

Professional conversations: resilient education discourses
and teacher positioning through a Wittgensteinian lens

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Abstract

In this thesis I examine teacher collegial conversations through the lens of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language that locates individual thinking and meaning-making in social agreement. My focus is on the connectedness of individuals, and on professional conversations as positioning the participants in the discursive fabric of the teacher community.

The theoretical basis for this thesis locates teacher beliefs, values and practice in community understandings and agreements, where language is an evolving social construction continually being adapted to the context, and where meaning in dialogue is dynamically co-constructed within a discursive framework of beliefs and ideas.

The research questions I explore in the study ask what perspectives the construct of community provides on teacher practice and education policy; what effects collegial conversations have on teacher positioning; and how such conversations reveal the prevailing discourses of schooling. These questions challenge both the assumption that teachers are independent agents, and the idea that existing discourses can be displaced with the adoption of new policy settings.

In my analysis of the conversation excerpts I focus on three related aspects. Firstly, the notion of *being*, individuality constructed within community, is used to highlight both atomistic understandings and social connectedness. My second focus is the issue of *fairness*, examining individual privilege and social equity in the provision of schooling. The third is the *cultural context*, exploring how tikanga Māori might enhance Pākehā perspectives.

In describing and analysing the language dynamics of the interactions I uncover how the participants influence each other. What is revealed is an inducement to conform to community norms, including developmental models and beliefs about the impact of early experiences in shaping teacher practice. Discourses of personal responsibility, a cornerstone of economic rationalism, are deeply embedded, positioning teachers as individually accountable and at the same time opening a space for resistance to external pressures on the basis of

professional experience. Shared reflections reveal that traditions of schooling are long-lasting, with progressive education discourses continuing to influence teachers in support of social integration and equity even as ideas of deservingness continue to promote competition.

Education policy changes and professional learning offerings for teachers can fail to change teacher practice or perspectives: the prevailing discourses of schooling retain their influence because they are constantly reinvigorated by the interactions between individuals within the teacher community. Teachers do not work in isolation from their peers, just as schools are not autarkic institutions. Addressing the current and projected challenges for secondary education requires acknowledging connectedness between individuals, departments, and schools and their collective influence on each other. Therefore, labelling any of these as ‘failures’ is in effect an indictment of the values and beliefs that infuse the education system as a whole.

This thesis is based on the conviction that schools serve a social purpose as they instil community values, and that teachers are participants in that mechanism. If it serves to draw attention towards collaboration and a view of co-constructed realities, then it will have communicated what I have learned in the process of writing it. I hope my colleagues in the teacher community find something of themselves in the dialogues, and that the participants recognise the value of the contributions they’ve made to this work.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed  Date 15 November 2016

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There is a particularly large group of people who have shared their perspectives in the literature that I have accessed in the course of this study. Only a small number of them are cited and represented in the reference list, and I particularly want to acknowledge them for the sharing of ideas that have shaped my understandings. It is my pleasure to now be included in the mesh of connectedness of the academic community.

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Dedication

It is my hope that this work will not only inspire other teachers to undertake education research, but also serve to remind others of retirement age that they too can commit to such an extended project. I therefore offer these perspectives to the teacher community that has made such a difference to my life.

I also hope it may provide an example of perseverance to my own children and grandchildren, that they may discover their own goals on which they will consider it worth expending their time and energy.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my wife Zoë, with all my love.

Glossary – including Māori terms

Ako	[Māori] learning together – the teacher is also a learner, and a learner is likewise a teacher
Ambicultural	“The ambicultural approach recognises the preferred core values and best cultural practices of the Māori partner of the treaty, who draws also on the best practices of the dominant Anglo-Western orientated New Zealand. Biculturalism in New Zealand suggests two cultures, Māori and Pākehā, living separately” (Hēnare, 2014, p. 64).
Aotearoa	[Māori] The name given to New Zealand, to which current practice assigns equal status by usage in the form Aotearoa/New Zealand in order to acknowledge the recognition of Te Reo Māori as an official language.
Aroha	[Māori] caring, empathy, love or compassion
Awhi	[Māori] support, helpfulness
Coimplication	[Philosophy] where something is necessarily implicated alongside something else
Co-optation	“A term devised by Philip Selznick . . . to refer to a political process found especially in formally democratic or committee-governed organizations and systems, as a way of managing opposition and so preserving stability and the organization”. <i>Source:</i> Marshall, G. (1998). <i>A Dictionary of Sociology</i> . Retrieved June 09, 2015 from: http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O88-cooptation.html
<i>eo ipso</i>	[Latin] an idiomatic equivalent: “by the same token”
Exaptation	where an alternative use is found for some common trait
Hapu	[Māori] sub-tribe or clan
In loco parentis	[Latin] a traditional expectation placed on teachers to act “in place of the parent”.

Iwi	[Māori] tribe
Jumbo day	[Jargon] NCEA training days for teachers
Kaupapa	[Māori] a topic or matter for discussion; a proposal or initiative to be debated
Kaupapa Māori	A collectivistic Māori research methodology
Korero	[Māori] discussion or conversation
Mahi tahi	[Māori] “This concept is about collaboration, cooperation and working together as one. It embraces the concepts of awahi, manaaki and whanaungatanga. This is about unity and working together for the collective good” (Ka’ai, 2008, p. 67)
Mana	[Māori] influence or status; the power or charisma that can be accorded or recognised by others
Manaaki	[Māori] hospitality
Manaakitanga	[Māori] ongoing expressions of hospitality
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Attainment — the current system of assessment and credentialing in secondary schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand.
Pākehā	[Māori] Māori-language term for non-Māori in New Zealand, typically those of European descent.
Palagi	[Samoan] Samoan-language term for those of European descent.
PD	Professional Development (a term previously used for what is now described as <i>Professional Learning</i> — PL)
PL	Professional Learning
PLD	Professional Learning and Development
Pro tanto	[Latin] “to that extent”, or “for so much”

-tanga	[Māori] a suffix attached to many Māori words to indicate the <i>ongoing</i> nature of the activity represented in the root word, such as manaaki — manaakitanga; kotahi — kotahitanga.
Te Kotahitanga	[Māori] oneness, unity — the name given to a secondary school reform initiative based on research into the impacts of teacher-student relationships on the learning of Māori students
Te Reo Māori	[Māori] The Māori language
Tiaki	[Māori] guidance (in the sense used by Bishop, Ladwig, & Berryman, 2014, p. 189)
Tikanga	[Māori] customs or mores; the practices that have been built up over time as recognised as the appropriate ways to do things in a community
Tino rangatiratanga	[Māori] sovereignty; self-determination
Tuakana – Teina	[Māori] In a tuakana–teina relationship, the older sibling (tuakana) is expected to assist a younger one (teina). However, there is also an implicit recognition that each needs the other to learn. The older needs to learn how to support the younger with patience, and the younger to learn respect for the older. By extension this also applies to sharing areas of expertise
Whakapapa	[Māori] literally genealogy or lineage, but also used in the sense of links or connectedness between people
Whanau	[Māori] extended family
Whanaungatanga	[Māori] Connectedness, as with a web of family relatedness.

Situating the study

The piece of research that is described in this study was conducted with Gisborne secondary school teachers in the region known locally by its customary Māori name of Tairāwhiti, which claims the distinction of being the first place of landfall for the English explorer Captain James Cook. Gisborne, the administrative centre of Tairāwhiti, also has the claim to fame of being the first city to see the light of a new year.

More importantly for this study, however, is the projection that by 2021 the Māori population of the Gisborne region is expected to reach 50% (Statistics New Zealand Tatauranga Aotearoa, 2013). In addition, Gisborne also has the “highest rates of [Māori] speakers” (Durie, 2005, p. 47). Amongst school-age children, adolescents, and young adults, Māori represent the majority of the district’s population.

There are three threads woven together in the study. The first is the conceptual frame that connects the perspectives of individuality and community. The second thread that is examined frames the ideas of fairness and unfairness in terms of privilege and equity. The third thread is an exploration of the social and cultural traditions of Māori and Pākehā (non-Māori — generally used to refer to New Zealanders of European backgrounds) as these traditions find their expression in the conversations of teachers involved in state secondary schooling.

Conventions

Throughout this document I have observed several conventions. Firstly, when I have used the terms Māori or Pākehā, I have made use of the macrons in line with current practice. However, when I have quoted directly from other sources I have maintained the original usage, which mostly means that these words will have been written without the use of the macron. Similarly, where in an original document the plural form of “*Maoris*” was used, I have quoted that usage unchanged. Likewise, in quoting historical usage of the term “*his*”, I have avoided the use of the annotation “[sic]”. However, I have used “[sic]” where there has been in any source document any usage that might be interpreted by the reader as an error on my part, so that I might quote the original precisely while at the same time making it clear that I am aware of problematic usage.

My preference is to follow the English rather than the American usage of *_ise* and *_isation*. However, where other authors have used *_ize* and *_ization*, I have retained such usage in any quotations to preserve the flavour of the original rather than imposing my stylistic preferences. Similarly, where there are different uses such as with hyphens, in citations I follow the author’s choice.

In the excerpts of conversation my contributions to the dialogues always appear in the left-hand column, as below, and the layout indicates where one person speaks and when the other takes over or interjects:

Excerpt o — sample layout

line	Maurice contribution	Other participant contribution
1	Words that I spoke, as well as	
2	obvious non-verbal	
3	contributions such as [nods]	
4	and [laughs]	micro-pauses (..) and words that
5		were spoken by the other teacher who
6		participated in the conversation ..

I have referenced these in my analysis in the following manner: “obvious” (o-2), using the convention of the excerpt numbering followed by the line numbering, indicating where the cited text begins.

Chapter 1 – overview of the thesis

Background to the research

This study arises from my own experiences as a teacher. Over the course of several years I engaged in conversation on a regular basis with a number of my teacher colleagues. In one group, we were a trio who were able to meet weekly to discuss issues of concern or interest during an hour where we each had non-teaching space available in our timetables. In our second year we did not have that timetable overlap, so we met at lunchtimes. A couple of years later there was a second group which met on Friday afternoons after school had finished for the day. That group adopted the saying: “the learning is in the conversation”. Many of those meetings lasted for two or three hours.

Those experiences shaped my thinking about collaborative reflection and the advantages of sharing experiences. We all gained from contributing different perspectives and asking each other questions, because otherwise we would not have sustained the friendships and continued to make the commitment of time and energy. We practised respect and trust as we navigated our way through the questions and dilemmas in our everyday lives as teachers. We became a peer support network for each other, contributing stories and insights from our distinctive pasts, and in the process creating commonalities that counterbalanced the different perspectives of culture or gender.

Throughout those years I also conversed with many other teachers on topics that were sometimes political, sometimes professional, and sometimes personal. Those dialogues persuaded me that teachers could add to each other’s understandings in almost any grouping. In turn, that contributed to the construct that I develop in this thesis, that teachers form a community of common understandings and expectations. Based on my experiences, I began this study with the assumption that teacher conversations, and in particular collaborative reflection, would lead to innovative practice, allow teachers to critique both practice and policy, and embrace new ideas while feeling supported and understood.

Talking with other teachers has at times inspired me with optimism, and at other times been profoundly dispiriting. Frequently, dialogue with other teachers has served to inspire me with confidence, but there were other times when I was left wondering whether my understandings of education had anything in common with some of my colleagues. Collegial conversations appeared to offer an opportunity to explore what meanings and effects our conversational interactions created, and that became one objective of my study. I wanted to explore conversational interactions between secondary school teachers in this study, partly because most of my long teaching career has been as a secondary school teacher, but also because it appeared to me that the voices of secondary school teachers have been increasingly muted and marginalised over the last decade in particular. At the outset of this study it appeared to me that the innumerable conversations that teachers engage in with each other could provide clues as to why some of the changes instituted by school administrators or promoted by enthusiastic teachers succeed while others fail to gain traction, why some attempts to reform teaching practice show positive results while others do not, and why some teachers are energised by their classroom experiences while others find themselves under constant pressure.

Teaching in Aotearoa/New Zealand has in some ways changed and in others it has remained the same. In my time as a teacher, education discourses have emphasised both conformity and experimentation, accountability and professional autonomy. As a teacher, I have been expected to prepare some students for further study at tertiary institutions and others for work, but shaping their thinking about participation in their community or the wider social democracy has been only an implicit expectation imposed by the sense of teaching as a vocation. In consequence, I have frequently reflected on the purposes of education, so questioning those purposes is part of the backdrop to the study.

Why a Wittgensteinian lens?

Wittgenstein is important to this thesis for a number of reasons, but primarily because of the style of critique used in his *Philosophical Investigations*. In that work he examines the interplay between language, meaning, context, and relationships, and the implications for philosophy – which he describes as “a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 40e, §109)¹. Similar factors are apparent throughout this thesis, where I explore conversational interactions using a comparable lens, one that focuses attention on how language is a means by which discourses colonise and retain control of our thinking and beliefs. From that perspective, Wittgenstein’s observations serve as both a model and critique of the ways in which I find myself approaching the empirical substance, the conversation excerpts. Accordingly, my theorising illustrates the convictions shaped by belonging to the teacher community as well as the doubts about being able to distance myself from the discursively-constituted positioning of my own contributions. Applying Wittgenstein’s philosophy as a lens gives me permission to acknowledge the patterns of language and interaction while at the same time allowing me space to consider the constraints on my own reflexion. Such individual observations and interpretations are primarily responses to contextual cues, but broader patterns can be seen to emerge when those specific instances are considered collectively. Wittgenstein used such a lens to challenge both conventional wisdom as well as his own earlier understandings of the limitations of language expressed in his *Tractatus* (1922/2010) by saying:

I can know what someone else is thinking, not what I am thinking. It is correct to say "I know what you are thinking", and wrong to say "I know what I am thinking." (A whole cloud of philosophy condensed into a drop of grammar) (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 189e)².

That perspective has guided me in this thesis.

¹ Die Philosophie ist ein Kampf gegen die Verhexung unsrers Verstandes durch die Mittel unserer Sprache (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 40, §109).

² Ich kann wissen, was der Andere denkt, nicht was ich denke. Es ist richtig zu sagen "Ich weiß, was du denkst", und falsch: "Ich weiß, was ich denke." (Eine ganze Wolke von Philosophie kondensiert zu einem Tröpfchen Sprachlehre) (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 189).

Wittgenstein's philosophy, and in particular his philosophy of education, has been the subject of a number of studies and commentaries. It is not my intention in this thesis to explore these in any depth, but instead to acknowledge that Wittgenstein's approaches to philosophy have been well traversed. Rather than examine the themes of Wittgenstein's work through such commentaries, I have chosen to work directly with his philosophy to create connections between his observations and aphorisms and the teacher conversations that form the basis of this study. In doing so I am using Wittgenstein's own approach as a model. He is remembered as comparing himself to a guide, opining that: "a good guide will take you through the more important streets more often than he takes you down side-streets; a bad guide will do the opposite. In philosophy I'm a rather bad guide" ("Ludwig Wittgenstein," 1951, p. 76). Despite that protestation, and even though most of his notes were only published posthumously, his work as a philosopher has guided many educators. Perhaps that is because "*doing* philosophy always took priority for Wittgenstein, whether this was in oral or written form: It was important to *show* the deep puzzles in our language (and our culture and thinking) as a step toward dissolving them" (Burbules, 2008, p. 201). It is in connection with such *doing* that this thesis links a Wittgensteinian philosophy of education with teacher conversations, in which is evident a spirit of inquiry where "what we are trying to do is *not* to discover something of which, until now, we have been ignorant, but to know better something that in one sense we knew already" (Smeyers & Peters, 2008, p. 37). That spirit of inquiry, in this thesis, is concerned with meaning-making by individuals in community.

The community constitutes the "frame of reference" (Smeyers & Marshall, 1995a, p. 222) that is itself a social construct dependent on common understandings developed and shared through language and behaviour. Against this backdrop, Wittgenstein's philosophy invites an ongoing awareness of context in the process of meaning-making (Smeyers & Marshall, 1995b). Moreover, that awareness extends to exploring the context of assumptions that contribute to the language used as well as the positions and meanings taken, until "if I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock ... Then I am inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do'" (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 72e,

§217)³. For the teacher conversations in this study, as Smeyers and Marshall argue, interpretation “always goes back to the understanding of the practitioners” (Smeyers & Marshall, 1995b, p. 10).

Focus questions for the research

This study explores secondary school teacher collegial conversations. These conversations are considered as indicators of positioning in relationships — between the teachers themselves, and of the teachers within the teacher community. The effects that the conversations have on the participants are explored in terms of confirming or challenging such positioning. Further, they are examined as observable indicators of the discourses of schooling. In using the term *discourses* I am referencing the postmodern construct of the mores, beliefs, practices and forms of expression than configure both the *self* and individual understandings. The discourses of secondary schooling include the current language and constructs of curriculum, success, failure, teaching and learning; but they also carry the beliefs and understandings from the past with constructs such as deservingness, ability, and preparation for the world of work and adult responsibility — all of which continue their influence over the understandings of teachers.

The study refers to the conversations to engage with three key questions:

- What does the construct of *community* offer as a lens on teaching practice and education policy?
- What effects do collegial conversations have on teacher positioning?
- How do teacher conversations promote or diminish the discourses of schooling?

Addressing these three questions leads me to argue that what constitutes the professional behaviour of teachers is not only a sharing in institutional practices, but also a direct result of being shaped by the practices and understandings of the teacher community. “Language constructs the individual's subjectivity in ways that are historically and locally specific. What

³ Habe ich die Begründungen erschöpft, so bin ich nun auf dem harten Felsen angelangt ... Ich bin dann geneigt, zu sagen: "So handle ich eben" (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 72, §217).

something means to individuals is dependent on the discourses available to them” (L. Richardson & St Pierre, 2008, p. 476). Ideas about teaching that are expressed in conversation are a demonstration of the central role of the teacher community in maintaining and modifying education discourses. Each individual teacher has different discourses available to them, but the discourses that are central to teaching and schooling are available to all teachers.

Question 1: Connected in community?

In response to the first of the key questions I take the position that the usefulness and importance of the construct of community requires an understanding of connectedness as a dynamic mesh of interrelationships rather than an aggregation of autonomous individuals. Accordingly, I posit that, among other things, conversations are a way of maintaining relationships within a community. Working relationships between teachers matter because they affect the climate of the school as well as the classroom interactions between teachers and students. If teachers respond to policy changes in isolation they risk being overwhelmed by discourses of personal failure. Conversations about practice, particularly the sharing of responses to difficulties, connects them to the support of the teacher community. Against the prevalent discourses of individual accountability, collegial support and encouragement can make a significant difference.

Question 2: Language and positioning?

Language and conversation interactions serve to position teachers against the contextual discursive backdrop of schooling. That positioning is fluid, but each contribution to a dialogue serves to structure the meanings that participants share as well as those where they differ. What is important about the conversations is that it is the interactions in combination with the words, the ongoing processes of performing and audiencing, that produce the meanings and the effects. “It is in *language* [emphasis added] that an expectation and its fulfilment make contact” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 111e, §445)⁴. Expectation and fulfilment find form in dialogue where *meaning* is co-created. Accordingly,

⁴ “In der Sprache berühren sich Erwartung und Erfüllung” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 111, §445)

a second purpose for this study is to acknowledge the contribution teacher collegial conversations make to the mores of the teacher community and to explore the mechanics of how such dialogues support the discourses of schooling.

Question 3: Changing discourses of schooling?

The restructuring of schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand that began in 1989 was called *Tomorrow's Schools* (Minister of Education, 1988) and accompanied other reforms that sought to embed an economically-oriented neoliberal orientation across the whole of the state sector. Teachers and the teacher unions at the time opposed many of the underlying assumptions and retain much of their opposition today. The earlier emphases on socially progressive education discourses (Boyd, 1938; Rugg, 1938a) and the liberal humanist discourses of the 1970s (Peters & Marshall, 1996) were sidelined as neoliberalism became increasingly embedded, but are still evident in schools. Answering the third question requires me to explore the ways in which teacher conversations serve as a mechanism that has conserved those embedded progressive and humanist discourses alongside the current neoliberal discourses within the secondary teacher community.

Implications of the questions

Addressing these questions brings into focus the political issue of how change might be brought about in the ways teachers think and express themselves at the growing edge where the individual is connected with the community. For many years, governments and schools have allocated monies towards the professional development of teachers. One of the assumptions appears to have been that by training teachers to do their work differently, the outcomes for students would also change. That assumption applies cause-and-effect discourses of evidence and measurement to both teacher professional development and teaching as generating student learning. More important, however, is the assumption that teachers exist as autonomous subjects with individual agency unconstrained by the embedded discourses of their school and teacher community. Those assumptions are examined in this study through

the lens of community, focused on positioning, against the backdrop of education discourses.

Key concepts

Community

Establishing this understanding of community allows me to argue that it is a frequently-neglected but necessary complement to the ideas of individuality that focus attention on the differences between people and the illusion of personal autonomy (Alford, 2013). This argument is predicated on the position that “we exist in a world of co-constitution” (Gergen, 2009b, p. xv), providing a foil to the assumptions of market economics. The principles of market forces enshrined in liberal economics within an individualist system label people according to their functions and roles as producers and consumers of goods and services (von Hayek, 1948). In contrast, what I refer to as *communitarian* in this study is a construct of community that acknowledges the differences between people as the impact of exposure to a variety of contextual and discursive influences. Those differences are expressed through the relationships between people (Gergen, 2009b). Accordingly, in exploring the spaces framed by my first question about applying the lens of community, I take the stance that discursive influences bind people together into collective forms of functioning, produce common understandings of *self*, and determine the boundaries of how people relate to each other.

Positioning

The second question involves the construct of positioning within community. Positioning (Davies & Harré, 1990; Howie & Peters, 1996; D. M. Taylor, Bougie, & Caouette, 2003) is fundamentally a spatial concept applied to relationships and is used throughout the thesis in two ways. The first is the notion of belonging, as represented by the terms *insider* and *outsider* (Hellowell, 2006; Kelly, 2014). This applies not only to myself as the researcher, but to my teacher colleagues as fellow participants in the inquiry. It is, of course, not so much a dichotomy as a quality of connectedness, including the notion of alienation

alongside empathy — the *Verfremdungseffekt*⁵ described by Brecht (1961). The second way in which positioning features includes ideas about alignment with the values and discourses of a community, as described by the terms *central* and *marginal*, as well as the inward and outward directional forces that Bakhtin (1981) refers to as *centripetal* and *centrifugal*. Positioning is, however, always to be considered as relative — relative to others and relative to the context. Positioning is also to be understood as fluid and dynamic, involving directional movement rather than fixed ideas of locatedness. In this respect it aligns more readily with metaphors of sea navigation than with land-based reference points. Accordingly, I argue that the effects of teacher collegial dialogue can be seen in their positioning and re-positioning in relation to the discourses that are prevalent in the community.

Discourses

The third question relates to the contradictory discourses of schooling and teaching that arise from different conceptions about the purposes for education, and the different weightings that are attached to these. Discourses include the “socio-cultural presuppositions” (Gumperz, 1982, p. 205), the “conversation which goes on both in public and within each of ourselves” (Oakeshott, 1959, p. 11), that frame the constructs of self and other, shaping the ways teachers “make sense of what is intended” (Gumperz, 1982, p. 205) as they interpret the values and objectives, evidence-based pedagogy and learning areas that feature within the “broad, general education” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 16) described in the New Zealand Curriculum.

“To analyse discourse is to hide and reveal contradictions; it is to show the play that they set up within it; it is to manifest how it can express them, embody them, or give them a temporary appearance” (Foucault, 1972/2002, pp. 168–9). Accordingly, this thesis does not aim for a definitive position against which to assess teacher subjectivities, but rather to explore the contradictions in order to better understand the dynamics that support their co-existence.

⁵ The distancing effect of making one feel like a stranger.

Engaging with the questions: methodology

The three questions are intertwined one with another, because teacher positioning is relative to others in the teacher community and the discourses that populate it. My approach to analysis is to weave together considerations of perspective, positioning and the discursive construction of perceptions and beliefs. Separately, none of these is sufficient to create a representation of the conversational interactions, but together they convey the complexity of community entanglements and serve to illustrate the construct of connectedness that is the basis of the thesis.

The following excerpt of conversation is included here as an example of the interweaving of the question threads.

Excerpt 1 – Interwoven question threads: community, positioning, and discourses

1		.. forums that help us go forward .. tools
2	yes, yes ..	that help us go forward .. umm ..
3		the design of this was to be helpful [reading
4	mm ..	aloud from document] “.. <i>and collegiality</i>
5		<i>and spread of the learning is important for</i>
6	absolutely ..	<i>our overall staff development .. with this in</i>
7		<i>mind you are encouraged to share .. either</i>
8		<i>with the whole staff, individuals, or</i>
9		<i>groups” .. whether it’s determined or</i>
10		random, just start sharing it .. [chuckles]
11	yes, because that’s	
12	the feature that is .. um ..	
13	has been relatively absent	
14	.. people go on PD	mm ..
15	[shaking head] whatever ..	mm
16	and there is no	
17	opportunity made, or	
18	encouragement to ..	yeah ..
19	disseminate that further ..	

20		exactly .. and the amount we've learned just
21	[nodding] yes ...	by sitting here just by sitting at
22		this table .. right, so I changed it cos it's ..
23	[nods]	on the form it's "go to a course"
24	right ..	whereas on here it's .. um ..
25		individual .. "share with the whole staff or
26		individuals or group the course or
27	[nods] yes ..	learning you participated in" ..
28	yes ..	it could be Skype, it could be ..
29	it could be ..	it could be this , it could be just us two
30	yes, it's not .. it could	.. eh, hand the ball on ..
31	be just a conversation ..	and that's spread ..
32		[reading] "so the professional learning
33		gained will be utilized and shared with .."
34	yes ..	

The references to the teacher community occur not only in the document being discussed: "*collegiality . . . spread of the learning . . . overall staff development . . . encouraged to share*" (1-4 to 1-7), but also in the uses of "us" (1-1, 1-2) and "we" (1-20) as individuals connected through belonging to the teacher grouping.

The excerpt also provides an example of positioning using "mm" (1-14,15), "yeah" (1-18), and "exactly" (1-20) to indicate agreement, but then shifting the discussion to suggest another perspective: "whereas" (1-24) "it could be . . . it could be . . . it could be" (1-28, 29). The effect of that exchange is to open space for another point of view while maintaining the collegial relationship and enhancing the sense of solidarity and connectedness in the teacher community. The interaction also illustrates how within the utterance what each participant says is "oriented toward the response of the other" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 75), and meaning-making is a shared enterprise.

Discourses that are evident in the excerpt include the neoliberal emphasis on the self-interested individual that has influenced the lack of "sharing . . . a feature that . . . has been relatively absent" (1-10 to 1-14), contrasted with the

teacher discourse of experience apparent in “the amount we’ve learned just by sitting here [in conversation]” (1-20). Also evident is the future-oriented discourse of *progress*: “forums that help us go forward ... tools that help us go forward” (1-1). Implicit in the contrasts is the assumption of professional autonomy and influence alongside experience and participation in decision-making, while the discourses of efficiency and effectiveness permeate the exchange.

Whatever the topic of conversation in the excerpts of dialogue, the focus of analysis remains with the key research questions about the influence of community, the effects on positioning, and the discourses that are being reinforced.

Themes threaded through the thesis

There are three themes that are threaded together in the thesis: the notion of *being*, represented by an analysis of the constructs of individuality and community; the issues of *fairness* and *unfairness*, examining privilege and equity in the provision of state education; and the concept of *culture*, with reference to the differing Māori and Pākehā traditions and perspectives that have been shaped by the provision of State education in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The thread of *being*, with discourses of separateness and distinctiveness supporting constructs of the self as an individual in contrast to discourses of connectedness and commonalities that support constructs of community is important because it aligns with the socially constructed approach to the study that is explored in detail in chapter 2. The argument is not that the constructs of individual and community are exclusive, but that they are complementary, and that the focus on the individual comes at the expense of the social.

The construct of community that is central to the thesis requires a view of ethics that is supported by an understanding of the collective influence of beliefs, values and mores. Education is a moral practice (Ballard, 2008; Biesta, 2007; Calvert, 2014; D. Carr, 1992; Dewey, 1916/2012; Gadamer, 1975; Sahlberg, 2011; Sergiovanni, 1998), though it has been Pākehā interpretations of morality that have dominated the forms of secondary education in Aotearoa/New Zealand and therefore the discourses of schooling that influence teachers. Different

perspectives on the *Te Kōtahitanga* school reform project make apparent some of the discourses that have shaped teacher thinking about Māori and Pākehā values. On the one hand, *Te Kōtahitanga* represents an acknowledgement that Pākehā values and beliefs have dominated state secondary schooling. On the other hand, developing an equal partnership and valuing of Māori perspectives and understandings against the embedded Pākehā discourses of schooling indirectly challenges the continuing unfairness that stemmed from colonisation.

The issue of unfairness is therefore explored in relation to constructs of privilege and inequality that are promoted by competition within and between schools, with reference to measures of success, the ways in which teachers talk about these measures, and the effects on understandings of evidence that result. This thread is explored in the conversation excerpts in connection with the historic discourses of deservingness and the market-based emphasis of the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms.

Chapter structure of the thesis

The focus of the different chapters is outlined below:

Chapter 1 – Overview, separating various strands of the argument

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to orient the reader to the perspectives that are being used in the thesis, particularly the social construction of discourses and the impact of those on constructs of individuality and community. Its importance to the overall argument comes from its propaedeutic function, indicating how the construction and style of the study serve to support the research analysis and the meanings that are then attached to these.

Although the thesis is organised into chapters, it is important that the various aspects, described separately, are seen not in isolation, but rather as parts of a whole, each contributing something different, each a necessary, integral and connected component. The work that this first chapter asks of the reader is to witness the connections between the parts, so that later, immersed in details, there will be greater clarity about how those connections contribute to the overall direction and strength of the argument.

Chapter 2 – The individual and the community

Building on the understanding of community previously outlined, this chapter situates the individual as being always in community. Concepts of individuality are given meaning by communal agreement. The self is conceived as always understood in relation to others. Ideas of the self are formulated in language and therefore in community. For the exploring of interpersonal communication, such an understanding of community is essential to counter the prevalent individualistic assumptions, and a greater richness of meaning is possible when the concept of the self as being always in community is merged with the concept of the self as individual.

The argument presented in this chapter begins with the paradox that the idea of individuality is a social construct learned in community. Support for this view is offered not only from a social constructionist perspective, but also from Marxism, cognitive science, theology and education. From this starting point, it is argued that language is the medium through which individuals learn from others, where people learn to *become* based on what the language of their culture allows them to conceptualise. The influence of communication comes from the capacity to connect what people *do* with what they *think*. The results are demonstrated in the unifying cultural norms of communication – the effects of language acquisition and interactions, rather than just the words that are used or the ways in which they are arranged. The position taken is that language derives meaning through creating connected understandings from individual relationships in community.

Privileging individualistic ways of thinking and acting creates an emphasis on difference, on distinctiveness. In contrast, engaging with others as seen through a lens of community allows, it is argued, better access to the potential of the creative power of dialogue. Just as concepts are best explained not in isolation, but as bound to other concepts in a holistic inter-relationship, so are *selves* best understood as always contextual, in relationship.

The chapter continues by exploring traces of previous usage in current understandings of an individual self, particularly through the European traditions of thinking which have remained accessible in written texts. Tracing

Chapter 1 – Outlining the thesis

genealogical connections is intended to strengthen the position that understandings are shaped by events over the passage of time, as well as being influenced by traditions. Accordingly, it is argued that a poststructural conception of self, located always in community, as well as Māori concepts of *whanaungatanga* (relationship) and *whakapapa* (connectedness) are appropriate to the discussion, for the study includes Māori participants and takes place in a geographical region strongly influenced by Māori ways of being.

The argument is then returned to the education context of the study where the effects of the conceptions of individuality and community are reviewed for their alignment with the argument. Discourses of separateness and ideas of identity are examined for their contribution to situating the participants in community.

Chapter 3 – Language and conversation

The previous chapter provided an outline of the concept of community as a contrast to the prevalent conception of individual selves. This concept of community is the bedrock upon which the rest of the thesis depends. It is fundamental to the interpretation and assigning of meaning to the teacher conversations, as well as vital for considering the effects of these. While the effects of conversations might more typically be interpreted in relation to the individuals involved, it is more important to this argument to consider the effects on the teachers in community, and how ideas of schooling, of teaching and learning, of individuality, self, other, and relationships all work to situate teachers relative to the discourses of public education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This is one key purpose of the thesis, to give currency to a community perspective in order to trouble the emphasis on individualistic assumptions that currently support the policy and practice of schooling in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

A common language is instrumental to the functioning of any collective – that is the thread which this chapter weaves into the argument. Language, in particular oral language, serves to shape conceptions of community, self, and other. In this chapter it is argued that language both illustrates and creates connections between people, between their experiences and their interpretations.

Language is the medium by which meaning is made and shared in relationships with others. The patterns of language use which have developed over time, the grammars of communication that connect the words of cultural lexicons, form the substance of learning with which the various discourses of community involvement are constructed. This ontology of language is intertwined with the ontology of community, since each requires the presence of the other. There is an alignment, a congruity, between the ways in which language and community are both predicated on interactions and relationships. Both are characterised by a dynamic fluidity and open-endedness as a consequence.

Although language and community are separately insufficient to explain how meaning is created, together they support the conceptualisation of reality as something that is socially constructed and contextually situated. Accordingly, meaning can be ascribed to the *effects* of conversations, involving both verbal and non-verbal aspects. Moreover, meaning is not simply to be inferred from the words that are used in a conversation, nor even from the grammar with which the words are assembled, but in a more holistic sense of how the interactions between the participants are sustained: how the delivery is crafted according to the audiencing of each by the other, and how these affect the ongoing process of collaborative engagement.

The ways in which conversational interactions flow and ebb, the levels of animation attached to acknowledging, agreeing or disagreeing, what is said, how it is said, and how it is responded to – all contribute to the meaning produced from the relationship between the participants in a conversation. The discursive positioning of the participants influences both what is acknowledged and what remains unacknowledged: the “absent but implicit” (White, 2000, p. 36). The argument is that language is not only a vehicle for communication, it is also the medium by which ideas, culture and community are constructed, shaping values, beliefs and behaviours in the process.

In this chapter the intention is to create a theoretical frame for thinking about language and its contribution to shaping conceptions of reality. In making that theoretical frame explicit the hope is to expose some of the aspects that combine in the process of making meaning in dialogue. The spoken language of

conversation is multi-faceted and includes features that are absent from written language. This is particularly important to the study, because such features are instrumental in creating the effects that are part of the focus.

What is also important is to explore how spoken language works to position participants in conversation, in relation to each other as well as to the discursive context. That is part of the purpose of this chapter, to make evident some of the ways that language shapes thinking and the limitations of what it is possible to think. As a result, language can be seen to be at the overlap of the constructs of *being*, *fairness* and *culture* that are the main threads of investigation in the study.

Chapter 4 – Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological considerations that arose from the purpose of the study outlined in the introductory chapter. In linking methodology to purpose, the intention is to demonstrate that each depends upon the other, that the purpose constrains the choice of methodological emphases, and that the methodology serves as an interpretation of the purpose.

The discussion of methodology examines how decisions about recording and interpreting the conversations raised particular challenges and how I engaged with those challenges. In it I describe the participants, how they were recruited, and some of the assumptions that I brought to the process. It also describes links between the philosophical orientation discussed in chapter 2 and the impact of that orientation on my perspectives.

There are connections made between the theorising of language discussed in chapter 3 and the practicalities of methods applied in the study. Discourses of schooling are discussed for their impact on how I viewed and analysed the conversations, particularly in relation to the construct of positioning. Also explored are ways in which the conversational interactions affect how the participants are positioned, and the implications of such positioning for analysis.

The work of this chapter is to acknowledge the multiple voices inherent in the construct of community, positioned against the backdrop of education discourses, and to describe how the methods used in the study assigned

meaning to the interactions of the conversations. It includes the notion that my changing orientation to the literature shaped the understandings that defined the methodology, as well as the constructs of teaching that I brought to the study as a result of experience.

Chapter 5 – Ethics and unfairness

In the previous chapter were explored some ethical considerations that applied to the study that were made necessary by the philosophical orientation chosen. In this chapter those constructs of fairness are examined in more detail with the intention of clarifying the contribution this makes to the relationship between the individual and the collective, as illustrated by provisions of privilege challenged by demands for equity. The contributions of Pākehā and Māori cultural differences are also discussed.

In this chapter the ideas of *being*, *fairness*, and *culture* are explored as ethical perspectives. In doing so, the intention is to situate constructs of ethics within the whole approach, and demonstrate how those constructs are inseparable from the wider argument. This consideration of ethics is an integral part of the argument and includes interpretations of the concepts of fairness and culture. Unfairness is discussed in terms of privilege and equity, while culture is discussed in terms of Māori and Pākehā, particularly relevant due to the context of the study.

The second section in the chapter explores the concepts of fairness, particularly in terms of privilege and equity considerations. The rationale for this is that privilege and equity are related, being differing interpretations of what is appropriate within a community.

In this study the ethics of participation as a researcher in a research community are connected to the ethics of participation as a teacher in a teacher community. Doing justice to the conversations with the other participants, being fair to the differing perceptions and perspectives they bring, these are fundamentally ethical considerations. What is important, therefore, is to expose the discourses in which the differing conceptions of *being*, *fairness*, and *culture* find their expression. Throughout that process of examining discourses, differences are taken as being complementary rather than in opposition to one another.

Chapter 1 – Outlining the thesis

The sense of individual and collective identities thus serves to create meaning from the ways in which those constructs are developed in relationship. Similarly, the constructs of privilege and equity are treated as existing with each other relative to the meaning of the other. Māori and Pākehā cultural indicators likewise are taken to depend on each other to illustrate their salient features in their contrasts. All these considerations are presented as a poststructural conception where meaning is found in the multiple voices represented at the intersection of language and understandings.

Different notions of *being* bring consequences for connected constructs of *being-in-relationship*. Since *being* and *being-in-relationship* are constructs developed in cultural contexts, so too are the ideas of appropriateness and responsibility as lenses through which individuals and communities view human endeavours. What is needed is a perspective that includes the various contextual aspects that contributed to those ideas. Individuals are necessarily situated in community, and their views therefore depend on just where they are positioned, in what ways and to what extent they are accorded status.

Accepting that understandings of fairness and justice are socially constructed discourses demands an exploration of the traditions within which those discourses are maintained. In particular, what is called for is an examining of the idea of an ‘essential self’ in contrast to the alternative notion of multiple subjectivities that arise from the community context. It was from that starting point that the notions of fairness as connectedness and belonging as an expression of the cultural construction of realities are considered.

Chapter 6 – Changing education discourses

An Aotearoa/New Zealand education context including both individualist and communitarian perspectives can be seen in the discursive history of education policy and practice. In this chapter it is the tension between discourses of privilege and equity in the provision of State education that is considered, as well as the impacts of schooling provisions on Māori. The salient features of education history outlined in this chapter are intended to provide the backdrop for the shaping of contemporary discourses of schooling.

The context of this study also shapes the argument. The education history of Aotearoa/New Zealand has shaped the discourses of schooling as well as the praxis of teachers. State policies included the assimilation of Māori, evidenced in the *one-people* discourses (G. V. Butterworth & Young, 1990). Policies for the education of Māori therefore also impacted on policies for the education of Pākehā.

In this chapter what is explored is some of the policies and practices that prevailed in education during the 19th and 20th centuries. The construct of deservingness arose in the early times when schooling was restricted to those who could afford it, and the education of Māori was provided under the auspices of the churches. In 1877 an Act of Parliament was passed to provide free primary education to all children (Mackey, 1967), and decades later so many of the original features remained evident as to occasion the comment that: “the state has retained the main qualities of the system laid down almost a century ago” (Mackey, 1967, p. 262). For the purposes of this study, the main features of interest are the emphasis on the concept of individuality rather than community, privilege prevailing over equity, and the problems of providing adequately for the needs of Māori in a system oriented to Pākehā cultural values.

By the middle of the 20th century the entitlement to a free education had been extended to include secondary schooling up until the age of 15. This policy resulted in a greater diversity of students attending secondary schools, and consequent pressures to provide for a wider range of needs, including skills for the workforce. The concept of education suited to develop each individual student’s potential to the fullest provided the base onto which such progressive policies were built.

Progressive ideals remained a key driver of the direction of education policy during times of prosperity, but economic difficulties caused a refocusing towards marketable skills and the introduction of neoliberal policies to counter rising unemployment. Those policies were evident in changes to school administration when schools were made self-governing. One of the unintended consequences was an ongoing rise in social inequality. International

comparisons showed Aotearoa/New Zealand losing its leading position in this area, and global comparisons underpinned by discourses of economics eroded the impacts of the previously progressive education policies. Teachers were not immune to these changes as the 21st century began.

Chapter 7 – Free market education

The discourses of schooling that previously prevailed, as discussed in the previous chapter, have continue to influence education policies and teacher practice even as sweeping structural changes accompanied the implementation of neoliberal policies from the late 1980s. Recent OECD reports (2011, 2013, 2014) have drawn the public's attention to various issues, including entrenched inequalities as a consequence of social policies and practices. Neoliberal perspectives position teachers as individually accountable for such inequalities because of the role they play in shaping for students the outcomes of schooling. It is also germane, therefore, to consider how teachers' thinking and praxis are influenced by societal expectations as well as by the traditions of schooling such as those discussed in the previous chapter. Examining fundamental ideas about education involves connecting current ideas with their earlier equivalents in order to better understand how the discourses of schooling influence teachers.

