic and educational problems marries well with dominant modernist understandings that inform ECEC theory and practice by denying the ways intricacies like social justice or equity issues inform an individual's experience of the world and shape multiple identities (Connell, 2013a, 2013b; Hughes, 2010; Krieg, 2010; Weedon, 1987). As a result, a singular and fixed teacher identity is produced based on objectivity, rationality, accountability and standardisation (Moss, 2014). Contemporary ECEC quality frameworks which promote competitive individualism actively regulate this identity, measuring and comparing the good teacher against quality outcomes for children based on national and international benchmarks (Lee, 2015; Savage & O'Connor, 2014). The implication being that traditional teacher identities stemming from care and relationships have become devalued by contemporary ECEC policy in favour of the expert professional identity, limiting diverse ways of understanding and being for teachers (Osgood, 2004, 2010, 2012; Taggart; 2011; Yulindrasari & Ujianti, 2018).

Paradoxically however, despite the increasing dominance of neoliberal policies and expert teacher identity, many historical discourses of ECEC persist and are highly visible in low social and professional status, poor working conditions and remuneration for teachers (Ailwood 2008b; Sims & Waniganayake, 2015). Moreover, the singular and fixed teacher identity of neoliberal ECEC policy is increasingly at odds with the highly political, ethical, relational and unpredictable nature of ECEC, denying the history of ECEC and its foundations in care, which is difficult to quantify, "see" and assess (Osgood, 2004, 2010, 2012; Taggart; 2011). Therefore, uncovering the complexities of teacher identities through qualitative

research is important because it gives voice to a marginalised workforce and illuminates other, diverse teacher ways of being to inform educational policy. Policy constructed from multiple perspectives could then celebrate divergent possibilities for teacher identities, valuing and strengthening the workforce, increasing outcomes for teachers and subsequently outcomes for children.

The Australian early childhood education and care context and local policy

In Australia, like many developed nations, the neoliberal agenda has become firmly entrenched in educational policy (Penn, 2011; Simpson, Lumsden & McDowall Clark, 2015, Urban, 2015b). More specifically, neoliberal ECEC reform became a focus of the Australia political arena when in 2008 the newly elected Labour government recognised the need for a strategic plan to address growing economic concerns of an aging population, a decreasing national birth-rate and an effective approach for continued economic growth in the NQRA (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2008, 2009; Logan, Press & Sumsion, 2012; OECD, 2006b; Sumsion, Cheeseman, Kennedy, Barnes, Harrison & Stonehouse, 2009). The Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) was established under the NQRA in 2012 to unify early education and care, raise quality, consistency and continuous improvement nationally, refocusing attention on the professionalisation of the workforce by streamlining regulatory arrangements across all ECEC contexts through the National Quality Framework (NQF). Implemented by regulatory bodies in each state and territory, the NQF includes the national Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations, NQS, Assessment and Rating and the National Register (COAG, 2008). As of June 2012, under the NQF Australian ECEC long day care, preschool/kindergarten, family day care and outside of school hours care services are required to be assessed, measured and ranked against the NQS, and neoliberal imperatives, and by implication so are teachers (ACECQA, 2017a).

Given the current national and global economic spotlight on ECEC and my intention to uncover the complexities and multiplicities of early childhood teacher identities, I have drawn on a poststructuralist paradigm to inform this research and agitate for more complex understandings of teacher identities and a greater valuing of diverse teacher ways of being.

Overview of thesis

In Chapter one I explore local and international literature surrounding early childhood teacher identities and their significance in greater depth, focusing on the ways these are constructed by economic, cultural, historical and political factors. Chapter two explores the poststructuralist paradigm that underpins my research, the conceptualisation of power, knowledge and truth by French philosopher Michel Foucault, and how these are drawn on to illuminate and make meaning of the data. Detailed in Chapter three is my rationale for the qualitative methodology I use to collect the data gathered from one on one, in-depth, semi structured interviews with seven Australian early childhood teachers. In Chapter four I analyse the multiplicities of early childhood teacher identities that emerged from the data and the complexities that shape, challenge, privilege and limit those identities for the teachers. Lastly, Chapter five summarises the findings of my research, considers possible outcomes and applications of my research and new beginnings for further inquiry into early childhood teacher identities.

Chapter Two Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review provides an overview of the considerable and growing body of work that has been produced over the past three decades which examines, analyses and makes meaning of teacher identities in both international and Australian ECEC contexts. Reflected in the literature is a time of shifting global social and political agendas driving regulatory change and how the provision of ECEC, and the workforce that delivers it, is understood. This change is significant and a result of historic, contemporary and future, social, political and economic issues in education at a time of increasing globalisation. The literature generally constructs, investigates, critiques and makes meaning of teacher identities through two perspectives; the lasting gendered concept of mothering, women's naturalised connection to and work with young children, and the contemporary concept of the accountable, objective, productive and measurable expert early childhood professional. Also evident are the ways neoliberal ideals and imperatives play out across the breadth of the literature, research and educational policy to inform teacher identities. Consequently, four intrinsically connected themes emerge from the literature informing ways of thinking about teacher identities from multiple perspectives: mothering, gender and teacher identities; expertise and teacher identities; influences and strategies that support a strong sense of teacher identities; and the effects of a strong sense of teacher identities. Through the examination of the local and global literature that explores the intricacies of these themes, I intend to illuminate the gaps and questions that emerge when considering the complexities and multiplicities of teacher identities within the Australian ECEC context.

A local and global view of early childhood teacher identities

Early childhood teacher identities, and the gendered and expert themes connected to and embedded within those identities, have become an increasingly significant area of research in the ECEC space since the 1980's (Cannella, 1997; Whitebook & Granger, 1989). Extensive literature, supported by the recommendations of the OECD's Starting Strong reviews (2001, 2006a, 2012), argue the implications of high-quality teachers on outcomes for young children. That is, creating a foundation for lifelong learning and the development of effective human capital, making the teacher the site of success for the child and the nation (Bennett, 2006; Logan et al., 2012; Penn, 2011; Simpson et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2016; Urban, 2015b).

Reflecting these contemporary understandings of the political, social and economic value of children and early education, Australian ECEC legislation has undergone significant reform to increase quality outcomes for young children and the nation in the past decade (COAG, 2008, 2009; Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC), 2012). Strategies to refocus attention on the professionalisation of the sector being one of the significant reforms implemented as part of the NQRA and subsequent Early Years Work Force Strategy (EYWS) (COAG, 2008; SCSEEC, 2012). The literature, underpinned by the OECD's (2006a) findings on quality ECEC and increased outcomes for children, also shows that how teachers make meaning of and construct teacher identities is key in understanding critical issues in the sector like high workforce turnover, and a professional preference for primary teaching (Thorpe, Millear & Petriwskyj, 2012; Thorpe, Irvine, Sumsion & Lunn, 2016). Likewise, understanding and supporting the construction of strong teacher identities is connected to the effective recruitment and retention of a stable, qualified and quality early childhood teacher workforce (Barron, 2016; Chang-Kredl & Kingsley, 2014; Gibson, 2015; O'Connor, McGunnigle, Treasure & Davie, 2015). The literature also documents the ongoing struggle for professional recognition by early childhood teachers, and the ECEC sector as a whole, against poor working conditions, remuneration, low social perceptions and political influence (Brock, 2012; Lightfoot & Frost, 2015; Ortlipp, Arthur & Woodrow, 2011).

Mothering, gender and teacher identities

Foundational to much of the literature on teacher identity was the dominant theme of mothering. In particular the historical social concepts of gender, mothering and the naturalisation of women's work with children and the production of early childhood teacher identity. For me, the concept of mothering, its intrinsic connection to an ethic of care and emotional labour and the many ways relational power operates within these discourses to shape complex teacher identities was the most challenging to make sense of.

Unsurprisingly, as the contemporary literature illuminates the refocus on professionalising the ECEC sector and its teachers, the endurance of historical and social concepts of gender and the role of women as caregivers to young children emerged as an equally significant and foundational identity for teachers (Cannella, 1997; Davis, Krieg & Smith, 2015; Sisson & Iverson, 2014; Jónsdóttir & Coleman, 2014; Moloney, 2010; Osgood, 2012; Sisson, 2011). Reflecting the gendered nature of ECEC, the concept of women's work and domestic labour were persistent and deeply rooted in the literature (Davis et al., 2015; Sisson & Iverson, 2014; Kim, 2013; O'Connor et al., 2015; Osgood, 2010). So too was the conceptualisation of mothering, underpinned by women's intrinsic and natural connection to children,

disposition for self-sacrifice, care and emotional labour, making the education and care of children a task that can be undertaken by any biological female (Gore, 1993; MacNaughton, 2003; Osgood, 2010). Cannella (1997) discusses this as the foundation for female identity and subsequent markers of the 'good' early childhood teacher. Similarly, this conceptualisation of women as teachers is underpinned by feminine virtues, which predispose women to unpaid domestic and emotional labour for which little or no formal training is required, including cooking, cleaning and caring for the community (Cannella, 1997). From these conceptualisations, the socially taken for granted knowledge and structures that produce the highly gendered and low status identities of the gendered good early childhood teacher emerge from the literature (Kim, 2013; Penn, 2011; Simpson, 2010). Ailwood (2008b) identifies the German educational theorist Frobel, credited with the inception of the kindergarten in the late 1800's and the now universal conceptualisation of the gendered 'good teacher', as integral to the underpinning of maternalism in contemporary ECEC. That being of a young woman, ideally between seventeen and twenty, formally trained to work with young children in ways that provoke her natural, maternal instincts to be brought forth and made conscious (Ailwood, 2008b; Taggart 2011; Whitehead, 2008). Ailwood (2008b), goes on to argue that maternalistic discourses were then later exploited by developmental psychology in the mid 1900's, where the study of young children subjected women to the scientific and rational gaze. The examination of both women and children as means of human management and nation building has since become an ongoing patriarchal agenda (Ailwood, 2008b; Burman, 2007; Cannella, 1997). Surprisingly to me, gendered teacher identities appeared to be embraced by the literature as readily as they were resisted, a perspective of relational power which emerged across the literature and will be explored in more detail in Chapter three, Conceptual Framework and Chapter four, Data Analysis (Dalli, 2008; Gibson, 2013; Sisson & Iverson, 2014; MacNaughton, 2003; Osgood, 2006, 2010, 2012).

Osgood's (2004, 2012) extensive work regarding early years professionalism and identity in a UK context, sheds light on how maternalistic discourses are embraced and resisted by those in the field for how they inform and limit teacher identities. Of particular interest to Osgood (2012) is illuminating how the professionalisation of ECEC via the structures of state policies, informed by the neoliberal agenda of the British government and masculinist discourses, work to control an occupational group and the identities available to them. Osgood (2012) made meaning of her findings, and the current state of ECEC in the UK, by drawing on Foucauldian concepts of the subject, power and political rationalities and the work of feminist poststructuralist thinkers like Butler, Cannella, MacNaughton, Walkerdine and Weedon. Through semi structured interviews, observations, focus groups and life history interviews, which

Osgood (2012) describes as 'broadly ethnographic', she sought to understand how the professional identities of nursery workers were discursively constructed. Osgood's (2012) findings show that early childhood teacher professionalism, unlike professionalism in other more traditionally masculine occupational groups, is a deeply personal issue. As noted further in the following discussion around expertise and teacher identities, it is of critical significance to how teachers, society and the state determine and understand teacher identities (Osgood, 2012). Furthermore, Osgood (2012) concluded that through the problematisation of hegemonic discourses of professionalism, other alternative discursive positions were illuminated allowing understandings of nursery worker identity as multiple based on class, gender and race, to emerge.

These findings were mirrored in Canada, where ECEC operates in a similar political context to the UK and Australia, by Harwood & Tukonic's (2016) mixed method study of early childhood teacher self-constructed perceptions of professionalism. From these findings Harwood & Tukonic (2016) recommended critical discussions about historical, cultural, gendered, racial and social practices of ECEC as essential in contextually constructing and deconstructing professional identity and ideals of professionalism. Osgood's (2012) findings further supported earlier research based on a similarly qualitative methodology and data collection. Osgood (2004) identified a general sense of powerlessness amongst the ECEC research participants as a result of masculinist and entrepreneurial approaches to managerialism in ECEC by the state aimed at embedding a dominant identity of professionalism for teachers. Managerialism essentially makes normal the constant regulated measurement and examination of an individual, group or service against prescriptive goals, outcomes and standards within a system of standardisation (Lee, 2015; Moss, 2014; Osgood, 2012). In Australian ECEC managerialism manifests through increasing assessment and evaluation of teachers against regulations and outcomes set by institutions, management and governing bodies, including pre-service teacher training and assessment, annual teacher registration, performance appraisals and quality improvement plans (QIP), in addition to the periodic assessment and rating of services and consequently, individuals (ACECQA, 2017d). However, upholding an ethic of care was noted as a site of passive resistance in ECEC amid the growing managerialism by Osgood (2004), a concept detailed later in this chapter.

Expertise and teacher identities

Expert teacher identities have become an area of great interest and investigation in ECEC research as a result of the dominance of neoliberal policy agenda and competitive individualism globally. Consequently, neoliberal understandings of power, as something that can be acquired and possessed, increasingly underpin critical issues for the ECEC workforce. From within this merging of the education and care sphere with the economic, power circulates to define the identity of the early childhood teacher as professional and what that means is evident throughout the literature.

Professionalism

Early childhood teachers, and many of the stakeholders they work with, have long since considered themselves as dedicated, highly skilled, professional experts (Fenech, Sumsion & Shepherd, 2010; Osgood, 2012). However there has been a well documented shift in the government and policy rhetoric of many nations in recent years regarding the professionalisation of the early childhood sector and its teachers (COAG, 2009; OECD, 2006a, 2012; Penn, 2011; SCSEEC, 2012). In Australia, the introduction of the NQF and NQS signaled a strategic national shift in the reconceptulisation of the expert identities for the early childhood teacher (ACECQA, 2017d; COAG, 2008; SCSEEC, 2012).

> *"ECEC is recognised as a profession which requires specialist skills and knowledge to support child development…The concept of professionalism in the ECEC workforce is incorporated into the NQS through references to capacity, leadership, teaching and learning. Enhancing the public perception of the profession will assist in attracting and retaining a skilled ECEC workforce"* (SCSEEC, 2012, p. 5)

This shift, based on the notion that the ECEC workforce is something in need of professionalisation, largely to cope with the ever increasing challenges of the work, the delivery of quality ECEC and to stabilise the workforce, has been well documented and explored in a large and growing body of literature (Dalli, 2006, 2008; Krieg, 2010; Ortlipp et al., 2011; Penn, 2011; Simpson, 2010; Thomas, 2012; Urban, 2008, 2014; Urban, Vandenbroeck, Van Laere, Lazzari & Peeters, 2012; Warren, 2014). Equally accountable for this policy shift is recent scientific evidence that demonstrates the early years is a far more critical period of neurological development than previously understood, which has had profound implications for the provision of ECEC globally (Oberklaid, 2007; Winter, 2010). This research in particular is highly valued and drawn upon in economic contexts for the potential benefits it presents for future national social, health and welfare spending, constructing teacher identities in terms of government investment and returns on human capital (COAG, 2008, 2009; Macfarlane & Lakhani, 2015;

OECD, 2006a, 2012). From within the sector, mounting literature documents the struggle of early childhood teachers to be considered as professional within social and political spheres as they challenge historical and enduring low social perceptions of ECEC connected to caring and naturalised teacher identities (Ailwood, 2008b; Dalli, 2002; Gibson, 2013; O'Connor et al., 2015). This literature argues that the privileging of dominant, historical maternalistic teacher identities that naturalise and diminish women's work with young children devalue the qualifications, everyday work and unique professionalism of early childhood teachers, privileging school settings as formal education environments (Dalli, 2002, 2008; Gibson, 2013; O'Connor et al., 2015; Sims & Waniganayake, 2015).