The purpose of this chapter is to make meaning from practices and philosophies of education from the recent past in order to better critique current concepts. It could be argued that current and future pedagogical practices are influenced by changing technologies as much as local or national policies. As an example, notions of success retain strong connections to ideas of competition and deservingness, rather than discourses of equity or citizenship. Equally, the teaching of skills or understandings can be based on foundational concepts of creativity or ideas about the social benefits of conformity. Teaching as a complex activity is predicated on assumptions about learning as well as assumptions of acceptability. A common curriculum shows alignment with ideas about standards, while discovery approaches display some of the characteristics of the scientific method. Individual subjectivities invite teaching approaches that differ from those more suited to understandings of identity derived from

positioning in community. The argument is that teacher understandings are framed by such assumptions.

This chapter explores the impacts of measurement on teachers and schools, particularly comparative international studies. Such studies, emphasising comparisons between different forms of schooling in different countries, have encouraged the acceptance of standards and competition rather than context-specific considerations and the societal consequences of the different education systems. Credentialing and assessment structures have also continued to influence teacher practice.

However, there have also been initiatives with a focus on teacher learning. Those that are discussed in this chapter include the school reform project called *te Kotahitanga*; and the emphasis on teaching with digital technologies with teachers from clusters of schools learning together in the ICTPD (Information and Communications Technologies Professional Development) contracts; as well as the approach called *teaching-as-inquiry*. These initiatives are referred to in the teacher conversations of this study and contribute to the effects of those conversations. In the teacher conversations, it is not simply the evidence of schooling discourses that is important, but the connections between the underlying assumptions and their effects on the teachers both individually and in community. Those connections are the substance of the exploration that follows, which includes elements of teacher praxis and the alignment to individualistic and communitarian perspectives that shape the work of teaching.

Chapter 8 – *Being* in the conversations: individual and community

This is the first of three chapters where I analyse excerpts from the conversations with a particular emphasis on the construction and maintenance of subjectivities. My intention is to illustrate the discursive positioning and re-positioning embedded in teacher collegial interactions. What teachers say to each other, and how they say it, is influenced by the contextual factors and education discourses outlined in the previous two chapters. However, the interactions also contain positioning effects, so I have examined how positions are indicated and acknowledged or challenged.

My starting point is that teachers learn and adapt in a community context where both individualistic and communitarian discourses exert their influence. Schools operate as discursively constructed communities, even though constructs of individuality mask the widespread conformity with tacitly-agreed standards. Institutional guidelines and personal appraisals serve to perpetuate hierarchical structures and defined roles, while “modern technologies of power” (Foucault, 1980, p. 152) serve to restrict the spaces in which teachers might foreground diversity of professional practice.

It is not my intention here to make a case for change as part of the argument. Rather, the contribution of this analysis is to critique the space where teacher praxis becomes at the same time open to change and resistant to it. That space is not simple or bounded with fixed reference points, but is a dynamic and contested area. From this viewpoint, I argue that teachers strongly influence each other to maintain their relative positions within the teacher community, adapting to some aspects of change while resisting others. The substance of analysis arises from interpreting the impact of such adaptation and resistance, illustrated by the discursive positioning within the dialogues. In examining discourses, my intention is to explicate the dynamic effects within the dialogue, the ways in which the participants are positioned and re-positioned. I also explore the effects on the relationship between the participants and on the community.

Teaching praxis represents a situated acknowledgement of the philosophical position explained early in the thesis, where constructs of individuality are reified within community. Teachers and teaching are shaped by their alignment to the expectations of the wider community, yet the teaching community recognises that such expectations include contradictory and divergent goals. Praxis therefore represents being positioned by conflicting community discourses. Institutional traditions and prevailing ideologies influence praxis as much as collegial relationships and the activities of teaching. In this chapter, however, my hope is to expose such dynamics as integral components of community participation. In the process I also theorise the practical impacts of collegial dialogue within contested spaces into a conception of teaching that recognises its complexity.

Chapter 9 – What’s fair? positions of privilege and equity

In this chapter I continue my analysis of excerpts of conversations, exploring how discourses of equity and privilege are reinforced and challenged in the teachers’ perspectives on their praxis. My focus is on the perspectives that teachers provide through the conversational interactions, and I examine these perspectives to see what movement might be occurring.

Some positions were readily available, while others appeared a step too far. In the analysis I have approached the constructs of privilege and equity as moral distinctions, and teaching as an essentially moral activity for individual interpretation within a community context. Therefore, in studying the excerpts I am critiquing value judgements and the effects of these on the interactions.

What I examine includes whether positions regarding values or morality are approached directly, or whether a recognition of the secular standing of state schools promotes a neutral stance, and if such positioning might be conferred by avoidance.

Chapter 10 – Māori and Pākehā: differing perspectives

In this chapter I continue my analysis of conversation excerpts, and the focus is on cultural discourses, with particular attention to the positions taken up by the teachers with regard to *Te Kōtahitanga* and the different Pākehā and Māori perspectives that are apparent. The aspects of *Te Kōtahitanga* that are discussed by the teachers mainly include talk about the co-construction meetings where teachers work in a group to improve their approaches to meeting the needs of Māori students in their classes. However, I also examine teacher perspectives on the outcomes of their involvement with the programme, particularly their responses to the emphasis on evidence and constructs of professional development in general.

The different perspectives that are offered in the teacher dialogues also shape the effects on practice and on teacher beliefs and values. The effects of the verbal interactions are assessed for their wider impact on the teacher community. In particular, my attention is focused on the positioning that teachers demonstrate in the excerpts, the extent to which they are influenced by discourses of experience, and their attitudes to expectations that they should

reposition their classroom approaches. Underpinning the critique is a consideration of the influence of discourses of individuality and community, as well as the effects of these on what the teachers report as reflective practice, and on their collegial interactions.

Chapter 11 – Drawing conclusions and outlining implications

In this chapter I begin by briefly reviewing the main threads that have been interwoven throughout the thesis. This includes the philosophical orientation I adopted that was elaborated on in Chapter two, and the considerations of how language is used as discussed in Chapter three as well as the concepts of fairness and culture explored in Chapter four. Then I discuss the conclusions that I have drawn from Chapters 8–10, those three chapters of examples and analysis of the conversational interactions within the teacher community and the effects of the dialogues in positioning the participants.

Since the changing context of education in Aotearoa/New Zealand, outlined in chapters six and seven, has been important as the discursive backdrop for analysis, I refer to the ways in which the discourses of schooling have eschewed communitarian perspectives in favour of individualistic understandings, how provisions for Māori education continue to be dominated by Pākehā concerns, and how global economic drivers and free-market discourses have influenced education policies and teacher understandings. If the issue of Māori underachievement is to be effectively addressed by the current policy which encourages schools and teachers to work together in communities, it is important that such groupings engage with other than the dominant discourses.

Throughout this discussion, I consider some implications of the study. These include the ongoing concerns about the disparities between schooling outcomes for students as well as the gap between the desires for innovation and the practices of conformity. That gap is briefly discussed in relation to the Ministry of Education policies called *Investing in Educational Success* and *Innovative Learning Environments*, both of which seek a similar result: the improvement of measurable student achievements.

Also included is the analysis of an excerpt where one of the participants talks with the researcher about the conversations in the study itself. This provides an

example of teacher thinking about this study as situated research, but also illustrates how teacher reflection includes several components, connecting observations that are incidental to the topic.

This final chapter concludes with suggestions for teacher collegial research, with the expectation that lessons can be learned from the success of Finland in achieving excellent results in international comparisons, partly as a result of developing a culture of teacher research into their practice. In particular, experienced teachers are a valuable resource for the window they provide into community norms, and their collaboration in research could prove productive for the learning gained.

Making space for teacher voice: Chapter conclusion

The work of this chapter has been to introduce the study as well as some background to it, to explain the research questions that are the focus, to describe the key concepts and topics that direct the study as well as to outline the methodology and the structure of the thesis – how the chapters are organised. This overview was intended to set the expectations of the reader and make apparent the connections between the different parts. In doing so it serves as an analogy for the construct of community on which the thesis is based.

In keeping with the intent of the study that teacher voices be better heard, the following excerpt is included to demonstrate teacher engagement with the details of schooling and the accompanying critique that highlights teacher concerns. These concerns about teacher professional learning (PL) indicate that the study and its implications might make some contribution to the theory and practice of education in this country.

The conversation in excerpt 2 below is further discussion about the wording on a form that has been designed for teachers to request permission to attend some professional learning offering. The series of questions posed and acknowledged but not answered illustrates how the dialogue is contingent on the shared dynamic. The questions are in effect rhetorical, and provide a recognition of common understandings, but they also collectively function as a request to confirm commonality, sharing the sense of belonging in the teacher community.

Excerpt 2 – “in what ways are we going to get collegial and spread it?”

1		the goal’s up here .. the key pedagogy is
2	[nods] yes ..	here, so .. when you go away, what will
3		be the professional learning focus – is it
4	..	pedagogy, is it institutional
5		transformation, is it leadership, is it
6	[nodding]	evidence . . . so when you go away you
7		get filled up or .. transformed, which .. in
8		what ways are we going to get collegial
9	right ..	and spread it .. so, it’s this matter of
10	right ..	simple .. simply highlighting and if you
11		have a look at the old form, ohh, it’s
12	I know I’ve .. [laughs]	terrible ..
13	been there done that ..	
14		[quoting] “ <i>can you let us know why</i>
15		<i>more than one person should go to this</i>
16	yes, yes ..	<i>PL?</i> ” course, they called them
17	courses, yes ..	‘ courses ’ .. ohhh no .. and so
18		if it’s actually focused on pedagogical
19		understanding, institutional
20		transformation .. who cares how many
21	[nodding] exactly ..	go .. [chuckles]
22	exactly..	we would, we would happily
23	very good, very good	cover for each other as colleagues, eh?
24	[reading the document] does	
25	that go to the PL committee	
26	again now? .. right	yeah, it’s already been

The excerpt begins with the language of business: “the goal . . . the key . . . the focus” (2-1,3), but this is then blended with a social perspective “in what ways are we going to get collegial and spread it” (2-7), and an assertion of

connectedness and community with the statement “we would happily cover for each other as colleagues, eh?” (2-22). Although these are examples of quite disparate ideological positions, they are merged into the discussion without distinction, indicating that both neoliberal and socially progressive discourses are embedded in this part of the teacher community.

The participants are positioning themselves as professionals whose voices are expected to be heard. With the questioning, “is it pedagogy, is it institutional transformation, is it leadership, is it evidence” (2-3), the phrasing and constructs are consistent with business-oriented practice, showing the impact of neoliberal discourses. In contrast, the position of protest and resistance, supporting discourses of democracy, is apparent in the expression of mock despair: “course, they called them ‘**courses**’ .. ohhh no” (2-16). Making use of whatever discourses fit the occasion, the participants show the use of blurred boundaries with co-existing dissonance in an example of reducing complexity through a pragmatic approach of “what works”.

This, then, is one task of the study, to understand and describe how the sharing of experiences based on that simple philosophy of pragmatism offers space for teachers to navigate the complexity of their work while keeping them connected in community. Exploring that construct of community in more depth is the task of the next chapter.

Chapter 2 – Ideas of individuality and community

In this chapter I examine commonly-held ideas of the individual and some implications that result when viewing the subject from a range of alternate perspectives. In particular, I expand on the ideas of community introduced previously to consider the implications for understandings of how people function as individuals within a social ecosystem.

From an outline of conceptions of the self as an individual, and alternate constructions of the self as existing only in community, I explore how the languaging of ideas about individuality has occupied a central position in the provision of state education in Aotearoa/New Zealand from its inception until the present day. This atomised construct of the individual has shaped the ways in which schooling has been understood, particularly influenced from the 1930s by a psychology of the individual “as an organism” (Rugg, 1938b, p. 133), as well as the physicality of individual desks in classrooms. My intention in exploring the constructs of individuality is to situate the study in a theoretical frame, and to sketch out the limitations of remaining constrained by too close an adherence to an individualistic view. However, I also want to open a space for a different approach that finds commonalities with the marginalised discourses of community that are particularly familiar to Māori and Pacific peoples.

Excerpt 3 – "just . . . two different ways of doing things"

1	yes ..	my partner's doing distance study ..
2		and when they go to .. um .. when they go to
3		do their .. work at the Uni .. they've got to
4		find their own accommodation, they've got
5		to feed themselves, we have to meet all the
6		costs personally [whereas] .. when I used to
7		go to my one-week block courses or
8		whatever .. in the holidays or when I was on
9		study leave .. um .. there's accommodation
10	right ..	at the marae .. or in the motels owned
11	.. right ..	by the whare wānanga .. all our

12		meals are taken care of .. I don't have to
13		worry about what I'm going to eat .. and
14	.. yes ..	with all of those barriers .. all of that stuff
15	.. yeah [nodding]	.. so that we can focus on the
16		learning .. whereas going to the Uni, there's
17		worries about where to stay, how much it's
18		going to cost, what and where to eat, what
19		about the petrol, is it possible to carpool ..
20	.. yes ..	so that's just a comparison of
21		two different ways of doing things ..
22	mm .. so the learning ..	
23	because you don't have all	
24	those things to worry	
25	about .. is a lot richer for	
26	you?	[nods] yeah .. because you don't
27		have to worry

The teacher in this excerpt talks about the effects of the difference between the Pākehā and Māori approaches, and in doing so invites an alternate perspective that acknowledges “different ways of doing things” (3-21).

I want to ask: what constitutes seeing the figure now like this, now another way? — Do I really see something different every time? Or do I merely *interpret* what I see in a different way? — I am inclined to say the first. *But why?* Well, interpreting is a procedure. (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 37e, §208)⁶

Viewing the two institutional approaches of the University and the Wānanga comparatively is an example that illustrates Wittgenstein's point about perspective. The procedure of interpreting, when I ask “so the learning . . . is a lot richer for you?” (3-22 — 3-26), follows the description. In that *interpreting*

⁶ “Ich will fragen: Worin besteht es, die Figur einmal so, einmal anders sehen? — Sehe ich wirklich jedesmal etwas Anderes? Oder *deute* ich nur, was ich sehe, auf verschiedene Weise? — Ich bin geneigt, das erste zu sagen. *Aber warum?* Nun, Deuten ist eine Handlung” (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 37, §208)

and the subsequent agreement “[nods] yeah” (3-26), there is confirmation not only of common understanding but also of values positioning, because the use of the modifier “just” (3-20) invites a response. That response recognises the preference for the communitarian norms of connectedness apparent in the Māori Wānanga in contrast to the University approach that exemplifies the neoliberal emphasis on individual choice. The rejection of the focus on individual choice that underpins neoliberal policy is apparent with the criticism implicit in the negative connotations of the words “worry” (3-13), “barriers” (3-14) and “**stuff**” (3-14). In contrast, the support available at the Wānanga includes “accommodation at the marae” (3-9) and having “meals . . . taken care of” (3-11) in order to make it easier to “focus on the learning” (3-15), but individual choice is constrained as a consequence.

“I am because we are”⁷: positioning self in community⁸.

Every society is shaped not only by those who occupy positions of leadership within a hierarchy of power, but indeed by the active participation of all the members of a community in collectively reinforcing patterns of interaction.

The question becomes whether we accept individuation, individuality, and independent identity as the starting ground for inquiry (characterizations of the self-other relationship fundamental to the Western [sic] mindset), or whether we understand the concept of self as epistemically related to other through self-other unity. (Heshusius, 1994, p. 17)

In this section I articulate more fully the concept of community as the bedrock, the base on which individualistic understandings have been constructed, and in doing so, I am offering one answer to Heshusius’ question above. My response is premised on the social construction of selves, language, and interactions. I argue that a focus on individuality marginalises the awareness of connectedness, that language situates people always in culture and community,

⁷ (Metz & Gaie, 2010, p. 274)

⁸ Note: *this section* (pages 48-58) is adapted from a paper I delivered at the 2014 PESA Conference: Education as Philosophies of Engagement (Alford, 2014). The paper was titled: “Engagement in dialogue: discovering common discourses, despite the dissonance”.

and that dialogue and engagement with others is an essential ingredient in the ongoing process of becoming. The grammar of engagement can be learned just as easily in a discursive context that emphasises connectedness as in one that is founded on separateness. Fluency comes with better understanding, from practice.

Socially constructed as individuals: origins of self in community

The interpretations that people make, of events and of interactions involving themselves and others, are socially mediated. Accordingly, the whole notion of individuality is predicated on acceptance of cultural perspectives that find expression and value in community functioning.

Social construction presents a paradox: that the sense of *self*, of autonomy, of separateness, is simply what has been learned in the social context of existence: that “we are socially constructed . . . as individuals” (Peters & Marshall, 1996, p. 179). The context of individualistic ways of thinking and behaving teaches differentiation, focusing attention on *personal* perspectives, based on the *person* that is encapsulated in a body. From birth, people are socialized to believe in the uniqueness, not only of bodily distinctiveness, but also of thinking, creativity. Children rapidly learn to ascribe *personal* meaning to what they hear and what they see, to imitate others and understand their contribution to meaning-making through the effects of their voicing and their actions. Yet as they learn to distinguish and to particularise, they also learn to disattend the *process* of construction and their situatedness as always in community.

From life beginnings in a world dominated by Pākehā values and thinking, children are taught how to respond to the stimuli of the environment, how to interpret the bodily responses that bracket experiences, and what signifiers to remember. Caregivers socialize them, both directly and indirectly, as to what is significant and what should be ignored. In doing so, they learn to participate in a community that acts as the composite source of their worldview, regardless of whether that community acknowledges that “the origin and foundations of the self, like those of thinking, are social” (Mead, 1962, p. 173). They are taught ways of being and belonging in community. They develop understandings of their world as they observe and engage with others. They learn constructs such

as *self* and *community*, not in separateness but in belonging to a group. “In acquiring one’s conception of the world one always belongs to a particular grouping which is that of all the social elements which share the same mode of thinking and acting” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 324). Belonging to a group, for Gramsci, shows in the recognisably similar ways of being in the world, in conforming. But conforming is not restricted to ways of thinking or acting — conforming also means being shaped by the meta-narratives that are implicit in group membership. “Being a member of a group generates our self-concept in ways that seem to defy the notion that societies are a collection of individual selves” (B. M. Hood, 2012, p. 183). Commonalities that are indicators of group membership are also, arguably, de-individualising.

Other writers have promoted the idea of the self as a social construct from perspectives quite different from Gramsci’s or Hood’s assertions. Harré views the self through a social constructionist lens as a realisation of the beliefs and values of a community: “the self owes its form and perhaps its very existence to the circumambient social order” (Harré, 1983, p. 256). Another postmodern philosopher, Schrag (1997), emphasises the connectedness of a self in community, conceptualised as patterns of interrelating with others in combination with the discursive traditions implicit in the ways community practices and beliefs reinforce each other. “The self in community is a self situated in this space of communicative praxis, historically embedded, existing with others, inclusive of predecessors, contemporaries, and successors” (Schrag, 1997, p. 109). This perspective is similar to that argued by the theologian Hauerwas and the philosopher Oakeshott, with both denying the positioning of a self as a distinct entity: “the “self” names not a thing but a relation” (Oakeshott, 1959, p. 17). The common thread in all of these approaches is effectively summed up by Rose: “The self’ . . . appears a much more contingent, heterogeneous, culturally relative notion than it purports to be, dependent on a whole complex of other cultural beliefs, values, and forms of life” (Rose, 1996, p. 6).

The community context of learning language through interaction

Language is learned, not in isolation, but in interaction within a community. As a consequence, the notions that underpin beliefs and values are necessarily contextual, since such beliefs and values must be expressed in language that is common and understood within the community of others.

How individuals interact with others is influenced by conceptions of the *self* in combination with conceptions of *other*. Since conceptions of self develop within the communities of experience, and conceptions of others are constructed in the same frames, then understandings of *self* are shaped by the language available, as words and ideas intertwine with the physicalities of life, always situated in community. Learning language is about more than just words — it is also about concepts. Edwards (1990) explains how the idea of an individual occupies the centre-stage in Pākehā thinking: “one learns to use the first person — one becomes an 'I' — just as one learns everything else basic to one's language, namely, by being taught it in language by a community of others” (Edwards, 1990, p. 234). Thinking about selves is constrained by the language context. “Quests for my own word are in fact quests for a word that is not my own, a word that is more than myself” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 149). Individuals cannot take ownership of words, let alone the thoughts that words express, because language is a shared resource. Engaging with others and engaging with ideas are both predicated on communal understandings developed by experiencing similar usage. Wittgenstein (1967) argued that language influences interpretation of more than just verbal utterances. Context is everything. Ideas, conceptions of *self* and reality, and fundamentally individual knowledge and use of language are all bounded by the sum of past interactions. Individuals live and change within a constantly evolving web of connectedness.

Engagement is participation with others in a dynamic that is both physical and metaphysical. People convey meanings in the way they stand, the gestures they make and the expressions that flit across their faces, and those meanings have been learned by interacting and by observing. Individuals move their mouths and speak in words that are not their own, for in language all enjoy a shared resource. Individuals think, using the language of their “*everyday*” world

(Wittgenstein, 1969, p. 44e, §347), as if their understanding rather than their socialization was the basis for their acting. Engaging with others involves initiating as well as responding, and in this, noticing and acting are inseparable. Meaning and understanding of language is demonstrated by what is done in response (Edwards, 1990).

Discourses and positioning in community

Conversations do much more than share understandings; they reinforce some discursive positions while at the same time they trouble others. Dialogue is a connective activity predicated on practices of mutuality, sharing and changing positions as individuals relate to each other. It is not fixed or bounded. It is something that happens both in thinking and without thought. In conversation individuals create meanings for themselves and with others. Yet such meanings are fluid, as the participants continue to add words and reshape their understandings. “There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future)” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 170). In conversation individuals participate in reconstructing language in a social dynamic that connects them to their contexts and shapes their sense of self, other, and community. Dialogue is never static, and everything people say, think, and do has a context. Bakhtin (1984) argued for a dialogic understanding of consciousness, a connectedness between life and language, awareness and being. Such an understanding situates individuals always in community, necessarily engaged with others.

Positioning ... is the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines. There can be interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another. And there can be reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 48)

Seeing a *self* as an *individual being* invites the same perspective on others, and to engage with them as equally distinct entities. Conversely, a communitarian perspective on others demands at least part of such *individuality* to be ceded to a discursive shaping by others, for in dialogue, “by reacting to the actions of

others our replies are never wholly our own; in being always . . . ‘shaped’ by influences beyond our control” (Shotter, 1996, p. 8). To engage is to experience connection through a recognition of mutual understandings. For this to happen there needs to be some discursive alignment, some elements of contextual overlap. Engagement through a lens of connectedness refines a cybernetic interpretation of society as a networked system (Nemo, 1978) where people are “nodal points” (Lyotard, 1985, p. 15), to a recognition of the closeness and complexity with which individuals in a community are “bound together” (Beer, 2008, p. xx) in an “ontological coimplication [sic]” (Wilson, 2004, p. 69) of ecological relationships with other organisms. By extension, this could equally apply to human technologies as contributors to shaping selves and others. Individuals are inescapably enmeshed in community.

Whanaungatanga: connectedness and relationships

In Māori traditions, conversations are more about fostering connections than negotiating differences, more about finding and sharing mutual understandings than establishing hierarchy. This approach echoes the perspective that language is simply part of the *activity* of being in community.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand there exists a Māori language term *whanaungatanga*, which refers to the connectedness of kinship ties or “a relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging” (Moorfield, 2011). The suffix *-tanga* “emphasises the *continuous* [emphasis added] act of what precedes it” (Elder, 2010, p. 4). Connected to the concept of *whanaungatanga* is the genealogical concept of *whakapapa*, with its “ideas of orderliness, sequence, evolution and progress” (Jahnke & Taiapa, 2003, p. 41), employed by Māori “to funnel the relation between past, present and future, and tie it together” (Metge, 1995, p. 90). Kinship, connectedness, and community are integral to a Māori worldview. Shared understandings, cooperation and responsibility are core aspects of *tikanga* (customs) which “can be summed up in the words *aroha* (love in the broadest sense, including mutuality), *awhi* (helpfulness), *manaaki* (hospitality), and *tiaki* (guidance)” (Bishop, Ladwig, & Berryman, 2014, p. 189).

Maori customary concepts are interconnected through a *whakapapa* (genealogical structure) that links *te taha wairua* (spiritual aspects) and *te taha kikokiko* (physical aspects). . . . This intricately woven *whakapapa* has often made defining individual customary concepts extremely difficult, as each concept is defined by its relationship with other concepts and not in isolation. (Ka'ai, 2008, p. 58)

Engagement, then, in Māori terms, can be seen as a holistic array of related concepts rather than an isolated aspect. This aligns with the sort of thinking that Wittgenstein (1975) applies in his discussion of propositions and reality: “when I lay a yardstick against a spatial object, I apply *all the graduation marks simultaneously*” (p. 317). Neither a proposition nor a concept can be understood in isolation. Language is words in relationship. Engagement is people in relationship. In a well-known Māori *whakataukī* (proverb), we are also enjoined to retain connectedness to the teachings of our caregivers, since these were the product of experience: ‘Kia mau koe ki te kupu a tōu matua’ (Brougham, Reed, & Kāretu, 1999, p. 8; Colenso, 1879, p. 131, §114) — *Hold fast to the words your father gives you*. In traditional Māori communities it is with a grammar of relationship rather than a lexicon of individual identities where meaning is situated and understood.

Relationships have many dimensions. Relationships within a community contribute to the positioning of some values, ideas, and practices as central or pervasive, and other ways of being and thinking as more marginal or sparse. Interactions between individuals in a community serve to both strengthen and challenge what is considered central and what is more marginal. As Wittgenstein argued:

“So you are saying that **human agreement** [emphasis added] decides what is true and what is false?” — It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in **form of life** [emphasis added] (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 75e, §241).

A form of life is shaped by the discursive context to which, however, individuals typically remain oblivious. People “disattend the pane of glass to look at the view out the window, so we generally disattend discourse. It is not until the glass fractures or breaks, for example, that we focus differently” (Davies, 1993, p. 153). What is deemed acceptable is not so, simply because of agreement in the language used, but rather because the relationships and connectedness to each other in community reflect the language of agreement. Language and behaviours — ways of thinking and ways of engaging with each other — are intertwined because “the epistemic and ethical practices of human beings are all essentially linguistic ones” (Edwards, 1990, p. 210). Language is essentially action — it creates meaning in the effects it produces. By engaging with others, individuals contribute their contextual understandings of the language being used. Individuals also illustrate the customs of community in the interpretations they apply to the signifiers others use as they engage together in dialogue. Consequently, “instances of “private” interpretation . . . make sense only against a public, institutional background of such interpretations: a background consisting of their formulation, their acknowledgment, and their use” (Edwards, 1990, p. 169).

Navigating a labyrinth: engagement between complementary modes

Of course, it needs to be said that a focus on individuality and difference implicitly acknowledges commonality and conformity. The concepts of separateness and connectedness are complementary, each relying on the other to add a fullness of meaning.

The concept of individuality is a fundamental rule of the language games played out in Pākehā cultural settings. By its presence the resulting philosophies of engagement include the language of *self*-other. In the language of self-other, engagement implies a reinforcement of difference. In contrast, in the language of community, of *whanaungatanga*, engagement is about strengthening connections. “Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from *one* side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 69e, §203). Different expectations apply when engaging with people whose frames of thinking and

ideas are closely aligned to one's own, as opposed to those whose context makes them strange. On the one hand, it is easy to engage with some people, whereas with others “we do not *understand* the people . . . We cannot find our feet with them” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 190).

Given what both forms of philosophy offer, it is important to learn to move between these complementary perspectives, between individualistic conceptions of selves and communitarian ways of being. Wittgenstein explored this in his *Philosophical Remarks*:

One of the most misleading representational techniques in our language is the use of the word 'I' ... It would be instructive to replace this *way of speaking* [emphasis added] by another in which immediate experience would be represented without using the personal pronoun; for then we'd be able to see that the previous representation wasn't essential to the facts (Wittgenstein, 1975, p. 88, §57).

It is the way of speaking, that is, the forms of expression learned in community, which is accorded a “privileged status” (Wittgenstein, 1975, p. 89, §58) in comparison with other ways of thinking. Individuals have learned to speak and to think in the words and grammar of their culturally-situated language. However, it is clear that many people speak more than one language, and are able to participate in the epistemic, ontological, and practical aspects of life in more than one community. Learning to see through different discursive constructs is to develop proficiency with new forms of expression. When Wittgenstein wrote “Meaning is a physiognomy” (1953, p. 128, §568), he was suggesting that many aspects contribute to meaning-making and that there are different ways of interpreting. It is not by observing the mouth or the eyes in isolation but in their combination that the meanings of facial expressions become known (Edwards, 1990). Making sense of a physiognomy entails examining both the overall impact and the individual aspects (M. Polanyi, 1961). Meaning is better understood by attending to both.

Attending primarily to individual components, using the word ‘I’ to centre *self* in meaning-making, reduces the opportunity to discover what other nuances

might become available from re-contextualizing engagement through a prism of connectedness with one another. “To say “I” is to disconnect myself from the others and from discourse with others” (Lingis, 2007, p. 40). Engaging with others is enhanced not by focusing ever more intently on just one side of contributions to a dialogue, but becoming more acutely aware of the relationship being produced and connections to another through that relationship. Halliday (2005a) describes language as “a system of meanings” (p. 63), a “semiotic system . . . best thought of not as a set of symbols but as a system of connections” (p. 70), producing meaning that is “not only ideational, . . . [but] also interpersonal” (p. 70). It is not enough to think of language as comprising signifiers that *express* meaning — language also plays a *semogenic* role, *creating* meaning, with grammar as its “source of energy” (Halliday, 2005b, p. 329). Dialogue is not engagement with others only to *share* understandings, it is to *create* them; and the power to create them comes from the common language available, but much more than that, it arises from the capacity to collaborate, to make interpersonal connections, to develop a relationship.

“Language is not a *medium* for our lives and practices; rather it is the stuff of life itself, the thread out of which all our patterns of thought and action are woven” (Edwards, 1990, p. 211). By engaging with others in conversation it is possible to comprehend mutuality. Looking for connectivity helps extend understandings, build trust, and confirm a place in the wider community. In practising such engagement, the valuing of difference can enhance a repertoire of connecting practices, finding links by responding to lexical cues, allowing curiosity to open lines of inquiry that bridge the gap of *other*-ness. Widening attention to include alternate conceptions, different values, and unfamiliar ways of being provides an invitation to engage more adeptly with the stranger, the outlier, and the immigrant to a community, opening space to *be* the foreigner, the outsider to someone else’s construction of reality.

Emphasizing difference over commonality creates an imbalance. In dialogue there are opportunities to merge individual and community-oriented perspectives. The construct of community fosters understandings of interactions in networks of connectedness as being established and extended

through a process of engagement. Since modes of relating are based on ideas shaped by language, more can become accessible by excavating through the layers of individualistic thinking to reveal the communitarian bedrock beneath. Differentiation is frequently connected with individualism, but is not marginalized by communitarian approaches — on the contrary, differentiation brought about within the processes of social construction is both integral and expected. Dialogue represents participation in acting out difference as well as likeness. In commonality are found resemblance and matching. In divergence, insights and extensions to normative thinking can be discovered. Engaging with others consolidates the discourses of belonging in community. It also enlarges the boundaries of thinking and being to connect with different aspects of collective human functioning. Engagement is learning to bridge language gaps, growing the capacity to make links between the familiar and the unknown, changing what is seen and heard. Conversation is collaborative, meaning is infinitely malleable.

Disconnections: traditions and ideals in education

The state education system that emphasizes individual achievement and personalized learning is a paradox. Education, broadly speaking, has found its purpose in the maintenance of social order or the betterment of society.

The origins of the use of the word [individual] can be explained quite easily: it is simply the result of translating literally the Greek word "atomon," which can be used in just this sense of 'individual' or 'individual thing'. Aristotle, in the *Categories*, . . . is the first to use the term in this way. (Frede, 1987, p. 50)

One of the main aspects of the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) is the importance accorded to connectedness, with an acknowledgement that students are part of their communities and need to be able to relate well to others even as they learn to manage themselves. There is a clear recognition that teaching and learning are not atomistic pursuits, independent of their school and classroom contexts. Despite this, in secondary schools, and particularly in the senior school, high-stakes assessments have a focus on individual learning and credentialing in an environment that seeks to blend competitive and co-

operative behaviours. One of the consequences is that traditions of meritocratic thought are privileged rather than considerations of equity.

The notions of equality and fairness have been associated with the philosophy of education from the time of Plato. “If they [women] are to do the same work as men, they should have the same upbringing (τροφή) and education (παιδεία)” (Jaeger, 1947, p. 244). Plato’s ideal was to provide the same education for young women as that enjoyed by the young men he used as his reference point. His philosophy has been extended in terms of fairness to include equality of opportunity, or the right for each child to an education, interpreted in democratic societies by calls for free schooling, first for younger children, and then for adolescents. However, problems of fairness and equity have remained and these are explored further in chapter 5.

The philosophical problems with Plato’s call arise from a clash between sameness and fairness. Providing the same education for all can be seen as fair, but it advantages those who have cultural backgrounds similar to the designers of the curriculum. Equity considerations, particularly as they apply to those from disadvantaged backgrounds, present challenges to such approaches. Equally, conventions of hierarchical thinking demand that a society educates its potential leaders differently, in order that their extra learning provide the wisdom needed to advantage the community as a whole. Ideas of privilege and equity are therefore complementary in terms of social impact.

Sacrosanct ideas: Augustine and the first-person standpoint

Self-concept and reflexivity remain evident in current thinking, noticeable in discourses of personal responsibility and accountability promulgated by modern technologies of power (Foucault, 1976/2008). This first-person standpoint has been carried forward from times and cultural contexts quite different from the present.

Augustine added to Plato’s influence by contributing to Western culture the notion of inward reflection (C. Taylor, 1989). A philosophy of individual worth and responsibility was strengthened. Yet in admitting the limits of his power to express his understandings, Augustine argued that the limit of his language was the crucial factor in his insularity: “What then is time? If no one asks me, I

know: if I wish to explain it to someone who asks me, I don't know" (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 36e, §89)⁹. Language does not in itself serve to explain but rather acts as a medium whereby explanation becomes possible. Even so, it is often inadequate to this purpose, breaking down not so much from the lack of common understandings, but rather from the absence of forms of expression. Yet the limitations of the first-person perspective have not diminished its influence.

Discourses of the self show an amazing resilience in the traditions of Western civilization. The notions of freedom, equality, justice and leadership all carry traces of their connections to the construct of the individual self. However, there are contrasting traditions that have endured in text and in practice for just as long as those given form by Plato and Socrates, for example, the Confucian tradition emphasises metaphor and allusion over fixed definition, and elevates discourses of *becoming* above the notions of fixed attributes (Lam, 2014). Language, ideas, and beliefs are intertwined with culture, and the first-person standpoint is therefore very much a contextual truth.

Exchange, reciprocity and signifiers: a poststructural conception

In poststructural philosophy context-sensitive multiple identities define a self. "In finding ourselves ordered to speak in our own name, we find ourselves being circumscribed, called to account, the space of our impassioned experiences annexed to the group" (Lingis, 2007, p. 91). It is impossible to speak except with the understandings, values, and logic implicit in the shared language of a community. Each individual participates in the ongoing process of disseminating, through what is said and what is left unsaid, accentuated with gesture and expression, always adapting to the engagement and responses of the other or others. That is how culture is transmitted, how traditions are continually refreshed, and how selves are given definition. It is always in context and in relationship, associated with language, linked with others. In post-structural understandings, individual consciousness is created by such learnings (Belsey, 2002).

⁹ "quid est ergo tempus? si nemo ex me quaerat scio; si quaerenti explicare velim, nescio" (Augustinus, 397AD/2008. Book XI, Chapter 14, §17)

Culture depends on exchange, reciprocity, and signifiers. Cultural norms are reproduced in the external demonstrations of their internalised conceptions. Subjectivities are the creatures of shared associations, produced by externalities. Distinct separate identities in the individualistic traditions of self-other are simply examples of the dualities redolent of Western thought, the binary oppositions of thesis and antithesis that privilege distinctiveness over connectedness rather than acknowledging the value of both. The value of a poststructural perspective arises from the implicit acknowledgements that it is language-in-use that steers meaning-making, and that a curiosity or orientation to inquiry is more helpful than a focus on seeking truths (Belsey, 2002).

Mahi Tahi (working together) as an alternate framework

Valuing Māori cultural traditions requires revisiting the prevalent identity discourses of Pākehā interactions. “I want to say: an education quite different from ours might also be the foundation for quite different concepts” (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 69e, §387)¹⁰. Aotearoa/New Zealand has strong traditions of egalitarian thinking (McCreanor, 1995; McDonald & Livingstone, 1984; Olssen, 1996; Shallcrass, 1967). Despite this, an ongoing tension remains between the different conceptions of what are appropriate values and emphases for an upbringing and an education that acknowledges and supports the distinctive cultural backgrounds of both Māori and Pākehā as Treaty partners.

New Zealand’s founding document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi), guaranteed to Māori the same rights as Pākehā, but young Māori leaders in the early 1900s were convinced that Māori needed to make a transition to more Pākehā ways of living (Orange, 2011). They were largely successful in persuading Māori to make such changes and adapt. Nevertheless, the philosophical collective orientation and the retention of kinship ties have remained important, particularly in rural areas such as Northland and the East Coast of the North Island, where Māori customs and language retain their influence. It is problematic, however, that the institutions of state, particularly schools, have made it extremely difficult for non-European philosophies to gain traction and acceptance (Devine, 2013). Connectedness, collective agreement,

¹⁰ “Ich will sagen: eine ganz andere Erziehung als die unsere könnte auch die Grundlage ganz andere Begriffe sein” (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 69, §387)

and holistic communitarian ways of thinking and cultural traditions suffer as a result.

Changing the emphasis, recognising the importance of a common good, and working collectively towards it, that is the essence of *mahi tahi* (Ka'ai, 2008). Addressing such a challenge, changing the system so that Māori traditions in particular, as well as those of other minority cultures are validated, would provide a platform for a more ambicultural¹¹ society with not simply *acceptance* but rather a *valuing* of such non-European histories. However, Pākehā discourses continue to dominate societal thinking (McCreanor, 1995).

Teachers bring such discourses into their relationships with their students and each other, but change is possible (Bishop, 2008; Hickling Hudson, 2003). For example, an ongoing emphasis on the teaching of literacy in schools privileges the skills and attitudes that already exist in middle-class Pākehā backgrounds, whereas many of the students from Māori families have different emphases in their social contexts. Literacy's traditional high status comes from its historical scarcity and the preserve of an educated minority. While there is no doubt that literacy is important to contemporary contexts and employment opportunities, oral traditions have been diminished as a consequence. A truly bicultural emphasis would accord status to both traditions, as well as other aspects that acknowledge heteronomy and connectedness rather than emphasising autonomy and distinctiveness¹².

The concept of community for Māori is much more than the aggregation of individuals understood from a neoliberal perspective. For Māori, and for many other groups, community has a quality of sentiment that accompanies the geographic locatedness of belonging. For teachers, too, the sense of belonging to a teaching fraternity is more than a professional identity; it is a way of thinking and being. Theorising community therefore requires paying attention to these

¹¹ refer Chen and Miller (2010), and Hēnare (2014, p. 64) "The ambicultural approach recognises the preferred core values and best cultural practices of the Māori partner of the treaty, who draws also on the best practices of the dominant Anglo-Western orientated New Zealand. Biculturalism in New Zealand suggests two cultures, Māori and Pākehā, living separately".

¹² In connection with this frame of reference, it is worth noting the African concept of *ubuntu* which stresses interdependence (Battle, 2009; More, 2006; Swanson, 2007)

aspects and more, including the socio-political ramifications (Peters & Marshall, 1996). The Māori concept of *mahi tahi* effectively includes these considerations and provides an alternative construct with which to interpret networks of inter-relationships in general and conversations in particular. For example, acknowledging and accepting such profoundly inter-subjective experiences as giggling and laughter (Critchley, 2002) demonstrate not only commonality, but also engagement with *others* in the creation of shared meaning. Equally, silent consensus and unspoken negotiation are integral in shaping community mores and claims of identity (Krajewski & Schröder, 2008; Wenger, 1998). Different cultures and their effects on the formation of individual minds play the dominant role in creating identity (Pagel, 2012). Theorising learning is philosophising *being*.

Constructs of being: chapter conclusion

Tensions in education between discourses of fairness arise from similar tensions between perspectives on the nature of *being*, as well as from different cultural traditions. The work of this chapter has been to situate the study in a philosophical tradition alongside its educational frames impacted by the historical features of state-provided education in Aotearoa/New Zealand as well as the geographically isolated Gisborne setting with bicultural and low socio-economic factors influencing the discursive positioning of the participants.

In the course of my arguments in this chapter, I have attempted to highlight some of the main features of the western constructs of the individual self. In doing so, I have foregrounded some of the associated positionings available in order to contrast these with what becomes possible with a more collective, community-oriented set of understandings. In addition, I have illustrated how the strength and resilience of such concepts of individuality have maintained their central position in the provision of education since the arrival of European settlers in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and correspondingly pushed social constructs of community towards the margins. In doing so I have sought to provide a philosophical basis for the analysis of the transcripts of the teacher conversations, so that I might outline the continuing impact of such ideas of

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individuality on teacher thinking and praxis, and what is precluded as a consequence.

Additionally, I have explored the notion of fairness in the provision of public education. Focusing on individual selves provides alignment with neoliberal discourses of capitalism and competition, whereas embracing collective understandings challenges those discourses with demands for more socially-oriented approaches. Collective ways of being imply connectedness and collaboration rather than conformity. Diversity in what are represented as truths enhances culturally distinctive values and beliefs.

Chapter 3 – Language and conversation

In the previous chapter, my focus was on the philosophical orientations of individuality and community, of separateness and connectedness. In suggesting a reconceptualising of Pākehā conceptions of self, I hoped to open space for a dialogical form of inquiry that more closely aligns Māori ideas on connectedness with Pākehā conceptions of social functioning that might allow for changing teacher praxis.

Language is not separate from experience or perceptions of reality. Rather, it is a paradox, being at the same time a cultural construct and a contributor to the shaping of culture. In usage, language reinforces beliefs and positions. It is indispensable for the creation of meaning, the sharing of ideas, and the interaction between individuals. Language is a community construct, and in this study contributes to an understanding of the teacher community.

My aim in this chapter is to extend the brief discussion of language that was begun in the previous chapter, and in particular to present the language of conversation as interaction, learned in a community of others. Since language is learned in interaction rather than in isolation, whatever underpins beliefs is necessarily contextual, since any beliefs must be expressed in language. This is important to an understanding of the influence of discourses of schooling and learning in teacher conversations. Meaning, for participants in conversation, therefore depends on assuming or establishing common understandings. The effects of shaping meaning in conversations are constructed by the (re)positionings of participants in relation to the embedded discourses. Understanding those effects is one of the purposes of the study.

Firstly, however, I want to situate the recorded conversations of the study within a frame where language, particularly oral language, can be seen as a confluence of many aspects. This exposition is intended to sit alongside the philosophical orientation of *individual-and-community* explored in the previous chapter and strengthen the theoretical basis for the analysis of the conversations and their positioning effects in the later chapters.

Using the context of *constructed-in-community*, I then theorise conversational interactions. Further to this, I consider how oral language contributes to a collective sense of reality in ways that are complementary to the contributions of written language. My intention is to not only *represent* an ontology of language but also to stratify, delineate and sculpt it. That is the purpose of this chapter.

Taking centre-stage: ordinary conversations

In this research study, a theory of teacher collegial conversations seeps into all the other considerations. In secondary school classrooms of Aotearoa/New Zealand, teaching and learning depend on teachers using conversational interactions for creating and transmitting understandings, even with topics in specialist domains. This study also explores how education discourses are maintained, modified and promulgated through their presence in the daily dialogues of teachers, shaping values, beliefs, and ideas about schooling. Those dialogues are also implicated in the culture of the teacher community, being the link for forming and re-forming relationships, and the medium through which epistemologies are articulated. Teacher conversations are central to both the maintaining and the changing of school culture and practice.

Talking is more like dancing, or even running, than it is like playing chess. Speaker and listeners are of course aware that the speaker is speaking; but they are typically not aware of what he is saying, and if asked to recall it, not only the listeners but also the speaker will ordinarily offer a paraphrase, something that is true to the meaning, but not by any means true to the wording.
(Halliday, 2002, p. 325)

What is *true to the meaning* in the conversations can be found in the ways the participants are positioned by the interactions and the discourses. For example, in conversation excerpt 4 that follows, the participants are positioned by the discourses of engagement and education as socialisation. Throughout the dialogue, progressive and neoliberal polarities are jumbled together, despite their ideological dissonance.

“It’s the conversations . . . I can do that sort of stuff”

What can be expected in conversation is collaborative engagement, and such engagement is the basis of positioning. In the following excerpt about teachers continually needing to upgrade their skills, the position being claimed is the classroom value of conversation skills in contrast to a perceived school emphasis on increasing teacher competencies in the uses of technologies.

Excerpt 4 – “It’s the conversations . . . I can do that sort of stuff”

1	but now .. it’s ..	it’s .. it’s	
2	a time investment		yeah ..
3	versus the return ..	yeah	return .. yeah
4	[nods]		[nods] so if I can .. I need to put
5			my time investment into what as I said ..
6	mm ..		it’s the oral stuff .. it’s the
7	mm .. mm		conversations .. and that’s the
8	[nodding] yeah		experience that I’ve got ..
9		[nods]	I can do that sort of stuff and that is the
10		yeah	strength that I have .. not
11		[nods]	necessarily this [touching computer] ..
12	yes ..	yes ..	but we’ll still use that .. but ..

The importance of conversations is expressed as “that’s the experience that I’ve got .. I can do that sort of stuff and that is the strength that I have” (4-6). The comment claims the position that having a strength in the art and practice of conversation is important for teaching. The justification, however, is interesting because it is phrased in market terms, in recognition that these are the prevailing discourses: “a time investment versus the return” (4-2) which is responded to in kind: “I need to put my time investment into” (4-4). The use of the language of the marketplace illustrates how the context shapes the choice of phrasing. However, the positioning of the teachers in the exchange shows the residual influence of progressive schooling discourses. The way the technology is referred to, “**but** we’ll **still** use that .. **but** [emphases added]” (4-12) positions

skills with technology at the margins, with conversational interactions retaining their place at the centre.

The problem with the language of learning — both the language itself and the ways in which it is used and contextualised in research, policy and practice — is that it tends to prevent people from asking the key educational questions of content, purpose and relationships . . . The language of learning is *insufficient* for expressing what matters in education, just as *theories* of learning are insufficient to capture what education is about. (Biesta, 2015, pp. 76–77)

Conversation excerpt 3 shows the teachers have appropriated the language of neoliberal economics and subverted that to explain and justify the continuing emphasis on what “experience” (4-8) has taught, namely the importance of classroom relationships that are established and maintained through conversations. While Biesta refers to the way the language of learning distracts people from the core issues of education, the teachers in the excerpt demonstrate that in practice even the language of neoliberal individualism can be readily appropriated and integrated into discourses of connectedness and social engagement. In the same way as Biesta observes that the “language of learning is *insufficient*”, just so is the language of economics inadequate to capture the social and moral aspects of schooling. However, in the manner of bricoleurs who “make do with whatever is at hand” (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17), the teachers make use of the language of the current context but do so in ways that serve their own pre-existing perspectives.

Claiming a place to stand: theorising conversation

Oral language is central in this study of teacher conversations, and the epistemological considerations of teacher knowledge-through-experience are part of the context for the interactions. In oral traditions such as Māori, knowledge is handed down from one generation to the next in stories. Stories have the benefit of being memorable without the need for exactness, as Halliday (2002) observed. Paraphrasing can enrich a story with embellishments as well as reduce it to essentials. That is the nature of conversation — its sensitivity to

context and participation. Meaning becomes the dominant driver, shared meaning that the participants negotiate as they interact.

The transcripts, on the other hand, have to communicate meaning without the benefit of the adjuncts of oral communication — intonation, pace, facial and gestural accompaniments. Interrogating that written form is easier in some ways, because it remains constant. The transcripts are fixed points of reference, but the utterances that they represent showed continual readjusting by the participants to what was being said and what was therefore invited as a response. However, both the oral utterances and their written representations in the transcripts create meaning against specific backgrounds of prior language experience and understandings. Each reader views a transcript through a different lens to a participant and interprets it according to an assumed context. For this reason, the transcripts used in the study need to be accepted as approximations rather than absolute records.

Furthermore, my analysis of the transcripts relies on factors not available to the reader — the video-recordings and the memories triggered by those. In the transcripts, meaning is assigned in the interpretation. In dialogue, the meaning is in the conversation itself and the effects of the interactions. In the written transcripts, the meaning is split, with the author producing a text having a particular perspective or understanding in mind, and the reader bringing a possibly different view to their interpretation of the wording. Meaning is produced and perceived differently according to the form of language being used. In the conversations, meaning is in the interactions between the participants, whereas in the transcripts, meaning is to be found more in the interactions with the texts. To that extent, the transcripts align more readily with the separateness of individual selves, and conversation with the connectedness of community. From that perspective, the written transcripts appear to emphasise separateness and individuality at the same time as the oral communications they represent illustrate the shared perspectives of connectedness through interaction.

The impact of the oral and written language forms is evident in the different emphases in this sharing of knowledge. “Knowledge is not *translated* into words

when it is expressed. The words are not a translation of something else that was there before they were”¹³ (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 33e, §191). Knowledge may be *expressed* in words, or in carvings, or tapestries, or equations, but such expressions, in whatever form, do not *constitute* that knowledge. Nor does the language itself constitute knowledge, since knowledge can be expressed in multiple ways. Knowledge is constituted in human understandings, and the different forms of language communicate different understandings: the participants communicating through one medium, and the transcripts through a different one. The media modify the meaning.

An ontology of language and communication

Language and beliefs are knitted together, always acting in concert to not only shape notions of reality, but also to limit what it is possible to conceive and communicate with others. Everything that people say, think, and do has a context. Contexts are both physical and phenomenal – comprising matter and meaning linked together in experience (Halliday, 2005a). Matter can be conceived as being independent of meaning, but meaning cannot be divorced from matter. Matter is ontic substance overlaid with ascribed properties (Spivak, 1993). Those properties are not resident in matter, but rather constructed in language by collective agreement. Behind meaning are beliefs, based on interwoven individual and collective understandings, fused with experience, that are taken to be truths. One such truth is the construct of self that is evident in Kant’s perspective on enlightenment:

Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the *inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another*. This immaturity is *self-incurred* if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of enlightenment is

¹³ “Das Wissen wird eben nicht in Worte *übersetzt*, wenn es sich äußert. Die Worte sind keine Übersetzung eines Andern, welches vor ihnen da war” (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 33, §191)

therefore: Sapere aude! Have courage to use *your own understanding!* [emphases added] (Kant, 1784/2009a, p. 1)¹⁴

That Enlightenment perspective of *self*, in an illustration of the longevity of historical discourses, underpinned Gadamer's view that "all understanding inevitably involves some *prejudice*" (1975, p. 239), and anchors that assertion by stating that "the possible truth of the tradition depends on the credibility that is assigned to it by reason. It is not tradition, but reason that constitutes the ultimate source of all authority" (1975, p. 241). One problem with Gadamer's argument, from the socially-constructed worldview, is that it doesn't go far enough, because reason is always constructed in traditions of language use. Later in his text, Gadamer acknowledges how the individual is shaped:

History does not belong to us, but we belong to it . . . We understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society and state in which we live . . . That is why the prejudices of the individual . . . constitute the historical reality of his being. (Gadamer, 1975, p. 245)

Gadamer's explanation of *prejudice* includes both positive and negative aspects, but by describing as "true prejudices" (1975, p. 242) those that are based on authority he assigns the relevant power to the discourses of the community:

The recognition of authority is always connected with the idea that what authority states is not irrational and arbitrary, but can be seen . . . to be true. This is the essence of the authority claimed by the teacher . . . That which has been sanctioned by tradition and custom has an authority that is nameless, and our finite historical being is marked by the fact that always the authority of what has been transmitted . . . has power over our

¹⁴ "Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. Selbstverschuldet ist diese Unmündigkeit, wenn die Ursache derselben nicht am Mangel des Verstandes, sondern der Entschließung und des Mutes liegt, sich seiner ohne Leitung eines andern zu bedienen. Sapere aude! Habe Mut, dich deines eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen! ist also der Wahlspruch der Aufklärung." (Kant, 1784/2009b, p. 3)

attitudes and behaviour. All education depends on this.

(Gadamer, 1975, p. 249)

Individual beliefs may be formed in abstraction, but are consolidated collectively. Discourses are beliefs and values constructed and sustained in community. Language acts as the medium for creating meaning, always with a backdrop of beliefs and discourses. Accordingly, beliefs and discourses do not exist *in* language, but *through* it. They may be evident in patterns of thinking and behaving, but patterns are insufficient to define them because they are contextually fluid. Meaning is shown by the effects of beliefs and discourses on interactions and behaviours. It is in *performance*, combined with language, that ontologies find expression, rather than in language alone (Barad, 2008). Language is necessary but not sufficient to represent beliefs about realities. While language signifiers may contribute to representations, they require both performing and audiencing to play their part in representing meanings and beliefs. Patterns of word use in language constitute grammars, and it is with the interactions between grammars and words that meaning is expressed and understood, rather than with words alone. Just as the interactions in the context of community shape individuals, so too does language derive its impact from the interactions between words and grammars. Language and communication are therefore interconnected with those involved, and are infused with beliefs generated by their interactions. They provide meaning in relationship (Flax, 1990). An ontology of language therefore presupposes connectedness.

Where is meaning located? Positioning words and grammars

Words are often thought of as signifiers, but words are not inherently meaningful. It is in the grammar of language *use* that words make their contribution. Language consists of words and grammar combined.

Words have forms; they receive their sense and function from the contrasts they mark within a constellation of words. They are relays; they connect up with other words, articulating things and events in more detail, connecting them with things and events that explain them, mapping them on other situations and at other times. They exist in movement. (Lingis, 2007, p. 50)

Word order is important in creating meaning. A combination of words means something when arranged in a particular order, and something else when arranged differently. However, a specific word order can still be made to mean different things according to the way it is spoken. The grammar of a language is the way in which it works, including the ordering of words; the ways in which they are sounded; the ways that words are inflected to denote their function; and, of course, what they mean in different contexts. Different perspectives apply for written and oral language, with a writer tending to be more expository or expansive and a reader more inclined to adopt a synoptic view of text; whereas a speaker and a listener, engaged in a conversation, embrace a more dynamic perspective, taking turns in performing and audiencing (Halliday, 2002). Written and oral formats thus communicate meaning in different ways.

One of the problems of interpreting language is that the meaning of a word is not fixed or static. If it were so, if words were absolute signifiers, then meaning would be more precise. However, it is because of the ambiguity, because their meaning changes according to their relationship with other words, that nuances of meaning become more possible. Just as the individual is not a single, bounded self, but multiple subjectivities called into performance by changes in context, so too the word has no unique meaning, but changes with circumstance. The word takes some of its meaning from its neighbours, some from its form, and some from its author. Words function in groups, not producing meaning simply through rules of grammar, but through patterns of use, understood in collective agreement.

One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look at* its use and learn from that. But the difficulty is to remove the prejudice which stands in the way of doing this. It is not a *stupid* prejudice. (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 93e, §340)¹⁵

It is important for analysis to recognise that words function in relationship, and grammar acts to give meaning to words in relationship. Grammar, however,

¹⁵ Wie ein Wort funktioniert, kann man nicht erraten. Man muß seine Anwendung *ansehen* und daraus lernen. Die Schwierigkeit aber ist, das Vorurteil zu beseitigen, das diesem Lernen entgegensteht. Es ist kein *dummes* Vorurteil (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 93, §340).

does not simply consist of rules, but is dynamic, and requires reasoning. It is therefore more akin to a set of principles derived from usage. Whereas “rules tell you what to do when you do the thing at all; principles tell you how to do the thing well, with skill or understanding” (Cavell, 1976, pp. 28–29). Those principles are learned and improved with experience of both audiencing and performing. When the teacher in excerpt 3 earlier in this chapter claimed to be able to “do that sort of stuff” (3-9), she was claiming facility with language use in a specific context.

Where then is meaning located, if not in the words? The functioning of words and grammar can be seen in their effects on meaning. Meaning “always depends on . . . among other things, [the] beliefs and values of the surrounding community” (Günther, 2008, p. 54). Substituting one word for another, modifying the word order, changing the cadence or tonal emphasis — all can shift the possible meanings. That is one of the principles of language that allow it to be finely nuanced. From that perspective, meaning is partly located in the words and grammar, and partly in the effects of the words on the participants. For that reason, the effects of the conversations are explored alongside an analysis of discourses, for the meaning that is derived by the participants cannot be assumed solely from a reading of the words used.

Making a point: meaning as the essence and function of language

Meaning making is not the preserve of language alone, for meaning is also created from the interactions and (re)positionings between people as they develop shared understandings. It is in those interactions and (re)positionings that the process of meaning-making creates effects, effects that are not simply a by-product of meaning-making but are fully implicated in it. The effects illustrate the meaning being produced.

Language is a heterogeneous vehicle for communication that demands inference as much as signifiers and functions to provide meanings within contexts (Vinciarelli, Salamin, Mohammadi, & Truong, 2011). For participants in conversation, sense-making requires prediction as well as prior knowledge, and prediction is itself dependent on prior knowledge. In this study, the teachers demonstrated shared prior knowledge and common experiences that enabled

them to make meaning and predictions, sometimes even completing each other's sentences despite discourses of politeness that indicate community disapproval of such interruptions. Such predictions exemplified how, rather than the words in isolation, the interactions between the words and the effects on the participants were implicated in meaning-making.

Meaning-making in conversation therefore includes both performing and audiencing, authoring and responding. Language is integral to the process, connecting impressions and context cues with shared perspectives and reactions, but language is not entirely responsible for the creation of meaning. It is in the interplay between existing *knowing* and further input that meaning finds individual substance, and language is only one form of input (Goodwin, 1995). There are all the other non-verbal aspects, as well as the patterns of response that inform participants when it is appropriate to comment or pause, to nod or laugh or express surprise (Brazil, 1995). The non-language social cues are critical in maintaining the mores of the community and positioning how topics are to be treated. Language cues play a similar role through patterns of intonation that invite a response, or the echoing of a word spoken to signify agreement. Some of these non-verbal cues are presented in the transcript excerpts in order to better relate their contribution to the process of meaning-making.

Those who had wished to provide a foundation for language had probably better . . . master the new linguistics, and accept or quarrel with it. But those who had wished to know our minds about our relations to ourselves and to others and to communities and to earth, will have to go still on the old things we say and do. (Cavell, 1979, p. 32).

The focus of the study is therefore on the interactions and the relations between the participants, the things we say and do to create meaning. Where creating meaning in dialogue is a shared activity, the interrelating contributes to the creation of meaning, for the interactions serve to confirm commonality as well as define distinctiveness between the participants. "Intimate understanding is understanding which is implicit" (Cavell, 1976, p. 12). It is as a consequence of

their shared understandings that participants can predict, and thus make sense of, the flow of language through the grammar of possibilities. Although grammar imposes constraints on the range of possible directions, conversational interactions are not predictable, because of the differences between the individual participants. Each individual makes inferences based on their existing knowledge and experiences and predicts accordingly. That existing knowledge contributes to the patterns of dialogue that allow participants to “make certain inferences, draw certain conclusions” (Cavell, 1976, p. 11). Those inferences and conclusions are situated in community, positioned in a distillation of similar interactions, and contribute to the normative effects of moderating change. In conversational interactions people do more than just create meaning, they also influence the discourses of the community even as they are themselves influenced.

The effects of language can be seen in repositioning. Dialogue that has the effect of generating inward movement, supporting discourses that are central in a community can be termed centripetal; whereas those that turn the gaze outward, that resist that pull and seek meaning at the margins, are responses to the centrifugal forces. “Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272). An utterance does not alone carry the meaning. Meaning also exists in the inward or outward movement that are the *effects* of the interactions within an utterance.

Oral communication: shaping collective realities

The teachers participating in this study draw on different cultural discourses. Pākehā traditions of schooling have emphasised both individuality and literacy. Māori traditions, in contrast, have retained an emphasis on oral language. Secondary schooling in Aotearoa/New Zealand has privileged Pākehā approaches with the emphasis on written language. As a consequence, oral language has been de-emphasised along with cultural traditions where spoken language is central.

Compared with what appears as *substance* in written text, the conversations may seem somewhat trite. Yet “the most important vehicle of reality-maintenance is conversation” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 152). Conversation contributes by building on the discourses that play a dominant role in a community or culture. Maintaining or disturbing equilibrium are effects of conversation that contribute to the meaning of dialogic interaction. When individuals participate in the performance of jointly reviewing understandings, those performances resonate through the social inter-connectedness of community. Communication is therefore much more than transmission from one to another. “The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction. . . Such is the situation in any living dialogue” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 280). Meaning in conversation is jointly created because audiencing is an active shaping of mutual engagement, just as is discursive positioning where the stance of each person influences the other and the direction of conversation. A change of stance creates a change in meaning.

The power of the unspoken: non-verbal elements of conversation

There are many non-verbal elements which combine to intensify or modify the impact of words and phrasing used in oral communication. In the making and sharing of meaning, the choice of phrasing depends on much more than a shared vocabulary. The cadence of the words in combination, the pace and emphasis given to particular syllables, and the physical expressions that accompany speaking — all contribute to the shaping of what is understood and the effects of those understandings.

The performativity of spoken language plays a significant role in how meaning is created. “How words are understood is not told by words alone”¹⁶ (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 26e, §144), since inferences are based on the non-verbal aspects. Such inferences are part of the grammar of conversation, recognising the range of inputs that contribute to meaning. Whether a speaker is joking or serious, there are cues to be found in the form of delivery. In responding to such cues, mirroring the tone or physical aspects in turn-taking signals mutuality and

¹⁶ “Wie ein Wort verstanden wird, das sagen Worte allein nicht” (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 26, §144)

shared understandings. “Can I not say: a cry, a laugh, are full of meaning? And that means, roughly: much can be gathered from them” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 124e, §543)¹⁷. Non-verbal aspects may or may not be noticed, but when they are noticed, they often elicit a similar response.

The power of the unspoken also resides in the influence on positioning that silence and a lack of response have on the direction of dialogue. In some cultures it is usual to bluntly respond rather than be circumspect. However, in my experience of the school culture of teaching in rural Aotearoa/New Zealand it is more normal for teachers engaging with each other to be somewhat tentative in presenting disagreement. This has the effects of maintaining harmony and openness to further discussion. However, it also makes it possible to express reservations or disagreement by the simple expedient of withholding comment. Such a lack of response signals to the speaker that their position calls may not be shared. These unspoken cues are evident in the conversation excerpts cited in the study.

Value in variety: cadence, tones of voice and forms of expression

Word-order and vocabulary in conversation contribute to more than style, they also generate patterns of intonation that add meaning. Rhythms are part of the music of language, contributing to its predictability. They convey more than just emphasis, they add flavour and style, gravity and emotional perspective. The cadence, as much as the words, confirms where a speaker is positioned in a group or community.

“There is a strongly musical element in verbal language. (A sigh, the intonation of voice in a question, in an announcement, in longing; all the innumerable *gestures* made with the voice.)”¹⁸ (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 29e, §161). The rhythm of speech, at least in English as a stress-timed language, invites a listener to find meaning in groups of words (Szczepek Reed, 2012). Dialogue also develops its own rhythm of interactions, with non-verbal cues complementing verbal

¹⁷ “Kann ich nicht sagen: der Schrei, das Lachen, seien voll von Bedeutung? Und das heißt ungefähr: es ließe sich viel aus ihnen ablesen” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 124, §543)

¹⁸ “In der Wortsprache ist ein starkes musikalisches Element. (Ein Seufzer, der Tonfall der Frage, der Verkündigung, der Sehnsucht, alle die unzähligen *Gesten* des Tonfalls.)” (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 29, §161)

semantics. Changes to the pace and rhythm in speech add to the meaning conveyed by the words themselves. In the excerpts of conversation that are cited in this study, spaces and double-stops (..) are used as indicators of micro-pauses between words and phrases. These are used as simple indicators to the reader that will minimise any interruption to the flow of the utterances at the same time as making apparent the effects on the interactions.

Tones of voice also serve as indicators of position calls, indicating support or acknowledgement of discourses, actively recruiting the listener to adopt a similar stance because of their “emotional engagement” (Siegel, 1999, p. 277). The pitch and timbre of a voice affect the cues that a listener will respond to, and the tone in which an utterance is delivered can radically change its meaning from one thing to the complete opposite. Tone of voice is important for expressing feeling as well as for recruiting a listener to a particular discursive position. The same applies to the use of jargon, which can serve to intensify the connections between participants in a dialogue.

Accordingly, particular cues of intonation or breaks in the rhythm of a dialogue signal calls for feedback, or perhaps a change of topic (Lingis, 2007). Any emphasis given, any change from the expected, any variation of inflection — all of these form part of the rich interaction implicit in spoken language that contribute to the meaning. In an oral tradition, the meaning is the interaction, the ongoing building of relationships and positioning within the community. For example, “greetings do not function through their cognitive meaning; in greeting someone we at the same time recognize and approach that person” (Lingis, 2007, p. 67). New knowledge and shared understandings may eventuate from an interaction, but often as an adjunct of a conversation rather than a goal. In this study the excerpts of conversation have been selected to illustrate the position calls, the discourses, and the effects of the interactions rather than any professional learning that may have occurred.

Shifting faces: making sense of expressions and gestures

Recognising and interpreting facial expressions are key components of dialogical interactions. Emotions are integral to communication, and facial expressions along with the tone of voice and the manner of speech convey

emotion. Gestures are not simply an adjunct to speech, they are a critical part of the physicality of relating. Gestures are instrumental in reinforcing the impact of facial expressions. Because they are more expansive, gestures are also used to convey meaning where words are inadequate to the task, and they reinforce their effects through mirroring emotion in action.

“The reinterpretation of a facial expression can be compared to the reinterpretation of a chord in music, when we hear it as a modulation first into this, then into that key” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 122e, §536)¹⁹. Within any conversation, facial expressions contribute to the meaning according to how they align with the meaning of the words. For example, a deadpan expression frequently accompanies the telling of a joke. A repertoire of expressions may be developed in a community that function to emphasise insider status, since fluency with such expressions facilitates understanding and connectedness.

“We don't understand Chinese gestures any more than Chinese sentences”²⁰ (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 40e, §219). Gestures, just as much as facial expressions, are culturally specific and located in community. Context is an important factor in determining the use of gestures (McNeill, 2007). Gestures have similar effects to facial expressions, indicating positioning and emphasis. They also vary according to whether a speaker is introducing new material, where the gestures complement the words spoken; or if they are referring back to ideas introduced previously, where the gestures are more expansive, supplementing the words (Foraker, 2011). Gestures also help to make sense of what is being discussed in conversation (Cutica & Bucciarelli, 2011), and are part of the meaning-making process rather than additional to it (McNeill, 1985, 2007).

How curious: we should like to explain our understanding of a gesture by means of translation into words, and the understanding of words into a gesture. (Thus we are tossed to

¹⁹ “Die Umdeutung eines Gesichtsausdrucks ist zu vergleichen mit der Umdeutung eines Akkords in der Musik, wenn wir ihn einmal als Überleitung in diese, einmal in jene Tonart empfinden” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 122, §536).

²⁰ “Chinesische Gebärden verstehen wir so wenig wie chinesische Sätze” (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 40, §219).

and fro when we try to find out where understanding properly resides)²¹ (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 41e, §227).

Gestures occur as accompaniments to speech even with people who have been blind from birth (Cutica & Bucciarelli, 2011), so the idea of *speech* can properly be thought of as including both words and gestures in a meaning-making process. Both facial expressions and gestures are integral components of spoken language, increasing the dynamic aspect that the cadence and tones of voice supply. Accordingly, where the gestures or expressions or laughs made a particular contribution to the dialogue they have been noted in the transcripts.

Knowing and communicating: turn-taking and overlapping

Conversation relies heavily on continual interaction, on cues and feedback. Participants take turns to speak, and even interrupt each other. How a speaker responds to overlapping talk contributes to the meaning-making. Turn-taking is integral to the ways in which participants position themselves and each other relative to the discourses. In the transcripts the contributions of the participants are shown alongside each other to indicate to the reader how the interactions flowed and where overlaps occurred.

Taking turns in a conversation is one way in which the relationship between the participants is reinforced. A commitment to reciprocity in conversations can be seen to influence how gestures are used (Cutica & Bucciarelli, 2011), but also impacts on the performing-audiencing dynamic seen in turn-taking. Interruptions, where one participant seeks to take over the speaker role at the expense of the other, are quite different from the overlapping speech contributions that occur mid-utterance and can be described as supportive feedback; or those overlaps that happen when cues signal that a speaker is indicating the end of an utterance, effectively asking for feedback (Bilmes, 1997; Schegloff, 2000). Of course, a power hierarchy may influence how the contributions to dialogue are apportioned, and how interruptions are

²¹ Es ist sonderbar: Unser Verstehen einer Geste möchten wir durch ihre Übersetzung in Worte erklären, und das Verstehen von Worten durch Übersetzung in eine Geste. (So werden wir hin und her geworfen, wenn wir suchen wollen, wo das Verstehen eigentlich liegt.) (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 41, §227)

accommodated between the participants, but in this study there are few of those indicators apparent because the participants were at similarly positioned in the institutional hierarchy.

However, a different form of hierarchy is evident in the study, with one particular aspect of turn-taking relevant that is story-telling, which is a particular kind of knowing that is shared. Story-telling in conversation is not a one-sided activity, but rather an interaction between the participants (Gülich & Quasthoff, 1986; Sacks, 1986). Nevertheless, in such a narrative the performer implicitly claims insider knowledge *of the story* that affords a special status to their role.

But isn't there a phenomenon of knowing, as it were quite apart from the sense of the phrase "I know"? Is it not remarkable that a man can *know* something, can as it were have the fact within him? . . . And this does indeed point to one kind of use for "I know". "I know that it is so" then means: It is so, or else I'm crazy. So, when I say, without lying: "I know that it is so", then only through a special sort of blindness can I be wrong²² (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 73e, §408).

Wittgenstein identified the essence of such story-telling: the element of authority, of taking a position that is not contestable. Story-telling in conversation invites engagement but not interruption or challenge, particularly in the context of communitarian thinking. Even when there is a strong commitment to the ideas of individual identities, the story-teller claims a privileged position as part of a social order, deflecting interruption of the story. The social order (Harré, 1983) is made visible in the cues that occur in conversation inviting participants to take up positions with respect to the discursive context, and the positions available are limited by the cultural context (Howie & Peters, 1996). The cultural aspects of teacher collegial conversations

²² Aber gibt es nicht ein Phänomen des Wissens sozusagen ganz abgesehen vom Sinn der Worte "ich weiß"? Ist es nicht merkwürdig, daß ein Mensch etwas *wissen* kann, die Tatsache gleichsam in sich selbst haben kann? . . . Und das deutet allerdings auf eine mögliche Art der Verwendung von "Ich weiß". "Ich weiß, daß es so ist", heißt dann: Es ist so oder ich bin verrückt. Also: wenn ich, ohne zu lügen, sage: "Ich weiß, daß es so ist", so kann ich nur durch eine besondere Verblendung im Unrecht sein. (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 73, §408)

include “multiple acts of trust” (Lingis, 2007, p. 79) that promote the sharing of insights and perspectives for mutual learning. Because teachers value the knowledge gained from experience (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999), positions and stories that align with experience are preferred and are frequently the currency of teacher conversations. Accordingly, some of the chosen excerpts feature such stories, notable for the positions that are claimed as representative of the teacher community as a whole rather than being simply anecdotes involving the individual teacher.

A backward glance: chapter conclusion

“What determines our judgment, our concepts and reactions, is not what *one* man is doing *now*, an individual action, but the whole hurly-burly of human actions, the background against which we see any action.”²³ (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 99e, §567). Language is embedded in social and cultural contexts, but is also implicated in determining those contexts. It is a shared community activity which continually shapes all participants and their beliefs about themselves, their community, and their world. Thus viewed, language can be seen to be instrumental in the collaborative construction of realities and pivotal in the developing of a sense of identity. Language is an instrument for expression, but it is also a medium for understanding *being*, for conceptualising realities. As language is used in community, a collective sense of identity is fashioned that includes a collective creating of individual identity potential.

The language of conversation consists of far more than simply the words used, and the effects of dialogue include the shaping of beliefs and values. Interactions between participants determine meaning, rather than the words used, or even the grammars of word arrangements. Context contributes to meaning-making, not only the situatedness in physicality, but also the discursive frames that constrain the possibilities of interactions.

Non-verbal features are fundamental components of conversation. Such features provide both feedback and feed-forward indicators that strengthen the

²³ “Nicht, was *einer jetzt* tut, eine einzelne Handlung, sondern das ganze Gewimmel der menschlichen Handlungen, der Hintergrund, worauf wir jede Handlung sehen, bestimmt unser Urteil, unsere Begriffe und Reaktionen.” (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 99, §567)

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interaction. Tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures and turn-taking all contribute to the effects of a dialogue. Those effects include confirming or moderating support for any given stance, reinforcing or weakening positions available, and emphasising individual separateness or connectedness in community.

Chapter 4 –Methodology

In this chapter I describe and explain the methodology as interlinked with the purpose of the study. From this perspective it is apparent that the descriptions and explanations of the participants and processes are connected with the discourses of schooling and teaching that prevail in the teacher community. In addition, the socially-constructed orientation of the study requires that meaning and understandings are viewed as being always contextual. Accordingly, this chapter involves exploring links between the practical aspects of methods, the philosophical positioning that encouraged the choices of those methods, and the lenses used to view and interpret the connections between the teacher conversations and the discursive environment.

To reiterate, the study explores the socialisation and subjectification of *teachers*, considered within the frames of the teacher community and the discourses of schooling. If teachers regard themselves primarily as self-interested individuals in competition with each other, then how they interpret the socialisation of their students will be affected. Correspondingly, if teachers understand their work as professionals involved in social issues rather than just academic credentialing, they will “also need to make a judgement about the appropriateness of how they teach and organise their educational efforts” (Biesta, 2015, p. 79). Such judgements depend on what discursive positions are available in the teacher community and how the teachers are positioned by those discourses. These themes are explored in the chapters where the conversation excerpts are analysed, while the rationale behind those analyses is described later in this chapter.

Accepting that teacher collegial dialogue influences the culture of a school makes it worthwhile to recognise the patterns that are being produced or modified by such interactions. Collegial conversations develop such patterns in response to local contexts as well as the prevailing discourses and norms of the wider teacher community. In conversations, although teachers are positioned by those discourses and norms, such positions are not fixed. Instead, teachers find themselves either being drawn more towards the norms by discourses of belonging or conformity, or stepping into positions of resistance. However,

positions of conforming and resistance are not discrete, but co-exist. My intention in the study is to illustrate some of the richness and complexity of that co-existence, and to show that teacher conversations act as a mechanism that conserves conflicting discourses of schooling as elements of school culture.

Standing on common ground: participants in the study

The request for participants in the study included that they be experienced secondary school teachers with some management responsibility for aspects of the school administration. This was conveyed to potential participants by my primary supervisor who explained the study and invited interested teachers to self-select. The intention behind the request for experience was the assumption that those with such experience would have had the institutional memories “embedded in their own personal points of view” (Cook-Gumperz, 2011, p. 444) more than their teaching colleagues who were newer arrivals to teaching. The desire to have participants in positions of responsibility was based on the assumption that any such participants who knew me would be less likely to be constrained by hierarchical discourses as we would consider each other as equals in the school hierarchy.

All of those who volunteered were contacted and subsequently participated. There were nine participants, including four men and five women. Three were Māori and five Pākehā. Six had begun teaching in the 1970s while three had begun teaching in the education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand after the *Tomorrow’s Schools* reforms of the late 1980s.

The teachers who joined in conversation with me in the study, despite self-selection, provided different perspectives. Nevertheless, because they had all been subject to broadly similar education discourses through the course of their teaching careers, they showed in the dialogues the common influences, the positionings, and the core values that have permeated secondary schooling in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

“There can be little doubt that the commitment to explicating the *subject’s interpretation of social reality* is a (one might say *the*) sine qua non of qualitative research” (Bryman, 2003, p. 71). Those who self-selected to participate in the study were mostly well-known to me, and some I had known

from more than a quarter-century of working together, so having collegial conversations was a normal part of our working life. The common interest in participating was based on the interactions and mutual support offered and accepted over many years that had generated reciprocity and trust, so our engagement in the conversations was partly on whatever became the topic of discussion, and partly on the research itself. This was particularly because of the open-ended, fluid nature of the conversations, consistent with what would normally occur.

My original hope had been that most of the conversations would take place relatively uncontaminated by issues of hierarchy, even though such positioning frequently occurs in schools. That hope was realised. All of the participants were experienced teachers and had some management area of responsibility. While it could be argued that this was a constraint on the generalisability of the findings, that was never an issue, because the research was only intended to be a small interpretive study, whose conclusions would never be scalable.

There was also a gender and ethnic mix, which brought to the dialogue a wider range of community discourses than might otherwise have been the case. All were secondary school teachers, and there was also a variety of teaching disciplines included, which mitigated the impact of subject-specific conversations common in school departmental meetings and steered discussion towards topics where there were common interests. Accordingly, the study provided some heterogeneity of participation, allowing generic teacher discourses to be central to the inquiry, while recognising that the context of secondary school thinking was obviously also influential.

The conversations were open-ended and unstructured because I had deemed it to be most congruent with the direction of my study to impose as little as possible my researcher perspectives of social reality, preferring instead to interpose my perspectives as a teacher. In maintaining my teacher presence, rather than allowing researcher subjectivities to dominate, my interest was to tacitly encourage the others to participate as normally as possible. Nevertheless, discourses of research made their influence felt at times, with the process of recording being a non-verbal but recognisable trigger for comment.

While all the participants in the study were teachers, there were others from the past who influenced the nature of the conversations. Educational researchers who had previously, in one form or another, engaged with some of the participants left their mark on the study, effectively participating through the traces of their approaches, evident in residual understandings of how to perform in a role of informant in an interview. For the most part, however, such factors remained peripheral to the conduct of the study.

Press record: capturing and transcribing

The conversations took place in the settings of the individual teacher offices or classrooms, either during gaps in their teaching schedules or after the school day was over, and all of the conversations were video-recorded onto a computer. In each case there was just a single participant engaging with me in conversation, and the conversations lasted from 15 to 40 minutes. Following some experimentation with the use of video cameras for recording the conversations, what I found worked best was to record directly onto a laptop computer using the inbuilt webcam and recording software. As a result of what I learned from some earlier recording experiments with separate video cameras conducted before I undertook the study, the conversations took place untroubled by technical concerns, as the recording process proved to be both straightforward and unobtrusive, with the computer screen visible to both participants throughout the conversation, showing what was being recorded. The main purpose in using video-recordings was to be able to see the physical rather than the audio responses, and some of these, such as *shrugs* or *nods*, are noted in the transcripts.

The conversations were open-ended and intended to be exploratory rather than definitive. They are typical of the collegial dialogues that I have shared in as a teacher. The participants were encouraged to identify any sensitive parts of the conversations that they might be reluctant to have included, but none made any such requests. However, to protect the privacy of the participants, the conversation excerpts were also edited to remove references that might make identifiable those who were involved, but apart from that, the transcripts accurately represent the dialogical interactions.

Recording the interplay of performing and audiencing within the dialogue gave purpose to the transcripts, but the video-recordings remained available as an adjunct, and I revisited them at times to observe the physicality of both the performing and the audiencing. The intention behind making the transcripts was not only to connect the actual conversations with an abstraction – making meaning of the *process* and the *effects* of the interactions rather than the topics discussed, but also to be able to more readily convey to the reader something of the nature of the conversations. Accordingly, the audible indicators of engagement such as *mm* and *hmm* are included in the transcripts.

Implicit in all this is the notion that all transcription systems – including the speaking voice in a living utterance – are inadequate to the multiplicity of the meanings they seek to convey. My voice gives the illusion of unity to what I say; I am, in fact, constantly expressing a plenitude of meanings, some intended, others of which I am unaware. (Holquist, 1981, p. xx)

Accordingly, the processes of both recording and transcribing were oriented towards recreating meaning from the dialogues. Rather than having a singular focus on analysing the discourses of schooling, the intention in this study included examining the effects of the conversation interactions. The specifics of pauses, emphases, gestures, facial expressions and other non-verbal elements of communication in the dialogue were all important indicators, but mostly for the contribution they made towards understanding the effects of the conversations on the participants.

The approach I took to transcribing the conversations was to use 2-column tables, with one column for my part in the conversation, and the other column for the other participant. What dictated the process was the need to find an intelligible way to indicate the direction of repositioning that occurred during the dialogue, rather than simply following transcription conventions such as Silverman (2011) considered appropriate for discourse analysis. The interactions, such as nodding, or vocalised indicators of agreement or questioning on the part of the listener, were typed as closely as possible to a parallel location in the corresponding column. A new row was introduced for

convenience, often coinciding with a new *utterance*, understood in the Bakhtinian sense of when the “speaker ends his utterance in order to relinquish the floor to the other or to make room for the other’s active responsive understanding” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 71), while recognising the arbitrariness of such divisions and the connectedness with what preceded it as well as its impact on what followed. When specific excerpts were later included in the analysis chapters those divisions were removed in order to produce a better sense of flow. In the excerpts of conversation that are cited, spaces and double-stops (..) are used as indicators of micro-pauses between words and phrases. These are used as simple indicators to the reader that will minimise any interruption to the flow of the utterances at the same time as making apparent the effects on the interactions.

“After you’ve taught for a while”: positioning *experience*

One of the main measures for teachers is what they consider they have learned from first-hand experience. However, such knowledge is “not counted as valuable or informative in the current climate of reform” (B. M. Atkinson & Rosiek, 2009, p. 176). That tension is illustrated in the following conversation excerpt.