A large collection of literature then identifies and examines the role of the OECD and the increasingly dominant neoliberal ECEC policy agenda of the West to how teachers are professionally understood and positioned in terms of quality outcomes for children and the nation (Lee, 2012, 2015; Macfarlane & Lakhani, 2015; Urban, 2015b; Urban et al., 2012). The literature goes on to explore the social, political and professional implications for female early childhood teachers as a result of the contemporary construction of the good teacher (Gibson; 2013; Lee, 2015; Sachs, 2001; Smith et al., 2016; Woodrow, 2007). The identity of the good early childhood teacher shifts from that of maternalism, to that of the individual whose success within dominant quality frameworks is intrinsically tied to the effort and ability they apply to reporting, training, pedagogy and outcomes for children that are measurable and comparable against local and global objectives (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Millie & Jones, 2014). However, to measure and compare quality outcomes and what it means for the individual to be a good teacher against national and international benchmarks, quality frameworks create a standardised, singular and fixed identity for early childhood teachers (Hughes, 2010; Lee, 2015). This identity is based on masculinist ideals of professionalism such as entrepreneurship, accountability, rationality, objectivity, efficiency and compliance through managerialism and sits in stark contrast to the historically produced gendered teacher identity (Lee, 2015; Moss, 2014; Sachs, 2001; Smith et al., 2016; Yulindrasari & Ujianti, 2018). Within this neoliberal understanding of competitive individualism, little or no acknowledgement of disadvantage, marginalisation or diverse ways of experiencing the world based on gender, age, class, ability or race exists for the individual, creating a tension documented in the literature by many in the sector for whom gender is integral to making sense of their identities (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Osgood, 2012). Early childhood teacher identities become less about who they are and why, informed by their experience and ways of making sense of the world, and more about what they can produce and how effectively they produce it (Doherty, 2007; Millie & Jones, 2014). This perspective of the expert professional, however does not allow for the messiness and uncertainty of poststructural

understandings of teacher identities discussed further in Chapter two, where relationships, ethical dilemmas and the history of socially produced discourses and truths divert technocratic and neoliberal solutions and counter ideals of care and social consciousness that attract many to the sector (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Osgood, 2010, 2012). Further disrupting this perspective, Osgood (2006) contends that despite the modern shift in professional rhetoric towards the masculinist professional, an ethic of care and the emotional labour embedded in ECEC discourse is inextricable from the everyday work that informs early childhood teachers' identities (Kah Yan Loo & Agbenyega, 2015; Madrid & Dunn-Kenney, 2010). From New Zealand, Dalli (2006) paradoxically argues in the same vein, that despite the disempowerment of early childhood professional status by lasting historical links to mothering, love and care should be 're-visioned' as pedagogical and political tools to reconceptualise the unique identities of the early childhood professional.

Sisson & Iverson (2014) discuss the tension and shifting power that come with the professionalisation of the sector, uncovered through Foucauldian narrative inquiry into preschool teacher identities in the USA. Noted in particular was the participants resistance to caregiver identities connected to mothering and low social and professional status, in favour of high status titles and perceptions associated with expert qualifications and training, despite identifying aspects of caregiving as essential to their professional work (Sisson & Iverson, 2014; Sisson, 2011). Osgood's (2012) findings reflect that of Sisson (2011) that illuminate the resistance of maternal identities by British early childhood teachers and the naturalisation of their work as it discredits their years of university education and undermines their struggle for professional status. Conversely however, pushes to professionalise the sector were cited in the literature as creating excessive administrative requirements and heightening stress for teachers as the sector becomes increasingly regulated, measured and standardised under global quality imperatives (Harwood & Tukonic, 2016; Sisson, 2011; Sisson & Iverson, 2014; Thorpe et al., 2016; Twigg & Garvis, 2010). These struggles between historical gendered and contemporary ideas of ECEC professionalism to inform early childhood teacher identities were prevalent throughout the literature. Reflecting on this, Urban (2008, 2010) suggests that there are other, multiple ways of understanding the ECEC professional and their purpose in society, challenging the sector to rethink professionalism from a critical space, within a framework of democracy, children's rights and teacher activism.

Constructing teacher identities

While a vast number of influences on teacher identities were noted across the literature, those that were recognised as critical in the construction of a strong sense of teacher identities, and the subsequent effects of those, are most relevant to this research. These include qualifications, remuneration and conditions, leadership, communities of practice, and an ethic of care. Many of which intersect and play out in relation to one another within the ECEC landscape.

Qualifications, remuneration and conditions

The literature recognises that teacher identities are adversely affected by the current state of remuneration and working conditions in ECEC (Thorpe et al., 2016; Moloney, 2010; Sims & Waniganayake, 2015; Thorpe, Boyd, Ailwood, & Brownlee, 2011). Similarly, the retention and recruitment of teachers are noted as enduring critical issues in ECEC, the general consensus being that with improvement in these areas teacher identities, and the sector, would be strengthened (Cumming, 2015; Thorpe et al., 2016; O'Connor et al., 2015; Ortlipp et al., 2011; Sims & Waniganayake, 2015). As the literature documents and explores the changes emerging from the recent professionalisation of ECEC, issues of qualifications, remuneration and working conditions consistently highlight a critical site of struggle for teacher identities (Gibson, 2013; Sisson & Iverson, 2014; Moloney, 2010; Phillips, Austin & Whitebook, 2016, Warren, 2014). The OECD (2001, 2006a, 2012) is clear in its argument that outcomes for children, and subsequently the nation, are significantly increased when ECEC is delivered under the provision of highly qualified, well resourced staff. More specifically, as a result of OECD (2001, 2006a) recommendations, nations like Australia have regulated requirements regarding specialised early childhood teacher education, minimum qualifications and continuous professional learning for the workforce (ACECQA, 2017c; Krieg, 2010). Moloney (2010) discusses such educational reform as fundamental to validating the identities of Irish pre service early childhood teachers as more than gendered workers and raising the traditionally low status of teacher to that of expert professional.

However, the refocus on early childhood teacher professionalism brings with it renewed barriers and tensions for teachers. The neoliberal agenda's promotion of competitive individualism as the way to achieve success for the individual and the nation incites teachers to complete more training, more reporting and apply more time and energy to prove and make measurable their productivity and compliance with regulatory obligations (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Grant, Danby, Thorpe & Theobald, 2016; Thorpe et al., 2016). This approach applies not only to contemporary managerial teaching processes, but also those enduring maternalistic duties associated with an ethic of care and emotional labour that are

foundational to teachers work with young children and so strongly connected to self-sacrifice, with significant implications for teacher wellbeing (Corr, Cook, LaMontagne, Waters & Davies, 2015; Noble & Macfarlane, 2005; Taggart, 2011; Thorpe et al., 2016).

These often conflicting identities that exist concurrently for teachers appear to create a tension for those seeking to counter the stress of excessive administration and the weight of self-sacrifice, physical and emotional labour with self-care (Corr et al., 2015; McGrath & Huntington, 2007; Twigg & Garvis, 2010). Moreover, despite increasing qualifications, training, responsibility and accountability, teacher remuneration, working conditions and opportunities for career progression do not reflect the same status that is taken for granted in other sectors with comparable qualifications, particularly teachers in the primary and secondary sectors (Krejsler, 2005; Krieg, 2010; Moloney, 2010; Sims & Waniganayake, 2015).

Such industrial conditions perpetuate the gendered marginalisation of the predominantly female early childhood teacher workforce and the conceptualisation that teachers are driven to succeed by their innate dispositions for care, dedication and passion for children (Dalli, 2008; Moyles, 2001; Sims & Waniganayake, 2015). Within this space, it seems that the identity of the successful professional early childhood teacher is that measured by emotional reward, not financial (Sims & Waniganayake, 2015; Thorpe et al., 2011). Furthermore, Ailwood (2008b) notes the naturalisation of women's work with young children has been used in developed nations to justify the continued low status and poor remuneration of those working in ECEC, holding teachers accountable to and perpetuating the historic identity of the good teacher, whose value is intrinsically tied to biological gender. The OECD warns that without improved training, pay and working conditions, ECEC will remain "unproductive where quality and child outcomes are concerned, and non-competitive with other sectors for the recruitment and retention of staff"(OECD,2006a, p. 170). While the advice of the OECD (2006a) is diversely reflected in ECEC reform globally, in Australia despite the requirement of specialised early childhood teaching qualifications, great disparities in pay and conditions continue both within the sector and in comparison to primary teaching and other 'professional' workforces (Australian Education Union (AEU), 2016b; Ortlipp et al., 2011).

 For Victorian early childhood teachers, the diverse industrial awards and agreements under which teachers holding identical qualifications may be employed exemplify this disparity. In comparison to the widely implemented, Educational Services (Teacher) Award (ESTA) 2010, the introduction of the Victorian Early Childhood Teacher and Educators Agreement (VECTEA) 2016, made Victoria the only

state where early childhood teacher salaries briefly exceeded that of primary school teachers (AEU, 2016a, 2016c). Contrasting the VECTEA 2016, the ESTA 2010 remunerates teachers as much as $12 less per hour, offers one third as much annual leave and one sixth of the non-contact time with children (AEU, 2016c). Alternatively, some large national ECEC providers employ teachers under enterprise bargaining agreements (EBA), which in principle enables employees and employers to negotiate agreements in good faith based on the collective awards and agreements available in the sector (AEU, 2016c, Fair Work Commission Australia (FWCA), 2015). The effects of such incongruent industrial tools are keenly reflected as barriers to the construction of strong early childhood identities and a strong workforce globally (Bridges, Fuller, Huang & Hamre, 2011; Thorpe et al., 2016; Kilgallon, Maloney & Lock, 2008; O'Connor et al., 2015). This is evident in the persistence of high attrition rates amongst early childhood teachers and a preference towards primary teaching roles in pre-service teachers (Bridges et al., 2011; Machado, 2008; Thorpe et al., 2016; Kilgallon et al., 2008; O'Connor et al., 2015). Even with the introduction of the NQRA, COAG (2008) recognised the likelihood of a degree qualified teacher shortfall by 2015, noting that ensuring sufficient supply was the greatest challenge to workforce reforms. As such, initial teacher training is explored extensively in the research as a site to construct strong teacher identities with the intention of teacher retention and increased quality in ECEC (Barron, 2016; Chang-Kredl & Kingsley, 2014; Egan, 2004, 2009; Garvis & Pendergast, 2015; O'Connor et al., 2015).

Leadership

Leadership has become emphasised as a crucial element of teacher professionalism. However it does create tension and raise questions around the conceptualisation of the historically masculinist leader in ECEC which in many ways is incongruent with the feminised nature of the sector, particularly the priority given to an ethic of care, relationships and democratic communities (Cameron & Miller, 2016; Davis et al., 2015; Kah Yan Loo & Agbenyega, 2015; Rodd, 2015, Sumsion, 2006; Woodrow, 2007). Not to be confused with the operational organisation of management, leadership in ECEC has been packaged as a collegial, inspiring, motivational and supportive activity, enabling policy reform and change intended to professionalise ECEC to be implemented at a grass roots level from within the sector (ACECQA, 2017f; Kah Yan Loo & Agbenyega, 2015; Peeter, De Kimpe & Brandt, 2016; Rodd, 2015). Since the introduction of the NQF to the Australian ECEC space in 2012 mandating the role of Educational Leader in all ECEC services, leadership has become a key strategy in the implementation of ECEC policy reform (ACECQA, 2017f; Barber, Cohrssen & Church, 2014; Rodd, 2015). It is through the Educational Leader, responsible for mentoring, guiding and supporting colleagues in the continuous improvement of ECEC programming

and delivery, and the role modelling of reform in everyday practice, language and thinking, that policy change becomes embedded in ECEC settings (Cameron & Miller, 2016; Peeter et al., 2016). This then enables others in the workforce to access and adopt this same neoliberal rhetoric of quality and accountability regardless of experience, or access to qualifications and training (Barber et al., 2014; Cameron & Miller, 2016; Peeters et al., 2016; Sims & Waniganayake, 2015). Additionally, leadership in ECEC has been identified as a strategy for increasing a preference for careers in childcare settings for pre-service teachers (Thorpe et al., 2012). Such literature demonstrates the ways early childhood teachers are socially and politically positioned, and understand themselves as professionals, have been both subtly and explicitly produced by the operation of ECEC leadership in the everyday (OECD, 2006a, 2012; Penn, 2011; Rodd, 2015).

For the leader, this role adds further complexities to the established roles and identities as teachers, particularly making sense of masculinist ideas of leadership, accountability and competitive individualism within a highly feminised space (Davis et al., 2015; Macfarlane & Lakhani, 2015). In light of these struggles, emerging from the literature is the argument that despite the current neoliberal underpinning of leadership in ECEC there are other, multiple, leadership identities available to teachers that are more aligned with the sector's ethic of care. These include the democratic leader and the activist leader explored in detail by Kah Yan Loo & Agbenyega (2015), Sumsion (2006), Rodd (2015) and Urban (2014, 2016). Similarly, Davis et al., (2015) discuss the possibility of drawing on feminist poststructuralist and postcolonial theories to challenge the masculinist leader identity within the uniquely feminised sector. Creating a space for leadership and leaders in ECEC is also noted for enabling valuable opportunities for the workforce to seek and receive feedback, share and expand ideas, understandings and practice, as will be discussed further regarding communities of practice (Noble, 2007; Tayler, 2012).

Communities of practice

Strongly connected to leadership in ECEC, communities of practice appear as a critical strategy in the construction of early childhood teacher identities (Barber et al., 2014; Ingleby, 2013; Sachs, 2001; Tayler, 2012; Sims & Waniganayake, 2015). The term "community", Noble (2007) contends, has become a widely used catchphrase within education, particularly from a policy perspective, to evoke a sense of belonging and shared or common interests, beliefs, values and identities. However, it can also signify the unity of diversity, something to be negotiated, always shifting and changing (Noble, 2007). And so, it would appear that professional membership to communities of practice, and the effect of that on teacher identities, is not only based on expert knowledge, practice and skills but also on the relationships on which those communities are built (Melasalmi & Husu, 2018; Moloney, 2010; Moyles, 2001).

Whatever the definition, collaborative communities of practice are widely regarded to support positive outcomes for teacher identities and the quality provision of ECEC when preservice, graduate and experienced teachers participate in reflection within their workplace or the wider ECEC community (Barber et al., 2014; Dalli, 2008; Moyles, 2001; Noble, 2007; Tayler, 2012). Such outcomes include; improved achievement, changed teacher perceptions, peer accountability, strong self-concept and sence of agency and confidence in professional conviction (Barber et al., 2014; Harwood & Tukonic, 2016; Melasalmi & Husu, 2018; Noble, 2007; Tayler, 2012). Moyles (2001) and Tayler (2012) report that through communities of practice and the implementation of reflection, teachers have a greater accessibility to divergent educational theories and practice as well as opportunities for continuous learning through the analysis, interpretation and critique of practice and thinking. Consequently, Tayler (2012) discusses communities of practice as an effective and high return strategy to support the system wide reform and re-conceptualisation of Australian ECEC and correct teacher ways of being through the NQF to an under resourced workforce.

Ethic of Care

Prominently featured in the literature, an 'ethic of care' is recognised as a core component of teacher identities, particularly in the often contradictory ECEC context of professionalising the sector (Fenech et al., 2010; Murray, 2013; Osgood, 2004, 2006, 2010, 2012; Taggart, 2011, Woodrow, 2001). As discussed by Osgood (2004, 2012), an ethic of care and the emotional labour of caring, born from effort rather than instinct, through which it is performed was identified as critical to the foundational values and beliefs of teachers in ECEC and significant to constructing and maintaining teacher identities (Brock, 2012; Dalli, 2008; Sisson & Iverson, 2014; Madrid & Dunn-Kenney, 2010; Taggart, 2011). Cannella describes an ethic of care as "a form of regard in which each person is respected and viewed as integral to the human connection" (Cannella, 1997, p. 163), moving beyond caring as a feeling, to care as an ethical expression. Conceptualising care in this way enables early childhood teachers to deepen and enhance their understandings and ability to attend to the needs of the individuals they work with and is key in the construction of social justice (Goldstein, 1998; Harwood & Tukonic, 2016). However, this approach to care and how it informs the good teacher significantly diverges from the competitive individualism of objectivity, rationality, efficiency and compliance from which the contemporary good teacher identity is built (Doherty, 2007; Millie & Jones, 2014). The writing of Noddings (1984) and Sevenhuijsen (1998) on an ethic of care underpins the work of Brock (2012), Dalli (2008,) Madrid & Dunn-Kenney (2010), Osgood (2010) and Sisson (2011) who draw on this gendered conceptualisation in resistance to the professionalisation of ECEC from an individualistic perspective.

Fenech et al. (2010) highlights this tension in push back from within the sector, reflecting on resistance to the 'dominant professional habitus', which they describes as being "the values, dispositions, discourses, rules and ways of behaving that constitute and reflect the cultural histories of ECEC" (Fenech et al., 2010, p. 89). Exemplifying this, the team at prominent Australian university based Mia Mia long day care, resist the 'dominant professional habitus' by alternatively enacting the masculinist characteristics of professionalism grounded in an ethic of care, to deliver education and care which when assessed against the NQS is of an exemplary standard (Fenech et al., 2010). In fact, extensive findings across the literature identify care, love and compassion as essential, even highly advantageous, professional traits in early childhood teachers, despite resistance against caring identities being equally evident (Brock, 2012; Dalli, 2008; Gibson, 2013; Sisson & Iverson, 2014; Osgood, 2012; Taggart 2011). It is then unsurprising that the literature finds strong, positive relationships with key stakeholders, including families, management, colleagues and children greatly influence teacher identities, their commitment to the sector and longevity in the workforce (Dalli, 2002, 2008; Egan, 2004; Harwood &

Tukonic, 2016; Moloney & Pope, 2015). The findings of Kilgallon et al., (2008) suggest that relationships, particularly those with colleagues and professional peers, play a large part in job satisfaction, effective teaching practices, professional motivation and commitment.

However, Goldstein (1998), Moyles (2001) and Taggart (2011) caution that in aligning itself with the traditional gendered concept of care that has contributed to the marginalisation of ECEC and its teachers for so long, such marginalisation, defined by low pay, status and political influence, will continue. But greater is the body of work that advocates for an ethic of care as the way to shift the tensions of incongruent neoliberal perspectives on early childhood professionalism (Osgood, 2004, 2010, 2012). Sisson & Iverson (2014) theorise that through an ethic of care, teachers are able to embody both the early childhood teacher as professional and caregiver through a pedagogy of care, in resistance to what Woodrow (2007) describes as the limitation of teacher identities by increasing teacher regulation. Like the writing of Davis et al., (2015), Sumsion (2006) and Urban (2014, 2016) around leadership, Taggart (2011) contends ECEC should be unapologetic in its ownership of care and promote critical pedagogy as a means for teachers to develop an ethically active interpretation of professionalism by drawing on an ethic of care to merge passion, social vision and change.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the literature presented in this chapter, it is obvious that there is a great wealth dedicated to examining, investigating and uncovering teacher identities, particularly in light of global policy reforms driven by the OECD. Authors such as Moyles (2001) and Taggart (2011) in the UK context, Moloney (2010) in Ireland, and closer to home, Dalli (2006, 2008) in New Zealand have worked extensively exploring issues and possibilities pertaining to teacher professionalism, identities and an ethic of care in ECEC. Research in the Australian ECEC context by Davis et al., (2015), Rodd (2015) and Woodrow (2001, 2007) on the necessity of, and possibilities for leadership in ECEC and Tayler's (2012) exploration of policy reforms and communities of practice as a tool for the implementation of these, help me make meaning of the current state of local ECEC. Similarly, illustrating how a Foucauldian perspective can be applied to the Australian context, Gibson (2015) explores preservice teacher identity construction, Fenech et al., (2012) critically analyses the NQF, Fenech (2011) examines the developing conceptualisation of 'quality' and Fenech et al., (2010) re-imagines ECEC professionalism. Likewise, Urban's (2008, 2015a, 2015b) work in the European Union has become a critical element in the literature illuminating the relationships and tensions in early childhood professionalism, quality and equitable ECEC provision in light of global policy reform. In the UK, Osgood (2004, 2006, 2012) has

contributed significantly to uncovering early childhood worker identities through in-depth interviews and Foucauldian analysis. Similarly, Sisson (2011) uncovered the construction of US preschool teacher identities, illuminating the tension found between the caregiver and the professional identities through narrative inquiry, also based on in-depth interviews from a feminist poststructuralist perspective.

While this and much more literature has been foundational to how I have come to make meaning of teacher identities, I am curious to know more about the influences and experiences that inform the identities of Australian early childhood teachers and how they make sense of their place within this complex, changing, relational and political sector through Foucauldian theory. My research intends to contribute to this literature by drawing on Foucauldian understandings of the individual to uncover the multiplicities of Australian early childhood teacher identities, particularly those informed by the gendered experiences of women and the feminised ECEC workforce. As such, the work of Cannella (1997), Gore (1993), MacNaughton (2005), Osgood (2012) and Weedon (1997) will guide the ways I make sense of the complexities of these historical, contemporary and divergent identities. In Chapter two, I detail the Foucauldian concept of power, knowledge and truth which I apply to the data analysis presented in Chapter four. By applying Foucauldian conceptualisations I am enabled to illuminate the ways relational power, discursive and disciplinary practices shape correct, and good teacher identities constructed on often divergent historical and contemporary ideals to make meaning of everyday teacher experiences in an Australian ECEC landscape underpinned by neoliberal education policy.

Chapter Three Conceptual Framework

Introduction

This chapter explores the poststructuralist paradigm from which this research is positioned. Specifically, the chapter examines Foucault's understandings of the individual and identities, his concept of power, knowledge and truth, the circulation of power through regimes of truth, and how these are upheld by dominant discourses and disciplinary practices. I do this to consider how these concepts can support my analysis of the data.

Although there are many influential and well regarded thinkers within the poststructuralist paradigm, I explicitly draw on the work of Michel Foucault, who sought to explore how Western society has come to be as a result of historical conditions (Gore, 1993; MacNaughton, 2005). I find his concepts of power, knowledge and truth particularly salient when considering how teacher identities are constructed by diverse historical and contemporary, often conflicting discourses, as made evident by the literature review. As such, this chapter will explore some of the key concepts related to Foucault's ideas around power and how these informed the data analysis.

Poststructuralist Paradigm

Foucault is recognised as a key scholar of the poststructuralist paradigm, known for revolutionising how many people understand knowledge through the deconstruction of modern, taken for granted concepts of language, knowledge, truth, power and the individual that intend to predict or understand the world by means of knowing fixed and conclusive formulas of what is true (MacNaughton, 2003; Weedon, 1997). Where structuralist paradigms make meaning of the individual by the systems of relationships that inform the world, seeking to know the world on the assumption that the truth is discoverable, Foucault sought to illuminate alternative, multiple truths and ways of being based on the individual's experience of the world (MacNaughton, 2003; Weedon, 1997). Foucault (1978) argued that material and social circumstances such as race, class, gender, age and ability influence how an individual experiences the world. Furthermore, Foucault understood the individual as a social product and producer of languages and consequently unstable, just as languages are unstable systems where meanings can never be fixed or singular as there are often multiple, diverse, mutually defining meanings (Weedon, 1997). As a result, the Foucauldian individual is always shifting and changing, constructing multiple identities, influenced by themselves and others, history, culture, politics, and society (Niesche & Gowlett, 2015; Weedon, 1997). These identities are positioned in every day, taken for granted social practices. They are

often mutually contradictory, unfixed by time and enable the individual to understand their experiences of the world in inconsistent or divergent ways (Hughes, 2010; Niesche & Gowlett, 2015).

To me, modern ways of making meaning of the world conflict with my observations of myself and my peers making sense of our teacher identity across multiple diverse contexts and experiences. However, Foucauldian ways of understanding identities speak to me as a researcher trying to make sense of teacher identities in a policy context that promotes a singular identity. Through Foucauldian conceptulisations I can consider teacher identities as multiple, shifting and fluid, inconsistent and conditional, enabling the underlying complexities to be uncovered from a place that understands doing so can only ever be provisional, not final, fixed or encapsulating (Hughes, 2010). More specifically, Foucault's concepts of power, knowledge and truth, which I will discuss in detail next, enable me to uncover the dominant discourses, and disciplinary practices that uphold these discourses to illuminate the complex and ubiquitous power relations that shape the complexities and multiplicities of Australian early childhood teacher identities.

Foucauldian understandings of discourse

In Foucault's work, discourse, which is founded in dominant social and institutional locations, determines which identities and power relations are known and assessed as correct (MacNaughton, 2005; Weedon, 1997). Operating in the everyday, discourses circulate as collections of thinking, writing and actions constructed by language and social practices based on common, or taken for granted, shared bodies of knowledge (MacNaughton, 2005; St.Pierre, 2000). Discourse then form the basis for fields of knowledge that inform institutional practices, texts, behaviour, everyday talk and decision making at any given time (MacNaughton, 2005; Weedon, 1997). Consequently, discursive practices are those often subtle and unquestioned every day behaviours and actions that bring to life socially and institutionally constructed rules or discourses (St.Pierre, 2000). Significant to Foucault's work is the understanding of discourses as multiple and concurrent, contradictory and contingent. As Foucault explains, discourse:

> "transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite to it, another discourse that runs counter to it. Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy;

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they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy" (Foucault, 1978, p. 100).

Through Foucault's (1978) concept of discourse, my research can shed light on the dominant historical, social, economic and political discourses that Australian early childhood teachers operate within daily, uncovering the entangled power relations, upheld by disciplinary practices of power, that shape multiple teacher identities.

Foucauldian understandings of Power

There are many different definitions of power across theoretical perspectives, so it is important to acknowledge that Foucault talked about power across his work in a range of ways (Fendler, 2010; Gore, 1993; Gutting, 2005; Hoffman, 2013). Foucault (1977) wrote about power as shifting and multiple, not highly visible or something used to repress individuals or groups, but something exercised through invisibility, embedded within social and institutional relations, practices and spaces. Power, in this sense, exists everywhere, dispersed through society like capillaries (Gore, 1995). Furthermore, Foucault (1977) argues that power is directly relational to resistance, both existing as a result of the other, and on the condition that those who experience the influence of power are free to resist it, because without freedom to resist power there is only control. MacNaughton (2005) extends on this, describing power from a Foucauldian perspective as a relationship of struggle to dominate the meaning individuals attribute to their lives, a struggle to produce truth and construct discourses that define what is normal and how we should produce and regulate ourselves. Truths do not exist intrinsically but are produced by continuous and ever-present struggles between dominant cultures, organised bodies of knowledge and institutions, like the military and universities, to decide which meanings become privileged and correct in underpinning the thoughts, feelings and actions of individuals (Cohen, 2008; MacNaughton, 2005).

Truth then, is inherently tied to power and knowledge as truth is actualised, or produced, by the circulation of power within organised and officially sanctioned bodies of knowledge to determine how we attribute meanings to our lives (Foucault, 1977). This establishes the Foucauldian triplet of power, knowledge and truth (Foucault, 1977). Foucault (1980) notes that through power we are subjected to the production of truth, and that it is only through the production of truth that power can be exercised. Similarly, truth becomes more powerful when produced or endorsed by institutions as scientific reason, and that it is through these relationships that knowledge can expand and regulate correct and desirable ways for individuals to be (Gore, 1993, 1995; MacNaughton, 2005). It is then within these contexts that

sets of truths produce privileged and acceptable knowledge and behaviour through the classification, definition, categorisation and organisation of everyday activities, common knowledge and individuals (Cohen, 2008; Hoffman, 2014; MacNaughton, 2005). These sets of truths within any given field are described by Foucault (1980) as 'regimes of truth', the types of discourse any society accepts as true and the norm, and as a result produce opposing falsehoods or 'others' from which resistance to dominant truths can emerge.

Regimes of truth

Regimes of truth expand on the Foucauldian concept of power, knowledge and truth by considering how all modern societies, and the institutions within them such as ECEC, exist because of the production and reproduction of regimes of truth. These then guide individuals on how to think, act and feel about themselves and others, as well as which knowledge and practices are socially and culturally good and acceptable (MacNaughton, 2005). Foucault (1980) wrote:

> *"Each society has its regimes of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true."* (Foucault, 1980, p. 131).