The first line positions the teachers in the practicalities of the present: “it’s got to be something relevant **now** [emphasis added]” (5-1), and this positioning continues with “it’s looking at the stuff that you get **today** [emphasis added]” (5-13). That emphasis illustrates the perspective that teaching is contingent on daily practicalities, and that teaching realities: “when I’ve got a class of 20 kids in front of me” (5-38) require more of the teacher than being a mere functionary, an interchangeable cog in an education machine.

Excerpt 5 – “After you’ve taught for a while”: positioning on data

1		.. it’s got to be something relevant now
2	[nodding, smiling] yes ..	and I guess
3		too after you’ve taught for a while you get
4	yes ..	a pretty good bullshit monitor .. you
5	yes,	know .. when people have just got
6		some fancy idea .. for the sake of this
7		fancy idea here .. you know, some things
8		that have .. that really do stick .. I mean
9	yes [smiling]	some stuff .. it was ages
10	mm, mm	ago but see old Bill
11	[nodding]	– you remember his stuff – it’s still
12		valid you know, that sort of stuff is
13		available so it’s actually looking at the
14		stuff that you get today and saying .. what
15	[nodding] still valid	is still valid? .. and I think
16		teaching-as-inquiry will be one of those
17		things that will be .. still valid
18	right	but at the present moment I’ve
19		just walked out of a meeting on data sets
20	oh, [laughs]	.. and stuff and I said to
21		myself “ <i>I’ve had enough of this</i> ” if you
22	right!	know what I mean .. starting to
23		talk round ourselves in the end and I
24	.. yes ..	thought no, what am I .. what have I
25		got to do with .. will be of more value to
26		me than sitting through data sets
27	mm .. [nods]	.. and this is more
28	yes ..	... this is my .. this was a priority
29	thank you ..	for me .. because .. you know
30	right ..	.. a different set of reasons .. they’ll
31		still be talking about data sets when I get

32	I'm sure, yes	back .. um .. but um ..
33		[frowns] and data sets are important
34		.. and what we .. what we gather
35		data on and when we gather data what
36		format it is .. it's all important stuff .. and
37		that's the bread-and-butter stuff .. but
38		when I've got a class of 20 kids in front of
39	yes, you're thinking	me ..
40	the kids not the data ..	[nods]
41	absolutely .. absolutely	[nods]

It is noteworthy that the language of measurement: “what is still valid?” (5-14), and “data” (5-19; 5-26; 5-35) is used throughout the excerpt, and is used with both positive and negative connotations, where “valid” is used in a positive sense of aligning with the practicalities of teaching, whereas “data” is used somewhat pejoratively, linked with “important stuff” (5-36), yet modified by the use of the conditional “but” (5-32; 5-37). There are positive aspects such as “old Bill — you remember his stuff” (5-10), and a reference to the conversation itself: “this is more .. this is my .. this was a priority for me” (5-27). However, there are also negative attitudes apparent: “I’ve had enough of this” (5-21) and “sitting through data sets” (5-26), as well as “bullshit monitor” (5-4) and “some fancy idea” (5-6). Such negativity is based on experience of developments that have challenged teacher professional insights and have been narrow in their scope, being based on discourses of credentialing as the primary measure of success. “It is important to see . . . that these developments do not enhance teacher professionalism or good education, but constitute a threat to the striv[ing] for good education and meaningful professional conduct” (Biesta, 2015, p. 84). The negative teacher attitudes towards having their professional judgements marginalised are apparent in the positioning statement “you’re thinking of the kids not the data” (5-39). Teacher judgements based on experience are positioned as central.

What the above excerpt indicates, therefore, was the need to acknowledge and confirm the value of teacher experience in this study and particularly in the analysis of the conversations and at the same time to theorise such experience in the context of the prevalent discourses within the teacher community. That is what I am attempting to do next.

Socialisation and subjectification of teachers

Dialogues between teachers provide examples of how collegial interactions reinforce some ideas and values while diminishing others. A community perspective provides a more substantive basis for understanding teacher praxis than alternatives based on a psychology of the individual. Consequently, I want to trouble the idea that individuality is an appropriate conceptual basis for considering educational objectives. It is relevant to question why state education might be provided by any society for its citizens if not for the ultimate benefit to society as a whole. Individuality might remain disconnected from such a consideration, but if education promotes ongoing net benefits and improvements for the communities involved, then it ought to be counted as an investment by a society in its future.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand there are Māori traditions of thinking and being that emphasise the connectedness of individuals through their *whakapapa* (genealogy), not only to their *whanau* (extended family), but also to their *hapu* (clan), and *iwi* (tribe). The understandings of Pacific Islanders also struggle with European assumptions that are embedded in state education structures and policies (Devine, 2013). Maintaining individualistic neoliberal policies and the associated teaching and learning practices serve to reinforce philosophies that cater to the demands of capital rather than community, as can be seen in the terms and measures of education indicators used by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2014), which only distinguish between *individual* and *public* costs and benefits, alienated from other, more socially cohesive, frames of reference.

The schooling discourses that were of most interest in this research were socially progressive and neoliberal discourses and the impacts of these on individual/collective identity claims, privilege/equity considerations, and

articulations of Māori/Pākehā perspectives. The conversational effects that I looked to comment on involved analysing how the conversations triggered or induced any shifts in positioning in relation to those discourses, or the converse, that they served to maintain or reinforce positions that were expressed. Either of those would be of interest, depending on whether it was seen to be important to encourage stability or to promote change.

Education practices predicated on individualistic philosophies remain resistant to the shaping effects and dynamics of interactions formed around collective understandings, where being is understood more in the sense of connectedness rather than autonomy. Some European traditions of thinking maintain Enlightenment ideas about rationality, truth and self-hood even in postmodernist writings (Flax, 1990). To recognise tikanga Māori, however, needs education philosophies of connectivity in a world of networks, and constructs of community in place of idealised individualised curricula. Liberal progressive understandings encourage educators to fit teaching to local contexts, as well as offering the freedom to employ stories, analogical approaches and understandings of situatedness to represent knowledge (Parker, 1997). Instead of universalised Pākehā realities, where Māori represent a majority, or even significant minority of the population, policies and practices of schooling ought to be constructed on a different foundation to do justice to the principle of partnership in the Treaty of Waitangi.

To align with this ideal and show how it might be possible to reframe Pākehā discourses, the participants in this study are viewed as exemplars of the social construction of teacher subjectivities and praxis, inseparably intertwined. In addition, the community that the teachers represent shows itself as multi-faceted, existing within a wider community of ideas, language, culture, time and place. In demonstrating how the collegial interactions in teacher conversations produce effects more consistent with a collective than an atomistic perspective, the study serves to illustrate the adaptive complexity of collective functioning. In finding ways to understand and describe the effects of dialogue on understandings of what it means to be a teacher, the thesis promotes the argument that such terms are themselves fluid, based on criteria which are created in time and community (Rorty, 1982). The argument itself is necessarily

contextual as a result, but carries the possibility of changed perspectives, as outlined below.

Subject to change: connecting purpose and methodology

The concept of community provides the link between purpose and methodology. In extending the context from the norms of individualistic ideas to include the connections between people, it becomes not only possible but also essential to align the ontological positioning of the study with its methodology. This is built on the argument that, although in current neoliberal interpretations the term education describes a complex aggregation of individual perspectives, such perspectives are articulated in a shared language and situated in community. To make any claims to insights or knowledge beyond those that pertain directly to the researcher, the study needed to be positioned within a recognised conceptual framework. Crafting that framework included connecting the various ideas and perspectives from a literature that shaped the changing approaches to the study as it progressed. Therefore, some ideas that appear here have been present throughout the entire course of the study, while others have been more recent arrivals necessitated by a desire for the argument to display sufficient congruity. Understanding the theoretical orientation adopted for the study, as well as its contextual fit, are both now vital components of the argument. That argument has been refined and re-evaluated many times during the course of its development, as a consequence of finding incongruities arising from different perspectives and theoretical positions, illustrating that meaning always remains subject to change.

Ontologically, the study is situated in a social-constructionist paradigm. Accordingly, an understanding of the discursive context is demanded. I have conceptualised this as co-locating understandings of *being*, *fairness*, and *culture*. These three aspects apply not only to the participants in the study, but also to their immediate context of the local community of secondary school teachers, as well as the wider historical and geographical frames for the education discourses that continue to have influence.

Virtual dialogues: why the philosophical orientation?

“Philosophy is not a theory but an activity” (Wittgenstein, 1922/2010, p. 44, §4.112). Every conversation is a shared activity. Even a conversation with oneself actively positions an individual in the context of socially-connected memories. This study explored face-to-face conversations between myself and a number of teaching colleagues, as well as virtual dialogues between various writers and myself. Here are recorded some of the impacts on my thinking.

More accurately, perhaps, the interactions I refer to were between myself and various writings that I have reflected upon, rather than the writers themselves. The distinction is worth mentioning as it places the emphasis on the ideas rather than the people who expressed them. The writings also caused me to engage with the *ways* in which ideas were presented, and to that extent each writer conveyed a sense of identity, of locatedness in community. However, the writings and the ideas contained within only influenced me in relation to those conceptions that had already coalesced and previously been accommodated within my worldview. Some ideas therefore usurped others to become central to my argument, though their contributions were not necessarily in the same form as that in which they were originally articulated by their authors. Rather, they were reshaped in the context of my thinking as I applied these ideas to my use in this study. Other ideas, despite their provenance, had to be rejected because of their incongruity with the thrust of my argument. Nevertheless, all the ideas have left traces, some of which are discernible in the phrasing of my writing. All the citations in this thesis thus represent an ongoing critical dialogue, an engagement with the academic community that has shaped this thesis. That shaping was at least equal in its influence on this study to the input from my face-to-face conversations with others in the teaching community that has shaped my understandings over many years of teaching practice. The activity of philosophising — the search for wisdom — has continued to re-frame my perspectives throughout the duration of the study and the writing of this thesis. It is therefore also integral to the argument.

Many voices contributed to the ideas that have coalesced for me in this study. Some have made a bigger impact than others, but it would not do justice to the

notion of community to privilege such voices while ignoring the others. My argument is that the discourses of community are best understood as expressed from multiple perspectives. The strength of a community comes from partial rather than full agreement. Individual distinctiveness should be seen as evidence of connectedness, of meaning in collective understandings. Utterances show their meaning in dialogical interactions. Texts convey meaning insofar as they resonate for the reader. The activity of writing propels ideas from one context to another. That is what I have understood as the task of this thesis.

Reaching bedrock: methodology and the community argument

As a consequence of asserting the need to understand community as the bedrock on which to build the philosophical enquiry that is fundamental to this thesis, several philosophical problems occur. Wittgenstein proposed that such problems “would be solved . . . by looking into the workings of our language” (1953/2003, p. 40, §109). Wittgenstein’s advice fits easily with the conversational basis of this study. However, determining what might be the best approaches to examine the ways in which language works to produce the effects it does merely creates other problems – methodological ones. The philosophical issues simply emerge in a new guise.

My intention at the outset of the study was to identify and describe the various education discourses in the teacher conversations – both those that were obvious to the participants and those which were more tacitly embedded in the dialogue. My intent was to argue that such discourses were integral to the shaping of the community context in which teachers found themselves positioned. However, it became apparent to me that identifying such discourses was only a first step in the process, that more was required to make viable any claim to be adding to the wisdom of the teacher community. Accordingly, I found further steps needed to be taken. The first of these was to consider the positioning effects of the presence or absence of various discourses in the teacher dialogues. The next step was to determine what movement from these positions happened in the course of the conversations, and to what extent the dialogues served to reinforce the status quo.

In the analysis I examined the transcripts to identify whether any discursive positioning shifted during the course of the conversation, for then the participants could be seen to be involved in a process of re-alignment, even if this appeared to be trite or of minor consequence. The workings of the language, the dialogical exchange in meaning-making, could be argued to be changing the positioning of discourses that were central to community functioning in relation to those others that were more toward the margins. This could also be described as learning – adaptation as a result of interaction. How such learning occurs was one of the questions that prompted my study, but more important for the community perspective of the thesis is what those learnings were. That was the problem to be solved. Wittgenstein posited that the problem of translating a joke from one language to another was “analogous to a mathematical *problem*”²⁴ (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 121e, §698), though without a ready algorithm to find the solution. That sort of conceptualisation aligns well with Kennedy’s (1999) finding that teachers assign the greatest value to research studies where they can draw analogies with their own praxis rather than find relevance “in the study itself” (p. 536). On that basis, I would argue that methodological problems in this study can be considered as solved when teachers or educators find themselves able to apply to their own practice any understandings that are gained from the reporting of this research.

Taking this argument further, methodological considerations may also be determined by outcomes conceived as desirable. The usefulness of research to improving *my own* understanding of teaching or learning was the measure that I applied from my perspective as a teacher. As a researcher, in contrast, the measure of value I applied to the study was its potential to encourage *my teaching colleagues* to alternate perspectives. Both measures influenced my initial judgements, which were that if this thesis was to make any contribution to knowledge in the area of participant-researcher methodology, then the *starting point* would have to be found in what I learned myself. In the course of refining my position I found myself surprised by what I interpreted as a lack of acknowledgment of the collective or communitarian understandings that underpinned approaches to Pākehā education research. Both *Talanoa* and

²⁴ “ist ganz analog einem mathematischen *Problem*” (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 121, §698)

Kaupapa Māori research practices fit their contexts of collective worldviews and became influential in shaping my understandings. However, even though I was aware of those practices, they had not been my starting point, because the participants who volunteered for my study included a mix of those whose positions were informed by Eurocentric traditions and others more influenced by *tikanga Māori* (traditional Māori ways of thinking and doing things). The first challenge therefore included conceptualising community in the context of individualistic discourses and histories. The next problem was to craft an appropriate methodology.

Separateness and connectedness: different inheritances

My intent was to apply a “poststructural scrutiny” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2009, p. 4) to the conversations by focusing on what and how language contributed to understandings of individual and collective functioning. Wittgenstein used such a frame in writing about how understandings of reality, learning and conceptions of what is true and what is illusory are all provided by the contexts in which people live.

I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the *inherited background* [emphasis added] against which I distinguish between true and false (Wittgenstein, 1970, p. 15e, §94)²⁵.

With these words “*inherited background*” Wittgenstein inserted the individual directly into community, acknowledging factors that construct the sense of identity and self. Marshall (2003) argued that Wittgenstein showed “an ongoing hostility . . . to any notion of a substantive and individuated self” (2003, pp. 45–6), so it seems fitting to use Wittgenstein’s work to argue a view of community. Similarly, “discourses of the real and the good originate neither within the mind of individuals, nor in the attempt to employ words in mapping what is ostensibly an independent reality. Rather, following Wittgenstein (1953/2003),

²⁵ “Aber mein Weltbild habe ich nicht, weil ich mich von seiner Richtigkeit überzeugt habe; auch nicht, weil ich von seiner Richtigkeit überzeugt bin. Sondern es ist der überkommene Hintergrund, auf welchem ich zwischen wahr und falsch unterscheide” (Wittgenstein, 1970, p. 15 §94)

discourse gains its significance from its use by persons in relationship” (Gergen, 2009, p. 98). Furthermore, “Wittgenstein's appeal to criteria is meant, one might say, exactly to call to consciousness the astonishing fact of the astonishing extent to which we *do* agree in judgment; eliciting criteria goes to show therefore that our judgments *are* public, that is, shared” (Cavell, 1979, p. 31). Wittgenstein’s philosophy provided the foundation for arguing not only that we are defined by our community, but also that Cartesian ideas of individual selves exploit the sense of identity by disconnecting subjectivities from their social contexts. The position that I am arguing is that beliefs, values and culture are all fundamentally language constructs. Thinking, learning, assumptions and selves are all built on the meanings generated by languaged interactions and the effects of those interactions. Individual thought and expression are totally contingent on shared understandings, aligned interpretations of meaning, and common forms of expression in community.

This is not to argue that the idea of individuality lacks meaning or substance. *Individuality* and *community* are expressions of separateness and connectedness that require each other to provide a full understanding. Instead, the problem is the assumption of individual autonomy that demands acceptance of innate personality or character traits quite distinct from approaches and ways of behaving that have been learned from observing and engaging. That assumption is incongruent with any concept of schooling that assumes learning through social interaction. The problem is one of compartmentalising – of separating *mind* from *body*, of *being* from *becoming*, of *identity* from *circumstance*. Associated with this is the problem of a mechanistic industrial perspective where community is interpreted as an aggregation of fungible human resources rather than a dynamic interplay of embodied discourses. That was a direction I wanted to avoid because it aligned too closely to the neoliberal perspective while excluding alternate views.

Performing and audiencing – describing and interpreting

Analysing the conversations provided me with a dilemma. To be congruent with the social constructionist view, I wanted to avoid any interpretation that differences were indicators of unique identities and individual selves. Instead,

my concern was with the individual-and-community basis of the study, so the focus was on the interactions between the participants in the dialogues and what those interactions signified.

Problematising the individualistic perspective included viewing the conversations as collaboratively producing meaning rather than simply expressing it, and recognising that the conversations were also impacted by the contextual connections, values and beliefs. Dialogue implies interaction, in an ongoing rhythm of each speaker reacting to the words and expression of the other. Many of the unspoken nuances that shape and shift meaning become lost in the process of transcription, so the study needed to focus on effects that could be observable in the written record. Such effects would be observable in patterns of responding, with meanings produced and found in the semantics of the language. Yet there was more to consider, for the cadence of the interactions also influenced the meanings being produced. For example, if one of the performers in a dialogue continued their flow of speech, resisting interruption, then such a performance itself carried meaning in terms of the relative positioning of the participants. Although some such noticings were included in the transcriptions or remarked on directly in the analysis of the video-recordings, most of them were more ephemeral, resisting categorisation. Those pragmatics of what could be claimed as data had a direct bearing on the interpretation of meanings.

Meaning, however, is necessarily conventional, for it is in community agreement that meanings are assigned to combinations of words, phrases, gestures and expressions:

Something *does* follow from the fact that a term is used in its usual way: it entitles you (or, using the term, you entitle others) to make certain inferences, draw certain conclusions. (This is part of what you say when you say that you are talking about the *logic* of ordinary language.) *Learning what these implications are is part of learning the language.* (Cavell, 1976, p. 11)

Interpreting the transcripts for meanings meant looking for patterns, not only in what each participant said, but also in the processes of performing and

audiencing. Examining those conventions rendered the effects more visible. With meaning being seen as “social convention” (Belsey, 2002, p. 88), the importance of the community aspect of the study was reinforced. My role as a researcher therefore necessitated my participation also in my other role as a teacher, situating me as a participant-observer. In that respect, the study would concern itself not only with discovering and describing patterns, but also with interpreting the consequences. Being positioned as a teacher collaborating with colleagues meant that I could recognise some of those effects, but others were less obvious because over-familiarity rendered such effects transparent. While immersed in the conversations I simply continued to take for granted the common understandings of context. However, after transcribing the conversations, when I began selecting excerpts for comment, that is when I examined the interactions in more detail and was able to notice what had been transparent to me. The initial selection provided me with highlights to analyse, but it was the during later selections that I was able to focus differently, viewing the conversations with the intent of identifying the discourses that were positioning us in the dialogues. Only when looking through a different lens could I begin to notice what was invisible to my teacher gaze. Asking in Wittgensteinian mode what the language was doing to preserve the teacher *form of life* enabled me to observe differently.

The argument, however, is that it was not in reflexion, which by definition would be limited to existing knowledge and understandings, but in reading more widely and engaging with ideas from other communities and cultures that I was able to learn to make new comparisons and notice further differences. Rather than framing the study as a closely bounded entity, I worked to connect it to the writings and studies of other researchers. In doing so I was effectively aligning the process with the conceptual basis of the study. Finding alignments to alternative thinking and praxis in the community of education researchers shifted the methodological framework from a pragmatic teacher perspective of asking “what works?” to questioning how to interpret the effects of conversations. Biesta (2010a) observed that the scientific model of causality has influenced education research directions by promoting evidence-based

judgments. Such ideas, however, would not align comfortably with the poststructural perspectives that shaped the study.

Using a wide-angle lens: language as a community perspective

Language is maintained and develops through use. When people use language they participate in the reinforcing of patterns of thinking as much as patterns of expressing. Patterns of language use illustrate community discourses.

“What people accept as a justification — shows how they think and live” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 90, §325). What Wittgenstein posited is that what is understood and accepted is necessarily contextual (Peters, 1984) — situated in community. Language and meaning are contingent, rather than absolute. This positioning required of me that I include sufficient descriptions of context in the study, as well as the recognition that aspects beyond the immediate surroundings shaped the meanings offered and accepted in the dialogues. Some form of genealogical approach was required, in order that phrases in the conversations could be shown to provide echoes or traces of community discourses. The research methodology needed to show links to the subjectivities of the participants as well as the discursive backdrop that shaped those subjectivities. The words of the transcripts, however, were already decontextualised from the dynamics of the interactions within the conversations. The dialogues involved inter-relating, but transcripts alone were not sufficient to demonstrate the extent of this constitutive process.

Nevertheless, interpretation of the conversations was possible on the basis of what I could identify as the effects on the interactions, as for example, when one participant interrupted the other. When comparing the flow of dialogue before and after such an interruption it became possible to notice such effects. It was not simply in the words or the phrasing that the ongoing effects became manifest, but also in the pace, or the ways in which the participants changed positions. The cadence of language used, the ways in which the speakers adapted to each other’s rhythm and style, the manner in which they audienceed each other — those were all language effects more obvious in the video-recordings than in the transcripts. Effects that the transcripts could show, explored in the analyses, were where the participants were positioned in

relation to institutional discourses, and how those positions shifted during the course of the conversation. More important to the process of interpretation, however, was recognising the “communalized interpretive practices” (Schrag, 1997, p. 93) that formed the backdrop to the conversations. How the teachers interpreted each other’s performing and audiencing contributed to the positioning in an ongoing dynamic, based on their experiences within the community.

“Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker’s intentions; it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 294). The speakers’ intentions could be noticed in the ways they responded, illustrating the performative aspect of conversation, where the actors exchanged the roles of performing and audiencing. The words and the syntax used were dynamic responses based on shared experiences and understandings. However, it was not only the actors who influenced the performance. The language used brought its own history of usage, *overpopulated*, in Bakhtin’s terms, with associated meanings. Attempting to wrest a particular meaning from a specific utterance was therefore unrealistic, because meaning was dependent not only on the words but on so many other aspects of the performance. The conversations were not simply private exchanges between individuals – they represented a plurality of possibilities of meaning and interpretation, even with similar patterns of expression.

“There is no statement that does not presuppose others”, argued Foucault (2002, p. 112). Conversation related the actors to their language context. Meaning was not isolated to any present exchange, but depended on a past. The actors did not question the past, but often referenced it. Neither did they constantly excavate the verbal terrain in the process of making meaning. It was enough that they continued the given usage that each provided to the other, mostly unaware of how each word, phrase, or sentence in use depended on connections to the ideas and statements of the discourses that populated the meaning of the dialogue. That was what enabled me as the researcher to observe connections and assert meanings. Foucault, in noting the “problematic of the origin” (2002, p. 158), also recognised the infinite capacity in language for new

forms of expression, new combinations of signifiers. Just as the teacher participants were shaped by their social situatedness, so too was the dialogical languaging shaped by previous usage and interaction.

Playing language games: (*Sprachspiele*) in context

All words and grammar in language have histories. Phrasings and sayings always carry traces of past meanings, as well as linkages to a range of other expressions in whose company they are frequently found: further signifiers of contexts. Patternings of language use resolve into patternings of interactions. That is the basis of language games. “Conversation flows on, the application and interpretation of words, and only in its course do words have their meaning” (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 24e, §135)²⁶. To get to the meaning required analysing the flow of conversation as much as the words, as well as paying attention to the dynamics of performing and audiencing in order to understand the meanings created through the effects of positioning in the utterances.

Peters (1984) argued that “the recognition that a language and the concepts that comprise it have a history ... would add an empirical dimension to philosophy and the philosophy of education ... and ... would truly emphasize the relevance and importance of the socio-cultural context” (p. 120). While the immediate context helped to determine the meaning of the utterances in their immediate contexts, the historical context provided a further space for reflection, for considering the implications, the discursive positioning, and the nature of the interactions implicit in the choice and use of language. This illustrated the point that Wittgenstein (1953/2003) made about what he called a *Sprachspiel*, a language game, that it was more important to be noticing it than attempting to explain it²⁷. In noticing a language game, in recognising when and how discourses were positioning the participants in relation to the ideas and to each other, it could be seen how subjectivities were being constructed. The meanings of the conversations were situated in the conversational interactions and their

²⁶ “Das Gespräch, die Anwendung und Ausdeutung der Worte fließt dahin, und nur im Fluß hat das Wort seine Bedeutung” (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 24, §135)

²⁷ “Nicht um die Erklärung eines Sprachspiels durch unsre Erlebnisse handelt sich's, sondern um die Feststellung eines Sprachspiels” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 141, §655)

effects, but significances could also be found from the relative influence of the discourses that were observably present.

What something means within a community depends on both the language and language games available, for meaning is created within the language interactions of a community. To find such meaning in this study it was not sufficient to examine the conversations as if they were distinct and isolated dialogues, it was necessary to examine these utterances for commonalities that might illustrate the language games connecting community discourses and their effects. It was in relationships that what was accepted as reality was experienced and expressed. It was equally important to notice the dynamics of the language games as well as their presence. It remained part of the argument that describing and interpreting conversational dynamics needed to be congruent with the community orientation of this study, since it was in building and maintaining collegial relationships that teacher subjectivities were constructed.

Inverting learning: making moves in chess games (*Schachspiele*)

Communication and thinking have much in common in that they absolutely require a context to ascribe meaning to either. The conversations in this study have nuances of meaning that are quite specific to who is participating and how past interactions position them. It is in the interactions themselves and the positioning effects of the interactions that meaning is produced, not only for the participants but also for the teacher community as a whole. That is to say, where teachers are positioned relative to any discourse, that positioning exerts an inwards centripetal or outwards centrifugal force on the community norms. Where teachers find common ground in conversation, their positioning reinforces some community norms, whether those are central or more marginal. Positioning effects of the conversations are therefore important to the study.

Fundamental understandings of concepts are likewise inextricably entangled with their contexts. Yet, using Wittgenstein's (1953/2003) example: "It would be as if without knowing how to play chess, I were to try and make out what the

word "mate" meant by close observation of the last move of a game of chess"²⁸ (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 88e, §316). The words that were spoken, and the meanings that were assigned to those words, were necessarily contextual. In the language games of the teacher conversations, as in a game of chess, the participants took turns but were all subject to the same rules and principles of the game. Those who did not know those, just as those unfamiliar with the game of chess, would not have been able to play. The ways in which the conversations played out were therefore influenced by more than each participant's localised background experiences, and would include other influences such as the secondary school teacher community, or collegial loyalty based on common interests supported by ongoing membership and participation in PPTA, the secondary school teachers' union. There was also the principle of reciprocity, derived from the realisation that most, if not all teachers, find they have professional challenges to face and that sharing and discussing such challenges is an integral part of the culture in the teacher community. These principles of interaction are evident in the conversation excerpts of the study.

Wittgenstein's analogy about the rules of the game indicated the influence of concepts and practices that shaped the range of responses for the conversation contexts. He pointed out that "the term 'language-*game*' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity"²⁹ (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 10e, §23 - emphasis in original). Again, context was emphasised, but not in the sense of something static. Rather, Wittgenstein was linking *speaking* with the much broader dynamic of living. The implication, that analysis of discourse required paying attention to much more than the words and phrasing, supported the direction of my argument: that interpreting the conversations required situating the dialogue within its education context. Wittgenstein's analogy also invited me to apply as much consideration to the rules as to the moves being made, to the discourses that were the drivers as much as to the effects.

²⁸ 'Es wäre ähnlich, wenn ich, ohne Kenntnis des Schachspiels, durch genaues Beobachten des letzten Zuges einer Schachpartie herausbringen wollte, was das Wort "mattsetzen" bedeutet' (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 88e, §316).

²⁹ 'Das Wort "Sprachspiel" soll hier hervorheben, daß das *Sprechen* der Sprache ein Teil ist einer Tätigkeit, oder einer Lebensform' (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 10, §23)

Co-constructing in a discursive landscape: shaping lenses

Many discourses populate teachers' conceptual maps. Some carry more influence than others. These embedded ideas are accepted as normal, invisible constraints, and remain generally unchallenged in teachers' work as reflective practitioners. The deep rules and assumptions of the dominant group in any culture become the deep rules and assumptions of the whole culture (Scheurich, 1997), marginalising those of other groups in a society. Accordingly, the social interactions between the teachers work to continually re-constitute the barely noticed micro-practices that are implicated in what have been described as "modern technologies of power" (Foucault, 1976/2008, p. 151). Yet, just as the subjects of discourses interact and in those interactions cause ripples of change, so too are discourses modified as they share contexts in the flow of time.

In this research study my aim included examining such modifying effects. By exploring the deep rules and assumptions of the discourses within which the participants were swimming, it was anticipated that the pressures and currents of those discourses would become more apparent. In making visible the tacitly understood, the unnoticed influences, and the processes by which these are hidden and camouflaged, alternatives might become more visible. Whether it was in acknowledging and supporting such rules, or in resisting and rejecting them, each participant influenced each interlinked other. Using different lenses to view the world would change the world as well as the view, since how teachers acted would depend on how they viewed their world. Those views were constrained by the lenses through which they had been progressively socialised to see the world of teaching, since "the lens constructs the world according to the nature of the lens" (Scheurich, 1997, p. 173).

Scheurich also posited that "a mind or consciousness could be seen not as an atomistic singularity but as interwoven within a broader social or cultural or contextual field that includes others" (1997, p. 165). In this he was articulating an alternative to the more prevalent discursive positions predicated on an essential self. In doing so, he offered the opportunity to draw on different styles of architecture in constructing interpretative frameworks. Of course, the architecture was not the building, but examining the architecture could open a

space to access discourses and perspectives as tools for interpreting structures and their contexts. An inquiry model built on those foundations, de-centred from monologic individual voices, could open pathways to collective reflection and collaborative interpretation, could transform mental maps, and could represent conversation and dialogue as illustrative of their contexts rather than simply the data on which understandings were built and theories were validated.

Bavelas et al. (2000) found that participants co-constructed conversations. Moreover, they found that the visual cues provided by listeners combined with the audible ones to modify the way the conversation proceeded and that a speaker and a listener *worked together* to produce a narrative. This had important implications for the study. It also supported what Davies and Harré (1990) argued, that positions within conversations were negotiated, produced “in the very act of conversing” (p. 55). It also illustrated that in oral interchanges the illocutionary force, the power of the features beyond the words, would be instrumental in producing meaning as well as relationship. Meanings would not be created by the words alone.

Words, expressions, and gestures combined in the study as the participants collaborated in dialogue, acting out the discourses that shaped their subjectivities in the encounter. “With positioning, the focus is on the way in which the discursive practices constitute the speakers and hearers in certain ways and yet at the same time is a resource through which speakers and hearers can negotiate new positions” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 62). Positions were established in words and in silences, in tones and in emphases, in movement and in stillness. Positioning mattered, since it was always co-constructed. In the dialogues, positions were established through the combination of performing and audiencing. Conversational effects could be seen in the maintaining of positions as well as in movement.

Always already implicated: a choice of method

“It is no more essential to the understanding of a proposition that one should imagine anything in connexion with it, than that one should make a sketch from

it” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 102e, §396)³⁰. What words mean in the dynamics of dialogue are the meanings assigned by the participants, and understanding is therefore always contextual. Making inferences from outside of the dialogues, interpreting utterances by exploring the connections between the words and their effects, in Wittgenstein’s measure, could be argued to add little in the way of deeper understanding. Problematising the *process* of interpretation on that basis indicated that it was more important to consider how the interactions and the discourses positioned the participants than what language games could be noticed.

The study intended to provide a deeper understanding of the effects of collegial conversations by treating the dialogues as interactions and integral parts of the process of positioning and re-positioning within the context of the teacher community. The proposition that supported this has already been outlined: that such conversations might be best understood when considered in a discursive context. How this aligned with the methods used is now explained.

With a community focus central to the inquiry, there was a need to optimise the shared understandings that arose from collaborative endeavours. This had already been argued in Pasifika and Māori approaches such as *Teu le va* (Airini, Anae, & Mila-Schaaf, 2010), and *Kaupapa Māori* (Bishop, 1996). The main difference between those frames of reference and that of this study was in the relative homogeneity of understandings, the cultural traditions that informed the contexts and connections in those approaches, and the Pākehā backgrounds for most participants in this study. Some of the teachers who contributed to this study brought Māori understandings to the fore, but the challenge was to develop a conceptual map that was appropriate to interpreting all of the conversational interactions in terms that aligned with other perspectives as well.

What aligned best with the social constructionist orientation of the study was an interpretive approach such as Gumperz (1982) promotes, where judgements could be made on the basis of internal evidence, or more accurately, *indicators*, from dialogue. One feature of the conversations was the ongoing negotiations

³⁰ ‘Es ist so wenig für das Verständnis eines Satzes wesentlich, daß man sich bei ihm etwas vorstelle, als daß man nach ihm eine Zeichnung entwerfe’ (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 102, §396).

and interpretations of meaning, so these were already present in the data. Noticing the effects of such meaning generation also occurred naturally in the dialogue, and was visible in the relative positioning of the participants. This included the constant awareness of the researcher presence, obvious with the overt video-recording of dialogues.

Choosing to participate as a researcher embedded directly in the study was consistent with my understanding that as a researcher I could not be independent or ‘outside’ such qualitative research, because my beliefs, values, and assumptions would always be implicated in the way I conducted the inquiries and the conclusions I reached. The intention was therefore to make those aspects visible by engaging in the study as a participant-observer. As such, I was directly involved in all of the conversations. This first-hand engagement in the collaborative process of meaning-making provided opportunities to maintain a collegial expectation of reciprocity as part of the social reality of being a teacher. “For reciprocity in research to take place, the researcher has to interrogate/scrutinize research methodologies that claim to be inclusive to ensure that participants’ experiences are not ignored and/or distorted” (Kiluva-Ndunda, 2005, p. 227). The concept of inclusion behind that issue of ignoring or distorting participants’ experiences was one that was itself situated in community discourses of fairness. For the purposes of this study, such discourses were not considered axiomatic, because of the differing concepts of fairness and competing claims for inclusion. However, the intention behind Kiluva-Ndunda’s advice appeared to be aligned with giving weight to the voices of participants as well as myself as the researcher.

Illuminating utterances: conversations and their effects

The circumstances of the interactions were similar though not identical. Prior to our meetings I asked each of the other participants where they would prefer to meet for our conversation. Their preferences determined what happened next, but the dialogues were all held at times and in places where we would not be interrupted.

The specifics of the dialogues are illustrated in more detail in later chapters where I have analysed a collection of excerpts from the conversations. Although

much of the dialogue may seem trite or mundane, it all made a contribution to deeper understandings. Those understandings included the nature of teacher subjectivities, the discourses of schooling, and the *effects* of the conversations. It was therefore helpful to refer to Bakhtin's (1986) comments about speech genres, and the way utterances exhibited commonality according to the context in which they occurred. Both the context of schooling and the ongoing development of teacher subjectivities supported the observation that "language enters life through concrete utterances (which manifest language) and life enters language through concrete utterances as well" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 63). What the conversations contributed to the positioning and subjectivities of the teacher participants comprised just one of the effects considered in this study. Another aspect was the effect on the life and discursive framework of the wider teaching community, also discussed. Those wider effects ought to be considered as identifiable features of interactions that continually reverberate through an unbounded, complex context of connectedness, rather than extrapolation from a limited amount of data in a fixed and bounded reality. The former is congruent with the socially-constructed community philosophy of this study, while the latter aligns more with conceptions of individualistic psychologies of being.

It was also helpful to consider the unspoken components of the conversations. Jackson and Mazzei (2009) considered the contribution of the "silent questions" (p. 51) — the wonderings that were present but not articulated, that, even though unasked, still influenced the direction of the dialogue and the nature of the interactions. Some of those *silent questions* that I recalled asking myself during the course of the conversations were therefore foregrounded and discussed alongside the analysis of the transcripts of the actual dialogue.

The reading and interpreting of gestures and body language by the participants was likewise subject to analysis and discussion. This was made possible because of the video-recordings. It had already been noted that the impressions produced by such non-verbal behaviours, and the values assigned to them, were remarkably consistent as a "social perception" (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993, p. 440), and accordingly aligned well with the orientation of this study.

[Re]shaping the interactions: analysing and interpreting

Two distinct approaches formed the basis for my analysis and interpretation of the dialogues. The first was identifying examples of discourses of equity and privilege and their contribution to the process of meaning-making, particularly in relation to Māori perspectives. The second was examining the ways in which those ideas shaped the interactions, positioning the teachers relative to the community norms.

Instead of "imaginability" one can also say here: representability by a particular method of representation. And such a representation may indeed safely point a way to further use of a sentence. On the other hand a picture may obtrude itself upon us and be of no use at all (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 102e, §397).³¹

Analysing and interpreting the conversations in terms of their effects required a verbal representation of both the participant interactions and their changes of positioning relative to each other and to the discourses that were embedded in the dialogue. "The objective is to describe the procedures by which speakers produce their own behaviour and understand and deal with the behaviour of others. The central resource for analysis is interaction itself" (Heritage, 1988, p. 128). The interactions, situated within a normative framework of education and teaching discourses, affected both participants by maintaining or challenging their positioning in relation to what were assumed to be central and what were more towards the margins. Those discourses were embedded in the genre of teacher talk, leaving little space in the utterances for individual style. Throughout dialogue, "meaning is negotiated on the basis of the communicative intent, inferences, and sociocultural knowledge of the participants" (Günther, 2008, p. 60). The conversations both demanded and illustrated the common perspectives and understandings that were shared by the participants.

³¹ Statt "Vorstellbarkeit" kann man hier auch sagen: Darstellbarkeit in einem bestimmten Mittel der Darstellung. Und von einer solchen Darstellung kann allerdings ein sicherer Weg zur weitem Verwendung führen. Andererseits kann sich uns ein Bild aufdrängen und gar nichts nützen (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 102, §397).

In this study the boundaries between emic and etic categories was blurred, even though some differences between perspectives became obvious at times. Moreover, to have aligned with Bryman's call for "explicating the *subject's interpretation of social reality*" (2003, p. 71) would have imposed expectations of self-other that were not congruent with the intent and direction of this study. What I determined was required instead was a consistency of interpretation as could be applied to the effects of the conversations on the participants. This needed to be not only in terms such as the *social perception* mentioned previously, but also in the relative positioning and movement of the participants. Language was obviously integral to both the interactions and interpreting them. On the one hand, the ephemeral nature of the dialogue was constrained by the temporality of conversation (Auer, 2007; Barth-Weingarten, 2008). On the other hand, my interpretations involved revisiting recordings of the dialogue in a fixedness that over-rode the temporality and situatedness of the responses. "Interactional Linguistics assumes that language is not produced for its own sake but serves the purposes of participants in interaction" (Barth-Weingarten, 2008, p. 81). Interpreting the interactions later, and particularly analysing those interactions through reference to the transcriptions, unavoidably interposed considerations of distance and integrity. Despite these constraints, the analysis produced indicators of the *directions* in which the conversations were driving the participants relative to the available discourses.

Research ethics in the study

It is easy to accept that people act differently in different contexts according to the discursively-constructed constraints, undercurrents or expectations of those contexts. From this perspective, the ethics of a researcher include an ethic of involvement, whether or not the researcher is aware of it, and regardless of their orientation and methods. The nature of researcher involvement, or a lack of it, tacitly signals to the other participants a positioning that privileges individuality or community, a positioning that speaks of separateness from their identities and experiences or engagement and interconnectedness. Research *on* others demands differentiation from them. Research *with* others invites involvement: "There is something active about identity that cannot be ignored: it isn't 'just there', it's not a 'thing', it must always be established . . . identity . . . [is what]

people do . . . [there is] a degree of reflexivity” (Jenkins, 1996, p. 4). That reflexivity is implicated in research ethics.

A collective ethics acknowledges that group cohesion and identity involve some commonality of understandings, values that are shared. There is therefore some congruence in the discourses that differentiate between the *insiders* and the *outsiders*. If one of the tasks or expectations of research is that it might lead to improvements, then alignment is needed between the ethics of the group and the outcomes of the research. Anything else can be seen as marginalising the group within a wider society. The question that then needs to be addressed is whether any group that is the subject of research for betterment understands the intervention as moving the group closer to the values and normative discourses of others, or enhancing its distinctiveness. The former operates to universalise the human condition, while the latter may create dissonance with societal norms, the outcomes of discursive practices. Such outcomes, projected in the planning and execution of research, represent a postmodern approach to research ethics (Hare-Mustin, 1994). This approach can be seen in Putnam’s (2005) assertion that qualitative research ethics are expected to be contextual, acknowledging the methodological practicalities and peculiarities of each study as well as the impacts of the beliefs and belief structures of both researchers and participants. Ethical considerations are therefore also *instrumental* in that they set boundaries for research studies according to the norms of the wider research community within which any study is situated.