Once officially sanctioned, primarily due to modern concepts of knowing based on scientific reasonability, truth produces an ethical substance or system of morality (Gore, 1993; MacNaughton, 2005). This is made up of the ways individuals apply various and intersecting techniques of power to govern themselves in accordance with the regime of truth (Foucault, 1977). Of these techniques, which will be further detailed later in this chapter, discipline, classification, totalisation, (self) surveillance, hierarchical observation, normalised judgment and examination were recognised as most relevant to this research and the ECEC policy landscape it sits within (Gore, 1995; MacNaughton, 2005). Knowledge, or truth, that is officially sanctioned can produce such authoritative unity it can be difficult to consider thinking, behaving or feeling differently and as such these truths come to regulate and govern everything we do (Gore, 1993). Regimes of truth enable the individual to self-regulate and self-govern, directing behaviour and the privileging of knowledge bringing power into existence, consequently making the individual an instrument of discipline themselves (Gore, 1993, 1995; MacNaughton, 2005). The scientific, and therefore officially sanctioned, knowledge of regimes of truth is legitimised by those

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with professional, intellectual or scientific status and understood as indisputable and unquestionable, obscuring knowledge of multiple truths and the possibilities of alternative meaning (Gore, 1993; MacNaughton, 2005). However, Foucault (1977) asserts that truth does not exist, rather there are multiple truths at any one time that reflect the "…politics of knowledge of the time and place…" (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 5). To better understand how power, knowledge and truth operate and regimes of truth are produced, next I look to how techniques of power work as a means of correct training for skilled individuals that not only do what is wanted of them, but they do it in precise and exhaustive ways.

In Foucault's (1977) exploration of how we attribute meaning to our lives and the historical circumstances that inform them, he identifies discipline as a technique of power which the individual implements over one's self through daily practices, ensuring we conform to correct and desirable ways of being a part of society. Foucault (1977) contends that it is through disciplinary power, and the practices that bring it to life, that a relationship between the utility and docility of an individual is formed, whereby an individual is made more obedient as they become more useful and vice versa, otherwise known as 'docile bodies'. Which is an interesting concept to consider when thinking about the heavily regulated and standardised ECEC workforce. These practices inform how people operate within multiple social, political and economic discourses producing the regimes of truth that dictate correct and desirable ways of being (Foucault, 1977). By actioning control of the body Foucault (1977) describes the efficacy of discipline in its production not only of the individual but *individuality,* shifting the spotlight of visibility from those individuals and groups in positions of power to the everyday individual which in turn amplifies the implementation of disciplinary practices on the self in conformity with regimes of truth.

Foucault (1977) writes about the classification of individuals and groups as key in the circulation of disciplinary power, a practice easily identified in ECEC. This separation of individuals works to infer or reinforce rank to individuals in addition to coding spaces to a specific function, increasing the utility of the space itself and the production of its commodity, be it the knowledge and skills of a school, health in a hospital or the destructive force of the military (Foucault, 1977). Foucault (1977) argued that classifying individuals, and doing so in visible ways, based on the examination of their behaviour, merit, skills or ability to produce the desired commodity, works to identify gaps and stratify skills and aptitudes, but also as a form of punishment and reward. Those ranked highly enjoy the infamy and opportunities that come with it, those who aren't are subject to a range of punishment, from micro punishments of shame and humiliation, to more lasting and profound approaches (Foucault, 1977).

However, there is always the possibility of what lies just ahead to drive those who fall into the middle, or just below the higher ranks, encouraging the modification of their behaviour to be rewarded as good and correct (Foucault, 1977). The public quality rating of ECEC services, and subsequently Australian early childhood teachers, by regulatory bodies through the Assessment and Rating process is illustrative of how classification, as a technique of power, operates in the everyday to produce quality regimes of truth (ACECQA, 2017a).

Similarly, Foucault (1977) goes on to discuss the control exercised over bodily activities within these spaces through the prevention of idleness by the exhaustive use of time via timetabling, routines and procedures. For Australian early childhood teachers this can be recognised in perpetual cleaning and care routines and the continuous year-round production of pedagogical documentation (Anderson & Grinberg, 1998). Complementing classification, totalisation groups individuals together by specific characteristics and attributes to create a whole that enables an optimal impact or outcome (Foucault, 1977). Described by MacNaughton (2005) as a will to conform produced by regimes of truths, totalisation enables clearly classified, docile and utilisable individuals to be constructed into small and larger collectives of individuals. For early childhood teachers lasting gendered identities of teachers as mother produce the good early childhood teacher identity, where all teachers instinctively care for and build emotional connections with all young children (Cannella, 1997; Osgood 2010; Whitehead, 2008).

Foucault (1977) then goes on to analyse the continued circulation of power, knowledge and truth by three techniques; hierarchical observation; normalising judgment; and the examination. Hierarchical observation works on the premise that control can be exercised over people by architecturally enabled surveillance (Foucault, 1977). The utilisation of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon in prisons is an ideal example of this, exemplifying the maximisation of control through minimum staff, the continuous possibility of observation and the greatest barrier to prisoner's awareness of active observation (Foucault, 1977). Once subject to surveillance, in a position of high visibility by an obscured, unpredictable and often unidentifiable gaze, the individual is forced to internalise the disciplinary gaze, as those subjected to the gaze can only assume it is constant and permanent (Gutting, 2005; Mills, 2003). Making the threat of surveillance just as integral as the action of surveillance to the production of truth, creating power relations where the individual plays dual roles of the oppressor and the oppressed (Hoffman, 2013, 2014; MacNaughton, 2005; Mills, 2003). Not unlike the Panopticon, the ECEC environment is often designed specifically with observation in mind, of the children and educators alike, resulting in the extensive use of windows, connecting passages, low structures and furnishings in open

spaces. Even those in positions of power are subject to (self) surveillance (Mills, 2003; Niesche & Gowlett, 2015). In an ECEC context, the director does not have unquestionable power over the service, but instead is subject to the regulatory and professional gaze of multiple stakeholders including regulatory bodies, staff, families and children. The ever-present threat of a random compliance check (the unannounced arrival of a regulatory body representative to examine and assess an ECEC service's regulatory compliance at any given time) influences teachers and educators to enact particular behaviours, tasks and routines, just in case.

Like (self) surveillance, normalising judgment is another salient concept when considering how regimes of truth are reproduced in ECEC settings. This is because it defines not only what knowledge, behaviour and practices an individual can possess or perform to be considered good and right, but also the ranking, standardisation and benchmarking of that against a larger group or population (Foucault, 1977). However, Foucault (1977) writes that the true power of normalising judgment lies in its ability to impose homogeneity, measuring and highlighting the variances of individuality in order to bring to light the norm necessary for membership to a social or institutional body. Such as the homogenisation of the ECEC workforce imposed through the normalising judgment of developmental regimes of truths of the child and mothering (Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006).

Finally, Foucault (1977) identifies examination as the lynchpin in the marriage of hierarchical observation and normalising judgment, that:

> *"…assures the great disciplinary functions of distribution and classification, maximum extraction of forces and time, continuous genetic accumulation, optimum combination of aptitudes and, thereby, the fabrication of cellular, organic, genetic and combinatory individuality…"* (Foucault, 1977, p. 192).

Examination enables a normalising gaze to measure, differentiate and judge individuals, then seeks to control their behaviour based on the norms set by the intended outcomes and results, ensuring the continued circulation of power, knowledge and truth (Foucault, 1977). The proliferation of examination in ECEC can be identified in pre-service and ongoing teacher training, continuous development of learning documentation and QIPs, and the Assessment and Rating process, to name a few.

Conclusion

Foucault's concepts of power, knowledge and truth enables me to make meaning of the data and the ways in which power, like capillaries, circulates throughout society via dominant discourses upheld by techniques of power like discipline, normalisation, (self)surveillance, totalisation, classification and examination. Likewise, exploring Foucauldian understandings of the individual, how we make sense of the world and identities as multiple, complex, fluid, or sometimes at odds, resonates with my experiences of ECEC and enables me to explore the experiences of the teachers with greater awareness and authenticity. The qualitative methodology I have drawn on to conduct this research, in addition to details regarding participant recruitment, research rigor, validity and ethical obligations will be examined in Chapter three.

Chapter Four Methodology

When embarking on research the methodological approach adopted determines the ways the researcher makes meaning of their world. This chapter outlines how a qualitative research methodology, complementing my theoretical position, has shaped the construction of this research project and the ways I collected the data.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research seeks to uncover how people make sense of the world, illuminating how meaning is constructed through their personal experiences of social contexts and phenomena which can be explored through many research methods (Merriam, 2009; O'Toole & Beckett, 2014; Stake, 2010). A qualitative approach to research allows for insight into broad and diverse contextual knowledge, uncovering historical, social, cultural and political understandings, presenting findings not as a resolution, but as an interpretation of meaning from multiple perspectives (Bell, 2010; O'Toole & Beckett, 2014; Stake, 2010). Engaging with my research from a qualitative approach is well suited to my poststructural positioning, enabling me to uncover, make meaning of and illuminate the phenomena, contexts and experiences that shape and inform the multiplicities and complexities of early childhood teacher identities (Merriam, 2009; O'Toole & Beckett, 2014; Stake, 2010).

In-depth interviews

For the purpose of this research, in-depth, semi structured one on one interviews were developed around eight contextual preliminary questions and twenty four open ended questions (Appendix B). These questions were crafted specifically to collect a rich representation of the intricacies and contexts that influence teacher identities, whilst remaining flexible to follow and capture each teacher's unique experiences (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010). As a data collection tool, in-depth, semi structured interviews enabled me to draw out the complexities of a small target population through responsive dialogue, with space to clarify specific points, elaborate and explore understandings in greater depth while remaining guided by the questions (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Ethical framework

I obtained ethics approval from the University of Melbourne before beginning the research process (Bell, 2010). In recognising the high professional demands already placed on early childhood teachers, participants were asked to volunteer thirty minutes to conduct an in-depth interview at a time and location convenient to them so as not to add to their professional burden. However, the interviews generally ran for approximately one hour. As with any research, the anonymity and privacy of the teachers is a primary concern, especially when working with the potential limitations of anonymity of such a small sample from a specific professional community (Coady, 2010). To best maintain confidentiality and anonymity, teachers were asked to nominate a pseudonym or consented to the allocation of one to them. General information around the teacher's work contexts was also collected but did not include employer or service names and locations (Coady, 2010).

In addition to providing consent forms (Appendix C), the teachers were made aware verbally prior to conducting each interview and as outlined in the Plain Language Statement provided (Appendix D) that at any time they were able to withdraw themselves and their data from the research (Coady, 2010; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Similarly, once transcribed, member checking was implemented by emailing each teacher their own interview transcription to review and approve how they and their meaning and intentions were presented, enhancing the validity of the data collected (Merriam, 2009; O'Toole & Beckett, 2014; Stake, 2010). Member checking allowed each teacher the opportunity to edit or delete from the transcript, clarifying their contribution and how that has been represented, enabling them greater power to shape how their story is portrayed, adding to the validity of the data collected (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010). Furthermore, the teachers were given the opportunity to meet again for an additional thirty minutes to discuss the analysis of the data if they chose to further clarify their contribution or add to it after reflection. This was optional so as not to impede the teacher's already limited time and none of them chose to take up this opportunity (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010).

Data Collection

Sampling and sample size

As it is the intention of my research to illuminate the complexities of Australian early childhood teacher identities and the lived experiences of performing those identities, a small sample of people endemic to the professional community enabled me to uncover those perspectives most meaningfully (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002a). Purposeful sampling was the most effective method to achieve this as it allowed me to intentionally select information-rich participants from whom I could glean great insight into the issues I sought to illuminate through my research question (Patton, 2002b). Purposeful sampling is commonly employed in qualitative research as it maximises validity, allows for in-depth insights into the complexities of human experience and minimises the statistical generalisations of the probability based random sampling preferred by quantitative research (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002b; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). For the purpose of this research project I employed purposeful sampling to recruit a small sample of Australian early childhood teachers who I was confident would meet the participant eligibility criteria. For this reason, the two eligibility criteria were crafted to specifically identify participants whose teacher experiences would relate to and shed light on my research question. As a result, purposeful sampling of the participants allowed me to collect a rich and comprehensive collection of data representing the research area and allowed a greater space for each teacher's story to be heard (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002a; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

Recruitment

Participants were recruited by a project specific recruitment advertisement (Appendix E). This document outlined the research and intention, the participant selection criteria as well as what would be required of those interested in participating, a brief description of myself and my contact details. The advertisement was circulated through professional networks found on the social media site Facebook (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002a).

Eligibility and participant criteria

Eligibility criteria were developed to ensure the sample included participants currently working in the ECEC field, who had qualified both before and after 2012 to provide a balance of perspectives regarding teacher experiences to examine the ways the NQF has shaped teacher identities, if at all. The following criteria were constructed in response to the literature review which suggested the significance of recent policy and regulation reforms on teacher identities and the perceptions of those by stakeholders over time;

- Minimum of a Bachelor qualified teacher

- Currently working in an ACEQCA approved early childhood service.

Given the cultural, historical, linguistic, social, geographic and political diversity of early childhood teachers, a diverse sample was anticipated and encouraged, but there were no specific criteria regarding these areas.

Participants

In a reflection of the gendered nature of ECEC, each of the seven teachers who volunteered identified as female. Whilst each teacher held a minimum of a three year early childhood specialist teaching undergraduate degree, some had completed undergraduate degrees qualifying them to teach in both early childhood and primary school settings. Similarly, others had completed or were currently enrolled in post graduate study. The teachers' experience in the ECEC workforce varies from one and a half years to twenty two years, most are employed as teachers in a range of government funded kindergarten models and are remunerated under the Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Assistants Agreement (VECTAA) 2009, now the VECTEA 2016, or similar. This is with the exception of Amy who is employed as a teacher in a long day care setting with no funded kindergarten program and is remunerated under the ESTA 2010 as part of an EBA. Similarly divergent, Purple Chocolate has recently taken on a role as key worker in early intervention where she is responsible for providing specialist support and service provision to children with a disability or developmental delay, and to their families. More specific details relating to the participants can be found in Table 1. Teacher Details.