However, research methods and ethics are also shaped by historical influences – they have their own genealogy. Artemidorus (c100/1975), writing in the second century, can be regarded as part of the tradition of combining empirical investigations with studies of the literature for his statement that he has “not only taken special pains to procure every book on the interpretation of dreams, but have consorted for many years with the much-despised diviners of the marketplace” (p. 13). That contrast may indicate that he complied with acceptable practice by referring to literary sources, but at the same time, from his reference to the ‘*much-despised*’ (p. 13), he was assigning value to marginalised forms of knowledge. In effect, this can be taken as an example of

where research ethics are shaped by prevailing discourses of morality as much as by practical questions. That context of ethics is explored in the next chapter.

From practice to theory: chapter summary and conclusion

To align with the community orientation of the study, the approaches used, from planning the approaches through to analysing the results, needed to be congruent with the shared perspectives of multiple voices. Accordingly, the positions were not fixed or absolute, either in relation to the background discourses of equity and privilege, or even between the participants in the processes of meaning-making. In this chapter I have described the purpose of the study as being firstly to identify the prevalent influential discourses, particularly those involving conceptions of fairness and culture. Secondly, my intention was to trace the effects of the conversations in terms of exploring to what extent the interactions shifted either of the participants from their initial discursive positioning.

In this chapter I built on the position outlined in chapter 2, where I argued that the conceptual basis of *community* was frequently neglected in an emphasis on individual selves. Using that as my reference point, I posited that aligning my purpose with that community perspective imposed methodological constraints. In justifying the stance I adopted for the conversations and their analysis, I identified that, to be congruent with the poststructural conceptions that steered my decisions, I needed to regard the language used in the interactions as providing relative rather than absolute indicators of positioning.

In the second half of this chapter I described the practical aspects of the study, connecting those with the philosophical orientation. My intention throughout was to weave theory and practice together, both in the research planning aspects and in my interpretations of the meanings that the teacher dialogues demonstrated. My specific intention was to connect the meaning-making processes of the conversation with the discourses of fairness and culture through the lenses of separateness and connectedness.

Chapter 5 – Ethics and (un)fairness

Ethics is obliged to acknowledge a moment of rebellious heteronomy that troubles the sovereignty of autonomy (Critchley, 2007, p. 37).

Previously I investigated the construct of *being* as an individual and as fashioned in community. That construct shapes the different understandings of ethics, where the individual is intertwined with the collective. In this chapter I am exploring an alternative framework with which to consider the notion of ethics as a collective paradigm rather than one that which has its focus on the individual. In doing so I build on postmodern perspectives of knowledge as always and relative rather than Enlightenment ideals that assign absolute priority to rationality. Adopting these postmodern perspectives requires a different perspective on the emancipatory ideal of education. I therefore examine the construct of *fairness*, where ethics and fairness are interpreted as considerations of privilege and equity. Fairness and unfairness are interwoven with the cultural thread, considering Pākehā and Māori perspectives.

The concepts of ethics and fairness are culturally connected ideas of appropriateness, boundaries, expectations and truth. Because they are culturally specific, there are differences between the interpretations that different communities place on similar behaviours. Accordingly, being sensitive to context is vital to comprehend what is appropriate and acceptable. Such contextual understandings are known to those who are community insiders. As an insider in the teacher community I was able to refer to my own understandings of how to respectfully engage fellow teachers in the research study.

Excerpt 6 – “.. and then there's difference of focus”

.. needs a little pastoral care too .. [nodding] .. yeah: ‘*I didn’t go home last night, because I was going to get a hiding*’, you know, all of those kinds of things .. and then there’s difference of focus ..

Different teachers have different issues to contend with. The duty of pastoral care demands more of some teachers than others. In excerpt 6 the teacher comment highlights the limitations of a predominantly academic focus for

secondary schools in the face of distinct social inequalities. The modifier “you know” positions the researcher in the same space, and the matter-of-fact tone of the utterance indicates that this situation was not unusual for either to encounter and was not likely to evince any surprise. The use of the diminutive “little” normalises the example, as does the phrase “those kinds of things”. Such aspects make apparent the collegiality of the teacher community and the discourses of responsibility wider than the evidence of academic measures. Underlying the comment “there’s difference of focus” is an acknowledgement that meeting the needs of students is more than simply preparing lessons for delivery to different levels of literacy. The teacher has discourses of the individual encouraging modelling what Biesta (2015) terms “subjectification . . . the way in which children and young people come to exist as subjects of initiative and responsibility rather than as objects of the actions of others” (p. 77). The teacher’s tacit acceptance of this role indicates positioning in discourses of equity and professional ethics, but there is a tension with the socialisation expectations of the community.

Situating ethics as discourses of individuality and community

Some of the literature that locates the concept of the ‘individual’ within a Western tradition of philosophy forms my starting point. In particular, I consider the notion of an ‘essential self’ as a contrast to postmodern approaches of multiple identity claims. In narrowing my exploration of postmodernism in general to social constructionism in particular, I move on to outlining communitarian perspectives and group understandings as found in some non-Western settings. I argue that, particularly for participatory forms of research, benefits apply from connecting the different approaches entailed by individual and collective understandings. This leads me into a discussion of the distinct perspectives on ethics when viewed through those different lenses. Following that discussion, I shift to the related concepts of fairness and consider them through the same lenses, with particular reference to the ideas of privilege and equity. I conclude with a summary of my argument and some suggestions.

Ethics of the individual, situated in community

The notion of the individual in Western philosophy is strongly linked to the idea that each of us is unique. This way of thinking is predicated on the idea of each individual having an essential *self*, quite distinct from others. On the one hand this idea requires a recognition and perhaps a valuing of differences, but on the other it has overwhelmed the ideas of collective understandings and shared existence. As a consequence, this pervasive Western construct does not fit well with ideas that posit a multiplicity of dynamic selves or identities, such as a socially-constructed approach.

In order to clarify the differences between traditional and postmodern approaches, I shall start by outlining the positions of Buber and Lévinas - two philosophers who articulated ideas about ethics from the perspective of a 'self' constructed on the basis of understandings from the Enlightenment. In contrast to those ideas, postmodernists argue that understandings are always contextual, contingent and fallible.

‘Postmodern’ educational inquiry [aims] to expose the tensions and contradictions between emancipatory educational values and prevailing educational practices and policies in order to indicate how contemporary educational institutions may be reconstructed so that they are able to operate in a more emancipatory way. (W. Carr, 1995, p. 127)

In 1923, the philosopher Martin Buber (1962a) wrote an essay about the individual entitled *Ich und Du (I and Thou)*. Although this explored the theme of relationships, it was predicated on ideas of our *selves* as separate and discrete persons. Buber (1962b) wrote elsewhere of individuals having shared experiences *within* a group experience, but argued that this did not imply any sort of existential relationship, any meaningful connectedness: “Just because you belong to a group, it does not suggest that you have any kind of existential relationship with any others in that group” (Buber, 1962b)³². In Buber’s way of thinking, a conversation, a meeting, brought with it the problem of two distinct

³² “Auf keinen Fall jedoch involviert schon die Mitgliedschaft in der Gruppe eine Wesensrelation zwischen einem Mitglied und dem andern.” (Buber, 1962b, p. 269)

entities, for each of whom there could only be a partial knowing of the other. For Buber, the real problem of intersubjectivity is the split between reality (*Sein*) and appearance (*Scheinen*) (Buber, 1962b)³³. According to Buber, reality was only knowable with self-reflection: What we represent as our philosophical knowledge of what it means to be human essentially requires individuals to first engage in self-reflection and then extrapolate from that as the basis for wider anthropological understandings³⁴ (Buber, 1962a). Buber continued by arguing that such a process was essential to reach a true understanding of philosophical anthropology.

It is helpful to explore the context and genealogy of Buber's position. Ascribing absolute values to the arguments would be a mistake, because that would imply a universality, an unsupported generalising from a particular, offending against a core principle of inductive logic. Buber's position may be seen as totally tenable in a specific worldview, but it does not automatically scale to include all worldviews, all ontologies. Nor does it automatically translate to other cultures, other social dimensions, other ways of being in the world. For example, in his dismissing of most conversation as one-way talk or gossip, Buber was attempting to describe what he perceived as a higher form of human interaction. Most of what we refer to as conversation these days is probably better described as pontificating³⁵ (Buber, 1962b). On the other hand, he wrote that we could only really understand humanity through the interactions of people. As Buber (Buber, 1962b) states, in any attempt to grasp what it means to be human, we must focus, not on individuals in isolation, but instead on interactions, the ways in which we inter-relate, because that is where we can better see our humanity expressed³⁶. However, much of what Buber wrote only makes sense to me when

³³ "Die eigentliche Problematik im Bereich des Zwischenmenschlichen ist die Zweifalt von Sein und Scheinen." (Buber, 1962b, p. 273).

³⁴ "Philosophische Erkenntnis des Menschen ist ihrem Wesen nach eine Selbstbesinnung des Menschen, und der Mensch kann sich auf sich selbst eben nur so besinnen, daß sich zunächst die erkennende Person, der Philosoph also, der Anthropologie treibt, auf sich selber als Person besinnt" (Buber, 1962a, p. 315).

³⁵ "Das weitaus meiste von allem, was sich heute unter Menschen Gespräch wäre richtiger, in einem genauen Sinn, als Gerede zu bezeichnen." (Buber, 1962b, p. 277)

³⁶ "Der Mensch ist nicht in seiner Isolierung, sondern in der Vollständigkeit der Beziehung zwischen dem einen und dem andern anthropologisch existent: erst die Wechselwirkung ermöglicht, das Menschentum zulänglich zu erfassen." (Buber, 1962b, p. 283)

viewed through a lens that situates each individual as an essential self, even though he acknowledged the importance of inter-connectedness. Buber admitted the influence of Kant, and in particular, Kant's (1800, p. 25) posing the question "Was ist der Mensch?" (*What is man?*). Buber (1962b) argued that this question brought into focus a place in time – being finite but part of infinity. We need to recognise that even as we acknowledge our limitations, the very finite timescale of our lives, we also participate in the infinite. Both the finite and the infinite make an impact on our lives, and together, intertwined, they are threaded through our existence³⁷. Such thinking appeared to open space for more possibilities, but the underlying assumptions limited the scope for alternative perspectives to be explored.

Another influential European philosopher in the same tradition, Emmanuel Lévinas (1994) expressed a similar perspective to Buber, and also saw each human as an isolated individual under the gaze of God. Lévinas asserted the proposition that while there was much that we shared with others, in the final analysis, we were unique and separate individuals:

It is trite to say that we only exist as individuals when we are surrounded by people and things which we engage with. We interact with others in what we see and in what we touch, in empathising with others as well as when we are working together. All of these are transitive ways of relating: when I touch something, I see an Other, but I cannot be that other. I am totally unique and individual (my translation).³⁸

Lévinas recognised commonality, he accepted that there was much that is shared, but insisted on an *essential self* as a consequence of uniqueness. This position does not invite us to examine or interpret our world and our existence

³⁷ Es ist also damit gesagt, daß wir **zugleich** und **in einem** mit der Endlichkeit des Menschen seine Teilnahme an der Unendlichkeit erkennen müssen, nicht als zwei Eigenschaften nebeneinander, sondern als die Doppelheit der Prozesse, in der als solcher erst das Dasein des Menschen erkennbar wird. (Buber, 1962b, p. 311).

³⁸ Il est banal de dire que nous n'existons jamais au singulier. Nous sommes entourés d'êtres et de choses avec lesquels nous entretenons des relations. Par la vue, par le toucher, par la sympathie, par le travail en commun, nous sommes avec les autres. Toutes ces relations sont transitives: je touche un objet, je vois l'Autre. Mais je ne *suis* pas l'Autre. Je suis tout seul (Lévinas, 2004, p. 21).

in other ways. The difficulty arises from focusing exclusively on the uniqueness of a person, because doing so marginalises the far greater impacts of our human connectedness to each other and our contexts.

This might be interpreted as the difference between a psychology of the individual and a sociology of the community, that it is simply a question of what is the more appropriate focus. Moreover, it invites a reader to consider these in terms of a binary, though acknowledging that wisdom can be seen to reside in both perspectives. However, even though different branches of philosophy have built on different perspectives, in Western philosophies both the formulations of psychology and sociology appear to have grown from the same fundamentals, the same atomistic view of ‘individual’ human beings.

A more recent German philosopher, Lorenz Puntel (2011), on the other hand, rejects Lévinas’ position, asserting that the arguments are based on untenable assumptions, and that the sharing of existence within a community is in itself something which gives meaning to the philosophical debate about the nature of *being*. Accordingly, Puntel’s position fits well with the perspective of socially-constructed identities.

Culturally situated: a collective construction of identity

In contrast to the essential self with a specific genetic code and bodily presence, which is part of the makeup of a *self*, there is another part that depends on accepting the culturally-situated identities and roles that also shape subjectivities. What I have so far attempted to foreground is a view of the subject as collectively constructed, shaped as an interwoven discursive amalgam of the possible positions available in a context. The positions available to some subjects may constrain or limit the positions available to others. However, I would argue that the subjectivities of persons present in any conversation, and therefore the available relationships, are generated in genealogies of inter-related ideas and promoted by contextual factors such as language.

By way of an example of such identity formation, and in contrast to the limited capacity for analysis that was available to previous generations, current technologies have given us what is termed ‘*big data*’: huge amounts of aggregated data whose analysis affords different ideas and understandings. It

has been claimed that big data “overturns centuries of established practices and challenges our most basic understanding of how to make decisions and comprehend reality” (Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2013, p. 6). If so, interpreting and analysing human interactions based on models of connectedness rather than isolation will require more than just changing viewpoints; it may require different worldviews to appreciate the ways in which such analyses modify thinking. Yet those who create the algorithms that sort such big datasets do so under the influence of existing ideas, existing conceptions of reality, privileging and emphasising some aspects and interpretations over others. What is new does not eradicate what came before, but builds on it.

Any movement from an individualistic conception to include communitarian understandings could therefore only be iterative and would carry forward the sum of philosophies and human knowledge that has been constructed on those previous foundations. This assumption is based on the concept that it is only possible to formulate and communicate new ideas using the language and approaches that are already available. Accordingly, it is not trivial to re-examine the fundamentals of knowledge from the perspective that it is embedded in the individual *and* in community. Lévinas (2004), for example, even in arguing for the idea of separateness, acknowledged that people never exist in isolation, but are always in relationship to other people and their contexts: What gives solitude its edge? It’s just trite to say we never exist in isolation. We’re surrounded by people and things that we relate to³⁹.

However, it fundamentally changes the ethics of relationships to position people as existing and being *always* in context with community and the environment. Yet other traditions have created ethics appropriate to the social self espoused in a communitarian perspective, rather than using the autonomous individual as the starting point. For example: “the Confucian self is a social self, not a self-choosing autonomous individual, and ... it is in great harmony with society rather than starkly opposed to it as liberalism contends” (Kim, 2011, p. 113).

³⁹ “En quoi consiste l'acuité de la solitude? Il est banal de dire que nous n'existons jamais au singulier. Nous sommes entourés d'êtres et de choses avec lesquels nous entretenons des relations” (Lévinas, 2004, p. 21).

“Ubuntu is an African concept of personhood in which the identity of the self is understood to be formed interdependently through community” (Battle, 2009, pp. 1–2).

Different identities become highlighted in asking socially-integrated selves Kant’s core question ““Was soll ich tun?” (Kant, 1787/2013, sec. 8258) – “what should I do?”, or more abstractly: “How should one live? How might one live?” (May, 2005, p. 2), because a sense of belonging, of connectedness, can and does steer the thinking and behaviour that is possible and acceptable in a community (Heshusius, 1994). In addition, beliefs that are embedded in cultural contexts also impact on the practical responses to concerns about *being* in a community (Putnam, 2005; Sen, 2009). Saul (1993, p. 8) talks about the “illusions” which impel people to constantly attempt to apply rationality to solve problems. The main illusion driving such thinking is the notion of the autonomous rational being that is implicit in Descartes’ “Ego cogito, ergo sum sive existo” (1644/2009, p. 30). Although this is frequently shortened to “cogito ergo sum” – “*I think, therefore I am*”, the emphasis on the self appears somewhat reduced, so I am translating this as “I, myself, am *thinking*, and therefore I *am*, or to put it another way, I *exist*.”

Yet Descartes’ thinking was necessarily influenced by his context and the texts that he had access to. For example, the likely influence of Augustine (426AD/trans. Dods 2009), on the formulation of Descartes’ aphorism can be seen from a millennium earlier:

I am not at all afraid of the arguments of the Academicians, who say, What if you are deceived? For if I am deceived, I am. For he who is not, cannot be deceived, and if I am deceived, by this same token I am. And since I am if I am deceived, how am I deceived in believing that I am? for it is certain that I am if I am deceived. Since, therefore, I, the person deceived, should be, even if I were deceived, certainly I am not deceived in this knowledge that I am. And, consequently, neither am I deceived in knowing that I know. (Augustine of Hippo, ca. 426/2009, p. 281)

Descartes promoted the idea that everything in nature had its own essence that was responsible for aspects of character or being (Skirry, 2005). This idea might be regarded as a forerunner of the notion of an essential self and, consequently, of personality and character traits. Equally, however, it might be argued that Descartes' *essences*, such as animality and rationality, offer similar cognitive approaches to theorising *being* as do the postmodern concepts of *discourses*. Debate about the nature of the relationship between mind and body continues, as with the argument that learning takes place in the unconscious in an unsubstantial, ethereal link with nature⁴⁰.

This line of argument effectively relocates problematic ideas to the domain of metaphysics, and questions of ethics therefore become issues of morality based on beliefs, which are themselves associated with cultural and societal contexts.

Who is to be accountable? mores and morals

Different cultures and contexts have needed to emphasise different values and truths in order to survive and thrive. As practices become established cultural norms they become accepted as truths situated in community.

Context necessarily includes a genealogical element, an historical aspect. Foucault described such an approach:

And this is what I would call genealogy, that is, a form of history that can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, and so on, without having to make reference to a subject that is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history. (Foucault, 2000, p. 118).

⁴⁰ les Idées problématiques sont à la fois les éléments derniers de la nature et l'objet subliminal des petites perceptions. Si bien que « apprendre » passe toujours par l'inconscient, se passe toujours dans l'inconscient, établissant entre la nature et l'esprit le lien d'une complicité profonde. (Deleuze, 2011, p. 214). I understand this as: *problematic ideas are ultimately just a part of nature and the end results of what we notice without being consciously aware of it. So "getting it" always happens at an unconscious level, it always happens in our unconscious, and that clearly shows the link, the connection between what we think and what is 'out there' in nature.*

In understanding more about where ideas come from, it becomes more possible to acknowledge their impact and significance in language and thinking. Only then can other alternatives become available.

As Aylesworth (2010) notes, Nietzsche saw the Western concept of the “I” stemming from the need for personal accountability. Yet Nietzsche also noted that a criminal sees that behaviours are relative to who performs them, when and where⁴¹.

The identity of each individual within a group is shaped by participation in the group (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Ungar, 2000). Each person in a community influences the community norms, the positioning and impact of the discourses of involvement, reinforcing and situating human relationships as central or otherwise. Accordingly, the discourses and the myths which become integral to group functioning also constrain the range of identity claims available to members, so it is difficult to disagree with the position that “the self owes its form and perhaps its very existence to the circumambient social order” (Harré, 1983, p. 256).

It is therefore problematic that the ways in which the *self* is conceived in modern Western democracies are shaped by the workings and structures of the “mercantile society” (Lingis, 2007, p. 11) within which people exist. Subjectivities, and relationships with others, are understood in terms of discourses of consumption and technologies of production. Negative consequences for communities result when the concept of the ‘worker’ as a philosophical foundation dominates form and function in social structuring. This can be seen in weakening community provision for *denizens*, as opposed to

⁴¹ Unterschätzen wir nämlich nicht, inwiefern der Verbrecher gerade durch den Anblick der gerichtlichen und vollziehenden Prozeduren selbst verhindert wird, seine That, die Art seiner Handlung, *an sich* als verwerflich zu empfinden . . . Alles somit von seinen Richtern keineswegs *an sich* verworfene und verurtheilte Handlungen, sondern nur in einer gewissen Hinsicht und Nutzenanwendung. (Nietzsche, 1887/2011, location 956) — *We shouldn't underestimate how much simply observing judicial procedures inhibits the criminal from truly understanding that what he has done and how he has behaved are actually reprehensible: because he sees the same sorts of things approved when they are happening in the pursuit of justice, all practised in good conscience . . . All these things that are used for punishments - none of them are seen by judges as behaviours that are intrinsically warped and misguided acts as such, but only according to their context and implementation.*

citizens along with a rapid growth of the *precariat* (Standing, 2012) – a growing class of people with little hope of gaining permanent employment status, financial independence, or value in the current globalised economies and marketplace. Such people are trapped in a precarious life because, although they often have education and skills, they lack money, mobility and security. As a consequence, they are marginalised in their communities, trapped by inequitable access to resources. Those people exemplify situated ethics.

Economic rationality ignores gender and cultural differences (Peters & Marshall, 1996), “but power and economic value are a paradigm of social reality. They do not spring from human volition; noncooperation is impossible in regard to them” (Polanyi, 1944/2001, p. 267). Moreover, a free-market ideology requires the failure of some individuals as a condition of the competition ethic (Devine, 2000). In the late 1980s, when state restructuring occurred in Aotearoa/New Zealand there was a large and rapid increase in social inequality as the policy makers changed the interpretation of fairness as it applied to the welfare state (Kelsey, 2015). The imposition of a competitive ethic on the provision of state education compounded the problems of social disadvantage. Income inequality grew, particularly the gap between Māori and Pākehā (Kelsey, 1997; Te Ahu Poata-Smith, 2013; Smith, 2013), and the effects flowed through into schools (Wylie, 2013a). The impact of liberalisation was particularly felt by teachers in low-income areas.

Real networks: connectedness and collective perspectives

Mutuality and reciprocity depend on understandings of connectedness aligned to concepts of self. Ideas about connectedness, relationships, and community offer alternatives to binary thinking, a duality of self and other. Situating persons within a conception of community makes possible a perspective where demands are experienced as fixed rules or constraints on the one hand, or flexible guidelines on the other, with both experiences and behaviours moulded by the “circumambient social order” (Harré, 1983, p. 256). In such a worldview, contextual factors are always influencing subjectivities. Other persons, both inside and outside any group or community, are constantly shaping individual perspectives and perceptions, responses and response-abilities. To varying

extents, individuals become aware of the unspoken and the tacitly acknowledged, the taken-for-granted and the less-noticed. Individuals are integral and contributing parts of the dynamic environment that shifts as they engage and interact. The discursive landscape morphs with such involvement, yet this generally escapes attention. As Davies remarks, “awareness of being embodied and, in particular, being embodied *in relation to* landscape, is something we have little practice in observing or articulating [emphasis added]” (Davies, 2000, p. 14).

Paying greater attention to *inter*-actions means signifiers of the collaborative construction of realities become more visible. Postmodern perspectives on interactions can highlight practices of participation as well as the discourses that produce them. No individual’s views of reality are then accepted as inherently more truthful than another’s, because in the postmodern condition everything depends on context and viewpoint. Accordingly, when someone behaves differently in the move from one context to another, or from some point of view to a different one, that can be described in terms of multiple identities. Relationships between people can likewise be seen as fluid, adapting to the different discourses that shape language, thinking, and behaviours. Foucault (2000) discussed discourses in terms of power, and described as *dominant* discourses those ideas and practices which appeared to have the greatest influence in a community or culture. However, to characterise some discourses as dominant and others as of lesser significance can reinforce the notion of power as a binary, with some people having power and others not. The construct of *fairness* similarly invites interpretation as a polarity, rather than as an adjunct of context and positioning. However, viewing *fairness* as a social construct that is aligned with community better allows for interpretations to be seen as relative to the different available perspectives.

Even in describing power in terms of *capability*⁴² rather than *force*, the cultural contexts may cause a strong sense of dominance to be attached to the description. Accordingly, the understandings of relationship become framed by our *prejudices*, in the sense that includes both positive and negative

⁴² The French ‘pouvoir’ as used by Foucault carries the sense of ‘capability’, in contrast to his other term ‘puissance’ which means power in the sense of ‘force’.

perspectives such as Gadamer (1975) described. Familiar discursive positioning encourages defining relationships in terms of connections between separate persons. To escape such thinking requires a different perspective: as beings continually shaped and reshaped by a panoply of discourses that are themselves adapting to one another in a dynamic *inter-play* rather than a battlefield. Discourses invite various ways of *being* according to the presence or absence of other discourses as well as the contexts in which subjectivities are being produced. To describe such functionings in terms of *competing* discourses limits the possible understandings. Any focus on people or on discourses as entities distinct from each other rather than always connected encourages habituated patterns of thinking and misses the *inter-fluence* of how the discourses shape individuals and communities. They do not operate in isolation from each other.

Words are used not simply to communicate, but also to develop and maintain a collective group identity (Q. D. Atkinson, Meade, Venditti, Greenhill, & Pagel, 2008). Loyalty, allegiance and belonging all represent aspects of a collective ethics based on participating and contributing to a group identity. Discursively-constructed identities are not simply contributors to such a group, they are active participants in the collective shaping of both the group itself and the other participants. Accordingly, patterns of behaviour adapt to changing influences as well as constant values and recognisable ‘norms’. Shared performances represent ways of displaying the underlying beliefs (Barad, 2008). Such beliefs, such collective ontologies given life and voice in engagement, can be said to be the substance of a communitarian perspective.

In some cultures, communitarian ways of thinking and behaving make a collective perspective more visible. For example, in a traditional Samoan approach there is a “need to comprehend something in as many ways as possible to construct the composite that finally, more comprehensively allows us to understand an issue, phenomenon or culture” (Anae, 1998, p. 23). Collective understanding allows for collective accountability.

Another collective approach is to be found in the African conception of *ubuntu*, where a person is only considered to be a person because of their relationship to

others (Battle, 2009; Swanson, 2007). More (2006) states: “*ubuntu* is a demand for respect for persons no matter what their circumstances may be” (p. 157). Ubuntu articulates a form of *collective ethics*, appropriate to its context and purposes – it acknowledges the contributions that everyone makes, and their influence, however small.

Stuck in time-space: recognising situatedness in collective ethics

In a socially constructed worldview, ethics are demonstrated in relationships, in discourses, and in contexts. In social functioning people develop different perspectives on ethics, see their world through different lenses, interpret their lives according to the understandings the discursive contexts give access to. Ethics, the shared discourses of morality in the sense of *mores*, show in how ‘selves’ are with others, and with communities of involvement and their genealogies of ideas and ideals. In this view, ethics are discursive constructs, continually shaped and re-shaped by their adaptive contexts. Ethics are intertwined with values and beliefs, dilemmas of practice and problems of privilege. Ethics represent engagements with others and shared understandings of ‘selves’.

An ethics of community, an ethics shared in the practical interpretations of morality, can be expressed as “an essentially *interpersonal* . . . aspect of moral obligation” (Darwall, 2009, p. 138). However, an *interpersonal* understanding does not necessarily imply a collective or communitarian basis for an ethical conceptualisation. Instead, collective ethics clearly demonstrate both social norms, and also the ways people influence each other as participants in contexts of behaviours and thinking. Such collective influence implies a collective accountability, not replacing an ethic of individual care, but complementing it. To those habituated to ethics of individual responsibility, ethics of community might be more problematic, more illusory. But in a socially-constructed worldview, irrespective of what any consideration of ethics is, an ethics of responsibility will be influenced by, and act in response to, such discourses as are present in the research context. In Western contexts it would be difficult to escape being influenced by discourses of the individual, but the question

remains — what is privileged and what is marginalised as a result? (Dachler, 2010).

Multiple points of view and differing perspectives provide support for a sharing of responsibility — collective ethics made obvious. The use of language illustrates intersubjectivity (Zlatev, 2008). The meaning of language is influenced by what is regarded as legitimate knowledge (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001). However, meaning may also “stand in need of liberation from reason” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 116). Just as the identities of famous people form part of community histories while their contemporaries are forgotten, dominant discourses may become the focus of attention as other discourses are ignored. Yet they all have their impacts, the obvious and the unnoticed alike (Fowler & Christakis, 2008). Gergen (2009a) is persuasive in arguing for the need to find other ways to understand subjectivities as “constituents of a process that eclipses any individual within it” (p. 129). The challenge is to acknowledge the individual and the community perspectives as complementary rather than alternative aspects.

Heroic traditions: the argument about ethics of the self

To align the consideration of ethics as applied in this study with the prevalent discourses of individual selves would not be congruent with my purpose or philosophy, so I have felt required to explain the ethics of self as always situated in community.

In this section I have explored the impact on ethics of the concept of the individual as it occurs within a Western tradition of philosophy, in contrast with communitarian perspectives and understandings of collective *being* and *belonging*. I have drawn from ideas of socially constructed selves to explore the notions of research and ethics within a collective frame of reference, in order to argue that benefits could accrue from finding alternate ways to understand *selves* both as separate persons storied extensively through heroic traditions, and as components with and within collective identities. The challenge is to not only consider collective ethics, but also to support approaches to making more of the interactions that bind people in shared traditions, technologies and

theories rather than continuing to focus on a collective belief in individuality at the edges of social connectedness.

The concept of fairness: privilege and equity

The concept of fairness has been linked to the idea of justice (Lévinas, 1985; Rawls, 2001; Sen, 2009). What is considered fair or just is situated in community even as it is interpreted individually. The practice of Western law uses case precedents to create yardsticks to apply more widely. The practice of education relies equally on understandings of what societal values, skills and knowledges will best contribute to community growth and welfare.

There are tensions between different perspectives. Privilege is frequently associated with responsibility, while leadership includes ideas of both hierarchy and service. Fairness and unfairness are connected to conceptions of morality, even with a state education system that professes to be secular such as in Aotearoa/New Zealand. What is deemed to be fair, ethical or moral in the field of schooling depends as much on the history and traditions of a society or community as it does on the practices that are privileged or tolerated. As I have already posited, education in Aotearoa/New Zealand has been largely based on individualist philosophies, consistent with the salient Pākehā Western moral traditions that emphasise separateness, rationality, and a work ethic (Weber, 1958). In contrast, Māori values have been informed by communitarian principles of connectedness: whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and the centrality of relationships (Ministry of Justice, 2001). Interpretations of what is fair, equitable, and just are dependent on these base values.

Because the prevalent Pākehā discourses include interpretations of fairness that are based on rational justifications of deservingness as a function of work effort, what has generally been understood as fairness has been the principle of equality of opportunity. That conception of fairness with the individual foregrounded creates dissonance with the collective orientation of Māori perspectives of fairness that include re-distribution to ensure that none miss out.

Pākehā privilege: translocated ethics

The concept of privilege includes the idea that some people, practices, or beliefs deserve to be valued more than others. Sometimes this may be because they have provided demonstrably wider benefits to the community than the alternatives. Sometimes it may be because their power has not been sufficiently challenged to promote change.

The Pākehā concept of the self has influenced the development of related ideas such as personal freedom and equality as well as individual responsibility and accountability. These concepts are linked in a capitalist context with ideas of ownership and knowledge, copyright and intellectual property. Privilege is acceptable in a meritocratic system of education on the basis that it is earned through work or an entitlement connected with ability, where ability is assessed and reified based on comparing individual performances using standardised measures and norm-referenced criteria. Throughout the history of education in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the concept of deservingness has underpinned individual privilege, particularly in secondary schooling through competitive and comparative practices.

Privilege is preserved through persistence and ongoing effort, but much more through the transmission of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977). The discourses that prevail in schools, that dominate capitalist thinking, though challenged by the ideals of progressive education philosophies (Boyask, McPhail, Kaur, & O’Connell, 2008), have maintained their centrality. It is not surprising that such continuity is evident, if it can be accepted as a given that “the self has only the tools of its own time (including its own past) and place (however imagined) with which to think itself **out of** that time and place” (Devine & Irwin, 2006, p. 19), and that the same constraints apply to an education community. Any desire to effect changes in an education system will be context-specific, particularly in their time-locatedness, since the institutional memories do not appear to survive generational change.

Like its notable predecessors, the Cohen Commission (1912) and the Atmore Committee (1930), the Currie Commission had its origin in dissatisfaction in the community with some features

of school work, combined with the desire for changes in the education system that has manifested itself each thirty or forty years since 1877. (Ewing, 1972, p. 2)

Similar patterns of emerging discontent and the refreshing of education policy can be seen with the other changes discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, but the strength of the dominant discourses is maintained, demonstrating both their resilience and their centrality in social functioning.

Seen from different positions: what equity means

Equity describes the ways of collective functioning that ensure the benefits that accrue to living in community are distributed in ways that do not privilege some members more than others. It is not that sharing is intrinsic to personhood, but rather that “the fact that a being is capable of a sharing relationship with us of a certain kind provides *pro tanto* [to that extent] moral reason to help it” (Metz, 2010, p. 55).

Providing equity of outcomes implies making adjustments to acknowledge different starting points. As such, it recognises the need to provide greater support for those whose starting point is further back than others, who suffer disadvantage by virtue of their circumstance. Equity therefore represents a different perspective on fairness. Instead of making equal provision, irrespective of need, equity demands proportionately extra provision according to the levels of disadvantage. Equity discourses are based on interpretations of fairness that construe increasing inequalities as being problematic for the long-term health and viability of a society or community.

Equity and privilege are different lenses on fairness, different justifications for ways of being in community. Privilege is acceptable in the context of discourses of leadership or the responsibilities attendant on ensuring abilities are applied to their best use in an hierarchical view of society, whereas equity finds favour within discursive constructs of egalitarianism or socialist ideologies. Fundamentally, it is the differing orientations to *being* that provide the different lenses on fairness. Privilege and equity serve the same principle of fairness, but from different bases: individualistic or communitarian. The different reference

points make the different perspectives rational. It is not the context, but rather the view of the context that makes the difference.

“Anything - and nothing - is right”. And this is the position you are in if you look for definitions corresponding to our concepts in aesthetics or ethics. In such a difficulty always ask yourself: How did we learn the meaning of this word (“good” for instance)? From what sort of examples? In what language-games? Then it will be easier for you to see that the word must have a family of meanings. (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 31e, §77)⁴³

Whether thinking in terms of separateness or connectedness, the morality of *being in community* is predicated on what Metz (2010) described as the *capability* for sharing, which includes almost everyone. Despite the apparent contradictions, the notion of *fairness* includes both privilege and equity, just as the notion of *being* includes both individuals and community. They are not mutually exclusive points of view, but rather are complementary. Combining both lenses therefore yields a richer picture, whereas favouring one over the other in a binary understanding of truth not only misrepresents the situation, it also diminishes it.

Cultural chasms: Māori and Pākehā ethics

In contrast to the individual focus that forms the basis of credentialing and comparisons in Western education, in Polynesian cultures there is an emphasis on recognising multiple voices in collective decision-making and responsibility. In this study the teachers all work in schools where the majority of the students are Māori, so it is vital to understand the importance of connectedness and relationships within the setting.

⁴³ “Es stimmt alles; und nichts.”--Und in dieser Lage befindet sich z.B. der, der in der Aesthetik, oder Ethik nach Definitionen sucht, die unseren Begriffen entsprechen. Frage dich in dieser Schwierigkeit immer: Wie haben wir denn die Bedeutung dieses Wortes ("gut" z.B.) gelernt? An was für Beispielen; in welchen Sprachspielen? Du wirst dann leichter sehen, daß das Wort eine Familie von Bedeutungen haben muß (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 31, §77)

As Metz (2015) explains it, labels are a matter of salience, describing noticeable features, so the descriptions of Māori and Pākehā traditions are necessarily fluid, and they do not have fixed boundaries. Many Māori have become highly socialised into Pākehā ways through ongoing exposure to the prevalent individualistic discourses, but that does not imply that they would deny the backdrop and importance of *Te Ao Māori* (the Māori world), and particularly *tikanga* (the Māori way of thinking and doing things). *Tikanga* represents frames of conventions and discourses, which have not remained fixed from some particular time in the past, but have been in a process of continual adjustment to the changes wrought by the influence of Pākehā values and approaches. Nevertheless, for Māori, the emphasis on connectedness remains important. Related to an understanding of collective ethics is the Māori concept of *mana*⁴⁴, or the dignity associated with playing a role in a community.

The differences between oral and written traditions are also profound. Māori has a long-term oral language tradition, enhanced since contact with Pākehā with a written form of the language. Although the different *iwi* (tribes) historically showed language variations which remain as geographically distinct markers in the written forms of record, *te Reo Māori* (the Māori language) includes distinct signifiers for the individual and the group. Equally, the oral histories include stories in the heroic tradition alongside the notion of togetherness – *Te Kotahitanga*.

The differences between Māori and Pākehā perspectives on ethics are visible in the differing approaches to research. On the one hand, Pākehā research ethics assume an orientation towards autonomy, with the attendant individual responsibilities and benefits. On the other hand, *Kaupapa Māori* is a Māori research paradigm that “is collectivistic and is oriented toward benefiting all the research participants and their collectively determined agendas” (Bishop, 1996, p. 19). What the approaches share is an orientation towards learning that is ultimately of benefit to the wider community, whether that be through understandings articulated in separateness or in connectedness.

⁴⁴ “*Mana* refers to a transcendent power that demands respect. It carries the weight of a connection to the gods and history, so is much more than simply the status of an important position” (Barlow, 1991, p. 61).

The cultural dimensions that distinguish Māori from Pākehā ethics, like the concepts of *being* and *fairness*, provide different views through the different lenses that are applied. As with the other ethical considerations, the cultural components are complementary in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Recognising only one comes at the expense of a deeper understanding, particularly in the field of education where the cultures co-exist.

A poststructural conception: meaning in intertwining

From a poststructural perspective, ethics can only be understood *in relationship*, and are never static but contextual. Such a conception of ethics is important to this study because it is congruent with the philosophical orientation adopted throughout. Poststructural perspectives can expose the “fictionality” (Davies et al., 2006, p. 89), the illusory nature of the concept of the individual. Language-in-use, however, allows the continuation of such fictions, and actually promotes them. An alternative, where individual subjectivities are defined and understood to be always in relationship, offers the opportunity to see individuality and collectivity as intertwined. However, the same fictionality applies to the concept of *community*, because that too is ephemeral and dynamic, always equally situated in discourse.

To make sense of the *always-becoming* nature of both individual and collective identities, it is important to adopt the poststructural perspective that these are “never a final or settled matter” (Jenkins, 2008, p. 17). From this viewpoint, the salient aspects of the terms *individual* and *community* are their contextuality and fluidity. Nor are the terms in binary opposition to each other, but rather, as I have already argued, complementary in their contributions to meaning-making.

Taking the concepts of individual and community as intertwined means accepting the tensions between always-separated and always-connected conceptions of ethics without attempting to resolve them. The notions of *truth*, *rightness*, *responsibility*, *fairness*, *culture* and *identity* are all imbued with meaning through their use in languaged contexts. In language the words are connected by grammar and separated by nuances of meaning. It is the functioning relationships between these that matter.

Equally, the relationship between the different conceptions of ethics can be seen as being both in comparison and in congruity, but always in perspective. Context changes perspective, but descriptors of context limit understandings of multi-dimensionality. Words and language fail just as much as they succeed. The language of ethics includes metaphors as much as signifiers. Metaphors are imperfect, imprecise, and lend themselves to different interpretations. Signifiers claim to correspond to aspects of reality, yet if that is itself a fiction, better described as multiple realities, then metaphors and signifiers share a dependence on usage. From this reference point, any perspective on ethics precludes fixedness in favour of situatedness. Accordingly, postulating the research ethics that apply to this study requires an acknowledgement of multiplicity.

(Re)-locating ethics in community: chapter conclusion

In this chapter I have argued for an overlapping of perspectives as they apply to the constructs of ethics as understood when aligned with the discourses of individuality and community. Equally, I have submitted that the Western preoccupation with an individual self emphasises a narrow view of ethics, while other conceptions of *being* that locate personhood in community offer a viable alternative that applies more broadly. In considering the concepts of fairness and culture, I have discussed the ethical implications of maintaining privilege and seeking equity, as well as exploring the significance of some differences between Māori and Pākehā worldviews and the ethical considerations that result. Finally, I have interwoven the different perspectives into a poststructural conception of ethics that embraces the multiple viewpoints through a consideration of language and meaning-making.

Chapter 6 – Changing education discourses

The dialogues that are the practical basis of this study require an appreciation of the discourses that influence both the teacher community and the wider education community. It is, therefore, important to trace the presence and shaping influence of state education policy discourses in Aotearoa/New Zealand. These included discourses of deservingness and equality, suitability and need. It is also appropriate to consider how the discourses of schooling have affected Māori not only because in the context of this study Māori students form the majority of the school population, but also because the Treaty of Waitangi demands recognition and valuing of Māori tikanga (ways of thinking and doing things).

The problem . . . is . . . only an historical and provisional starting point, for in order to fully articulate and define a problem, *its first tentative outline must be related back to an understanding of the problem-context* [emphasis mine] and forward to the anticipation of action.

(Peters & Marshall, 1996, p. 143)

The previous chapter highlighted the place of language in the functioning of individuals in community. I argued that language is not only a medium of communication, it is the foundation on which ideas of self and others are constructed, on which culture depends, and through which the discourses that shape values, beliefs and behaviours find their expression. In this chapter I explore some education discourses that have shaped teachers and schooling.

My intention is to outline various historical discourses in the provision of schooling in Aotearoa/New Zealand that have influenced schools and educators in this country and that retain their currency despite significant changes in social structures. Such discourses continue to influence teachers and school planners, often without being re-examined for their appropriateness for learners. There are frequently parallels between past and present challenges, so it is important to revisit lessons learned.