Table 1. Teacher Details

Pseudonym	Qualification	Years qualified	Years worked ECEC	Current role	Current ECEC context	Age	Gender	Industrial award or agreement
Lucy	Bachelor of Early Years Studies.	2.5	9	Kindergarten teacher	Government funded kindergarten program in local government run integrated children services hub	28	Female	EEEA 2016
Elsie	Bachelor of Early Childhood. Honours.	5	15	Kindergarten teacher	Government funded integrated long day care and kindergarten	35	Female	VECTAA 2009
Purple Chocolate	Bachelor of Education, Early Childhood.	11	22	Recently moved to role as a key worker in Early Intervention	Early Intervention. Previously taught in a Government funded stand-alone kindergarten	45	Female	Previously employed under VECTAA 2009
Rebecca	Bachelor of Early Childhood studies. Honours. Master of Education (Research) Honours.	5	14.5	Kindergarten teacher (maternity leave)	Government funded stand-alone kindergarten	32	Female	VECTAA 2009
Ana	Bachelor of Education, Early Years.	1.5	1.5	Kindergarten teacher	Government funded stand-alone kindergarten	23	Female	VECTAA 2009
Colleen	Bachelor of Early Childhood Education.	7	10	Kindergarten teacher	Government funded integrated long day care and kindergarten	32	Female	VECTAA 2009
Amy	Bachelor of Education, Early Years.	1.5	1.5	Pre-kindergarten teacher	Long day care setting	23	Female	ESTA 2010, under EBA

Research validity

Rigour and validity

Validity is a critical concept when conducting research and is intrinsically tied to the rigor with which the research is designed and implemented (Hughes, 2010). Commonly, triangulation is utilised by qualitative researchers to corroborate data, and the conclusions drawn from it with at least two other perspectives to verify the validity of the truth presented by the research (O'Toole & Beckett, 2014; Hughes, 2010). However, it is argued by poststructuralist researchers that criteria such as triangulation implies a fixed point of truth that can be checked against other fixed points, denying the disparate nature of multiple perspectives and truths of the human experience which qualitative research seeks to illuminate (Merriam, 2009; O'Toole & Beckett, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Complementing this understanding, the small sample size used in this research is well suited to capturing the complexities of teacher identities. More specifically, in alignment with the poststructuralist paradigm this project sits within, the research methodology has been constructed to make meaning of relational power dynamics based on social, cultural, historical and political truths, the discourses that uphold these, and the multiple teacher identities they shape (Hughes, 2010). Additionally, unlike traditional validity methods like triangulation, validity in poststructuralist research is underpinned by the authenticity of the data (Hughes, 2010). Lather (2006), writes of honouring data using poststructuralist theory to enable its voice and express the participant's experiences of the world, an approach where the researcher is actively aware of the implications of imposing their own meaning or interpretation to the data. Additionally, O'Toole and Beckett (2014) discuss plausibility, validity, resonance and transferability as alternative measures of research reliability. As previously mentioned, it is intended that member checks enhance the validity of the data collected for this research, and its analysis, through the verification of authenticity based on the teacher's approval (Merriam, 2009; O'Toole & Beckett, 2014; Stake, 2010). The precision and consistency with which the data was collected, documented, analysed, coded and stored has built an audit trail around the detailed and organised records of the research (Patton, 2002b). Additionally, the literature review, which underpins the research, at times resonates with the multiple perspectives captured in the data (O'Toole & Beckett, 2014).

Data analysis

The analysis of data began during the interview process with the making of notes to draw out emerging themes, ideas and events to question further or consider at a later stage (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Next, as the interviews were transcribed, more notes and memos were made to document biases, ideas, themes and concepts that began to appear (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). These notes then assisted in summarising each interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). As the concepts and themes became more refined through ongoing engagement with the data, codes were allocated to those themes and concepts as they emerged from the data as a whole (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Stake, 2010). These codes allowed for the themes and concepts to be to systematically classified and stored, making them more readily available for examination without having to dip back into each individual data set to search for and pull out information (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Siraj-Blatchford, 2010; Stake, 2010).

Limitations

While qualitative research is commonly utilised by the social sciences, there are criticisms that the lack of quantifiable and consistent data produced by qualitative research raises questions regarding its reliability (Shopes, 2011; Silverman, 2006). Similarly, the handling, transcription and interpretation of qualitative data raises questions around the reliability of the data and the loss of the crucial nuances humans use consciously and unconsciously to communicate (Chase, 2011; Silverman, 2006). Unconscious bias in the ways the interviews were conducted, recorded and interpreted, in addition to my own bias as an interviewer must be acknowledged for the potential to influence the responses of the teachers and indeed those innate power relations that played out between myself and the teachers (Coady, 2010; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

Putting theory into practice

Given the poststructuralist paradigm and the Foucauldian ideas of power, knowledge and truth that underpin this research project, the interpretation of the data, and the conclusions drawn from it, it was my intention to interpret the story of the teacher as little as possible, so as not to privilege my voice as the researcher over that of the teacher (Chase, 2011; Hughes, 2010; O'Toole & Beckett, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Instead, my intention is that the data analysis I present in Chapter four not privilege one truth but illuminate multiple truths of early childhood teachers. By approaching data analysis in this way, I am able to explore multiple truths of how teacher identities are discussed, recognised and performed by the teachers in the everyday and how their experiences shift and change within the dominant neoliberal ECEC landscape (MacNaughton, 2005).

Chapter Five Data Analysis

Introduction

In this chapter, I draw on Foucauldian understandings of power, knowledge and truth to illuminate how relational power shapes the multiplicitous and complex teacher identities emerging from the data (Foucault, 1977). Similarly, by uncovering the operation of dominant discourses and disciplinary practices in the data I bring to light the entanglement and instability of teacher identities. The work of Cannella (1997), Gore (1993), MacNaughton (2005), Osgood (2012) and Weedon (1997) guide my engagement with, and application of, Foucauldian conceptualisations to this data analysis and inform how I make sense of the dominant discourses that operate within ECEC and their influence on teacher identities. Moreover, these thinkers help me make meaning of Foucauldian notions of power as I find myself drawn back to contemporary understandings of how power operates. Through these multiple perspectives, my own slips and struggles are illuminated and my search for knowledge continues. Furthermore, Fenech et al. (2012), Lee (2012, 2015), Moss (2014), Press and Hayes (2000), Smith, Tesar & Myers (2016), Sumsion et al. (2009), Urban (2015a, 2015b) and Woodrow (2010), create an image of Australia's historical and contemporary ECEC policy contexts, and the increasing influence of the neoliberal agenda on local and global ECEC spaces. Likewise, the literature recognised the dominant discourses of mothering and professionalism in addition to qualifications, remuneration and conditions, leadership, an ethic of care and communities of practice as key influences on teacher identities. Through this framework I am further enabled to contextualise the experiences of the teachers and how their identities are shaped by the current ECEC landscape.

As a requirement of this thesis, the data has been stripped back, made linear and classified under headings as requisite within institutional power structures. However, it is important that in the reading of this Foucauldian analysis the data is understood not in the linear way it is presented but as entangled, contradictory and changeable, honouring the complexities of each teacher's experience and how they and others continue to construct their teacher identities.

Dominant discourses of teacher identities

Reflecting the dominant discourses of teacher identities recognised by the literature in Chapter two, the data has been examined through the themes of gendered teacher identities and expert teacher identities as widely recognised and documented by the literature. These themes also emerged from the initial stages of data analysis that began during data collection and continued to take shape throughout the ongoing process.

Producing the truths of gendered teacher identities are the discourses of mothering and women's work, strongly tied to essential gendered truths of Western patriarchal culture (Ailwood, 2008b; Cannella, 1997; Sisson & Iverson, 2014; Jónsdóttir & Coleman, 2014; Moloney, 2010; Osgood, 2012; Sisson, 2011; Weedon, 1997). The expert teacher identities are produced by the discourses of professionalism and managerialism, heavily informed by neoliberal education policy and globalisation (Lee, 2015; Moss, 2014). In order to convey the ways dominant discourses have informed teacher identities in a linear way, while acknowledging the tension that exists in doing so when working within a poststructuralist paradigm, this chapter will be presented in two parts; Gendered Teacher Identities and Expert Teacher Identities. Within these, light is shed on the teacher's strategic and political struggle for power, often operating within multiple discourses, at times privileging contemporary policy rhetoric to enable their own agenda, while at others upholding the gendered identities so often used to silence them. However, given the contingent nature of discourses and the ways in which the teachers uphold and resist multiple, often conflicting discourses, and how knowledge and power circulate strategically and politically, the ideas, themes and concepts of each part are present and woven throughout and across each. Similarly, given the Australian government's policy agenda, neoliberal discourses are woven throughout all of the data, prompting me to draw on neoliberal conceptualisations across this analysis to make sense of the gendered and expert teacher identities of the teachers (Lee, 2015; Savage & O'Connor, 2014; Smith et al., 2016). However, in this analysis I examine the neoliberal agenda not as an economic and political agenda implemented on teachers, but how teachers take up the ECEC policy agenda to enable their own professional agendas in powerful ways (Brown et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2016).

Part One - Gendered Teacher Identities

Deeply entrenched in ECEC globally, the discourses of mothering and women's work help bring to light historically produced gendered regimes of truth to make meaning of how and why ECEC and its overwhelmingly female workforce are understood, valued, privileged and silenced by diverse groups (Ailwood, 2008b; Sisson & Iverson, 2014; Kim, 2013; O'Connor, et al., 2015; Osgood, 2010; Taggart 2011). This section analyses the teacher's experiences of their gendered teacher identities within the Australian ECEC context and how teachers and stakeholders exercise relational power, enabled by dominant gendered and expert discourse, to shape and define teacher identities. In particular, the teacher's experiences shed light on the historically low social perceptions of care and women's work that influences the construction of teacher identities, qualifications, remuneration and conditions. This gives insight not only into how teachers make sense of their own identities but how the state, society and the sector understand and value early childhood teachers and their work with young children. Conversely but equally apparent, the data illuminates ways teachers uphold the same gendered discourses often used to silence them, drawing on an ethic of care in strategic and powerful ways to take up diverse discourses to perform, resist, embrace, silence and privilege multiple teacher identities.

Discourses of gender and neoliberal identities

Overwhelmingly the findings of this analysis uncovered the continued, and deeply rooted privileging of gendered discourses, like mothering, in relation to teacher remuneration, working conditions and the social perceptions of the ECEC teachers. This was evident in the teacher's experiences working within the current Australian ECEC frameworks of quality and accountability and the prominence of diverse industrial tools. Also evident was the teacher's resounding strategic resistance to these gendered discourses in instances where the privileging of expert and quality discourses empowered their access to professional entitlements. As recognised in the literature, the significance of expert qualifications, pay and conditions on teacher identities emerging from the data was unsurprising, as was the circulation of power between teachers and employers surrounding them (Moloney, 2010; Ortlipp et al., 2011; Sims & Waniganayake, 2015).

Competing discourses of the professional and naturalised career

Elsie, who graduated with a Bachelor of Early Childhood, Honours, runs a kindergarten program in a long day care setting under the now VECTEA 2016 industrial agreement. She has worked in the sector for fifteen years, the past five years as a teacher. Reflecting on the challenges she faced as a graduate, Elsie recalls searching for an ECEC teaching role in a neoliberal market and the uncertainty of employment under multiple, often incongruent industrial tools, an experience shared by most of the teachers (AEU 2016c; Press & Woodrow, 2005):

> *'…when I finished my degree, I was very adamant that I wasn't going to accept any jobs*
> *that weren't offering VECTAA and I mean when I went to other job interviews at other*
> *childcare centres they were like "do you really think that's fair, that you get paid more*
> *than everyone else?" and I was like 'I just worked my butt off for years (laughs) it's more*
> *than fair.' -Elsie*

The VECTAA, as mentioned by Elsie, is the 2009 forerunner to the VECTEA 2016 industrial tool identified as one of the most desirable by the teachers to be employed under as it offers greater remuneration, professional status and conditions for teachers than the ESTA 2010 or an EBA (AEU 2016c). The VECTAA 2009 and VECTEA 2016 were recognised by the teachers for providing working conditions that gave them more access to resources such as time, to meet regulatory requirements for which they are held accountable and assessed against under the NQF (AEU 2016c). However, comments classifying Elsie as unfair for expecting to be paid more than the other, presumably female staff, suggest the service draws on discourses that conceptualise early childhood teaching as naturalised work for women (Ailwood, 2008b; Cannella, 1997; Vintimilla, 2014). Moreover, their comments act as micro punishment intended to provoke conformity in Elsie with the gendered discourses endorsed by the ESTA 2010 and the service's management. This speaks to the ways the service understands the purpose, value and identity of the good early childhood teacher as singular and fixed based on gendered regimes of truth and how they promote conformity with those understandings amongst their staff (Gore, 1993; MacNaughton, 2005). Interestingly, the service's position sits in contrast with the competitive individualism of the good teacher identity promoted by education policy that drives regulation, benchmarking, expert qualifications of teachers and the individual as the site of success (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Millie & Jones, 2014). Conversely, in the employer's recruitment of Elsie as a teacher, they are able to comply with legislative requirements mandating children's access to the expert skills, qualifications and knowledge of an early childhood teacher (ACECQA, 2017c). Thus satisfying regulatory demands informed by expert

discourses and quality imperatives (Connell, 2013a; Lee, 2015; Moss, 2014; Ritchie, 2015). Ultimately, Elsie chose not to explore this job in favour of others under the VECTAA 2009, which strategically upholds the same expert discourses to privilege and value teachers as professionals, resisting the ways gendered truths are drawn on by the ESTA 2010 to naturalise and devalue teachers work (Gore, 1993; MacNaughton, 2005).

Having worked in ECEC for 9 years, Lucy began teaching two and a half years ago with a Bachelor of Early Years Studies and runs a kindergarten program in a local government run integrated children's service hub under the Early Education Employees' Agreement (EEEA) 2016. In Lucy's case, negotiating an EBA for her previous role as an early childhood teacher within a national, not for profit ECEC provider in a long day care setting, was a way to resist the gendered regimes of truth the ESTA 2010 produces in the social, political, economic and professional silencing of teacher identities and the ECEC sector (AEU, 2016c; Bridges et al., 2011; FWCA, 2016; Thorpe et al., 2016; Kilgallon et al., 2008; O'Connor et al., 2015).

> *'…it was my first year out of Uni, um, and I just found a job that existed, I just found a job, um, and sort of took the best of the jobs that I'd applied for, and was offered… knowing what the VECTAA was offering and knowing what I wanted and I was able to negotiate my pay on parity with VECTAA…'* - Lucy

However, it also enabled her employer to resist the ways the then VECTAA 2009 privileges expert truths and the professional discourses that uphold those to advantage teachers (AEU, 2016c; FWCA, 2015). This is an example of the many ways power shifts, resists and struggles between groups for the authority to attribute the meaning which informs teacher identities:

> *'…but I wasn't, I didn't have any school holidays, I had the standard four weeks annual leave, the planning time was abysmal. We were offered two hours a week, um I looked after seventy children a week, so, in the long day care setting, so that was not much, and I negotiated and got five hours and then I actually put together a proposal for them, um, just before I left and ah, that said that "this is what VECTAA offers, this is what I am doing with my planning time, this is what I'd like" and I asked for eleven hours planning time a week, and the, I put it to my centre director and the, um, regional manager, and the regional manager literally laughed in my face and said that's never going to happen and so that was the day I said "I'm not going to work here anymore"'.* -Lucy

Both Lucy and Elsie's experiences illuminate the totalisation of early childhood teachers through diverse industrial tools as an unskilled, unprofessional, naturalised workforce based on gendered expectations of self-sacrifice and the naturalisation of the skills possessed by teachers, as women who work with young children (Cannella, 1997; Sisson & Iverson, 2014; Jónsdóttir & Coleman, 2014; Osgood, 2012). Despite employers privileging the expert qualifications of Lucy and Elsie to comply with education policies intended to professionalise the sector, there are still dominant structures in place, socially and politically embedded into everyday life, like industrial tools, that exploit teachers and silence multiple ways of being by upholding historical, gendered discourses (Cannella, 1997; Gore, 1993; MacNaughton, 2005; Weedon, 1987). These taken for granted understandings of early childhood teacher identity as singular and fixed perpetuate the innate connection between women and children and diminish the social and political value of their work, disempowering both groups in subtle but far reaching ways (Gore, 1993, MacNaughton, 2005; Weedon, 1987).

Interestingly however, Elsie and Lucy's experience shows that although their higher qualifications are recognised as valuable by employers, they were still asked to be like everyone else. For Lucy and Elsie, it's through the ESTA 2010 and EBAs constructed on it, and the endorsement of these by state and federal governments in addition to some of the largest providers of ECEC in Australia, that the devaluing and totalisation of teachers based on gendered ECEC regimes of truth continues to thrive. In the sanctioning of gendered truths that marginalise teachers by such institutions, gendered discursive thinking, behaviour, texts and speech becomes common place in everyday life. Consequently, the naturalisation of teachers work with young children and the devaluing of care are perpetuated as socially taken for granted knowldge (Cannella, 1997; Gore, 1993; MacNaughton, 2005; Weedon, 1987). However, the endorsement of gendered discourses by Australian institutions that deprofessionalise teachers through low status, poor pay and conditions, creating critical issues around recruiting and retaining a quality workforce, is puzzling. Particularly when considered within the dominant political context of competitive individualism and ECEC reforms that demand increasing expert training, professionalism and accountability for social and economic growth (COAG, 2008; Thorpe et al., 2016; Millie & Jones, 2014; OECD 2006a).

The frequency of such contradictions and the competing and conflicting gendered and expert demands of teacher identities however were common in the data, illuminating the complex, conditional and multiple nature of discourses and the circulation of power within those (Foucault, 1977). The teachers often finding themselves in tension with prospective, or existing, employers as they compete to define

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their purpose, value and identities based on divergent gendered and expert regimes of truth (Cumming, 2015; Gore, 1993). Even so, the ESTA 2010 endures, creating barriers and limitations that define, construct and constrain teacher identities through restrictive entitlements and expectations intended to create a compliant and productive workforce (Cannella, 1997; Cumming, 2015; Gore, 1993). Interestingly, all but one of the teachers had made the decision very early on not to accept any teacher position under the ESTA 2010 or moved on from positions under the ESTA 2010 or an EBA with no intention to resume such a position. This highlights the teacher's powerful and strategic resistance against the totalisation of dominant ideas of the gendered good teacher perpetuated by those industrial tools.

Rebecca, currently on maternity leave, has worked in ECEC for fourteen and half years, five of those as a teacher with a Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies, Honours in addition to a Masters of Education, Research, Honours. Rebecca teaches in a standalone kindergarten under early years management (the collective management of unaffiliated ECEC settings typically under a not for profit organisation) (DET, 2017b).

> *'…then once I finished my diploma I was actually quite shocked by the pay rates which I think at the time was $15 an hour. Um, and I kind of realised that if I wanted to stay in the profession long term, that remaining at a diploma qualified rate was not feasible…I had to do a degree and get a higher paying job.'* - Rebecca

For Rebecca, her experience of securing remuneration reflecting her expert teacher status under the VECTEA 2016, uncovers how through hierarchical observation, disciplinary power circulates between individuals to normalise teacher identities in accordance with dominant maternal regimes of truth. Reflecting on her experiences with a colleague Rebecca offers a different perspective to that of Elsie and Lucy:

> *'…you also don't deserve more money, you also don't deserve to have school holidays, you also don't deserve to have more programming time because you are just the same as everybody else. And so, that was a really, that's a really difficult position to be put in, um, because I felt like I always had to justify myself, I always had to you, you know, the most knowledge, the best ideas, um, because I felt like I just had to prove myself all the time'* -Rebecca

Rebecca's encounter highlights the circulation of relational power experienced by early childhood teachers in the pursuit of professional status within the sector. Even with the acquisition of expert knowledge and qualifications and employment under the VECTEA 2016, professional status is not guaranteed. For early childhood teachers this is a result of deeply embedded gendered discourse of maternalism, through which historical, taken for granted female ways of being produce homogenous, correct, self-sacrificing and compliant identities of the good teacher (Ailwood, 2008b; Cannella, 1997). The inherent complexities and multiplicities of teacher identities are uncovered by Rebecca, simultaneously operating within conflicting good teacher discourses of the self-sacrificing, naturalised carer and the successful professional (Ailwood, 2008b; Cannella, 1997; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Millie & Jones, 2014; Vintimilla, 2014). Rebecca's colleague is explicit in her normalised judgment of her non-conformity to historical, maternal truths that prescribe women's innate purpose as unskilled carers. Her scrutiny instilling a hyper vigilance in Rebecca, who in turn applies the disciplinary gaze of her peer on herself, outwardly producing evidence of her professionalism, justifying her professional status and entitlements to her colleague. Paradoxically, her colleague's intention, or unintention, to deprofessionalise and disempower Rebecca brings to life the discourses of managerialism, professionalism and competition as her colleague's gendered thinking, language and behaviour incites Rebecca to produce more professional, and therefore quality, ECEC outputs (Lee, 2015, Urban 2015b). This moment, and the practices, behaviour and thinking that emerged in response, are illustrative of the relational and shifting nature of power and the sometimes innocuous, sometimes deliberate, every day disciplinary practices that enable power to circulate between diverse groups as they compete to define dominant knowledge and correct teacher ways of being.

As recognised by the literature, the significance of expert qualifications, remuneration and conditions on teacher identities is illuminated by this analysis. So too are the multiplicities and complexities of teacher identities as the teachers grapple to make meaning of those identities whilst operating across multiple conflicting and conditional discourses. However, as Purple Chocolate and Colleen illustrate next, focusing only on the ways gendered discourses are drawn on to disempower teachers oversimplifies and denies the inherent complexities of teacher identities and the ubiquitous and shifting nature of power (Gore, 1993). Instead, Purple Chocolate and Colleen's reflections continue to illuminate the way the teachers embrace, resist and struggle with multiple discourses in the political and strategic construction of their teacher identities.

Discourses of gender and caring identities

The data clearly reflected how each of the seven teachers, who all identified as female, embraced and resisted the gendered identities assumed for them and the discourses that produced these from instance to instance, in diverse and strategic ways.

Claiming caring identities

Colleen, who has worked in ECEC for ten years, began teaching seven years ago with a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education. She currently implements a kindergarten program in a new community services hub, primarily accessed by at risk and marginialised families where the operation of complex and shifting relational power, challenges her contemporary good teacher identities:

> *'…she just looks at me and said that "(name), you've got a dirty nose you need to wipe*
> *your nose, it's disgusting"…. I took it to mean "oh, you've done a bad job because you*
> *haven't gotten my son to blow his nose."'*-Colleen

Such subtly implemented disciplinary practices and discursive behaviour intends to correct Colleen's teacher identities in line with the dominant gendered good teacher identity of mother privileged by the families she works. However, despite this type of punishment Colleen's current context simultaneously provokes her to contemplate the multiplicities of her good teacher identities in diverse contexts and the complexities of enacting those identities within multiple discourses (Hughes, 2010; St.Pierre, 2000). Finding a subtle resistance to the masculinist expert truth of the objective, rational professional, Colleen embraces gendered teacher identities to develop her pedagogy around an ethic of care:

> *'…at the moment, this year they're influencing me more to think about my role as,*
> *having duty of care for the children, in focusing more on that, than on education and*
> *learning through play, um, mmm, which is very grounding, and humbling.'* Colleen

Although still operating within her professional roles and responsibilities, Colleen draws on the emotional labour of effort rather than maternal instinct, to alternatively comply with regulatory obligations and accountability in meaningful and holistic ways to meet the complex needs of the children in her care (Dalli, 2002, 2006; Osgood, 2004; Taggart, 2011). A subtle but purposeful resistance to dominant teacher ways of being created by educational and developmental psychology theories and privileged by the singular conceptualisation of the professional that undervalues the significance of care in teacher's every day work (Brown et al., 2015; Burman, 2007; Cannella, 1997; MacNaughton, 2003; Taggart, 2011). Simultaneously however, expert discourses create a space for Colleen to draw on her

expert knowledge and professional status to resist those same discourses as she implements care for equitable education (Cannella, 1997). This shift in power enables Colleen to resist her position as a docile body and producer of human capital, subverting the utlisation of her expert skills and sanctioned knowledge to produce social change through an ethic of care (Cannella, 1997; Urban, 2015b). This appeared to be a significant and resounding shift for Colleen, enabling her to embrace the gendered teacher identities she often resists to challenged singular, taken for granted identities produced by professional discourses to uncover multiple, concurrent and changeable teacher ways of being within a neoliberal quality framework. Colleen's conflicting experiences exemplify the entangled and unstable nature of ECEC and illuminate the fluidity with which all of the teachers shifted through and between multiple discourses, their identities produced by subjective and diverse experiences and knowledge from instance to instance (Hughes, 2010; St.Pierre, 2000).

Purple Chocolate, with over twenty years ECEC experience, was a teacher for eleven years before becoming an early intervention key worker but was most recently employed under the VECTEA 2009 in a standalone kindergarten. Here, Purple Chocolate demonstrates the complexities of diverse discourses informing multiple simultaneous teacher identities. Expressing care as foundational to her teacher identities Purple Chocolate simultaneously resists a gendered nurturer identity, whilst embracing neoliberal expert discourses to lift the professional status teacher identities:

> '…I have come into a very female orientated job where women are expected to play with children and um, but, or women are expected to nurture and look after children, but that I was doing it not because I was a female, I was doing it because I felt passionately about um, what I was doing and about the value of children and giving them a… good foundation to, to you know grow from' -Purple Chocolate

Recognising her gendered teacher identities in part as a consequence of her own gender and the historical gendered nature of ECEC, Purple Chocolate draws on human capital imperatives central to neoliberal education policy to resist the socially taken for granted knowledge that her female gender is a dominant determiner of her identities and capabilities as a teacher (Ailwood, 2008b; Cannella, 1997; Gore, 1993; Weedon, 1987). It appears that through her extensive career and experiences of the ongoing power relations between teachers and their socially and politically taken for granted low value and status, fueled by maternal discourses, Purple Chocolate has constructed an awareness of teacher identities as contingent and political (Cumming, 2015; Gore, 1993; Fenech et al., 2010; Sisson & Iverson, 2014; Urban, 2008, 2010). Seeming to borrow from neoliberal rhetoric of ECEC as strategic investment

in strong and effective human capital, Purple Chocolate strategically advocates for young children, their value and ability, to meaningfully contribute to society to raise the professional profile and status of early childhood teachers (Fenech et al., 2012; Lee, 2012; Smith et al., 2016). However, at the same time she embraces gendered discourses as she describes the ongoing motivation for her work as a teacher. As increasingly identified by the literature, the 'passion' Purple Chocolate mentions denotes the conceptualisation of the unique ECEC professional, where professionalism is based in an ethic of care and emotional labour as opposed to individualism, objectivity and measurable outcomes (Dalli, 2008; Osgood, 2004, 2012). Reflecting Foucault's (1983) argument that everything is dangerous, in this moment Purple Chocolate highlights that identities are not good or bad, but are multiple, navigated strategically and powerfully by teachers to make meaning of their own teacher identities and raise the social and professional status of the workforce.

Just as part one illuminated the teacher's operation across multiple discourses, which they embrace and resist in the circulation of power, enabled by disciplinary practices, part two of this chapter will continue to uncover the complexities of teacher identities. In particular, the expert discourse of managerialism and professionalism are made meaning of from a neoliberal perspective, underpinned by the Foucauldian concept of disciplinary power.

Part Two - Expert Teacher Identities

Concurrent to the gendered discourses of mothering and women's work, the discourses of managerialism and professionalism intend to produce a more effective, objective and accountable early childhood teacher responsible for the provision of quality ECEC and increased outcomes for children and the nation (Cannella, 1997; Lee, 2015; Osgood, 2012; Penn, 2011; Vintimilla, 2014). Expert teacher identities, constructed on neoliberal understandings of competitive individualism, are shaped by the assumption that the site of power is within the individual and that through hard work anyone can be a good teacher because all the structures necessary to achieve this have been provided for them (Doherty, 2007; Millie & Jones, 2014; Vintimilla, 2014). This conceptualisation of the individual creates a singular identity for teachers where diverse ways of experiencing the world through gender, age, class, ability or race that exist for the individual do not influence the construction and complexities of teacher identities (Davies & Bansel, 2007). While the OECD (2006a) and SCSEEC (2012) recognise how professional discourses, and the expert regimes of truth they sustain, empower teachers as expert professionals with greater access to social status and professional entitlements. However, an equal and growing body of work discusses how expert discourses are utilised to silence teachers, in similar ways to gendered discourses, as they work to regulate and conform the sector under increasing scrutiny, often denying the caring, relational, messy and dynamic nature of ECEC in the process (Fenech et al., 2010; Lee, 2015, Osgood, 2004, 2006).

The following analysis of the teachers' experiences highlights how they make sense of their teacher identities while operating as powerful players within and across multiple discourses. I do this with specific attention to those discourses of professionalism and managerialism to uncover the complexities of teacher identities in an ECEC landscape shaped by competing discourses, neoliberal policy agendas and historic gendered conceptualisation of women.

Discourses of expert and professional identities

Throughout the data emerged an apparent conflict and tension within the teachers when considering who they are as a professional and a seeming discomfort in articulating their identities as a teacher, despite the re-professionalisation of the sector under the NQF. Noted by (Gibson, 2013), Lightfoot & Frost (2015) and Ortlipp et al., (2011) as key influences in this are recent reforms to professionalise the sector, the diverse and often incongruent social perceptions of teachers even by those within the sector, and the ongoing struggle between gendered and expert discourses to determine dominant early childhood teacher ways of being.

Competing discourses of the professional and the National Quality Framework

As mentioned in the introduction, the periodical quality assessment of all ECEC services nationally against the NQS, enables the observation, examination and measurement of the workforce against seven quality areas to identify strengths and gaps in knowledge and practices, allowing the systematic classification of groups (ACECQA, 2017a, 2017e; Jackson, 2015). The NQS, a collection of truths sanctioned by ACECQA, includes standards traditionally aligned with care, such as relationships with children and children's health and safety, as well as expert and managerial areas like educational programming and practice, leadership and governance (ACECQA, 2017e). Assessments are implemented by jurisdictional regulatory bodies who then provide the service a rating of 'Significant Improvement Required', 'Working Towards', 'Meeting' or 'Exceeding' NQS and recommendations for quality improvement, ensuring the continued circulation of dominant knowledge and correct ways of being (ACECQA, 2017a). In some cases, services awarded an 'Exceeding' rating may choose to submit further evidence of high quality ECEC provision to ACECQA to be assessed for an 'Excellent' rating (ACECQA, 2017a). Service ratings are publicly accessible online through the ACECQA (2017g) National Registers and Mychild.gov.au in addition to each service being required to display their current rating, serving as both public reward or punishment (ACECQA, 2017e; Australian Government, 2017). Additionally, service staff must produce an annual QIP for themselves against the NQS, ensuring the continuous utility, (self) surveillance and examination of early childhood teachers in the absence of the regulator which must be provided upon request (ACECQA, 2017j; DET, 2017b, 2017c).