The changing discourses of schooling in Aotearoa/New Zealand requires more than recounting a history of connected events, it also demands mapping connections to philosophies and approaches that were current as changes were proposed and implemented. Therefore, in this part of my argument I consider educational discourses alongside the corresponding education policies or practices of schooling. My intention is to make more visible the connections between the changes to discourses and their residual effects on the teacher community in this study.

The early years of state education

Benthamite ideas became progressively more widespread in 19th century England, particularly the idea that “it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong” (Bentham, 1891, p. 93). Accordingly, the idea gained general acceptance, both there and in New Zealand, that education was the key to improving conditions for the working classes, something that might benefit society as a whole, and forestall or preempt any tendency towards revolution (Briggs, 1972; S. Butterworth, 1993; Smiles, 1905). In its early years New Zealand was a Crown Colony of England, and “the settlers of the day had to face the fact that if they wanted schooling for their children they had to pay for the services of private tutors or teach them themselves” (Cumming & Cumming, 1978, p. 5). The provinces rather than central government took responsibility for education until 1875, but were unable to sustain the financial commitment. The Education Act of 1877, promoting a basic primary school education for all children, then produced a relatively cohesive system (S. Butterworth, 1993; Cumming & Cumming, 1978). The consequence of this was that state education became the norm, based on discourses of social cohesiveness and opportunities for advancement.

Both the administration and practice of education were “cast in the Benthamite mould” (Renwick, 1986, p. 49), with the teacher taking charge from the front of the classroom consistent with the discourse that the teacher was responsible for setting the standards of both learning and behaviour. Schools were expected to promote virtuous thinking, to counter the “evil propensities” (Smiles, 1800, p. 71) associated with ignorance. Discourses of social transformation were

clearly part of the picture, particularly those relating to the assimilation of Māori.

Although “Maori education was one of the original first priorities of state education” (S. Butterworth, 1993, p. 9), the intention behind this was for Māori children to be Europeanised as quickly as possible, so that European and Māori might “become one people” (G. V. Butterworth & Young, 1990, p. 38). Nevertheless, it was not until 1894 that it became compulsory for Māori children to attend school. Until then, any education provided to Māori was “through the agency of the churches” (S. Butterworth, 1993, p. 9). This differentiation between what was provided for Māori children and what was provided for the children of European settlers was in part, possibly, a recognition of different worldviews although in part also an effect of colonization, where settling Europeans amongst the Māori, and particularly clergymen, would serve to “civilize the Natives” (Grey, 1862, p. 17). Accordingly, separate schools were set up to provide for Māori, and 10 Māori mission schools were still operating as late as 1945 (Mason, 1945, p. 53), evidence of the power of the Church discourses of *saving souls* to influence education policy. Providing separate schooling for Māori was also perhaps an acknowledgement of the failure of the *one people* discourse to reduce the disparities between Māori and Pākehā. However, it was also consistent with the expectation of a continued decline in the number of Māori, evident over the 100 years from 1840 (King, 2001).

Discourses of deservingness, privilege and competition

There is some alignment between the early educational policies, where secondary schooling in particular was reserved for those worthy of the professions, and Darwin’s ideas, loosely described as *survival of the fittest*. In the early years of state education in Aotearoa/New Zealand discourses of deservingness underpinned expenditure. Related discourses of competition effectively promoted schooling for the already privileged instead of equity, because those who succeeded in schools tended to come from backgrounds that encompassed the Pākehā mores required for that success. This could be seen quite clearly in secondary schooling, with such offerings as scholarships for

attendance at District High Schools, where all could “be judged by the same standard” (S. Butterworth, 1993, p. 18). The competitive model ensured those already advantaged were supported to remain in the system. Similar consequences could be seen as a result of the narrow academic curriculum, based on the classics, which had scant relevance except for those intending to proceed to university or the professions such as Law and Medicine. That had obvious relevance for those who succeeded, particularly the ones who became Māori leaders, for example Māui Pōmare and Te Rangi Hīroa (Peter Buck), who both became doctors, and Āpirana Ngata who trained as a lawyer. However, there were few such Māori professionals in the early years, and most of them were to be found in “education, nursing and the clergy” (New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage Te Manatu Taonga, 2012). Equality of opportunity for all students, but Māori students in particular, did not apparently extend to providing subjects which would have wider relevance in their communities:

The secondary schools' devotion to an outmoded curriculum was due not only to their own snobbishness but also to the demands of their clientele who, amazingly in an agricultural society, resisted the introduction of agricultural or other sciences and wanted to fit their sons for the professions and the public service. (S. Butterworth, 1993, p. 24)

Mechanisms of selection, the Proficiency and Matriculation examinations, also influenced what teachers did in their classrooms more than the needs of the children in their care. The “underlying myth of the survival of the fittest” (Beeby, 1986, p. xix) was not effectively challenged, even with the introduction of technical schools. The discourse of *fitness* that served to perpetuate privilege with a narrow focus on examinable aspects of the curriculum was acknowledged and lamented many years later, because “it makes teachers concentrate unduly upon [test] requirements and on these alone” (Fraser, 1936, p. 5). Together with the associated discourse of *social advancement*, the discourse of *fitness* served to perpetuate a ranked social hierarchy rather than a community of interdependent individuals. “In 1920-1935, psychological theory and research had drawn attention to the varied abilities and needs of individuals, but it *strengthened rather than weakened the notion of selection* [emphasis added],

and many of the solutions it suggested for individuals' problems led to even more classification" (Beeby, 1986, p. xxiv). Discourses of success and failure, determined by examination results, induced teachers to conform to narrow interpretations of what was expected of them as they were subjected to the perspectives of the school inspectors whose power to influence came from their positioning towards the top of the hierarchy.

Changing direction: a shift to progressivism

"Many of the progressive ideas and movements . . . had begun in the 1920s and 1930s" (Middleton & May, 1997, p. 103). The previous emphasis on deservingness shifted as education became viewed more as a social good (Beeby, 1992; Middleton & May, 1997; Renwick, 1986). In 1937 there was huge support for the New Education Fellowship (NEF) Conference, which featured lectures by overseas experts in education, held in the main centres and also broadcast on radio (Alcorn, 1999). Speakers challenged the status quo, arguing that education for the privileged elite was no longer suitable (Meadon, 1938), that more progressive approaches were needed (Boyd, 1938), and that teachers had become too cautious and conformist (Hart, 1938). Others argued that schooling needed to take greater account of the social impact (Isaacs, 1938; Kandel, 1938a, 1938b; Norwood, 1938), in particular the need to recognise that citizenship and democracy depended on the emphasis given to these in the classroom (Rugg, 1938a; Zilliacus, 1938). The groundswell of public opinion that resulted from the conference gave added impetus for change in the ways education was conceived and delivered. The Minister of Education announced that he would "place a new Education Act on the Statute book" (Campbell, 1938, p. xiii), and not long afterwards, acting on the strong support expressed by many of the visiting speakers, appointed Dr Beeby to the position of Assistant Director of Education, a role "in which he was charged with the oversight of a government-sanctioned revolution in New Zealand education" (Alcorn, 1999, p. 92).

The resulting changes of direction in education policy were intended to better provide for the differing needs of children from dissimilar backgrounds. This

was clearly articulated by Peter Fraser, the Minister of Education, in the new Education Act of 1939:

The Government's objective, broadly expressed, is that every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers. So far is this from being a mere pious platitude that the full acceptance of the principle will involve the reorientation of the education system. The structure of the New Zealand school system as originally laid down (and, indeed, of practically all the school systems of the world) was based on the principle of *selection*. (Fraser, 1939, pp. 2–3)

He continued by acknowledging the discourses of privilege that had shaped schooling for the better part of a century, and advanced the need to change direction to a system that could be more widely advantageous:

It is only against this historical background that the Government's policy in education can be fully understood. It was necessary to convert a school system, constructed originally on a basis of selection and privilege, to a truly democratic form where it can cater for the needs of the whole population over as long a period of their lives as is found possible and desirable. (Fraser, 1939, p. 3)

These political statements, strongly outlining the need for change, might not have been possible without general support from the people of New Zealand. The social environment became recognised as contributing to what and how children learned in school. Progressive discourses in education *policy* gradually replaced the previous emphases, and teachers were encouraged to be creative in their approaches. The Minister was able to report that “heartening reports are coming in of teachers throughout the country who are taking advantage of the absence of external pressure and external examinations to break new ground and experiment in methods and curricula” (Fraser, 1939, p. 9). Progressive

education discourses began to supplant the previously dominant ideas that oriented teachers' efforts towards conforming with outside pressures, particularly the Proficiency examination that was abolished in 1936 (Mason, 1945).

In 1938 almost half of the primary-school age Māori children attended their local Native village schools, as did the local Pākehā children in the same villages who comprised 12% of the rolls at those Native schools (Fraser, 1939). In 1936 it had been decided to align teaching and learning approaches in those schools to the community traditions of Māori culture. This was advanced as the reason that there were “no schools in the country making bolder experiments than the Native schools” (Fraser, 1939, p. 10). The community orientation there was more successful than a focus on the individual, at least for those children privileged to attend such schools.

However, by the end of WWII Māori education was seen as a ‘problem’ because it required schooling that would allow the children to “live happily in two worlds” (Mason, 1945, p. 53), and this was becoming more difficult because the numbers of Māori children had more than doubled over the course of 25 years. With a significant relocation of Māori from rural to urban living, Apirana Ngata’s famous injunction later affirmed the *two-worlds* discourse: “Grow up and thrive in the days destined to you, your hand to the tools of the Pākehā to provide physical sustenance, your heart to the treasures of your Māori ancestors as a diadem for your brow, your soul to your God, to whom all things belong” (Brougham et al., 1999, pp. 89–90)⁴⁵. It was recognised that the system of Native schools that had been operating for 60 years needed to be changed, and Henry Mason, Minister of Education, called for all involved to work with Māori to create a “secondary education adapted to the varied needs of their children” (Mason, 1945, p. 58). With the population shift to the cities, non-alignment between Māori communitarian discourses and a Pākehā focus on individual learning had become troublingly apparent.

⁴⁵ “E tipu, e rea, mō ngā rā o tōu ao; ko tō ringa ki ngā rākau a te Pākehā hei ara mō tō tinana, ko tō ngākau ki ngā tāonga a ō tūpuna Māori hei tikitiki mō tō māhuna; ko tō wairua ki tō atua, nāna nei ngā mea katoa” (Brougham, Reed, & Kāretu, 1999, p. 89)

By 1945 the enthusiasm expressed by Fraser that teachers were responding to the freedom to experiment had been replaced by an acknowledgement that the discourses of conformity had not lost their influence: “Old attitudes die slowly, both in those under authority and in those wielding it” (Mason, 1945, p. 18). However, the conviction remained that teachers needed new skills and pedagogies adapted to a curriculum that had expanded in both breadth and depth. Classroom practice had not altered along with changes in policy that supported a more child-centered approach. The challenges involved were considerable, for as Mason (1945) observed: “there is a good decade's work in putting into practice in the schools principles upon which the great majority of persons concerned with education are agreed” (p. 5). One example of those who applied those principles to his work was Elwyn Richardson. His teaching at Oruaiti came to official attention and he was granted special experimental status by Beeby, the Director of Education (MacDonald, 2010). Another was Sylvia Ashton-Warner, teaching Māori children in remote schools with the support of her husband, Keith Henderson. Both of these teachers worked with their students in the spirit of child-centered learning.

Progressive eccentrics: experimentation at the margins

The examples of Elwyn Richardson and Sylvia Ashton-Warner are case studies that show what is possible when state education discourses include experimental approaches to pedagogy. These two teachers demonstrated the benefits of official support or connivance with teacher experimentation and research against an accountability regime of school and teacher inspections. However, they also illustrate the influence of Dewey and his progressive philosophy of education. Both Ashton-Warner and Richardson provided examples of the sort of change of approach that Dewey argued was required for schooling in his statement: “the thing needful is improvement of education, not simply by turning out teachers who can do better the things that are now necessary to do, but rather by changing the conception of what constitutes education” (Dewey, 1904/2016, p. 18). Each found in remoteness the opportunity to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of the children and recognize the influence of the local community. Those contexts shaped particular ways of thinking for the children they taught, and Richardson and

Ashton-Warner both fitted their teaching to the contexts. Dewey observed that “much of present education fails because it neglects this fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life” (1897/1982, p. 541) – a principle that Ashton-Warner and Richardson both ascribed to in their different ways.

Official approval: flexible standards⁴⁶

Richardson’s approach to his teaching, as described in his writing and his reflections (MacDonald, 2010; E. S. Richardson, 2001, 2012), provides an exemplar of effectively using student experience not only as an entry point to inquiry learning, but also as an appropriate choice of pedagogy for the students and their context.

Equally, Ashton-Warner applied to her teaching the lessons she learned when making sense of her own difficulties of *being-in-the-world*. Ashton-Warner required discipline to make sense of her struggles by writing about them (Ashton-Warner, 1963; Clemens, 1996; L. Hood, 1988). She applied the same discipline she applied to her writing in establishing routines for the children in her classes, based on her inquiry and observations, and in “ordering the day with play first . . . , Sylvia went against all tradition, like giving dessert before vegetables” (Clemens, 1996, p. 131). Nevertheless, at a time when many inspectors were “rigid, petty and unimaginative” (L. Hood, 1988, p. 80), she earned the particular approval of the senior inspector of Native Schools (L. Hood, 1988).

Richardson’s willingness, indeed his commitment to experimentation, which is what drew him to the sole-charge teaching position, is also what proved the defining factor that won him approval to deviate from the expectations of an instructional mode of teaching. As part of the agreement for his school to have experimental status, Richardson agreed to documenting his praxis, and the resulting books later influenced changes in official policy. That is one lesson that

⁴⁶ This section includes a condensed adaptation of a paper accepted for publication in the Elwyn Richardson Special Edition of *ACCESS: Critical Perspectives on Communication, Cultural & Policy Studies (with Educational Philosophy and Theory)* (Alford, 2015).

can be taken from Richardson’s example: teachers who engage with their students in distinctive ways, rather than conforming to whatever are the practice norms of the time, represent the possibility of emergent practice.

Richardson “set out to construct a humane, caring, mini society” (MacDonald, 2010, p. 239). In this, perhaps, he represented the essence of the humanist tradition which was included in the school syllabus of 1929, and was later promulgated for Māori children in Native schools. To that extent, his teaching aligned with the spirit of the times. What is also significant was Richardson’s memory about publishing his book, “that at the time of publication he had been advised, ‘Your book will not be as widely read if you specify that the children are Maori’” (Clemens, 1996, p. 36). Culture influenced policy and practice.

Ashton-Warner also demonstrated strong social awareness of the impact of her teaching approaches on her students and their engagement with learning, in particular with their Māori students: “The Hendersons [Sylvia Ashton-Warner and her husband Keith Henderson] taught us it was okay to be who we were — it was good to be Maori — and all our other education taught us about how it’s terrible to be Maori” (Clemens, 1996, p. 155). Her success in implementing her theory of *Key Vocabulary* with Māori children gained her a following in the United States, but not in her native New Zealand. At home her claims of persecution from the education profession were regarded as being somewhat paranoid, because not only was she prone to self-aggrandisement, but also “both dimensions of the international progressive movement — the psychoanalytic/psychological and the sociological/political — were being encouraged at the highest levels of New Zealand education policymaking at the time” (Middleton, 2006, p. 48).

A new syllabus popularly known as the *Red Book* was gazetted in 1929 (New Zealand Department of Education, 1929). “The Red Book curriculum encouraged teachers to create their own curriculum and to tailor it to the ‘needs’ of their pupils on the basis of their knowledge and understanding of the individual children and the wider school community. It was intended to provide guidelines rather than serve as a prescription” (Middleton, 2006, p. 44). The Red Book exemplifies the discourse of teachers as empowered professionals.

Just deserts: discourses of equity and social justice

Renwick (1986) noted that the “social ideal of desert [*sic.* — used in the sense of deservingness] . . . influenced very deeply the expectations that parents, teachers and children have come to have of the education system itself. Schools are *required* [emphasis added] . . . to be sorting and selecting agencies” (p. 27). The practices of differentiation had begun much earlier with different provisions for schooling Māori and Pākehā when New Zealand was still a Crown Colony. Certainly, Governor Grey’s intention for schooling was to deliberately and directly reduce the influence of *iwi* (Māori tribal groupings) and *hapu* (Māori clans with a common ancestor). The discourses of assimilation saw most of the Crown Colony education ordinances enacted to change Māori and Pacific practices through the teaching of the English language in particular.

I have already argued that discourses of utilitarianism, represented by an acceptance of marginalising minorities, also strongly influenced the nature and style of public education from its inception in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Moreover, the discourses of rationalism and empiricism found in the fundamental epistemologies of the scientific method, coupled with industrial society as the *de facto* standard, meant that alternatives such as traditional Māori approaches were pushed to the margins. What was considered by the Pākehā majority of educators to be the *right* ways of teaching constrained inclusiveness, because practices based on Māori values and perspectives were scarcely tolerated and certainly not valued. Such discursive positioning was grounded in a “mono-cultural educational system” (Tauroa, 1982, p. 18) that was largely ethnocentric.

Catering for all needs: the second half of the 20th century

One of the influences in furthering child-centered schooling was the psychologist Piaget, who stated:

I'm very interested in the problem of education, for I have the impression that an enormous amount needs to be reformed and transformed . . . [because] — and it's remarkable — absolutely nothing is done to reach the child the spirit of experimentation . . . I'm convinced that one could develop a marvelous method of

participatory education by giving the child the apparatus with which to do experiments and thus discover a lot of things by himself. Guided, of course . . . For me, education means making creators, even if there aren't many of them, even if the creations of one are limited by comparison with those of another. (Bringuier, 1980, pp. 131–2)

However, while primary teachers were encouraged by progressive discourses to enjoy the freedom of experimentation, different challenges confronted secondary teachers. These challenges resulted from the raising of the school leaving age so that almost all children would attend secondary school. Catering for all meant adapting a system designed only for a select minority. The burden of change fell on teachers, who were expected “to work out courses and methods of teaching suitable to the new conditions” (Mason, 1945, p. 45). Yet most secondary school teachers were ill-equipped to shoulder the burden because they had to remain cognisant of the discourses of deservingness that had previously prevailed.

Strained circumstances: The Currie Commission of 1962

As a consequence of the raised leaving-age for children, and of the structure of the School Certificate which ensured 50% failed of those who attempted the examinations, the Currie Commission accepted that for half of the secondary school population there was “neither a goal attainable by honest effort nor the type of course and the tuition needed to help pupils to attain such a goal” (Currie, 1962, p. 13). The discourses of deservingness that characterised education in the previous century had again become apparent. However, the weaknesses in the examination-oriented structures of secondary education did not deter the Commission from recommending that further checkpoints be instituted at lower levels to ensure student progress could be measured against specific standards, a tacit acceptance of applying scientific discourses to schooling.

With regard to the education of Māori, the Commission observed that race relations were being strained by the changing social and economic situation as more Māori moved to the cities, commenting that the “equilibrium has shifted:

the unstated basis of social agreement by which in the first half of the century Maori and Pakeha lived on the whole tranquilly together is now called into question” (Currie, 1962, p. 401). The one-sidedness of the *two-worlds* discourse, where Māori were expected to participate in the Pākehā world and at the same time retain their cultural traditions were not balanced by any reciprocal demands on Pākehā to learn from those Māori traditions. The Commission decided that the “difficulties that arise from the meeting of cultures are more closely studied and better understood than in the past” (Currie, 1962, p. 415), but found no new approaches to advance Māori interests. The Commission’s conclusion was that “too many Maori children are prevented from enjoying equality of opportunity by prevalent socio-economic conditions” (Currie, 1962, p. 417). An alternative perspective was offered by Jones (1991): “when the dominant ideology (or the generally-held belief) is that schools are institutions designed to benefit all students, this conceals the processes which are weighted against students from subordinate groups” (p. 146). While the Commission accepted that teachers of Māori students would benefit from knowing the Māori language and tikanga, the failure to acknowledge that schools did not cater well for Māori students illustrates how state education was wedded to the mono-cultural dominance of Pākehā discourses.

Ten years after the Currie Commission there was an analysis of progress on the recommendations made. It contained the observation that “the Currie Commission had its origin in dissatisfaction in the community with some features of school work, combined with the desire for changes in the education system that has manifested itself each thirty or forty years since 1877” (Ewing, 1972, p. 2). It also noted “that local interest in education should be preserved and strengthened” (p. 17). These comments both recognised public interest in local schooling issues, and also welcomed such involvement, in effect, readying the wider community for the Education Development Conference (EDC) that followed. Regarding the issues of Māori education, the review reiterated the three main influences: the changing demographics with significant and ongoing increases in the proportion of Māori in the population, the increasing urbanisation of Māori, and the greater interest shown in Māoritanga. It was noted that more secondary schools were offering courses in Māori language, and

that trade training courses had been set up in country districts. The greater problem of Māori underachievement was addressed mainly with funding for NZCER research into the problems of Māori students, rather than the previously acknowledged difficulties teachers found in catering for a different worldview, reinforcing the assimilation discourse.

Hearing voices: the 1974 Education Development Conference

In 1974, not long after I began my career in teaching, I was among the 50–60,000 who participated in the Education Development Conference (EDC), “an attempt to solicit public opinion about education on an unprecedented scale” (S. Butterworth, 1993, p. 44). Each of the 3000 community groups met several times and discussed a range of education topics, with the results collated and analysed. With such a broad outreach and public response, it is not surprising that the resulting recommendations were quite generic, but one of the main aspects of the EDC that deserves comment is the significant public involvement. One of the recommendations was for more space for community participation in the process of education, while another asked for more attention to be paid to those not enjoying much success at school. These calls, when considered alongside the significant rates of community participation, illustrate the concerns that the discourses of schooling were not shared by the people they were intended to serve.

Equalities of outcomes rather than opportunities, modifying ideas about equity, became part of the discussion. Although equality of access to education was guaranteed by the post-war policies, discourses of patriarchy and privilege were still firmly entrenched in secondary schooling and evident in practice. The curriculum assumed that girls needed to be schooled for their future roles as mothers and home-makers (Middleton, 2013). Discourses of meritocracy were particularly visible in secondary schooling where students were streamed according to their perceived ability, specifically their academic abilities. The School Certificate examinations for 15-year-olds were structured to allow only 50% to pass, and the marks were scaled according to a hierarchy of subjects so that, for example, more than 50% were assigned pass marks in Latin, a subject taken only by the more ‘able’ students, whereas far fewer than 50% of those who

studied Māori were awarded pass marks, on the assumption that those students who studied the indigenous language were less academically competent. “Both students and teachers knew the status hierarchies of the subjects and knew the likely futures of those who took them” (Middleton & May, 1997, p. 170). Streaming perpetuated disadvantage. Despite the EDC calls for greater support for those ‘failed’ by the system, the School Certificate examination was not phased out until 2002. Until that time, patriarchal discourses of deservingness perpetuated the selection of *winner*s and *loser*s according to gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background.

The report from the members of the EDC study group investigating Māori education bluntly stated: “For over 100 years official policy was aimed at achieving a homogeneous culture by assimilating the Maori. This policy has failed” (The Education Development Conference, 1974, p. 18). The report noted that Māori had no confidence in the existing system of education to provide adequately for the needs of Māori students, primarily because it did not recognise their culture or what was important to them. Formal education, instead of strengthening New Zealand society by developing biculturalism, had maintained a focus on monocultural education traditions that maintained Māoritanga at the margins. As a consequence, Māori students were denied an education that respected their traditions and worldview, and non-Māori were not exposed to the cultural aspects that might have enhanced their understandings of Māori values. The ongoing social costs were significant.

More problematic for the egalitarian myth in New Zealand, however, was the fact that low-ability classes appeared to be “racially selected” (Renwick, 1978, p. 91). The “painful effects of failure” (Committee on Health and Social Education, 1977, p. 16) to address the inequities between Māori and Pākehā was a matter of real concern to many, with Māori and Pacific students suffering despite the fact that their parents “set great store by education” (Renwick, 1978, p. 9). The education authorities presented the problem as being due to the fact that the large majority of teachers were Pākehā, and the increasing proportion of Māori and Pacific students challenged Pākehā teachers’ capabilities to provide the sorts of education that would fit such students to a society dominated by Pākehā values while making sure their cultural backgrounds were acknowledged.

Many Māori, however, had a different perspective. They argued that schools did not value Māoritanga, and that the century-old discourse of assimilation had failed to provide the expected benefits (The Education Development Conference, 1974). What Māori apparently wanted was not only an education system that encouraged Māori students to learn their language and cultural traditions, but also one where *all* school students learned those things in order to bring about a truly bicultural society (National Advisory Committee on Maori Education, 1971). Such a policy would have been an acknowledgement that the legacy of colonisation needed to be addressed. The Committee also recognised that this was an equity issue, submitting that “to achieve the goal of equal opportunity it is often necessary to take measures that are vastly unequal” (National Advisory Committee on Maori Education, 1971, p. 3), and that equal respect, status and proficiency in both languages was a precondition for true biculturalism (The Education Development Conference, 1974). However, the recommendations did not gain enough support from the Pākehā majority to change the direction of education policy for Māori.

Business as usual: no further developments

Following the EDC, the same discourses of providing education for the betterment of society that were apparent in the beginnings of state schooling in Aotearoa/New Zealand reappeared in response to public unease about the ways communities were changing. Acknowledging the potential role of schools in making a greater social contribution to their communities, the Johnson Report of 1977 made several recommendations that challenged the prevailing thinking and practice. Several of them proved to be contentious, particularly because they involved values education and health education as a response to such concerns as “the breakdown of the family unit; the increase in ex-nuptial births, the incidence of venereal disease” (Committee on Health and Social Education, 1977, p. 7). In accordance with the discourses of individuality, the position taken by the Committee was one of personal responsibility, particularly evident in the priority recommendation calling for the “establishment of the concept that every person is responsible for his own health and that of his dependants; including the proper knowledge and skills that enable the ready acceptance of that responsibility” (p. 98). Drawing on the discourse of state *interference* in

family life, the proposals were too permissive for the ‘moral right’ (Middleton & May, 1997; Openshaw, 1983) and the government at the time was socially conservative, so the recommendations were not implemented.

The same National government was still in power in 1982 when the Race Relations Conciliator produced a report aiming to highlight how institutional practices based on Pākehā perspectives served to perpetuate disadvantage for Māori and calling for social change to improve race relations (Tauroa, 1982). The view of New Zealand as a multicultural country was increasingly being challenged, but many Pākehā could not comprehend the challenges, having been persuaded by the assimilation discourse that New Zealanders were all one people. The position that “once the Pakeha is bicultural we can start talking about a multi-cultural community” (Tauroa, 1982, p. 17), represented an alternate Māori discourse as well as a challenge to the prevalent Pākehā position that assumed a single national identity. In essence, that position illustrated a lack of comprehension and acceptance of equity demands. Because Pākehā formed the majority of the population, and because the education system aligned with the discourses of catering for the majority in a narrow understanding of democracy, they did not appreciate the extent to which many Māori felt disenfranchised and marginalised in schools. Pākehā did not realise they too had a role to play, other than to continue the paternalistic discourse of “wise and kindly interest” (Mason, 1945, p. 58) that Pākehā were expected to have in relation to Māori.

Several Māori women also challenged both the dominant patriarchal discourses and Pākehā feminism in the hope of bringing greater awareness of the historical shaping of Māori identities (Johnston & Pihama, 1994; McIntosh, 2001; Smith, 1999). These challenges gained attention, but did not materially change the status quo. Māori concerns remained positioned at the edges of mainstream education discourse.

Going international: Aotearoa/New Zealand and the wider context

Prior to the EDC, in 1970 and 1971 New Zealand participated in the *Six Subject Survey* managed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA, 2011). The outcome showed New Zealand

gaining the highest results in Reading Comprehension as well as comparing favourably in the other tests. Perhaps more importantly, as if to confirm the benefits of education policy and the discourse of an egalitarian society, “the spread of marks for the New Zealand students was narrower than in all the other countries except Sweden” (Renwick, 1978, p. 20). Moreover, the results were achieved with a much lower per student cost for education than the other participating countries.

The strong beliefs the New Zealanders expressed in egalitarian ideals did not, however, translate into practice in schools, where students were being streamed and assessed on what they already knew rather than on their capacity or willingness to learn (Shallcrass, 1967). When Finland abolished streaming in the mid-1980s the achievement gap started to shrink (Sahlberg, 2011). Research in the United States showed that results from students in unstreamed classes were much closer to the results of high-stream than low-stream, but that streaming mirrored social inequities (Goodlad, 1984/2004). That had already been noticed in New Zealand. When coupled with the pragmatic considerations of difficulties in staffing low-ability classes, this meant that by 1978 there had become a trend for schools not to stream students according to their abilities (Renwick, 1978). Discourses of efficiency and effectiveness manifested in pragmatism determined the approach to equity issues rather than design or philosophy.

Less than a decade after the *Six Subject Survey*, a team of researchers from the OECD reviewed the state of education in New Zealand. Given the economic rationale for their investigations and New Zealand’s declining fiscal position, the “bleak economic climate” (Renwick, 1978, p. 102) of the time, they commented on the need for education to play a role in increasing economic productivity (S. Butterworth, 1993). Education for improved employment opportunities had long been a feature in Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, the global influence of economic drivers on education, particularly through the OECD PISA assessments, changed the direction of education from its previous primary role of socialisation to be far more about preparing students for participation in the workforce (Meyer & Benavot, 2013).

When education is viewed as an expense for the state rather than an investment in future social cohesion, it serves to reinforce the idea that schooling is a resource that might be wasted if offered unconditionally. From this perspective, Fraser’s (1939) discourse about providing the type of schooling suitable for each individual invited categorising and prejudging, reinforcing the discourses of selection and privilege. However, discourses of democracy and equal opportunity were also noticeable at the same time, because “since the early years of the century, the American philosopher John Dewey had exerted a strong influence” (Middleton & May, 1997, p. 162).

Dewey (1897/1982) had argued in his philosophy of education that the basic reason for the failure of schools to educate stemmed from their ignoring of the social, the community aspect of their existence. While many countries struggled to adapt the education systems to the economic imperatives in the early 1980s, a major research study was undertaken in the United States. Amongst the findings was the observation that they had “never quite achieved the desired balance between the home teaching individuality and the school teaching commonality” (Goodlad, 1984/2004, p. 41). Schools and teachers in Aotearoa/New Zealand had struggled with similar issues, but for Māori students it was the reverse, with homes teaching commonality and schools teaching individuality. Finding a balance between the two was always difficult.

The following conversation excerpt illustrates the discourse of teaching as a collaborative profession where skills and understandings are shared rather than one where individuals and schools work in competition with each other. Accordingly, it is grounded in the discourses of progressive education with an emphasis on collegial connectedness.

Excerpt 7 – Professional passion: “trying to help my colleagues”

1		.. I did that study, I enjoyed the study .. it
2	..	was a good challenge .. mm .. [grins]
3	[grins] you like challenges	
4	[laughing]	depends, depends actually .. yeah,
5	.. so tell	depends what it is ..

6	me about the challenges of	
7	finding good PD for yourself	
8	these days ..	.. ahhhh ... well .. there's ..
9		my passion is [my subject] .. and [my
10		subject] encompasses a huge area .. um,
11		there's .. there's personal development,
12		but also, I sort of take it in a holistic view
13		— .. I want to .. I wanna build, I wanna
14		strengthen the community .. so .. so I've
15		pushed for the last four or five years of
16		trying to help my colleagues upskill as
17	.. mm mm ..	well, .. yeah well .. so
18		I've tried to encourage them to take up
19		some .. some ahh .. study and do some
20	oh fantastic ..	papers as well ..
21	so you ..	so that would stimulate our
22		conversations around our table
23	absolutely ..	.. so .. yeah .. [nods] that was ..
24		there's theory behind our discussions
25	.. so you ..	basically ..
26	really seriously practice	
27	networking .. yeah ..	oh absolutely ..

Even though this teacher has spent most of his career working under the neoliberal *Tomorrow's Schools* that is the subject of the next chapter, the progressive discourse of the teacher as an empowered professional is apparent: “I sort of take it in a holistic view” (7-12). The discourses of community and schooling as a social sharing are also visible: “I wanna build, I wanna strengthen the community” (7-13). The teacher is clearly collaborative, even when taking a leadership role: “trying to help my colleagues upskill” (7-16), and “I’ve tried to encourage them to take up some . . . study” (7-18). The inspiration may have arisen from his own learning: “I did that study, I enjoyed the study” (7-1), but

the purpose is the contribution to the profession: “so that would stimulate our conversations around the table” (7-21), and include a perspective that was based on more than classroom experience: “there’s theory behind our discussions” (7-24).

The conversation itself reinforces the positioning through agreement: “so you” (7-25) — where the use of *so* serves to intensify the words that follow — “really seriously **practise** networking” (7-26), which elicits the response: “oh absolutely” (7-27). The effect is to strengthen the sense of solidarity between the two participants, confirming common ground through the process of performing and audiencing.

Cycles of newness, change, and re-emergence: Chapter summary

In this chapter I have discussed historical shifts in education policy and thinking and the discourses that have been associated with them in the provision of state education in 19th and 20th century Aotearoa/New Zealand, from the early days of European settlement through to the latter part of the 20th century. What is apparent is the recurring emphases on the contribution that schooling makes to social functioning alongside the impact on the individual that became emphasised by the discourse of child-centred learning. Some of the competing educational discourses retained their influence over several generations, as well as the corresponding arguments that were recycled in different turns of phrasing appropriate to the language fashions of the times. It has been evident that there has been an ongoing tension where competing discourses have co-existed, particularly with regard to expectations of teaching in the divergent contexts of progressive and conservative ideologies.

It is evident that the discourses of deservingness have always had a place in education policy in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Discourses of equality of opportunity gained traction slowly, but garnered strong public support at the 1937 NEF conference, resulting in increased government support for free education that resulted in the abolition of the Proficiency Examination as a barrier to entry into secondary schooling. Further, in 1944 the school leaving age was increased to 15, with the result that twice as many students began attending secondary schools (Nolan, 2007), and they came from a broader

range of social backgrounds. Schools and teachers were expected to adapt the curriculum accordingly, making it broader to cater for the more diverse needs of the student population.

At the same time, teachers were being officially encouraged toward greater experimentation, to change teaching approaches to be consistent with progressive education discourses. This created tensions between on the one hand the school practices of sorting students and offering them courses differentiated according to their perceived capabilities and backgrounds, and on the other hand the continuing parental expectations of upward social mobility. In particular, secondary schooling emphasised individual achievement rather than collaborative learning, and a hierarchy of subjects in the School Certificate examination structured so that 50% of students failed.

Community-oriented discourses of egalitarianism and the betterment of society became increasingly evident as progressive ideals promoted wider participation in schooling and extended education's reach to include older students. The discourses of progressivism are visible from as far back as the *Red Book* syllabus of 1929 where teachers were encouraged to interpret the curriculum in whatever manner they judged suitable for the particular needs and backgrounds of their students. Despite this, conservative traditions, limited resources combined with large class sizes, and discourses of conformity ensured that many teachers continued to deliver instruction from the front of the classroom, particularly in secondary schools.

The assimilation discourse that was encapsulated in the initial Pākehā desire to colonise New Zealand and civilise Māori according to an English perspective was gradually replaced by the two-worlds discourse that expected Māori to retain their cultural traditions and at the same time participate and learn from the Pākehā ways. The one-sidedness of this policy – because there were no reciprocal demands on Pākehā to learn from Māori culture and customs – effectively created a monocultural approach to schooling where Māori discourses were marginalised. Neither the one-people discourse nor the two-worlds discourse have proven effective in addressing the problems with schooling that Māori students face, but have instead served to perpetuate the

paternalistic Pākehā discourses of privilege and advantage. Calls for social change to improve race relations, however, proved no more successful than those demanding more community involvement in the process of education.

Nevertheless, the discourses of an egalitarian, progressive New Zealand society endured through the post-war period (Nolan, 2007) until the latter part of the 20th century, when economic pressures hit, and some sectors of society suffered more than others. The idea that schools should prepare students for the workforce then became problematic as unemployment rose, particularly for school-leavers, and more specifically Māori and Pacific Islanders (Nolan, 2007). Such changes are the subject of the next chapter where the focus shifts to the economically-oriented agenda introduced with the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms.

Chapter 7 – Free market education

In this chapter I explore some of the features and effects of economic discourses that have become progressively more evident in education within Aotearoa/New Zealand since the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms, particularly those that are included amongst the topics of conversation in the study. These economic discourses are presented as shaping teacher perceptions and praxis over the last 25 years, adding to the other historical features discussed in the previous chapter.

In 1982, the OECD identified the most significant values informing the provision and practice of education in New Zealand as full employment, equality of treatment, multiculturalism, a consensual approach to education, consultation and participation, and individual freedom and social justice. *The changes to compulsory education that began in the late 1980s sought, with limited success, to redirect those values towards the free market society* [emphasis added].
(Kelsey, 1997, p. 327)

The progressive discourses of schooling which had been reshaping education in Aotearoa/New Zealand were effectively sidelined by economic discourses. “Neoliberal and Left-liberal pressure for change drew upon a *commonly created discourse* [emphasis added] that not only profoundly influenced social policy at the time but also went on to give birth to a new blended ideology” (Openshaw, 2009, p. 184). It is ironic in the context of a progressive curriculum where teachers were encouraged to fit their teaching to the context and understandings of those they taught, that the claim of a “distinct academic and theoretical bias” (Crocombe, Enright, & Porter, 1991, p. 105) was used to justify a policy shift to a more vocationally-oriented system of education. The underlying discourse was economic, that schooling was to prepare most students to be workers, while the more deserving would earn higher positions in a capitalist society. Instead, education administration was subject to a complete overhaul and schools became self-governing. The irony is that with that shift to self-governing schools, the competition between schools accentuated the academic and theoretical bias. The “principle of selection” (Fraser, 1939)

evident in the early years of state provision gained ground as the discourse of deservingness returned to influence education policy. Those that were most able to gain advantage from this were the ones in wealthy areas, because of parental involvement and because greater expertise was available in their parent communities. However, the “high level of trust many parents had in teachers and schools before the reforms” (Wylie, 2009, p. 13) meant that few changes occurred in how teachers did their work, partly because school leaders proceeded to make changes only cautiously. To that extent, change occurred more in policy than practice.

Discourses of devolution: *Tomorrow’s Schools* reforms

In 1987 an education task force was established by the Government to review the administration of education. Apparently, schools were “sites of a pervasive hegemony designed to domesticate teachers through a series of formal and informal components . . . all of which served to disadvantage many groups in society” (Openshaw, Lee, & Lee, 1993, p. 277). The Picot Committee, tasked with creating a blueprint to reform the education system, included some who treated such hegemony not as critique, but as providing the opportunity for transformational change. Words like *hegemony*, *community* and *choice* were being used according to neoliberal terms of reference rather than common usage: “one cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look at* its use and learn from that” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 93e, §340)⁴⁷. The architects of the reforms appropriated such words deliberately to take advantage of their positive connotations and associations with democratic ideals.

When the education reforms named *Tomorrow’s Schools* were introduced as a consequence of the Picot report, the discourse emphasised greater involvement by communities in their local schools as well as improvements to Māori education (Minister of Education, 1988). However, equity issues in the devolved model of community responsibility remained focused on access rather than outcomes. Choice exacerbated the increasing competition between schools (Wylie, 2009), with the result that “instead of countering inequality, our system too frequently reinforces it” (Wylie, 2013a, p. 134). The attractiveness gap between schools was compounded by parents seeking better outcomes for their

⁴⁷ Wie ein Wort funktioniert, kann man nicht erraten. Man muß seine Anwendung *ansehen* und daraus lernen (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 93 §340).

children by the simple expedient of sending them to a higher-decile school rather than their nearest local one as illustrated by the finding that “parental involvement was related to school decile” (Wylie, 1999, p. 84). Self-managing schools exhibited similar characteristics to self-interested individuals in a market economy, and in the face of ongoing competition between schools, collaboration between teachers declined, even within schools (Wylie, 2009).

Inequality was compounded by the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms, rather than mitigated by them. Global comparisons also showed a significant decline for Aotearoa/New Zealand from the 1970s to the end of the century, even as economic discourses became more influential in guiding education policy. Those discourses became more central with the structural changes brought about by the *Tomorrow's Schools* legislation.

Tomorrow's Schools was a change in direction intended to replace the weight of the education bureaucracy with direct control of the schools by their local communities, particularly parents (Bates, 2009; Creech, 2009; Lange, 2005; Wylie, 1999). However, 10 years after the reforms, parents were less likely overall to be involved with their children's schools, and the situation for those marginalised in the previous structures had not changed for the better (Wylie, 1999). In fact, the competition associated with *Tomorrow's Schools* served to increase the gaps between the quality of education received by the privileged and by those who were not so fortunate. It was not enough to have self-managing schools, because the discourses available to teachers and principals remained embedded in the communities and social functioning of the same society. Accordingly, the reforms failed to deliver what had been expected of them, particularly the expectations that local communities would transform their schools (Openshaw, 2009; Wylie, 1999, 2009).