Of all the teachers interviewed, Purple Chocolate had worked in the sector for the greatest number of years prior to the implementation of the NQF. She discusses her initial uncertainty at its introduction and the Assessment and Rating of ECEC services against the NQS:

> *'…then all the changes came in, so I was a little bit nervous about the Quality Framework because I felt like, you know I had just gotten to this place where I could interact with other professionals and we could reflect on what we were doing and how and why it was different and then I kind of felt like, oh now they're going to rate us, and that will pit us against us, and people won't share information'* -Purple Chocolate

Prior to the NQF kindergartens and preschools, as education services, had been exempt from quality assessments under the Quality Improvement Accreditation System (QIAS), which only applied to services offering child care (Rowe, Tainton & Taylor, 2006). But in the NQF's theoretical closing of the education and care gap, Purple Chocolate illustrates that what professionalism looked like in ECEC was shifting, and fixed teacher identities were challenged. Purple Chocolate's reflection on this time suggests the gravity of policy reforms on her teacher identities. In particular, the implementation of reform through managerial practices like Assessment and Rating under a unified and contemporary set of education and care standards, set to increase the visibility of teachers and the examination and ranking of services in comparison with one another (Brown, 2009; Jackson, 2015; Lee, 2015). In this moment, Purple Chocolate illustrates how multiple gendered and expert discourses, embodied by the NQF produce an effective but compliant workforce. A workforce consistently and methodically working as groups and individuals to observe, review and implement their own, and each other's, ECEC practices as evidence of compliance and quality through exhaustive managerial practices (Jackson, 2015; Lee, 2015). The individual is then illuminated by a universal system of standardisation that assesses the quality of compliance under high public visibility. In this way consistent, unified ECEC practices and homogenous good teacher identities are strategically shaped, observed, assessed and rated for variance which are corrected through managerial and disciplinary practices (Brown, 2009). This process of totalising groups and individuals through surveillance and examination against normalised judgement who are then ranked and classified to produce docile bodies, is not unlike that implemented at the Ècole Militaire. For Foucault (1977) the complex military 'honorary' classification of pupils through the subtle, yet highly visible, variations in uniforms at the Ècole Militaire based on the frequent examination of moral qualities and universally recognised behavior exemplifies this process. Similarly, recognising the potential shifting and break down of professional relationships, Purple Chocolate indicates a resistance within the sector

by many who felt professionally disempowered and their teacher identities threatened by the NQF (Osgood, 2004).

However, it appears that such a response from teachers was anticipated, illuminating the utilisation of professional strategies like educational leadership (Rodd, 2015). A strategy comparable to Foucault's (1977) example of elementary school 'officers', where the best students were selected to perform logistical tasks, to observe compliance, report noncompliance, teach discrete and explicit technical learning to fellow students on behalf of the teacher, in addition to acting as a role model and representing the student cohort. Similarly, communities of practice were introduced in the transition to the NQF as political and strategic tools to ensure the uptake of policy reform, compliance and the singular contemporary good teacher identity through sector buy in (Barber et al., 2014; Kah Yan Loo & Agbenyega, 2015;Tayler, 2012). Through these strategies a sense of ownership over reform is created amongst the workforce, provoking conformity from within through universalised observation and assessment against legislative compliance (Penn, 2011; Rodd, 2015). In an example of the complex and inconsistent ways teacher identities are informed and enacted, Purple Chocolate recounts the sense of professional validation the introduction of the NQF evoked in her. A contrasting ownership of the same reforms that provoked such anxiety for her:

> *'…I already felt really strongly about what I was doing and the importance of it, when all the, um, frameworks and changes came in it was kind of like a confirmation, you know, my job is serious, good work'* -Purple Chocolate

Purple Chocolate recognised the NQF as evidence of professional empowerment and status, endorsed as truth by institutions like the state and federal governments and the fields of economics, neuroscience, education and psychology, strengthening her sense of teacher identities (MacDonald, 2002; OECD, 2006a; SCSEEC, 2012; Winter, 2010). In these two simultaneous moments, the shifting and relational nature of power in the reprofessionalisation of ECEC and the complexities of teacher identities is illuminated by Purple Chocolate. So too are the contrasting and conditional ways the structures and requirements of the NQF shape Purple Chocolate's early childhood teacher identities, simultaneously and contingently empowered and disempowered by the multiplicitous and changing nature of ECEC itself (ACECQA, 2017b; Grant et al., 2016; Tesar et al., 2017).

Diverging from Purple Chocolate's acute awareness of the NQF and the additional complexities its implementation and the discourses it privileges brought to early childhood teacher identities, Amy illustrates the subtler nature of disciplinary power through the NQF. Amy, whose Bachelor of Education, Early Years qualifies her as an early childhood and primary teacher, has led the 'pre kinder' room in a long day care centre under a large non for profit provider for the one and a half years she has worked in the sector. The centre does not offer a government funded 4 year old kindergarten program but employs Amy in order to meet minimum regulatory staffing requirements (ACECQA, 2017c). As Amy does not implement a kindergarten program, she is not remunerated as a kindergarten teacher under the organisation's EBA, instead she falls under a classification in the EBA that allows her to be paid as a teacher under the ETSA (2010) (FWCA, 2016). Unsurprisingly, given the significance of professional qualifications and remuneration on strong teacher identities discussed in the literature and earlier in this chapter, there appeared a tension and struggle for Amy when considering her teacher identities and professionalism because of the structures of her workplace and her role within that (Gibson, 2013; Phillips et al., 2016; Tesar, Pupala, Kascak & Arndt, 2017). At the time of interviewing Amy had just been asked to take on the Educational Leader role at the service, a responsibility she took great pride in:

> '*In my centre, I personally don't use it [the NQF] very often because we, not at the moment, now that I am in the Education Leader position I will use it more. But it is used more with our Quality Improvement Plan, our QIP, but it's not used in the rooms as an expectation. So, it's not, like I know it's important for me to know, but it's not part of my identity in this role. Because I don't engage much with it*' -Amy

Amy's disconnection from the governance of the NQF is an interesting example of how the relational, ubiquitous and capillary like nature of power through every day discursive and disciplinary practices influence teacher identities in multiple unconscious, purposeful and complex ways. The NQF regulates everything from Amy's expert qualifications and employment, including her new role as Educational Leader, to the daily taken for granted cleaning routines implemented to meet elements of NQS quality area 2, Children's health and safety (ACECQA, 2017d). However, Amy's disconnect from the operation of the NQF and its influence on her teacher identities suggests her resistance against assumed, standardised and top down expectations of correct teacher ways of being. But adding further to this complexity is Amy's new role as Educational Leader, an example of the dynamic and changeable nature of teacher identities, illuminating the multiple and shifting influences that are embraced in one moment

and resisted in the next, from context to context, as she prepares to professionally embrace the NQF (Hughes, 2010; St.Pierre, 2000; Weedon, 1997).

> *'about a month ago my director came up to me and said 'Why haven't you applied for the educational leader position?' and I said, 'Well I don't think I'm ready' and she said 'I think you are, have a think about it for a week'. So I did, I said yes I'll be, I'll try out the educational leader position… So I am, my role is to teach the other teachers and also teach the children in my room through a kinder program*' -Amy

For Amy, her new role is a direct acknowledgement of her professionalism, a visible and explicit recognition of her ability to correctly meet the ECEC practices, outcomes and truths valued by her management. A role she spoke of with pride and an identity she embraced. As the Educational Leader, Amy has already identified how it is now important for her to take up the discourses of the NQF and uphold the truth it privileges, to better enable her colleagues and the overall service to meet regulatory quality standards and obligations (Hoffman, 2013; Peeter et al., 2016; Tesar et al., 2017). Amy's experience illustrates the effectiveness of leadership in ECEC as a remote and consistent means to strengthen teacher sense of identities, lift professionalism and concurrently ensure individual accountability, sector buy in and compliance with the discursive practices of the NQF in the absence of a direct regulatory presence (Kah Yan Loo & Agbenyega, 2015; Rodd, 2015).

Discourses of expert, managerial identities and the good teacher

As the data was analysed an interesting and dynamic relationship between the teachers' identities and the Assessment and Rating process became apparent, drawing connections between Foucauldian conceptualisations of corrective training and managerialism as a policy tool (Foucualt, 1977; Lee, 2015).

Embraced and resisted, the undeniable connection between an ACECQA quality rating and the teachers' identities revealed struggles to resolve tensions within, and attribute meaning to, multiple teacher identities that emerged for the teachers. The teachers relationships with Assessment and Rating revealed a melding of tension, motivation, (self) surveillance, skepticism, hierarchical observation and critique, professional learning and advocacy. Elsie, who works at a long day care centre currently rated as Exceeding, illustrates this dynamic:

> *'…there's a lot of people in the profession for the wrong reasons and I think it's really important to have that quality framework to, even if it's not successful, to work toward, and to say "no there is these standards that, you know, cover*

everyone around Australia" and that's what we need to be working towards

because um, I think otherwise, there are services and practitioners that drag the

whole profession down in its identity' -Elsie

For Elsie, despite a resistant skepticism regarding the NQF's efficacy, she appears to have embraced her expert identities as an 'Exceeding' teacher. From her position as a teacher within a highly rated service looking outwards on the sector, being held accountable to the NQS by Assessment and Rating is a reform strategy she supports to raise professional accountability and the status of the ECEC workforce.

Reflecting Elsie's discussion of increasing professionalism and quality from within an adequately and low rated service, Ana has worked in the sector as a teacher for one and a half years since graduating with a Bachelor of Education, Early Years. She began teaching in her current role in a standalone kindergarten, under the VECTEA 2016, after its most resent Assessment and Rating:

'So, my current service got 'Meeting', which I think we could do a lot better in, it

happened, that happened before I moved there. That, but from um, seeing or being at

places that got 'Exceeding' it's kind of made me think 'Oh, what can we change and how

can I better myself to improve our current practice to get 'Exceeding' next time?" -Ana

The data suggests the teachers have come to understand that to be recognised and valued professionally, socially and politically, it is necessary to embrace the organisational changes and practices embodied by the increasing regulation managerial discourses bring to the sector (Fenech et al., 2012; Hall & McGinity, 2015; Moss, 2014; Osgood, 2004). For those in services rated as average or below, actively engaging in managerial quality processes like the annual QIP, performance appraisals, professional learning, service visits and internal audits, they are enabled to identify gaps in their own capabilities to apply and embed visible changes within the service (Lee, 2015). These documented and visible changes translate into the increased quality provision of ECEC and consequently professionalism and teacher identities. The idea of continuous self and peer examination, in addition to that implemented by regulatory authorities, complements the neoliberal understanding of power at the site of the individual (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Millie & Jones, 2014). This contemporary good teacher informed by education policy and expert discourses, works harder, creates more documentation and performs more (self)surveillance, develops more processes and refines best practice in line with neoliberal ideals in the pursuit of individual professional success and status (Davies & Bansel, 2007;

Millie & Jones, 2014). However, this is a significant contrast to Ana's understanding of the good teacher based on relationships, care and emotional connections with young children:

> *'the way I see a good teacher, is someone that, um,… someone you can look up to and respect and somebody that helps you to get wherever you want to go in life or just every day. To be there for support, um, help you along the way, someone that you can confide in…' -Ana*

Nonetheless, Ana demonstrates how ACECQA service ratings work to produce teacher identities and the capillary like reach of disciplinary power as she reflects on the ways she and her colleagues can better, not just in their practice, but in themselves to become more highly rated, singling herself out to do better.

Ana's experience uncovers that for teachers there is always the possibility of what lies just ahead to drive those who fall into the middle, or just below the higher ranks, encouraging the modification of their behaviour to be rewarded as good and correct, mirroring the pupils of the Ècole Militaire (Foucault, 1977). The data illuminates the complex relationships between the public visibility and reward that accompanies an 'Excellent' or 'Exceeding' rated service, and consequently their teachers, empowering teachers rated as 'Working Towards' or 'Meeting' to correct and modify their own pedagogical performances, based on common and shared understandings of desirable behaviour. Just as those empowered by an 'Exceeding' rating continue to self-assess and critique in the same ways as those of lower rating to ensure their high rating is maintained or possibly increased to 'Excellent'. Similarly, as discussed by Foucault (1997), reward is the catalyst for conformity with normalised judgment, not punishment and only those rated 'Significant Improvement Required' experiencing short term ongoing intervention from regulatory bodies. Which as of August 2017 was less than 5% of ECEC service nationally (ACECQA, 2017h). Such data illustrates the effectiveness of reward as a disciplinary practice for ACECQA and regulatory bodies to influence and shape the teacher identities, practices and knowledge of groups and individuals sector wide through the NQF with limited resources or direct intervention (Foucault, 1977). A strategy effective in shaping teacher identities not only at the time of assessment but in the period between assessments. In fact, as Ana demonstrates, teachers don't even necessarily have to be a part of the assessment to adopt the existing rating of their service as a part of their teacher identities and professional worth.

Summary

This chapter illuminated the teachers' experiences operating within diverse, contingent and contradictory discourses of gender, mothering, professional and managerialism while making meaning of multiple, shifting teacher identities. Likewise, the relational and capillary like nature of Foucauldian power and everyday implementation of disciplinary practices shed light on the political, social and historical complexities of ECEC, gender and neoliberalism that inform early childhood teacher identities. Following on from this, the final Chapter outlines the overarching themes and findings from the data analysis. Furthermore, the conclusion considers possible recommendations for further inquiry and how these findings can inform teacher practice and pedagogy through teacher education and communities of practice.

Chapter Six Conclusion

This research project was born from a frustration and sense of unease at working within the boundaries of a fixed and singular early childhood teacher identity prescribed by contemporary Australian ECEC policy that I couldn't recognise or reconcile with. Wanting to make meaning of this incongruence, I asked the question: what are the complexities and multiplicities of Australian early childhood teacher identities?

In this chapter I summarise the findings of this research, reflect on its limitations and successes, consider recommendations for Australian ECEC and possibilities for future inquiry. Likewise, I reflect on the surprises that emerged from the data and my shifting understandings of power and teacher identities shaped by Foucauldian conceptualisations. The findings of this research add to the existing research that understands teacher identities as complex, multiple and historically and socially produced, such as the work of Osgood (2004, 2006, 2012), Cannella (1997) Sisson (2011) and Sisson & Iverson (2014) and many more internationally. However, the complexities and multiplicities of Australian early childhood teacher identities has not previously been explored from a Foucauldian perspective since the introduction of NQF.

Findings

Three years ago, my initial intention was to try to identify and understand the correct early childhood teacher identity to lift our professional status, then help teachers adopt that identity, discarding the identity that marginalises us. However, my engagement with Foucauldian conceptualisations thrust me into a world of complexities and multiplicities that challenged my understandings of singular teacher identities and provoked me to consider my own identities and the strategic and political ways I perform teacher ways of being. Despite my initial assumptions and biases, I am now reminded by Foucault not to think of early childhood teacher identities as good or bad, because everything is dangerous, which is not the same as bad (Foucault, 1983).