The teachers in this study are situated in low-decile schools where student 'failure' is much greater than in high-decile schools. Neoliberal perspectives position the explanation or blame for such failure as “either the result of teacher failure - hence the ERO discourse of ‘incompetent teachers’ or the result of student/family failure - hence the MOE discourse of ‘at risk pupils’” (Devine, 2000, p. 250). These ERO and MOE discourses are important for the effects they have on teacher perspectives. It has been reliably demonstrated that “whenever two common conditions, school choice and student selectivity, are

present, then we cannot reliably infer anything about school performance from student results” (Kinkead, 2015), yet the linking of student failure with teacher inadequacy remains relatively uncontested. As Devine points out, “failure is a necessary component . . . of . . . ‘competition’ but is seldom acknowledged as such” (2000, p. 250), yet because of our familiarity of the discourses of success and failure, “we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 43e, §129)⁴⁸, and in that failure to notice, we effectively change acceptance into endorsement.

One of the effects of that competition between schools was that many parents and students chose to avoid schools judged to be ‘failing’. However, that choice was exercised markedly less by the most disadvantaged, so inequality became more pronounced as some schools were forced to carry a greater burden when more of the students who are ‘failing’ were left behind while their more ‘successful’ peers shifted to schools that were more attractive (Thrupp, 1997). Within schools, ‘streaming’ or ‘banding’ students has had a similar effect, marginalizing those who have been deemed to be less academically able.

Marginal values: collaboration and community

Communitarian understandings remain effectively marginalised in our society where more than 40% of school-aged young people are identified as belonging to non-Western traditions (New Zealand Government, 2014). In Aotearoa/New Zealand, even the *Key Competencies* of the current national curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) are to be understood from an individualistic perspective, apparently unmindful of the “intellectual histories” (Devine, 2013, p. 60) of community-oriented alternatives. Although cultural diversity and inclusion are listed among the curriculum principles (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 9), the language used implies that these principles are to be understood from the viewpoint of an individual psychology rather than education praxis crafted around collective understandings.

Discourses of individuality are, therefore, central to the organisation and functioning of schools. Wittgenstein (1953/2003) uses the word *gemeinsam* (common) to describe community understandings of individual character traits. Distinguishable and distinctive *categories*, including such obvious aspects as

⁴⁸ “das, was, einmal gesehen, das Auffallendste und Stärkste ist, fällt uns nicht auf” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 43, §129)

ethnicity, gender, and physique, are the frame for the understandings that the common language of education affords, yet they *separate* individuals in the process. What is meant by *community* or *collective* is generally expressed from the perspective of aggregations of individuals, maintaining the centrality of individualistic thinking. If it is the discourses of community that shape schools, then it may seem paradoxical that Western traditions have so strongly emphasised the place of the individual, especially in the provision of education for social cohesiveness.

While a pluralistic understanding of community has parallels in the idea of a body comprising many parts, which we describe using words such as ‘eyes’, ‘ears’, and ‘fingers’, and connect with our understandings of ‘seeing’, ‘hearing’, and ‘touching’, it is also much more. The concept of community describes aspects of alignment without demanding homogeneity. A school community and a community of teachers have overlaps, whereas a geographical community is constrained by physical boundaries. Since concepts are fluid, an awareness of context is vital to create meaning from words, so it is important to query any understanding of the term *community*: “the question is: ‘In what sort of context does it occur?’” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 161)⁴⁹. Social institutions, such as schools, shape the meanings of interactions simply by being contextual elements that develop the understandings of those involved. School-specific, district-located, and nationwide contextual elements all contribute to the discourses of schooling. Indeed, even within schools, particularly secondary schools, different discourses are evident within the various subject areas. Conceptual frames such as the *scientific method*, the mathematical notion of *proof*, the construct of *creativity* in art, and judgements about what constitutes *quality* in a drama performance – all these factors influence the interactions between teachers of different subjects and between those who teach the same subject. Interactions may promote discourses of commonality and distinctiveness, a hierarchy of knowledge and positioning of subjectivities.

While Peters and Marshall (1996) caution against “a notion of social self (one anchored in community)” (p. 154) for being “universalistic” and “utopian”, their concern is with the way neoliberal politics have appropriated the concept and modified it while developing policies that are assimilative. However,

⁴⁹ “In welcher Art Zusammenhang steht es?” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 161)

conceptions of self can acknowledge connectedness and interdependence at least as much as separateness and distinctiveness. Sidelining communitarian ontologies and epistemologies effectively condemns to the margins those who live by such understandings. In Aotearoa/New Zealand particularly, this represents lost opportunities, not only for Māori or Pacific peoples, but also for Pākehā, who might otherwise enrich their worldview by accessing alternate perspectives based on connectedness. Many of the most powerful links between ideas and understandings are those anchored in historically-dominant discourses. As well as being shaped by discourse, teaching judgements are developed and cemented by experiences. Context and teaching are connection-oriented.

Subject to performance: “doing the right reinvention”

Neoliberal discourse insists that it is the teacher’s responsibility as a self-interested individual to adapt to a changing education policy framework. The following conversation excerpt shows a teacher positioned by that discourse.

Excerpt 8 – “Make sure that you’re doing the right reinvention”

1		that whole business about an ability to
2		recognise where you’re at .. with being a
3	[nods]	really important thing for teachers
4	yes ..	it’s absolutely vital because if you
5	[nodding continuously]	can’t recognise where you’re at .. and
6		then .. for what it is .. and make those
7		adjustments .. then [shaking head] well,
8	yes ..	what are you doing here? .. I don’t
9		believe, I don’t believe any longer there’s
10		a place for the ‘old Mr. so-and-so’
11		because he’s always taught that way and
12		it’s just the way he teaches – [shaking
13		head] it just doesn’t work that way any
14	right .. right ..	more .. you can’t .. if
15		you’ve only had that moment of saying
16		“oops” time to .. time to make a change ..
17		[shaking head] no, time to make a big

18		change and get yourself out of the system
19	yeah, yeah	.. yeah
20	well that was a .. thread that	
21	was .. came through quite	
22	clearly to me .. and I just	
23	wanted to check that ..	Yeah, no, no that's
24		fine .. and also from the perspective of ..
25		somebody who, as I've said earlier on ..
26		I'm at that end [indicates continuum
27	yes [nods]	with hands] .. I'm not at this end ..
28		and, you know, you've only got a
29	mm [nodding]	certain number of reinventions left
30	mm ..	so you've got to make sure that
31	yes ..	you're doing the right reinvention .. you
32		know, hanging on just for the sake of
33		hanging on there is not [shaking head]
34	it's .. it's not good for	
35	any of us ..	

The comment “I don’t believe any longer there’s a place” (8-9) shows the influence of neoliberal discourse expecting that teachers and schools adapt to whatever direction is chosen for them, rather than the discourses of participation and democracy that would have them directly involved in determining such changes. The comment emphasises that the requirements for teaching are continually subject to changing market forces, and teachers should either modify their thinking or “get . . . out of the system” (8-18) and leave the profession. This is echoed by the awareness of being subject to the *gaze* of authority, where teachers don’t know how to put into words what they see, for what is *visible* is neither *speakable* nor *expressible* (Foucault, 1983/2007)⁵⁰. Being under the *gaze* finds expression in the comment that “you’ve got to make sure that you’re doing the *right* reinvention” (8-30). The discourse of conformity is reinforced, along with the discourse of right-and-wrong.

⁵⁰ On ne savait pas comment restituer par la parole ce qu'on savait n'être donné qu'au regard. Le *Visible* n'était pas *Dicible*, ni *Discible* (Foucault, 1983/2007, p. 51).

There is acceptance of the discourse of teacher responsibility for change apparent in the words “it’s absolutely vital because if you can’t recognise where you’re at . . . and make those adjustments . . . then . . . what are you doing here?” (8-4). The discourse of *self-reliance* that came from the neoliberal realignment of social values and expectations is evident in the individual responsibility to both ‘*recognise*’ positioning and then make ‘*adjustments*’ in response. The comment “it just doesn’t work that way any more” (8-13), and the added agreement “right .. right” (8-14), together reference shared memories of previous emphases. However, having a long history of teaching service, despite all the associated benefits of classroom experience and institutional knowledge, is now positioned as marginal. Both teachers had been teaching during the 1970s when “the exuberance for social action and social change, coupled with a concern to meet the needs and interests of increasingly diverse student populations, were reflected in curriculum change and innovations at both school and national levels” (Middleton & May, 1997, p. 228). The unspoken subtext of the conversation is a recognition of the reduced acceptance of difference and diversity, apparent in the need to conform. “Embedded neoliberalism” (Kelsey, 2015, p. 112) is visible in an acceptance of the dominant management discourse. However, the opposite has also been argued: that for changes in policy to be successfully implemented in classrooms “requires a climate of respect for teachers as responsible professionals who are committed to the well-being of their students, not a climate in which teachers’ compliance is sought through accountability regimes that communicate distrust of their professionalism” (Alison, 2007, p. 254). That climate of respect for teachers committed to assisting students to do well remains at the margins of this discussion. “Central to good teaching is an understanding of what doing well entails” (Hostetler, 2016, p. 182), but those understandings are marginalised in the statement “I don’t believe . . . there’s a place for the old Mr. so-and-so” (8-9), regardless of the way his teaching expresses his understandings of *doing well*.

Teachers and schools are shaped by the ideas that are demonstrated in their traditions, as well as by their responses to new influences and pressures making an impact on their communities. It has been noted that the “history of the New Zealand education system often reveals a spirit of experimentation in which the visions of experimental educators were shaped by the debates and cultural

understandings of the times” (Boyask et al., 2008, p. 23). The constraints and demands that are made on teachers and secondary schools are shaped by the discourses of the neoliberal ideologies embedded in *Tomorrow’s Schools*.

Constraints on experimentation and progressive approaches

There are numerous examples of what is possible with a good relationship between teachers and their students, as identified in many research studies (e.g. Bishop et al., 2014; Cooper, Allen, & Bettez, 2009; Golding, 2013; Hattie, 2014). The education context, however, is very important. For example, by the time Beeby gave approval for Richardson’s experimental approach, many of the more progressive ideas promoted at the 1937 NEF (New Education Fellowship) Conference had become an accepted part of what Fraser (1938) referred to as an “educational renaissance” (p. ix). Indeed, Beeby’s decision as Director of Education to grant Oruaiti School experimental status was because such work outside the formal syllabus aligned with Beeby’s own views of the need for teachers to break out of the “bounds of the set curriculum” (MacDonald, 2010, p. 183). Similarly, according to an education official, “Ashton-Warner’s methods were not innovative to New Zealand. She practiced [sic] teaching methods commonly used by many teachers of her time” (Clemens, 1996, p. 149). Nevertheless, both of them were outliers from the norm, resisting pressures to conform with the discourses of teaching that prevailed at the time.

“Busnocratic rationality” (Peters & Marshall, 1996, p. 86) and neoliberal discourses limit the range of choices that are available to teachers as they interpret their role and the curriculum. If further creative approaches to schooling in Aotearoa/New Zealand are to escape those constraints, then opportunities for experimentation must be supported. For creative teaching approaches to flourish in the future, there needs to be sufficient endorsement for such experimental endeavours. With such support such as was provided from the 1950s by “advisers and some inspectors” (Middleton & May, 1997, p. 146), new and hopefully effective approaches to pedagogy in complex spaces can be found. Without it, creative teaching is likely to remain at the margins.

As a result of the *Tomorrow’s Schools* reforms, teachers in schools found themselves apparently more answerable to the parent community, particularly since legislation provided for each school to be self-managing with its Board of Trustees being accountable (Education Act 1989, 1989, p. 182 §93). Under this

legislation, schools became subject to review by ERO – the Education Review Office (*Education Act 1989*, 1989, p. 636 §325), exposing not only teachers but also Boards of Trustees to appraisal and approval or censure. Although the Act was intended to increase local control on schools by their communities, from the time of its inception, ERO increasingly functioned as a normative force promoting conformity through a requirement for compliance with National Education Guidelines (NEGs) and National Administration Guidelines (NAGs). There was also “a worrying tendency for schools to become more conservative as a result of consumer pressure” (Vaughan, 2001, p. 98). Experimentation in teaching approaches was driven more towards the margins, constrained by the need for approval and support against the increasing influence of discourses of accountability and performativity.

Many years earlier, Shallcrass (1967) had observed that “one of the problems about formal education is its conservative nature” (p. 11). Conservative approaches to schooling and teaching were evident in the scientific discourses of psychology, reinforcement theory, and intelligence testing. The core values and beliefs of a school community necessarily influenced teacher positioning and praxis. Many parents, communities and school leaders continued to expect teachers to maintain the traditions of local schooling, while also expecting that new ideas would be integrated. As a result, the traditional discourses that were central to school functioning, particularly in secondary schools, continued to prevail. Teachers could not be productively challenged to inquire into their own practice while remaining closely aligned to the conservative discourses of their school and their teaching colleagues.

Even the physical classroom contexts influenced pedagogy. Traditional classroom seating arrangements supported the expectation that teachers should assume a role as an all-seeing controller of classroom interactions. Such classroom designs saw students learn under the ‘gaze’ of their teachers (Landahl, 2013) for decades. Moreover, normative discourses of compliance were further reinforced by the increasing focus on school leadership and the separation between leaders and teachers. The emphasis on leadership became central in both forming and maintaining the professional identities of teachers under a management regime of surveillance and appraisal, despite, or even because of, the diversity apparent in teacher responses to the changing

curriculum. Into this context new secondary school qualifications, long demanded by teachers and the PPTA (Alison, 2007), were introduced in the form of the National Certificate of Educational Attainment (NCEA), with the attendant discourses of greater fairness and better meeting the diverse needs of students.

21st Century schools: embedded conformity

By the time the 21st century began, neoliberal discourses of efficiency and competition had become embedded (Kelsey, 2015) along with the discourse of the rational, self-interested *homo economicus*. For teachers, self-interest expressed itself in different ways, as illustrated in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 9 – “That’s a person who is willing to share”

1		.. and you know that .. that’s a person
2	[nod] yes .. but	who .. is willing to share
3	that’s part of ..	.. but, you know, the workshop we
4	yes .. oh, OK	had I had to steal his ..
5	[nod]	he didn’t want to give us the disks
6		at all .. he gave each person a disk to put
7	yes ..	in their computer to .. to view
8		different things .. however, he said he
9		didn’t want them copied
10	so while he was talking you	
11	just copied? ..	no, so while he was ..
12	yes ..	while we were packing up ..
13		I .. um .. I filled in my .. ah .. um ..
14		appraisal .. of the .. of the day .. and while
15		I was chatting to him like that I just took
16	..	all my stuff and I just put the disk in with
17	right ..	.. you know, putting it in ..
18		[demonstrating] “ <i>oh well, I’ll see you</i>
19		<i>next time</i> ” and away I went .. and uh,
20		every .. every other person who you go to
21		they’re more than happy to give it to you

22	.. but sharing	.. or copying ..
23	is what .. used to	
24	[shrugs] or in my book ..	
25	used to make us a good	
26	profession ..	because then you can go
27		back to it and refer back to it and say,
28		<i>“hey, that we’ve got to show the kids” ..</i>
29	yeah ..	

This anecdote is a continuation from a previous one and provides a comparison between different providers of professional development for teachers. The workshop provider referred to at the beginning, “that’s a person who .. is willing to share” (9-1) was maintaining a long tradition from before the economic reforms were imposed on schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In contrast, the subject of this anecdote, “the workshop we had” (9-3), displayed a different attitude, “he didn’t want to give us the disks at all” (9-5). That self-interest on the part of the facilitator, “he said he didn’t want them copied” (9-8) became an invitation to teacher resistance: “I had to steal his” (9-4), “while I was chatting to him . . . I just put the disk in” (9-14). The justification comes with “every other person who you go to they’re more than happy to give it to you” (9-20), and the response provides no censure, but rather collusion in the comment “sharing . . . used to make us a good profession” (9-22). Moreover, a higher moral ground is claimed with the concluding comment “*that we’ve got to show the kids*” (9-28), positioning the original demand for no copying in direct opposition to the purposes of schooling – to benefit the students. The appeal to that sense of solidarity between teachers and students in a school community brooks no argument, and the individual self-interest of the workshop provider challenges that.

Individual self-interest also challenged Māori cultural traditions, where “for a person to retain a leadership position, *success for the group* [emphasis added], whether whānau, hapū, or iwi, was a requisite” (V. Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009, p. 69) indicating that communitarian perspectives had not been extinguished. This recognised the importance of collective ways of being for Māori, if not for others, and how individuals were expected to be jointly

responsible for the progress of the group. It did not begin to address the influence of the prevailing discourses of self-centred schooling. Nor did it encourage teachers to debate issues of equity and privilege that applied to those for whom individualistic approaches represented a cultural mismatch. For such students, *equality of opportunity*, a goal rated half a century ago as unattainable due to the “socio-economic conditions” (Currie, 1962, p. 417), remained out of reach. The consequence for teachers was having to choose either to ignore communitarian cultural traditions or to reframe educational success to fit with the individualistic norms of neoliberal discourses.

In such contexts, dissonance might have proven desirable as a stimulus to questioning and debate, or at least engagement with issues, while harmony would have provided no such motivation. In the broader historical context over many years, most secondary schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand became more conformist rather than more creative, increasingly persuaded by the need to gain approval from ERO in order to retain or enhance their reputation in a competitive environment. In 21st-century schools, discourses of equity and social justice had to contend with pressures to foster talent or measure success using standardised assessments, and to determine, for example, who should qualify for access to higher education. Those pressures suppressed teacher professional inquiry. Dissonance may of course have been with the wider education system, but “any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process” (hooks, 1994, p. 21). Emphasising the commonalities and connections between different aspects of learning would enhance both praxis and a sense of collective identity, mitigating the sense of self-interest.

It has been noted that the reform of schools is most effective when it starts from classroom teachers rather than from school administrators (Alton-Lee, 2003; Bishop, O’Sullivan, & Berryman, 2010; Elmore, Peterson, & McCarthey, 1996). Yet the paradox of neoliberal discourses in schooling was that self-interested teachers working in the isolation of their own classroom were unlikely to refine or extend new approaches without also discussing them with colleagues, thereby aligning with the progressive discourse of schooling as a social endeavour. However, if teacher conversations needed “to focus on evaluating their own and others’ teaching practices” (Annan, Lai, & Robinson, 2003, p. 31) to be

successful in promoting change, then the teacher as a rational and self-interested individual would have to express that self-interest by collaborating. If teachers working together in a community engaged in dialogue primarily to support each other and the ethos of their community, then experimentation that promoted changes to the norms would arguably be isolating, at least initially. “Essentially we become both individualized and normalized, as subjects who are subjected through disciplinary power” (Peters & Marshall, 1996, p. 186). Normalisation has been one of the main effects of schooling on teachers.

Best evidence and best practice: influences towards conformity

However, subject to the discourses of performativity, teachers were also becoming increasingly constrained by the demands for evidence, particularly in terms of NCEA requirements and pass levels at the higher levels of secondary schools. Increasingly prevalent discourses of individual assessment and appraisal exerted pressures on teachers and students alike, promoting compliance with standardisation. Ideas about leadership and school outcomes were predicated on a premise of academic attainment where “serious intellectual activity” (V. Robinson et al., 2009, p. 73) was strongly connected to discourses of independent individual effort and responsibility, despite an acceptance that students, teachers, and school leadership were all implicated in *jointly* constructing a school culture.

With progressivism, diversity represented greater possibilities for creative approaches to the shaping of new pedagogies in changing contexts of schooling. However, viewed through the managerial, busnocratic lens of neoliberalism in Tomorrow’s Schools, that same diversity represented a challenge to the economic discourses of standardisation and best practice. The causal assumptions that underpin evidence-based practice and research are based on scientific conventions of cause-and-effect being applied to social settings. Yet teaching does not easily fit with such positivist models, being essentially a “moral practice” (Biesta, 2007, p. 10) of relationships situated in a community context of values, beliefs and traditions. Centralising neoliberal discourses tend to position teachers as education technicians supporting school traditions rather than liberal agents attempting to facilitate new approaches to learning in fluid, complex, connected environments. Nevertheless, “every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces

are brought to bear. The processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272). There is a balance between the inward, centripetal forces of conformity based on an individualistic ideology and those with an outward, centrifugal impetus such as was displayed in the previous chapter’s excerpt of a teacher trying to help his colleagues upskill as a group.

The concept of evidence positions something *in relation to* an existing theory (Kvernbekk, 2016). Evidence-based practice in teaching connects research and pedagogy, theory and action (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008). Nevertheless, the concept of evidence itself demands critique. Firstly, there is the issue of what is to be considered evidence. There is a general understanding of a hierarchy of evidence, ranging from what is considered absolute to what can readily be dismissed. As Biesta points out, evidence-based practice is really a “framework that brings with it a particular view of professional practice” (Biesta, 2007, p. 6). That framework is not neutral, as might be hoped for towards the top of an evidence hierarchy. However, irrespective of where in a hierarchy any evidence is positioned, it remains situated in community understandings, biased by the values and practices considered worthwhile in that community. Individual subjectivities must always influence the level of objectivity that any evidence can claim, but cultural interpretations also influence what is regarded as evidence “It is very difficult to describe paths of thought where there are already many lines of thought laid down, — your own or other people's — and not get into one of the grooves” (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 64e, §349)⁵¹. *Evidence* is tied to assumptions and discourses within a frame, not noticing, or even ignoring what can be interpreted as on the margins or outside of that frame.

The idea of *best practice* is similarly problematic and represents an oversimplification, connoting simple cause-and-effect discourses which are not well-suited to the complexity of teaching in 21st century digitally-connected environments. Conformity is one of the consequences, at the expense of creativity. In our recent past, meta-analyses of available research have been conducted for the Ministry of Education as *Best Evidence Synthesis Iterations* (for example: Alton-Lee, 2003; Biddulph, Biddulph, & Biddulph, 2003;

⁵¹ “Es ist sehr schwer, Gedankenbahnen zu beschreiben, wo schon viel Fahrgeleise sind — ob deine eigenen oder andere — und nicht in eins der ausgefahrenen Geleise zu kommen” (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 64, §349)

V. Robinson et al., 2009; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). The intention of such studies is to promulgate principles of *best practice* in schools. There is a danger, however, that such principles may influence schools and teachers to disregard contextual factors in favour of agreed expectations to guide their classroom performances.

If we are to look for what is at the center of teaching, we do not look for it in things such as evidence-based teaching, ‘best practices,’ and/or reflection. For those yield limited benefit if they are not located within the larger and essential project of helping people do well (Hostetler, 2016, p. 189).

Busy teachers, unaware of the normative aspects of “modern technologies of power” (Foucault, 1976/2008, p. 152), may be encouraged to adopt rubrics of practice without aligning such rubrics with the contextual elements and interactions within their classrooms. Paying insufficient attention to adapting teaching practice when integrating *best practice* principles may serve to promote second-best praxis instead. Even the terminology used can be problematic. *Best practice* is suitable for scenarios involving predictable cause-and-effect relationships. Complex situations (Snowden, 2011), where emergent practice approaches are more suitable, demand a different orientation to teaching. Similar arguments apply to the curiosity required to underpin *teaching-as-inquiry*, which expects of teachers that they more closely attend to the language they use in the classroom and focus their students’ attention on “learning goals” rather than “performance goals” (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008, p. 104). Such attention to language expects alignment between teacher expectations and classroom discourses, because a school emphasis on measurable outcomes such as NCEA credits creates a dissonance with inquiry, and such dissonance then serves to reinforce the discourse of performance, where teaching and learning are subservient. Performance does not align with an orientation to inquiry.

The New Zealand curriculum: aspirational and holistic

A new national curriculum for schools was released in 2007. The intent was to encourage schools and teachers to examine teaching and learning through a different lens, to embrace a more holistic approach, one where the connections between different aspects of learning were emphasised. School principals were

exhorted to change from a managerial approach to one that involved leading learning. Equally, they were expected to connect with their peers from other schools as well as develop leadership teams within their own schools (Cowie et al., 2009).

In my experience, when teachers are inspired by new ideas they tend to share them. In this example the sharing included only “the rest of my staff” in one school department, even though there were potential benefits for teachers in other subject areas or indeed in other local schools. What inspired the sharing was the immediate excitement at the realisation of the potential for this new understanding that the teacher has learned to make it easier for his students. It was the sense of being connected to his peers in the teacher community rather than a self-interested autonomous subject that prompted this sharing.

The new curriculum of 2007 only went a small way towards addressing the insular thinking that accompanied competition between schools. The concept of *community of practice* was largely confined to individuals working together within their own schools, apart from a few national initiatives (Cameron, Garvey Berger, Lovett, & Baker, 2007). Moreover, the centralisation of decision-making, so evident before *Tomorrow's Schools*, gradually returned (Bates, 2009). The imposition of National Assessment Standards on reluctant schools was a good example. Nevertheless, there was also increasing awareness of the interdependent nature of the relationships between central administrators, schools, and researchers (Bates, 2009; Eppel, 2009; Fancy, 2009). Global measures such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) increasingly influenced policy alongside local research such as NEMP (National Education Monitoring Project) and BES (Best Evidence Synthesis). In secondary schools, NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement) replaced the previous structures of student assessment. For their part, teachers became expected to apply the teaching-as-inquiry model into their practice, while still being subjected to incompatible discourses and practices of accountability. Measurement and assessment increasingly occupied a central role in schooling, but for many, particularly Māori and Pacific students, success remained elusive.

View from the top: PISA and the example of Finland

There are several reasons that Finland's education system warrants a place in this discussion. Firstly, Finland shares characteristics with Aotearoa/New Zealand, including the percentage of students attending State schools (OECD, 2014, 2015), and equity aspirations for all students to achieve in education. Secondly, in Finland the tension between discourses of privilege and equity was confronted and continues to be addressed. Compare, for example, Bishop, O'Sullivan, and Berryman (2010), where they advocate strongly for the need for schools and teachers to *reform* their practices for Māori students to be better able to enjoy success, while Sahlberg (2011) argues that the challenges for Finland are to *maintain* its focus on the socially equitable approaches that have sustained their position at the top of the OECD rankings.

Finland has been recognised as being at the forefront of education policy and practice because of its top ranking in international tests such as PISA (Sahlberg, 2011). Nevertheless, there are concerns that have been expressed by both Finnish and independent researchers (Norris, Asplund, MacDonald, Schostak, & Zamorski, 1996; Simola, 2005). Discourses of equity that influenced the directions set in the 1970s have since been moderated by the reform pressures of the 1990s with a focus on evaluation that, until then, had been largely absent (Simola, 2005). Despite this, the emphasis on equity remains strong, as can be seen in the current Finnish government's support for a universal minimum wage (Helsinki, 2015), which is consistent with Rawls' (2001) difference principle of being "to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society" (p. 43). Discourses of fairness find clear expression in the ways Finland displays the effects of its collectivist, agrarian roots (Simola, 2005), resulting in its position as having the lowest levels of inequality in the EU (Sajari & Teivainen, 2014).

A more managerialist, business-oriented approach common in Anglo-American schooling is now, however, also becoming evident in Finnish education (Sahlberg, 2011). Although equity issues remain part of current policy (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2011), these now sit uncomfortably alongside "*economic growth*" and "*competitiveness*" (p. 3) as well as "*performance-based*" funding (p. 35). Such market values have an impact on the curriculum, changing the ways in which teachers relate to their work. One of the features of

the high status of teachers in Finland has been their alignment with conservative values rather than ideologies of the Left, but these changes have the effect of steering Finnish education in a new direction.

Aotearoa/New Zealand, by comparison with Finland, fares quite poorly (OECD, 2011), and PISA results show a troubling long tail of underachievement by Māori and Pacific students. Some of the blame is attributed to the neoliberal policies of the marketplace that introduced the discourses of competition and management into the provision of schooling (Codd, 2005). The pressures that market forces brought to schools has also contributed to a greater emphasis on competition rather than cooperation, leading to the situation where “competition between schools for students is more the norm than exception” (Wylie, 2013b, p. 2).

To some extent, this has recently been acknowledged, with the recent IES (Investing in Educational Success) initiative promoting collaboration rather than competition between schools in communities of learning (Ministry of Education, 2014, 2015c). However, competition discourses remain evident, with descriptions of “best practice”, and “most skilled teachers” (Ministry of Education, 2015c, p. 2) being differentiating factors rather than aspects of connectedness. The intention is clearly stated as raising student achievement at all levels of schooling, to be accomplished by having schools “learn from each other how best to raise the quality of teaching and learning” (Ministry of Education, 2015c, p. 2).

Raising the bar: using NCEA as a measure of success

Quality of teaching is recognised by teachers as oriented to measures that allow ready comparison, particularly NCEA results. Secondary school teachers, particularly those teaching classes in the senior school, are well aware of the pressures and expectations of parents and students to focus on credentialing. NCEA achievement goals align well with discourses of success, but a focus on achievement rather than learning restricts the range of teaching approaches, as noted in the comment from one of the teachers:

Excerpt 10 – “these are the results the kids need”

the assessment doesn't [sigh] um .. tie in with how we are teaching .. but we have to do it because we are .. you know, a

fact-based .. a fact-based .. um .. discipline and these are the results that the kids need

Criticism and powerlessness are both expressed in the teacher comments that “we have to do it” because “these are the results that the kids need”. There is a recognition that teaching that is goal-oriented rather than direction-oriented promotes a narrow view of the purposes of schooling. Social aspects such as citizenship are marginalised by market-oriented discourses of performance:

The Government's goal is that by 2017, 85 percent of 18 year olds will have attained NCEA Level Two or equivalent qualifications. This is the level of achievement that is deemed to equip students sufficiently to participate in employment and society in a productive and successful manner. Identified in Government policy are key levers that will have the biggest influence on improving their achievement – *stronger teacher accountability* [emphasis added] for improving students' learning (Education Review Office, 2012, p. 5)

If students' learning is to be measured solely or primarily by NCEA qualifications, the implicit assumption must be one of comparability in order to justify applying policy levers in the pursuit of *stronger teacher accountability*. The tension between contrasting philosophical positions remains – recognising co-construction of learning, but not of teaching. There appears to be no awareness of the contradiction between the statement above and the following from the same document:

“For Māori students, a curriculum that has limited or no connection with students' language, culture and identity is not one that contributes to their self worth, to their sense of themselves as culturally located persons, or to Māori achieving success as Māori as outlined in Ka Hikitia” (Education Review Office, 2012, p. 15).

For teachers to improve the success of Māori students, much more is required than narrowing the focus more exclusively on NCEA assessments. In Aotearoa/New Zealand “students' socio-economic background has more impact on their performance in PISA than the average across OECD countries” (OECD,

2014, p. 6). Addressing that problem requires more than assigning the responsibility to schools, it demands instead “the emergence of a new socially just economic model” (Kelsey, 2015, p. 237).

Addressing Māori underachievement within the neoliberal model

Excerpt 11 – "it's a cruel, debilitating practice"

It's that elephant in the room, and every time I get with him I forget it .. I forget it, and I don't even know if he wants to go there .. I think he still thinks extension [a separate class for 'more academically able' students] is a point of difference, when really it's a cruel, debilitating practice

This teacher utterance refers to the fact that Pākehā students formed the majority in 'extension' classes at this teacher's school, preserving privilege and a sense of entitlement that exemplifies “the institutionalised racial, gender and class divisions of a European settler colony [where] Māori were marginalised and consistently received inferior treatment” (Kelsey, 2015, p. 83). The self-blame of “every time I get with him I forget it . . . and I don't even know if he wants to go there” illustrates the discourse of *personal failure* that is a consequence of what Williams (2007, p. 227) refers to as “*responsibilization*”. The utterance shows the teacher positioned as a caring professional constrained by the effects of the neoliberal discourse of competition.

From the beginnings of state education in Aotearoa/New Zealand it was assumed that Māori needed to be civilised into Pākehā ways. However, “by the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s . . . the 'cultural deficit' approach to Maori culture and language was being increasingly challenged, and alternative approaches to Maori education were being advocated” (Middleton & May, 1997, p. 193). It was argued that Māori children, for their own self-concept and sense of well-being, needed to know that Māoritanga was respected by their non-Māori peers (The Education Development Conference, 1974). Before the *Tomorrow Schools* reforms, “the Picot Taskforce . . . had available to it a wealth of evidence suggesting that Māori educational underachievement stemmed from a single underlying cause - the failure of Pakeha society and its school system to recognize Māori culture” (Openshaw, 2009, p. 74). That lack of recognition by

Pākehā limited the effectiveness of attempts to address the education disparities between Māori and Pākehā.

Whole school reform was the intention driving the *Te Kotahitanga* interventions. In 2001 the first phase of the research and professional development project was implemented. The first step was “interviews as conversations” (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2009, p. 2) with Māori students about their classroom experiences, followed by “detailed classroom observations” (p. 3). The outcomes became the substance of the *effective teaching profile* (ETP) that was used for the professional development of teachers.

The intention of the ETP was to support teachers to recognize Māori culture through a focus on their classroom practice, in particular on their relationships with Māori students. Pivotal to the success of the interventions was having teachers critically reflect on their classroom interactions with Māori students, and in particular, comparing their understandings of those experiences with what the students themselves reported (Bishop & Berryman, 2009). The intention was to make teachers aware of the ways their words and actions positioned Māori learners, and in particular, to allow teachers to see the effects of negative interpretations, “deficit theorising” (Bishop & Berryman, 2009, p. 29).

Te Kotahitanga – unity (Barlow, 1991, p. 57) was based on a collective, communitarian understanding, a “collaborative response towards a commonly held vision” (Bishop & Berryman, 2009, p. 31). For teachers, establishing connections – the concept of *whanaungatanga* – with Māori students proved to be essential to their engagement (Bishop et al., 2014). This engagement was more important than the curriculum. In demonstrating caring for the students (*manaakitanga*), and how they were performing (*mana motuhake*), teachers indicated their expectations of their Māori students, while moving to more interactive approaches (*wānanga*), rather than the more traditional transmissive teaching methods, and varying the sorts of class activities enabled better learning (*ako*), with co-construction of meaning, all within a well-managed learning environment (*whakapiringatanga*) (Bishop & Berryman, 2009; Bishop et al., 2009). *Te Kotahitanga* challenged prevailing ideas about Māori underachievement, and was seen as a whole-school reform project

(Bishop et al., 2010). However, *Te Kotahitanga* actually supported the discourses of neoliberalism with its focus on the individual efforts of teachers and students because it required a rejection of the social reasons for underachievement. A previous initiative provided a contrast:

Excerpt 12 – "have no favourites"

you've got to have two teachers .. I think teacher aides .. um .. not *Te Kotahitanga*, it was .. called .. Tu Tangata .. and Miss P we called her .. she said '*what shall I do?*' ... I said: '*sit .. by every kid in the class – a different day, I'd like you by a different kid .. so that you know that you've rotated, right round the class ..*' and I said: '*have **no** favourites, make sure that every kid has the same amount of love from you ..*' [shaking head] and she was remarkable .. and that class hummed .. it really did

The emphasis in this utterance is on equality: "*sit by every kid in the class . . . have **no** favourites*": the presence of another adult in the classroom is to be experienced by every student. This is in contrast to in-class observations in *Te Kotahitanga* where the focus of attention of the extra adult is on the engagement of the teacher with Māori students. In relating this anecdote this teacher is offering a critique of *Te Kotahitanga*. The exchange: "she said . . . I said" has the effect of a reminder that in this situation the teacher is in charge, whereas in *Te Kotahitanga* the observer has the status of a researcher gathering a particular form of evidence and the teacher, being under scrutiny, experiences a reduced level of *authority*. The anecdote also reverberates with an implicit challenge to the way that *Te Kotahitanga* positioned the teacher in the interest of improving outcomes for the students. This excerpt highlights the difference between the approaches used in the two programmes and the comparative effects on the *mana* (status) of teachers and their practice.

Most of the teachers in this study had been involved with the *Tu Tangata* programme, and all participated in *Te Kotahitanga*, where colleagues observed their teaching practice as part of the research. All of them had Māori students in their classes, and in addition, all had directly experienced marae-based learning, so could appreciate the cultural aspects involved and shape their interactions with Māori *ākonga* (learners) accordingly. Most of them outlined their views on

Te Kotahitanga in the study, and some of those perspectives can be found in the excerpts that are discussed in Chapter 10.

Interschool competition: the impact of digital technologies

The beginning of the 21st century witnessed changes to the *Tomorrow's Schools* approach by supporting teachers to work collaboratively across clusters of schools to learn to teach with Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs). The discourses of efficiency and attractiveness in the competitive market environment for schools ensured that digital technologies would exert perception pressures to expand the use of digital technologies.

The Information and Communications Technology Professional Development (ICTPD) programme was a Ministry of Education initiative that included clusters of schools working together over a three-year period. It started in 1999, a decade after the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms. Many teachers lacked basic skills and understandings of how to integrate into their teaching praxis the changes that ICT made possible, so the Ministry promoted the ICTPD Schools Cluster Programme for groups of schools to work together in providing professional development for teachers. This clustering proved to be an effective response to the limitations of the competitive model of interschool relationships, and teachers collaborated in learning new skills, both in mainstream and in the Māori-medium Kura Kaupapa Māori schools (Ham, 2002; Ham & Moeau, 2006). The use of ICTs or *digital technologies* is now widespread in schools throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand, maintaining the shared learning approach among many teachers.

What was apparent with the ICTPD model, particularly in the Tairāwhiti district, was the realisation of mutual benefits from sharing knowledge and understandings in approaches that were more apparent from the progressive era before schools were required to compete for students and resources.

Excerpt 13 – “I picked up from that what I needed”

<p>1 and .. do you think, umm, 2 thinking back on it, you 3 know, when we had the .. 4 um .. ICTPD 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">but no, I really, really enjoyed the courses on .. which were the hands-on .. umm, and a bit like kids .. I picked up from that what I needed to, to actually enable me to function better in my teaching life but when we got to the ubiquitous pedagogy [<i>old joke, previously rehearsed</i>] and all this sort of stuff .. you basically [<i>shaking head</i>] I couldn't squeeze that into the stuff I had to do at the time. Right now, with a bit more luxury .. yeah, I quite enjoy that .. I enjoy reading .. but it's taken a while</p>
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“I really, really enjoyed the courses . . . which were hands-on” (13-4) is a statement reinforcing the positioning of experience at the centre of teacher learning, particularly in contrast to education theory, that “ubiquitous pedagogy . . . *stuff*” (13-9) that is marginalised as a “luxury” (13-14). Only after time has passed, after “what I needed . . . to actually enable me to function better” (13-7) has become embedded, does reading about pedagogy find a space: “I enjoy reading . . . but it’s taken a while” (13-15). This confirms the view that “good teaching is more experience-based than research-based” (Hostetler, 2016, p. 179).

The effects of digital technologies go beyond the impacts on interpersonal communications and can be seen in the significant disruptions they have been causing to the functioning of economies. This is important because of the contributions that education makes to the economy through the development of skills. One of the questions that secondary schools in particular face as a consequence is: “what kind of attitudes will support a technological society and how can the school help to encourage these?” (McDonald & Livingstone, 1984, p. 61). One of the main justifications for calls to a more digitally literate and

skilled workforce is that the employment context has been changing dramatically and continues to change as digital technologies become increasingly embedded into the fabric of social functioning (K. Robinson & Aronica, 2015). The argument that “despite some very successful initiatives in the education sector, [Aotearoa/New Zealand] is still unable to provide either a high-quality digital technology curriculum, teachers trained and passionate in digital technologies, or informed parents” (Eaton, 2015, p. 1) is based on market-driven perspectives on the role of schooling.

Given the problems arising from child poverty and social inequalities (OECD, 2011, 2014), and the related impacts of inequalities on schools (Wylie, 2013a), today’s ethical challenge for educators might be to sustain hope for their students and for each other rather than pursue the mirage of an adaptive curriculum that seeks to stay current with technological advancements. “‘Structural privilege’ gives entitlement, choice and opportunities” (Smith, 2013, p. 231), but “inequality is a ‘whole-of-society’ problem” (Smith, 2013, p. 235). The challenge involves individuals *and* communities addressing privilege *and* inequity, not simply schools and teachers in high deprivation areas. Providing equitable access to digital technologies in schools is in many respects an issue of priorities for Boards of Trustees, but addressing the wider issue of *fairness* in education goes far beyond schools. Teachers are shaped by the discursive positions available to them and also implicated in the ongoing reshaping of what is central in the teacher community, where socially-oriented progressive discourses continue to jostle with individualistic neoliberal discourses.

Curiouser and curiouser: teaching as inquiry

Excerpt 14 – "I don't think we're going very deep"

I don't think we're going very deep, to be honest	No, there's a little bit of hesitancy to go there, because what it means is commitment .. and it means more time ... and the rhetoric around here is: " <i>I've already done my time</i> "
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What is illustrated again in the above excerpt is the way in which teachers reinforce positioning by agreement. This is apparent in the way the initial

comment is elaborated on by the second teacher. It provides an example of teacher co-constructed reflection, particularly the observation about *rhetoric*. “*I’ve already done my time*” is a reference to teachers’ willingness to make voluntary contributions of time and expertise for the benefit of the whole teacher community. This is apparent in such matters as participating as an office-holder in the PPTA teacher union or joining a staff committee with no status or remuneration attached. The comment is more than a superficial observation – it is a political statement on the effects of introducing neoliberal discourses of self-interested individuals to the shared endeavour of schooling.