Extensive research has examined the importance of teacher identity to professionalism in the Australian ECEC context, particularly since the introduction of neoliberal policy reform establishing quality frameworks and the requirement of increased qualifications. My research adds to this body of work, uncovering that educational policy documents and quality frameworks, teacher identity research, development strategies and resources have not lessened the complexities of teacher identities but instead continue to intensify them. This research shows that the complexities and multiplicities of

teacher identities are not limited or broadened by the political and institutional re-professionalistion, categorisation, and ranking of a fixed singular early childhood teacher identity. Instead the findings show that teacher identities exist regardless of the examination and classification of individuals and groups. Moreover, this research illustrates that teacher identities exist whether they are examined and classified or not, because they are complex, constantly shifting, multiple and changeable across moments and contexts, illuminating the ways and sites at which power operates to shape teacher identities.

These identities enabled the teachers to work in strategic and powerful ways to resist the identities that silence them and embrace the identities that empower them in advocacy for themselves and the young children they work with. Furthermore, this research illuminated that teacher identities do not have to be either gendered or expert, they are both and often multiple complex variations of these. Teachers powerfully upheld, denied, shifted and navigated between and across these identities from moment to moment, resisting and embracing relational power, to further their own professional agendas. The strategic and dynamic ways the teachers drew on and enacted diverse identities enabled them to be powerful players in the ongoing circulation of power between colleagues, families, the regulator and the state to determine the purpose, value and status of early childhood teachers in Australia. These complexities and instabilities emerged from the beginning of the interview process. Then as I tried to make sense of, then arrange the teacher's lived experiences in a linear manner to present in this thesis it became more and more apparent. As did the operation of the dominant discourses of mothering and women's work, professionalism and managerialism in shaping prominent gendered and expert teacher identities.

Australian early childhood teacher identities
There were four discourses of identities circulating throughout my data: neoliberal identities, caring identities, professional identities and managerial identities.

Neoliberal identities
I was unsurprised to find that the teachers experienced push back against the identities they took up particularly in regard to acquiring and recognising expert qualifications, remuneration and working conditions, as documented by the literature. However, I did not expect to find such powerful instances of push back against teachers' professional identities by stakeholders when correctly performing the good teacher identity. Despite acquiring the necessary competencies, skills and attributes to be assessed and classified as good and valuable, the shifting of power between Rebecca and her colleague and the conflicting historical gendered and contemporary expert discourses they uphold illustrates the

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contingent complexities of teacher identities. Likewise, as identified by Moss (2014) in this moment, my research shows that the stable, apolitical and value free neoliberal concept of the individual and identity are in reality highly political, unstable and historically and socially constructed.

Caring identities

Most surprising to me was the ways the teachers upheld gendered identities, as my assumption had been these would be resisted and denied in all instances in favour of professional identities to raise the status of the workforce. However, Colleen's reflection on how she has come to draw on her expert knowledge and judgment to take up specific caring identities to better meet the needs of the children she works with, was a consistent theme across the data.

Professional identities

Similarly, Purple Chocolate discussed simultaneous, political, contingent but conflicting expert identities. In one moment she upholds the identity constructed by policy documents and quality frameworks that position teachers as professional, competent and powerful. In the next moment she is cautious, uneasy and resistant to the definition, measurement and ranking of teachers by those frameworks. Highlighting the instability of teacher identities and the powerful ways teachers shift and move within those to strategically privilege their professional and political agendas. While this initially surprised me, as I analysed the teachers' narratives it came to make more and more sense, becoming almost expected given the continued operation of conflicting dominant discourses in ECEC.

Managerial identities

The teachers relationships with quality frameworks and regulation was both expected and surprising. While I had anticipated push back against regulation, particularly Assessment and Rating, I did not expect the ways the teachers strategically embraced the process and actively drew on managerial discourses to inform their teacher identities. For instance, Elsie embraced the NQF as a way to sift and sort those who fall short, and for the ways it recognises her as good teacher and adds credibility to the sector, while simultaneously resisting the NQF as unsuccessful. In this moment Elsie illustrates how teachers can appear as docile bodies in one instance and in the next are empowered and resistant because relational power is not fixed and finite but constantly shifting and circulating between groups.

Reflection

Limitations

Reflecting on my research, there were three key limitations: Despite the extensive and rich data collected from interviews with the seven teachers, this small sample size means that the findings of this research are limited to this group. Similarly, the time and word limits prescribed by a masters thesis, although initially overwhelming, do not allow for an extensive exploration of the data and related concepts. These same requirements did not allow for engagement with the diverse stakeholders that shape teacher identities such as children, families, teacher educators, the regulator and policy makers. Had these voices also been captured by the data, this thesis would have illuminated even further depth and complexities of teacher identities.

Poststructural Conceptualisations

Foucault's conceptualisations of the individual, power, knowledge and truth, and the relational and ubiquitous ways power operates in society helped me make sense of the tangled web of early childhood teacher identities. Through understandings of multiplicity, I have come to recognise identities as contingent on one another, contradictory and concurrent, dynamic, political, strategic and powerful. This helped me to go beyond remapping discourses and more deeply analyse the operation of gendered and expert discourses in the teachers' experiences and how power, knowledge and truth are threaded through those.

Qualitative Methodology

The qualitative approach drawn on for this project was well suited to the Foucauldian conceptual framework within which the research is positioned. In particular, engaging in in-depth, one on one interviews with early childhood teachers enabled me to connect with each individual and go deeply into, and analyse their lived experiences. Likewise, the semi structured nature of the interviews allowed me to prompt the teachers with both carefully crafted and organic questions, supporting them further in articulating their rich narratives. Furthermore, member checking allowed the teachers time to reflect on and modify their contribution to the research. This process resulted in rich and insightful data that offered an alternative perspective of teacher identities than discussed in the literature, particularly that which sat within a modern paradigm, was situated in historic policy contexts or focused on the experiences of teachers in international ECEC landscapes.

Recommendations and new beginnings

Working within a poststructural paradigm I recognise that my research doesn't produce any one answer, singular truth or course of action, however I have considered the following possibilities as a result of this project.

Further research

As the teachers' narratives and ways of thinking developed during our short, one hour interviews, it provoked me to consider what kinds of depth and complexities would emerge from data collected over a period of time and what practical implications may arise from this for the participants. Recognising that people's capacity to speak or make change in the moment is difficult, an action research methodology might support teachers to shift or identify the ways power and discourse operate to shape their teacher identities in the moment and draw on that to make change.

 A shift in conceptual framework may also shed further light on how early childhood teacher identities are shaped in the current policy context, specifically through Bourdieu's work with cultural capital and critical class theory. Given the inherent competitive individualism of neoliberal education policy it would be interesting to explore teacher identities from a socio-economic perspective. Particularly how early childhood teachers from diverse socio-economic contexts take up and perform teacher identities and access the skills, abilities and competencies required to meet the singular and fixed identity of the good teacher constructed by ECEC policy.

Policy

It was indicated in both the literature and the data that the language used by policy documents positions teacher identity as singular and fixed, limiting teacher ways of being and how they are understood by stakeholders. This research could help to inform the recrafting of policy documents shaped by many truths to recognise the multiplicity of teacher identities, opening up genuine possibilities for diverse performances of the complex and unique professionalism of early childhood teachers. Especially given as some of these policy documents may name poststructural influences, however they really do very little to meaningfully produce poststructual understandings or ways of being for teachers. This then creates a need to work with educators and teachers to understand what complex and multiple identities might look like in practice.

Professional learning

Following on from my above recommendations for policy and drawing on the contemporary ECEC climate of continuous professional learning for teachers, this research may inform professional learning workshops for the sector that make poststructural conceptualisations of teacher identities accessible. For pre-service teachers, exploring and reflecting on the multiplicities and complexities of teacher identities may help shape expectations of performing diverse teacher identities in the field to support the recruitment and retention of teachers in ECEC. For practicing teachers, workshops could create the opportunity to analyse the complexities of their lived experiences and make meaning of the multiple teacher identities they uphold and resist. In doing this they may understand the possibilities of relational power and themselves as strategic players in the ECEC context who are not simply subject to the top down implementation of educational policy.

Conclusion

The teachers who participated in this research were generous in offering me not only their time but insight into their lived experiences, to which I felt profoundly connected because in their experiences I recognised my own teacher identities and feel more at ease with the instability of those identities. I think the stories and lived experiences of the teachers will spark conversation and interest amongst other early childhood teachers as they recognise some of their own experiences in them.

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Appendix A:

List of Common Acronyms

ACECQA	Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority
AEU	Australian Education Union
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
EBA	Enterprise Bargaining Agreement
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EEEA	Early Education Employees' Agreement
ESTA	Children's Services (Teachers) Award
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
EYWS	Early Years Workforce Strategy
NECDS	National Early Childhood Development Strategy
NQRA	National Quality Reform Agenda
NQF	National Quality Framework
NQS	National Quality Standards
OECD	Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
SCSEEC	Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood

QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
VECTAA	Victorian Early Childhood Teacher and Assistants Agreements
VECTEA	Victorian Early Childhood Teacher and Educators Agreements

Appendix B:

Interview Questions

Preliminary interview questions
These questions will provide background information and the demographic data relevant to the research.
- What is your age?   - What is your gender?   - What are your qualifications?   - How many years experience do you have working as a teacher?   - How many years experience do you have working in early childhood education and care?   - What type of early childhood service do you currently work in?   - Briefly describe your service community?   - Which industrial agreement are you paid under?
Interview questions
- What was your motivation for becoming an early years teacher?   - What is your understanding of professional identities?   - How would you describe your professional identities?   - How would you not describe you professional identities?   - What are your understandings of you as a professional? What does that look like in practice/ working with;   - families   - pedagogy   - the National Quality Framework   - How have the perceptions of others influenced how you understand yourself as a professional?   - children   - families   - colleagues   - society   - government   - How have factors such as preservice training and industrial awards influenced how you understand yourself as a professional?   - How have the ways these factors influence your professional identities changed since the introduction of the National Quality Framework?   - How would you describe the community of practice at the service you currently work in?   - How does this influence your professional identities?   - Can you describe an experience or a time when you felt like your professional identities were   - acknowledged   - supported   - challenged

Appendix C:

Consent form

I,……………………………………………………………………………………………………… (Name of participant),

hereby consent to be a participant of a research study to be undertaken by Dr Kylie Smith and Leah Tsomos (name of investigators). I understand that the purpose of the research is to contribute to the following project:

Uncovering the complexities and multiplicities of early childhood teacher identities

I acknowledge that:

(1)   Participation in the research study is voluntary.

(2)   The aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study have been explained to me to my satisfaction - including the possibility that I could be identified due to small number of participants being interviewed for this research.

(3)   Individual interviews will be audio-taped, transcribed and the transcriptions used for data analysis.

(4)   The information I provide will be coded and kept separately from my name and address.

(5)   Results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in academic and professional journals.

(6)   My results will not be released to any person except at my request and on my authorisation.

(7)   I can choose to be named or referred to by pseudonym in any reports or publications arising from the study.

(8)   At any point during the interview, audio recording and questioning can be stopped or paused to address any issues or concerns that may arise.

(9)   I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease.

(10) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements.

Signature   Date

(Participant)

Appendix D:

Plain Language Statement

This letter invites you to participate in a Masters Research project undertaken by Leah Tsomos under the supervision of Dr Kylie Smith from the University of Melbourne.

Project: "Uncovering the complexities of professional identities under the gaze of the National Quality Framework"

This research will look at the complexities of the multiple professional identities of early years teachers working across diverse early childhood contexts in Victoria. More specifically, it concentrates on the experiences of early years teachers in how they enact these identities. The research is particularly interested in how early education and care policy reforms since 2012 along with other external and internal factors influence the construction and enactment of professional identities.

It is the intention of the research to better understand how early years teachers understand themselves as professionals and what identities they construct to be considered as professionals by children, families, colleagues, management, society and government.

Involvement in the research project is voluntary and should you agree to participate, you would be asked to participate in a one on one interview at a time and location convenient to you, taking at most one hour. This interview would include questions regarding how you see yourself as a professional, what and who influences your understandings and experiences of being a professional. With your permission, the interview would be tape-recorded so that we can ensure that we make an accurate record of what you say. When the tape has been transcribed, you would be provided with a copy of the transcript, so that you can verify that the information is correct and/or request deletions.

Should you wish to withdraw consent or any unprocessed data previously supplied you are free to do so at any stage without prejudice.

In order to maintain the privacy of participants your name and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that you supply. This will only be able to be linked to your responses by the researchers, for example, in order to know where we should send your interview transcript for checking. You will be referred to by a pseudonym of your choosing or one you give consent

to be referred to by. Responses and notes will be coded by themes and categories preventing the need to use respondent's names and addresses to identify the data. We will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity; however, please note that as the number of people we seek to interview is small (8 participants), it is possible that someone may be able to identify you. All data will be securely stored for five years before being destroyed in accordance with Melbourne University policy

Please be aware that the outcomes of the research project will be disseminated at conferences and through publications (e.g. journal articles).
This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Office for Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Fax: +61 3 9347 6739 or Email: HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au. All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.

Yours sincerely,

Leah Tsomos

Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Dr Kylie Smith,

Equity and Childhood Program, Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Appendix E:

Recruitment Advertisement
Uncovering the complexities and multiplicities of early childhood teacher identities

My name is Leah Tsomos and I am currently undertaking my Masters in Education, by research, under the supervision of Dr Kylie Smith.

My research project intends to capture the experiences of Victorian early years teachers as they construct and reconstruct multiple professional identities and uncover the internal and external influences that shape these identities. In particular, I am interested in gaining an understanding of how early years teachers understand themselves as professionals and what identities they take on day to day, in order to be considered as professionals.

I am planning to interview between six and eight Bachelor qualified, early years teachers who are currently working in an Australian early childhood setting.

What is the purpose of the research?

Despite a growing body of international literature exploring the complexities of professional identity of early years teachers, and how recent policy reforms have influenced these, these perspectives do not represent the experience of the Victorian early years teachers. As such, there has been limited inquiry into how Victorian early years teachers experience and understand their own professional identities and the influences that construct those identities.

Accordingly, by uncovering the complexities and struggles of Victorian early years teachers as they negotiate and construct their own professional identities, as a result of recent Australian policy reforms, the research will provide a valuable alternative perspective to the local and international conversation.

Criteria for participation:

- Have a minimum of a Bachelor in early years teaching

- Have completed their Bachelor qualification prior to 2012 or since 2012 (This criteria provides opportunities to capture a current representation of the experiences of those who have practiced both prior to and post the implementation of recent policy reforms)

- Be currently working in an Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority approved early childhood setting

What do you have to do?

If you are interested in participating in this research project or would like find out more about it, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will send you additional information. Please note the closing date for expressions of interest will be **August 31st 2016.**

Email ltsomos@student.unimelb.edu.au

Phone or text 040479