It has been argued that “practising reflection is one of our most active means of emerging from the globalization of capital, the alienation of social systems from the environment, and the enframing of technology” (Devine & Irwin, 2006, pp. 22–3), but individual reflection cannot suffice to liberate teachers and promote experimentation.

It seems implausible that students will engage in greater interaction with each other, or more sustained interaction with teachers around challenging new content, if the structure of the school day remains compartmentalized and if each subject is taught as if it bore no relationship to the others. (Elmore et al., 1996, p. 7)

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, current approaches to inquiry-focused pedagogy (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008; Golding, 2013) emphasise the importance of using student experience as a starting-point for building deeper understandings of how best to reflect on teaching practice. They also advocate connecting with the experience of other teachers.

Every teacher’s practice is grounded in a theory about how to be effective, based on their experience and their knowledge of the practice context. The more experienced the teacher, the more likely it is that their theory will be coherent. (Timperley et al., 2007, p. 199)

A blend of these two ideas propounded by Elmore et al and Timperley et al would have teachers acknowledging the experiences of others alongside their own and making useful comparisons in their reflections. However, the results of

inquiry are more than achieving a coherent theory of teaching, or even gaining improved student assessment results. A consequence of teacher inquiry includes becoming a more expert teacher, one who is better able to create and sustain productive classroom relationships. Expert teachers are “more able to improvise . . . anticipate and plan for difficulties” (Hattie, 2014, p. 107) because they expect variations from the routine and have sufficient background and confidence to adapt. From a progressive education orientation, expert teachers could be expected to demonstrate reflection that is both contextually situated and also does more than critically examine and challenge individual teacher practice by, for example, reviewing the assumptions that constitute the politics of teaching and the discourses of learning. In doing so, they could examine the contextual factors that privilege their particular experience and expertise within the structures of education in order to make sense of their positioning.

However, from the neoliberal perspective the emphasis is more on teacher accountability, because in order to gain or renew practice certification, teachers in Aotearoa/New Zealand are required to meet various criteria, including applying critical inquiry to their work (Education Council New Zealand, 2015b). An associated project is linked to these criteria, aiming to make a stronger connection between teacher appraisal and professional learning (Education Council New Zealand, 2015a). There has also been a strong recommendation to apply principles of inquiry to teacher appraisal (Sinnema, 2005). The emphasis is emphatically on the teacher as an individual distinct and separable from the context factors of their community. At least in this respect, the potential of inquiry is limited.

Entangled threads: competition, credentials, and comparisons

The last 15 years of schooling in Aotearoa/New Zealand have seen a variety of education policy initiatives intended to bring about changes to secondary schools’ classroom teaching. Teaching that is broad and inquiry-focused has not displaced the traditions of subject-specific compartmentalisation of the curriculum. Evidence-based discourses have become more prevalent and influential and have contributed to the repositioning of teachers as purveyors of learning. *Te Kotahitanga*, a school reform project, brought the voices and relative progress of Māori students to the forefront of teacher awareness in participating schools, by combining individual class observations with teacher

co-construction group discussions. ICTPD clusters and NCEA Jumbo days also saw teachers working together in groups to share knowledge and skills in a legacy of progressive education discourses.

However, all of these initiatives have been of limited duration or scope, and both the historical discourses and the more recent neoliberal discourses of secondary schooling continue to influence teacher practice. The emphasis on credentialing in the senior school contributes to the ongoing competition between schools and between subjects within schools. Global comparisons afforded by PISA and TIMSS have strengthened the competitive discourses of education. An increasing emphasis on individual performance and accountability has overshadowed collective ideals. Inequality remains an issue, but “does not suggest a poorly performing school system” (Snook, O’Neill, Birks, Church, & Rawlins, 2013, p. 32). Instead, in an ongoing assigning of blame to individuals, it is asserted that anxiety and other “learning beliefs and behaviours” (Whitney, Lamy, Cowles, & May, 2015, p. 3), are responsible for lower scores in such tests by Māori and Pacific students. This neoliberal perspective suggests that the role of the teacher should include supporting *ākonga* (learners) to reduce their anxiety and increase their confidence and beliefs in their capacity to learn, which can occur “when teachers use socially and culturally responsive pedagogical actions” (Gervasoni, Hunter, Bicknell, & Sexton, 2012, p. 209). The main problem with this observation can be attributed to the discourses of individualisation and responsabilisation that shape both teacher conceptions of their identity and education policy. The effects on teachers of the divergent neoliberal and progressive education discourses are discussed further in the following chapters.

Chapter 8 — Where am I? Positioning the individual and community

In this chapter I present a number of excerpts from the conversations and examine them. The focus of this analysis is on discourses of self, including both individualistic and communitarian perspectives. I also attempt to illustrate some of the positioning effects of the dialogue as illustrated by the interactions of the participants, and the dynamics of their positioning.

All of the teachers in the dialogue were experienced secondary school teachers, each occupying a position of responsibility within their school, but I have added some descriptors to emphasise their locatedness within the teacher community. When these conversations were recorded, my own position was as a teacher with more than 35 years' experience, and some of the other participants had a similar length of service.

The excerpts are selected to illustrate influential discourses, the dynamics of interaction between participants, or noticeable effects on their positioning. With the recognition that all these discourses, dynamics and effects are fluid rather than fixed, my analyses should be viewed as illustrative rather than definitive, examples rather than classifications.

“I’ll sort it out”: getting a parent involved

The following excerpt is a story told by an experienced male teacher, providing an example of making a connection with a parent in order to deal with a behaviour problem that a student presents in class. More than just an example of values and behaviours, it illustrates the connectedness between teachers and students within the school, as well as links between the teacher and a wider community. In my experience, stories such as these are common in teacher conversations and are an integral part of maintaining the functioning of the teacher community. This does not imply that such dialogue is subject to critical reflection, particularly if “conversation is truly critical and self-aware only when participants approach it with certain inclinations and predispositions” (Brookfield, 1995, p. 142). Nevertheless, such interactions play an important role in maintaining community engagement and a sense of belonging.

Excerpt 15 — “I’ll sort it out”: involving a parent

<p>1 [that] must have influenced 2 your ..aah .. 3 [nods] 4 right .. 5 6 7 [nods & smiles] mm 8 [nods] okay 9 right .. 10 11 [nod] 12 13 14 [nod] 15 [nod] 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 .. 24 25 26 27 28 — [talk of other matters] 45 [nodding] 46 .. yes, yes .. 47 [nodding]</p>	<p>it has .. in particular, my willingness to contact parents .. it was always, when I was starting teaching, it was always a little bit of a dread that you have to ring a parent to talk about progress .. whereas now it’s kind of second nature and, .. I’ve done it a couple of times .. um to very good effect .. like I had .. um .. I think it was right at the start of this year I had a young lady .. who is now elsewhere [nod] .. she was “<i>f.. you, I’m not effing that</i>” .. and “<i>doing this work</i>” and .. slammed the door and I turned around to the class and I said: “<i>right, I will need to call her mum, I’m gonna call her right now, you will all behave very well</i>” and I picked the next-worst kid in the class .. and I said “<i>you</i>” [pointing] .. named the person .. “<i>you’re in charge</i>” .. sort of looked as if to say: “me? .. all right, I’ll be in charge” .. I left [nodding] .. not far away .. told one of my colleagues I’ve just left, I’ve gotta ring her mum .. that girl stormed off, I’m not having that .. discussed in Chapter 9] um .. and that’s one example of contacting parents [nodding] .. trying to bring them into the</p>
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48	yes ..	picture ..
49	yes ..	if they're contactable ..
50	but that's the ..	they're not always ..
51	[sighs] that's the sort	
52	of approach that ...	

In the utterance shown in Excerpt 15 above, the dialogue appears mostly one-sided, with the researcher primarily audiencing rather than initiating. The interaction is possible, however, because so much can be left unsaid. Implicit in the telling is the positioning of the teacher *in loco parentis*, concerned for the upbringing of the student. Contacting the mother reinforces this authority, as well as the mutuality between teachers referenced by the inclusion of the phrase: “told one of my colleagues” (15-26). That reference to the colleague acknowledges a shared responsibility, positions the teacher as part of a collective, and reinforces the positioning as community insiders.

The emphasis of the utterance positions teachers and students as interdependent, together comprising the school community. In this, a teacher is clearly situated within the rules, values, and practices of the school as an institution. Teachers perform their classroom roles within the school ecosystem. Any authority they can call on requires acceptance by students within a community of practice, illustrating both normativity and interconnectedness. Following what is regarded as good teacher practice by choosing “the next-worst kid” (15-21) to be “in charge” (15-23) highlights the responsibility of the teacher role, as well as the recognition that it can be delegated. It also illustrates the unspoken acknowledgement that the students’ collective understandings of what is considered appropriate will continue in the teacher’s absence, and neutralizes a potential cause of further disruption. This aspect of the story does not require an explanation to the teacher colleague. It clearly positions the teacher, however, not as an self-interested worker in pursuit of individual gain, but operating within the conceptual framework that Goodlad (1984/2004) refers to as “schooling” (p. 28), a wider endeavour.

What is noticeable in the story are the discourses of social connectedness. The anecdote serves as an example of classroom socialisation in the school and community expectations of behaviour. It also illustrates that “professional judgment is central to educational practice, and that the nature of this judgment is moral rather than technical” (Biesta, 2007, p. 11). The teacher’s stance illustrates that progressive education discourses retain their currency.

This particular excerpt of the conversation, this utterance, is connected with what is said before and what follows it. It is interesting to notice the perspective that is applied to the relationships between teachers and parents. On one hand, there is an acknowledgement of disconnectedness indicated by the “little bit of a dread” (15-6), but on the other hand there is a real acceptance shown by the words: “now it’s kind of second nature” (15-8), indicating that contacting parents is accepted as normal — a position that gained support and agreement from my affirmative responses. My participating in the dialogue, positively audiencing the narrative, affirms the teacher interpretations of agreement and convergence rather than questioning or alternative perspectives. In that respect, this example of dialogue can be seen as an illustration of collegial conversations reinforcing the status quo, common understandings, and expectations of conformity to the school demands “that you have to ring a parent” (15-7), and thereby actively participate in supporting the discourse of a social contract between schools and parents, with teachers located at the intersection. This excerpt serves to reinforce the position of the teacher not as an agent of social change, but of preserving traditions and community understandings as central to the role.

“Trust is the overlap”: positioned in relationships

In this next excerpt, the teacher is conscious of her impact on others, fortifying her stance with the reference to “someone’s done some study on it” (16-41). This may be an implicit granting of space to education research, an almost circular fit to the research purpose of the conversation in which she is engaging, but there is also a tentativeness, expressed in such phrasing as “I’m not sure about that word . . . I would want to change it” (16-9), and a wondering in “where am I in relation to” (16-15) that are indicators of reflection. At the same time there is a

firm stance taken towards the end of the utterance with the statement “that can only come with shared .. shared power” (16-89), indicating a specific positioning adopted as a result of reflection.

At the core, however, is an awareness of the opinions of others in the community and a reluctance to challenge the discourses of hierarchy. This is apparent in the reference “leadership can improve themselves” (16-33) despite the recognition of a group expressed in *leadership* and through the use of the collective *we* in “we’re . . . challenged” (16-22; 16-28; 16-29). Positioning and leadership are both discussed in relation to discourses of “hierarchy” (16-18).

Excerpt 16 — “Trust is the overlap”: community relationships

1		there’s two circles, if someone went to PD
2	yes ..	.. to PD with some guy .. there he
3		was, and he drew two circles and .. and
4		the middle circle .. because I was tempted
5	[nods slowly]	to push the circles together .. but [laugh]
6	yes, yes, yes	.. in the middle is something called
7		relational trust if someone is
8	..	trust
9		.. and I’m not sure about that word
10		relational .. but .. um .. I would want
11	right, right	to change it to relationship
12		because relational to me is too
13	right, right,	mathematical
14	got it .. yep,	mm .. so it
15	mm, [nods]	implies a line .. where am I in
16	in relation to ..	relation to
17	to others rather than ..	yeah, like a
18		hierarchy rather than to .. relationship is
19		better if you’re going like flat across
20	yes ..	.. and in this box is support
21	okay ..	support provision .. and in
22		this box is challenge .. so we’re all

23		getting challenged to get these things
24	[nod] yes ..	ready by these dates, right? And
25		because teachers have to be .. um .. more
26	yes ..	professional
27		.. and those are random challenges ..
28		they're not .. we're challenged by the
29	..	school vision, we're challenged by the
30		school mission .. um .. but what is the
31		support .. being provided going towards
32		that challenge .. and that's .. where
33	right	leadership can improve themselves ..
34	.. I'm intrigued that ..	and helpful
35	that um .. if it's put as	yeah!
36	a Venn diagram and like this	
37	.. that they see ..	
38	relationship trust is the	
39	overlap of support and	
40	challenge	support and challenge, yeah .. it's a
41		model, someone's done some study on it ..

The questioning and critique alongside the wondering is evident both in individual comments and also in the collaborative engagement with the ideas and issues discussed, based on a diagrammatic model of professional learning for teachers. The occasions in the transcript where there are gaps in explaining what is intended, these illustrate that the participants are calling on their common knowledge which renders unnecessary any further explanation. For example, the acronym PD (16-1) is used as an abbreviation for *professional development*, and Covey (17-44) is a reference to Covey (2013) *The seven habits of highly effective people*, claiming support for her position by reference to an external authority.

The influence of neoliberal discourses is particularly evident in the phrase: “teachers have to be . . . more professional” (16-25). Implicit in that statement is

an acceptance of the emphases on efficiency and effectiveness that characterise neoliberal positioning. However, the utterance also carries residual undertones of what Bentham (1838/2008) called *inspectability*, consistent with the much earlier liberal emphasis on a hierarchical positioning of knowledge and power. That emphasis is echoed by the repetition of the words in “we’re challenged by the school vision . . . [and] mission” (16-28), where a positioning that contrasts “leadership” (16-33) reduces the relative status of the teachers and diminishes the profession. Nevertheless, professional critique appears with the observation that “that’s where leadership can improve themselves” (16-32), re-orienting the dialogue towards the democratic ideals of progressive education.

Avoiding “smarty-pants”: judging what to say

Just as in the previous excerpt, there is a reference in the following that maintains the particular perspective established in a previous conversation: “**our** model” (17-86); while “*not-knowing*” (17-71) expresses shared understandings about stances taken in interactions, based on Anderson and Goolishian’s (1992) description of the kind of naïve curiosity that aligns well with conceptions of socially-constructed realities in the exploring of different perspectives. There is also a relational sense of continuity through change as represented by the constructionist approach to *becoming* (Anderson & Gehart, 2007), which infuses whatever meaning is attached to interpreting and responding to the phrasing: “the better you become” (17-45). However, it is interesting that such perspectives are not considered normally acceptable teacher positioning, “because it would have been too .. smarty-pants” (17-52).

Excerpt 17 — Avoiding “smarty-pants”: positioned by others

42		yeah, so there’s questions, eh ..
43	okay ..	and if you .. overlap the circles ..
44	yep ..	cos that’s what Covey reckons .. that the
45	mm ..	better you become ..
46	yeah, the more	together .. and so
47	you put those together ..	support, support and challenge are in the
48		same box .. and trust

49	[nodding] well that	and it goes bouncing
50	makes more sense	like that, and I didn't .. want to present
51		that .. because it would have been too ..
52	no ..	smarty-pants .. [chuckles] you know,
53		that's what I feel .. anyway, I think that,
54		so anyway, these things get intermingled
55		.. in the one group, in the one person
56	mm ..	.. in the partnership .. that
57	mm	.. and it's reciprocal .. so this
58	mm ..	is still a .. directional model, isn't it?
59	I think so, I think so, and it's	
60	also a hierarchical model ..	
61	because it's	like
62	yes, but	who exists in this space, isn't it ..
63	it implies .. that support	
64	provision is a one-way thing	yep ..
65	rather than a two-way thing	
66	where you interact and	
67	engage with each other ..	yeah
68	and in so doing .. you	
69	know what I mean, eh ..	yeah .. at least
70	right ..	the model was .. was put up there .. with
71		the take it from the not-knowing, eh ..
72	yes ..	you would ask questions like that
73		– what does this mean .. how is this
74		meaningful ..
75		and it was a couple of people at the
76		conference – principals – obviously been
77	yes ..	to the same PL .. and they were
78		touting this same model .. how is this
79	and I	model meaningful [writing it down]
80	don't have a problem with	
81	that because you don't know	

<p>82 what you don't know and 83 unless .. they've .. 84 85 86 yes, but it's not our model .. 87 yes, the relationship trust .. 88 yes .. 89 90 and with 91 equally shared power is 92 automatically .. um .. an 93 acknowledgement of 94 transparency .. don't you 95 think? 96 Mm 97 98 99</p>	<p>yeah, at least they've put something up and you can examine it, eh .. or do something and examine it .. no, so I'm interested in that .. because that can only come from shared .. shared power .. equally shared power [chuckles] .. [to self, referring to her diagram] who is in there? mm mm hmm .. [quietly, almost to self] co-construction .. yeah, rather than models for models' sake ..</p>
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Throughout this section of dialogue hierarchical power and shared power are contrasted. At the beginning of the previous excerpt, with the words: “because I was tempted to push the circles together” (16-4), there is a questioning of a model of representation. The challenge continues from “I would want to change it” (16-10) all the way through to the disappointment expressed by the question: “who is in *there*?” (17-94) and the disdainful, disappointed “co-construction” (17-98).

“The general form of propositions is: This is how things are.” — That is the kind of proposition that one repeats to oneself countless times. One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over

and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it. (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 41e, §114)⁵².

The frame through which the teachers look at the situation changes, from what is someone else's model, where any suggested alternative would have been negatively positioned, through to a critique based on democratic principles: "equally shared power" (17-91). The last phrase of the utterance effectively encapsulates the positioning established: "rather than models for models' sake" (17-99). That stance, tentatively suggested at the beginning of this excerpt, becomes progressively reinforced with the interactions, and it is through collaborative engagement and agreement that the position gradually solidifies, from the relatively non-committal "mms" (17-55; 17-56; 17-57) of understanding to agreement expressed by "yes" (17-72; 17-77; 17-86; 17-87; 17-88). The effect of the interaction is to validate a position that was not shared in another forum "because it would have been too smarty-pants" (17-52). This effect admittedly develops through direct questioning and the expected agreement in response: "this is still a directional model, isn't it?" (17-58) and the response: "I think so, I think so" (17-59), reinforced by the connection to *hierarchy* (17-59) with the words: "and it's also a hierarchical model" (17-59). What is noticeable is the way the participants work together to establish and then to reinforce a position. There is frequent checking to confirm alignment: "right?" (16-24), "eh" (17-42; 17-69; 17-71; 17-85), "you know" (17-52), "isn't it?" (17-58; 17-62), "you know what I mean" (17-68) and "don't you think?" (17-94). The effect of these solicitations is to not only seek agreement but to confirm it, reinforcing the progressive education discourses of professional judgement and democracy.

For the participants, tracing around the outline of a previous discussion together serves to further develop shared frames of understanding that produce the perspective. Sharing in the dialogue is a dynamic process of establishing meaning and reaching agreement by negotiating a range of positions. In this excerpt, the teacher was trying to recruit support for a position that she was hesitant to offer in the previous forum. Such recruitment, confirming an

⁵² "Die allgemeine Form des Satzes ist: Es verhält sich so und so". — Das ist ein Satz von jener Art, die man sich unzähligemale wiederholt. Man glaubt, wieder und wieder der Natur nachzufahren, und fährt nur der Form entlang, durch die wir sie betrachten (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 41, §114).

existing perspective or understanding, serves to establish or strengthen relative positions within a community, whether these be central or marginal. The distancing of school leadership from teachers that is apparent in the previous excerpt (16-33) is further emphasised in this continuation by the choice of pronoun: “they” (17-77; 17-83). That positioning is consistent with the neoliberal discourses of *management*. The effect of the discussion is to shift school leaders to positions as outsiders relative to the community of teachers through reinforcing an “us/them” binary. The initial tension inherent in this challenge gradually lessens as the dialogue continues and has vanished by the time the utterance concludes. That illustrates another of the effects of such conversational interaction — the moderating of challenge and critique.

“That’s the way it will always be”: resistance to change

In the next excerpt from the end of a conversation with a male teacher, the form of recruitment is somewhat different, but the non-verbal indicators exert a similar form of influence. The first response: “all the *what?* [laughs] .. have I said enough? [laughs]” (18-4), with the pretence of not knowing, establishes the position that is subsequently expounded and serves as an opening gambit in the process of recruitment, marking out a strong position with the words “it’s not PD, it’s just admin rubbish” (18-10). This elicits a laugh in response, an agreement: “right” (18-11), as well as a tentativeness that can be seen in the way alternatives are presented as questions, punctuated with “um” (18-14; 18-15). The strong positioning claims are continued with the certainty expressed in the use of the words: “always” (18-17), “would develop” (18-19), and “it didn’t matter what anyone said ... you would stay with that style” (18-20 — 18-22). This determined positioning again elicits a not-knowing stance, evident in the words: “has that proven true for you?” (18-28), which reinforces the position claim: “yes ... and all the PD that we have .. does not change that” (18-29).

That a strong opinion elicits such a response serves to confirm the effect of management discourses on teachers that was illustrated in the previous example about remaining silent “because it would have been too smarty-pants” (17-51). Both are examples of behaviour learned from an awareness of being under the *gaze* of authority, recognising *inspectability*.

Nevertheless, alignment between the participants occurs before the end of the dialogue with the differentiation between “how to teach” (18-74) and “new skills to teach” (18-75). These descriptions retain the original positioning at the margins of the teacher community, critical of PD promoted by those positioned more towards the norms of school functioning. At the same time, they acknowledge that the recruitment intention evident at the beginning of the utterance has only been partially successful, as shown in the affirmations of “right, right” (18-74) to “yeah, yeah, yeah” (18-78).

Excerpt 18 — “That’s the way it will always be”: teaching style

<p>1 .. tell me how does all that 2 compare with all the stuff 3 we learn at school in PD and 4 all .. or the ways of learning 5 .. 6 [laughs] 7 8 9 .. right .. 10 [laughs] 11 [laughs] right 12 .. is that because you’re an 13 experienced teacher do you 14 think, or do you think .. um, 15 you know, young ones .. um 16 .. don’t really need that 17 either .. or .. 18 19 .. yep .. 20 21 22 23 .. right ..</p>	<p>.. all the <i>what?</i> [laughs] .. have I said enough? [laugh] .. I see a lot of it being where the school it’s basically nuts and bolts and you don’t need PD for it .. it’s not PD, it’s just admin rubbish .. we were always told, when we were at Training College, that we would develop a style of teaching and it didn’t matter what anyone said, once you are comfortable with that style you would stay with that style the whole of your teaching career ..</p>
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24		.. you may free up or become less .. um ..
25		controlling and things like that but in
26		actual fact the style that you had right at
27		the start was the style that you ended up
28	.. has that	with ..
29	proven true for you? ..	.. yes .. and all the PD
30	right, right ..	that we have .. um .. is .. does not change
31	.. okay ..	that I take it on board,
32		but .. but it does not change my teaching
33		style .. I am in control of my class the way
34		I'm comfortable with and that's the way it
35		has been and will always be ..
—	[talk of other matters	discussed in Chapter 10]
70		.. and then the other thing, yeah you're
71		dead right about that, and the reason that
72		I thought this woman .. um .. was
73		fantastic is she's not teaching, she's not
74	.. right ..	teaching me how to teach .. she's
75	.. right,	teaching me new skills to teach
76	right	whereas we don't get that in our
77	.. got it ..	PD .. I don't believe we do
78	.. yeah, yeah,	anyway ..
79	yeah, that's .. something ..!	.. some people would say
80		that we got fantastic PD, you know we've
81		got fantastic PD .. but um .. for them it
82		may be .. but for me, no.

This conversation excerpt is similar to the previous in that both participants occupy positions critical of the central hierarchy, but the previous participant is more successful in recruiting as evidenced by the greater alignment at the end of that piece of dialogue. However, in both cases the participants appear to have shifted minimally from their original positions. The effect has been to consolidate those positions by sharing them in dialogue, reaffirming them by

“tracing round the frame through which we look” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 41e, §114)⁵³.

The school context exerts a normative effect on the development of teacher subjectivities, strongly supporting continuity and tradition (V. Robinson et al., 2009). This teacher supported such a position in arguing that such professional development (PD) “does not change my teaching style” (18-32). In part, this is a response to the changed structure of schooling from the time he began to the more business-oriented neoliberal model of *Tomorrow’s Schools*, an assertion that he had not relinquished the professional freedom he enjoyed in the previous, progressive education system. For several such participants, what is readily available is the position that individual teaching experience is valued as one of the most important sources of teacher learning. Such positioning is historical and has been noted over many years (Cumming & Cumming, 1978; Currie, 1962; Kandel, 1938b; Openshaw, 2009). With this as a backdrop, the individualistic stance displayed by such teachers is precisely what should be expected from long-serving, experienced educators socialized to the norms of schooling.

Accordingly, it is no surprise to find resistance to other discourses that derived their power from outside the direct classroom experiences of teachers. The clarifying question “has that proven true for you?” (18-28) is taken to affirm this stance of resistance, occasioning a further comment that supports the initial proposition: “she’s not teaching me *how* to teach” (18-73). Experience is positioned as initially fluid but progressively more viscous, and at the same time, patterns of teacher responses are presented as equivalent to individual teacher subjectivities. The certainty in expressing: “that’s the way it has been and will always be” (18-35) does not encourage collaboration, situated as it is in a particular perspective informed by discourses of bivalent options for judgement. Nor is there any challenge to this certainty, since the tentative questioning continues without either endorsing the position claimed or debating it.

⁵³ “Man glaubt, wieder und wieder der Natur nachzufahren, und *fährt nur der Form entlag, durch die wir sie betrachten* [emphasis added]” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 41, §114).

However, there is another factor in all these conversations: my presence and my positioning as a researcher, which subtly influences both the nature of the conversations and the positioning of the other participants. Most of the transcripts appear to show that my involvement is predominantly as a questioner and listener, positioned primarily in the audiencing role rather than audiencing and performing. In response, the other participants appear to be positioned as informants, telling stories and expressing opinions to align with common conceptions of research and inquiry. Despite this, there are places where the norms of teacher collegial dialogue succeed in minimising the research dimension. Questioning tends to encourage the research dimension to dominate, while mirrored use of non-verbal responses encourages a more equal dynamic. Towards the end of the several following excerpts that involve the next participant, however, there is a direct reversal with a question asked of me: “so what do you like teaching, Maurice?” (21-86). This is a particularly obvious illustration of the form of collaborative inquiry practised in collegial conversations.

“I still get a buzz”: the effects of belonging

The following excerpt is a discussion at the end of a 40-minute dialogue with a woman teacher. This participant had begun the conversation by wanting to start with the events and the thinking that influenced her initial decision to train as a teacher. The stories that followed were all connected to this early contextual framing, and the excerpt shows a return to the starting point of the conversation. There are similarities with the previous participant, who also referred to his time at Teachers’ Training College (18-18).

Excerpt 19 — “I still get a buzz”: a teacher story

1		.. so I came home .. went to University ..
2		and the only way I could get in to
3		University was by going to Training
4	.. yes ..	College .. and .. then .. basically came
5		out and I thought, ‘ <i>oh well, suppose I</i>
6	right, right	<i>should teach</i> ’
7	[rising inflection] ..	.. and I always said [tapping in

8		emphasis] .. <i>'if I'm teaching, I'm going</i>
9	and .. still trying to get it	<i>to get it right' ..</i>
10	right .. [laughing]	.. and 35 years later .. [laughing] I'm still
11	oh fantastic! ..	trying to get it right .. but I wouldn't do
12		anything else .. it's .. it's a .. it's just the
13		sort of job that [shaking head] .. when I
14		get into my classroom .. when I get in
15	.. yes ..	there with those kids ..
16	.. yes .. nothing compares	
17	with that .. yeah ..	nothing compares to it .. um,
18		even on its worst days, nothing
19		compares to it .. because you've only got
20		to have some kid .. come up with
21	.. mm .. [nodding]	something that .. or even a question of
22		words they don't understand or they'll
23	.. mm	say to you: <i>'ohhh, is that what that</i>
24		<i>means?' and you just .. but you know,</i>
25	mm ..	there's nothing like it ..
26	[nodding]	.. but it's not so much the buzz I get out
27		of it, I still get a buzz .. it's the buzz these
28	mmmm ..	kids get out of it .. you see these little
29	[laughing]	lights .. the little lights go on .. and none
30		of them, .. my focus this year has been
31	okay	vocabulary, .. and .. because they're
32		really shocking .. some of their
33		vocabulary .. and the fun we've had with
34	yes .. yes [nodding]	some of that ..
35	[nodding]	.. as I say, it's those little bits of
36		conversations that just make it .. and
37		those are what the kids come back and
38		what they all remember .. <i>'ohh,</i>
39		<i>remember the time when you' .. so, you</i>
40	Yes, I don't	know

<p>41 remember the details, but I 42 remember some .. student 43 saying: <i>'oh, the best bit</i> 44 <i>about .. um .. your class</i> 45 <i>was some .. story</i></p>	<p>some story ..</p>
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Teaching is presented as an afterthought, a solution to the problem of getting a university education (19-2), but discourses of commitment are appended: “*if I’m teaching, I’m going to get it right*” (19-8). The effect of this is to acknowledge and support the idea that teaching is a vocation rather than a job, strengthened by the repetition: “and 35 years later .. I’m still trying to get it right” (19-10), a subtle reminder of shared experiences that invites the endorsement: “oh fantastic!” (19-10). That agreement promotes elaboration: “when I get in there with those kids” (19-14) elicits: “nothing compares with that”, (19-16), followed by agreement through repetition: “nothing compares to it” (19-17). The effect of this brief interchange is to highlight the accepted practical wisdom and job satisfaction of long-serving teachers as a device for promoting insider positioning and participation in supporting these discourses that are central in the teacher community.

There is a rejection of market values and the neoliberal emphasis on schooling as primarily a preparation for participation in the workforce. That rejection is apparent in the light-hearted tone used in excerpt 19, particularly the positive emotional orientation in the words “buzz” (19-27) and “fun” (19-33). The resistance to being driven by economic discourses is signalled earlier by the apparently casual approach to work apparent in the flippant comment: “*oh well, suppose I should teach*” (19-5). The dialogue reinforces that resistance.

“Ubiquitous pedagogy”: using experience to challenge theory

Another aspect that is visible in the earlier excerpt 5 is the pastoral care positioning of teachers in relation to students. In excerpt 19 above, the references to “kids” (19-15; 19-28; 19-37) carry traces of affection, as shown by extending the diminutives to “little lights” (19-28) and “little bits of conversations” (19-35). This emphasis highlights the differences in age and experience that accompany the accepted gaps in knowledge, thereby maintaining the idea that teacher do not simply transmit content knowledge but are also positioned as role models of the adult community. Such positioning continues with the talk about vocabulary, emphasising the learning gap, but the snippet about “story” (19-45 — 20-48) is deflected. Similarly, the attempt to shift the dialogue to include reflection on theoretical positioning is rejected, with a renewed emphasis on an elaboration of the importance of experience (20-60 — 20-85). Experience is positioned as the fundamental aspect of teacher professional learning: “PL” (20-61). The utterance concludes with a reference to “ubiquitous pedagogy” (20-82): a use of rhetoric with multi-syllable words to illustrate the idea of a significant gap between practical classroom experience and academic theorising. Effectively, education theory is pushed to the margins at the same time as practical expertise is emphasised as a specific point of contrast to theories of education and learning: “you know I probably couldn’t tell you .. what the .. um .. pedagogy behind it was” (20-51).

Excerpt 20 — “Ubiquitous pedagogy”: joking at jargon

<p>46 Yes, a weird story that had 47 just made an impression on 48 them .. because .. 49 50 .. mm, mm .. 51 52 53 54 .. yeah, but we 55 theorize .. as we go .. we ..</p>	<p>.. mm [nodding] .. yeah and so .. yeah .. and those .. that’s why I just .. it’s just seeing those little sparks with the kids .. you know I probably couldn’t tell you .. what the .. um .. pedagogy behind it was .. in actual pedagogical language ..</p>
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<p>56 we form our own ways of 57 thinking about things, and 58 to me that's theorizing .. 59 sooo .. or building a 60 philosophy which is .. 61 62 63 64 65 .. mm .. 66 67 68 69 .. mm 70 71 [nodding] 72 .. something else .. 73 yeah .. 74 mm .. 75 76 77 .. mm [nodding] 78 79 80 81 [chuckling] 82 83 84 85</p>	<p>[nodding, smiling] yeah .. making those links .. so, I guess that's .. in terms of PL, there's gotta be .. and it's the same with the kids, you can't teach them something, you can't present them with something that they're not ready for .. so if they're not ready for it, so there are times when you've just got to use your .. you know what it's like .. you start off with something .. and you look at it and you think, hold on, this isn't working .. you might not be able to say exactly why it's not working, right there on the spot, but you have to have the ability to morph into something else .. and I think that comes with experience .. afterwards you can sit down and you can do the analysis and you can say .. <i>'the reason why ..'</i> was because di-dah, di-dah, di-dah .. next time you come along you've got that now stored away in your head .. so .. um .. ubiquitous pedagogy [old joke in reference to common participation in previous tertiary courses] [shaking head and sighing] .. those little words ..</p>
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This teacher, in asserting that “it’s the same with the kids . . . you can’t present them with something they’re not ready for” (20-63), is showing more than an acceptance of developmental discourses which were common at the time she began teaching. She also argues that experimentation that contributes to teacher experience is the most important aspect of teacher learning, and seeks support for that position by emphasising “**afterwards**” (20-76), in another implicit criticism of neoliberal reliance on measurement and evidence by linking that reliance to pretentious theory: “**ubiquitous pedagogy**” (20-81).

In this exchange, it is the repeated experience of the unpredictability of classroom teaching and the serendipitous benefits of incidental learning that provide the basis for a faith in open-ended approaches in contrast to more structured methods. “The existence of the experimental method makes us think we have the means of solving the problems which trouble us; though problem and method pass one another by” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 197e)⁵⁴. Just as conversation is responsive to others’ utterances (Bakhtin, 1986), so relational teaching must be responsive, since “it is within a relationship that the work of a teacher is done” (Bell, 2012, p. 5). Socialisation and subjectification conflict with the atomisation of secondary school subject teaching that has a focus on assessment rather than inquiry.

The probing of experience apparent in: “we form our own way of thinking about things, and to me that’s theorizing” (20-56), eventually results in the direct question at the start of excerpt 21, which presents a challenge to either endorse experience as central or argue a place for education theory. The response endorses neither practice nor theory, but instead shifts the focus to another aspect that is central to secondary teaching — the topic of assessment.

“Slaves of the curriculum”: acknowledging discursive construction

In this excerpt the other teacher in the conversation asks me a question directly, as if reminding herself that the study called for dialogues rather than an interview.

⁵⁴ “Das Bestehen der experimentellen Methode läßt uns glauben, wir hätten das Mittel, die Probleme, die uns beunruhigen, loszuwerden; obgleich Problem und Methode windschief aneinander vorbei laufen” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 197).

Excerpt 21 — “Slaves of the curriculum”: discourses of agency

86		.. so what do you like teaching, Maurice?
87	.. what do I like teaching? ..	..
88	[shaking head, looking at	mm ..
89	ceiling] .. ohhh, .. I really	
90	like .. blank canvas stuff ..	
91	just seeing where things go ..	.. mm [nodding]
92	this is what bugs me .. quite	
93	a bit about .. the pressure of	
94	getting assessments done is	
95	that .. you’ve got to avoid all	
96	these things which are really	
97	interesting learning .. just to	
98	focus on assessments .. and	
99	it’s like .. mm? .. that wasn’t	[nodding] .. mm ..
100	what it was all about	
101	.. so ..	.. we are slaves, to a certain
102	.. mm ..	extent, to the curriculum, but .. one
103	.. mm	thing I find I do a lot now, I do a lot of
104	[nodding]	conferencing .. with my first full
105	.. mm ..	assessment .. um .. we use Unit
106		Standards .. why do we do Unit
107	.. mm	Standards? .. because these guys can
108	[nodding]	talk through .. they know the stuff .. and
109		they can talk it through with you .. and
110		they can talk about it .. and if you can
111	[nodding]	talk about it, you know about it .. right?
112		.. I’m not going to penalize a kid
113	.. right, right ..	because they can’t physically write it ..
114		so what we do is we conference about a
115		lot of things .. we make the .. we so on
116	.. mm ..	and so forth, but .. and you say to the
117	.. mm [looking thoughtful]	

118		kids, no, I'm not going to .. I'm not going
119		to say you can't get these six credits
120	mm ..	because you can't actually .. spell .. or
121		you can't actually write a sentence or
122	mm .. for ..	you can't .. you know the stuff .. so that's
123		why we get Unit Standards .. and then
124		they go into the exam at the end of the
125	.. mm ..	year and do exactly the same material ..
126	[nodding]	for Achievement Standards .. but a lot of
127		them won't, a lot of them say: 'I've got the credits I need' ..

Although it is not verbalised, it is clear that “getting assessments done” (21-94) refers to summative assessments. Because assessments are central to the culture of secondary school teaching, changing the direction of the dialogue here opens a different debate, an alternate perspective on teacher agency. The criticism in both “blank canvas .. just seeing where things go” (21-90), and “you’ve got to avoid all these things which are really interesting learning .. just to focus on assessments” (21-95), elicits a concessionary response that is an acknowledgement: “we are slaves .. to the curriculum” (21-101). At the same time, however, the interpolation of “to a certain extent” (21-101) anticipates the subsequent support for the central position of assessment while offering an acceptance of the intent of the comment: “that wasn’t what it was all about” (21-99) through a continuation of the theme of experience. This can be seen in the comment which draws a parallel between teaching as a role denominated by experience rather than theory, and student learning as evidenced in talk rather than writing: “they know the stuff .. and they can talk it through with you” (21-109) in contrast to: “you can’t actually .. spell .. or you can’t actually write a sentence” (21-120).

The participants in this dialogue gently challenge the position of the other, but both positions are acknowledged and supported as valid within the teacher community. The effects of the conversation include reinforcing the values of

that community as expressed through the common currency of teacher understandings and practice. Acknowledging variation and difference within the teacher community is normal, as this excerpt shows with the questioning of the narrow focus on academic achievement and the exercise of teacher judgement in providing suitable alternatives. Even when a teacher’s practice positions them at the margins, however, there is acceptance of the central discourses of schooling, as shown by the following dialogue.

“We were all self-taught”: constructed by classroom experiences

The perspective where teachers learn their craft from their individual classroom experiences is also echoed by the teacher in the following excerpt, stating: “so in many ways we were all self-taught” (22-46). However, learning from a visiting educator is also offered as an example of PD which was meaningful because: “it was practical .. and it related to .. our everyday experiences .. which is great” (22-16). This is not surprising, given that the following example compares sharing perspectives with other teachers: “what worked, what didn’t work” (22-32), with the formal presentations which were “not valuable” (22-34). What is highlighted is the connection between what others offer and what the teacher can directly make use of in their own classroom practice.

Excerpt 22 — “We were all self-taught”: constructed identities

<p>1 .. if you think back on all 2 the PD you’ve had this 3 last year or two years .. 4 what are the ones you’ve 5 enjoyed .. or felt ‘<i>yeah,</i> 6 <i>I’ve really got something</i> 7 <i>out of that’ ..</i> 8 and what has been 9 something you’ve sat 10 through .. [grinning] 11 12</p>	<p>mm .. [nodding] .. yeah [nodding] .. yeah .. yeah [grinning] .. yeah, well we’ve had two that spring to mind: Bill Rogers, when he came and</p>
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13		spoke to us .. and even though I thought he
14		was pretty tired and jaded .. he had
15		humour .. brought humour into it .. he had,
16		um .. it was practical .. and it related to ..
17		our everyday experiences .. which is great.
18	.. right ..	So that was good, I .. I feel personally, I
19		learnt some really good things, I reinforced
20		some other things from him .. and he did it
21		in a way that just made it easily
22	.. right ..	communicatable .. and fun .. you know,
23		when you're sitting listening to someone
24		for three or four hours .. you want to feel as
25		though you're not going to nod off .. and
26		the other extreme we had Jumbo days ..
27	.. yes, yes ..	which .. um .. [pause to think how to
28		express it – big inward breath] .. the really
29	.. yes ..	effective part of that was .. um .. getting
30		together with other teachers .. from other
31		schools .. networking, sharing experiences
32		.. sharing what worked, what didn't work ..
33		with them .. the actual presentation by the
34		Jumbo day teachers .. facilitators .. was not
35		valuable
36	right, right	.. but it was getting together with
37		other teachers saying: <i>'look, this really</i>
38		<i>worked'</i>
39		.. <i>'we tried this and it didn't work, but we</i>
40	..	<i>then did this'</i> .. so, that was great ..
41	so the facilitators	
42	made that networking	
43	happen? or it was despite	.. [grinning] they .. almost
44	them?	was in spite of them .. yeah, it just was
45		something which .. so in many ways we

46		were all self-taught .. but that might have
47		been what their .. what they intended us to
48		do anyway .. and the part of the session
49	.. oh, I see ..	where we were taught at .. to .. to .. by the
50		facilitators .. was really .. I didn't find that
51		very interesting at all .. but what was good
52		was the getting together with other schools
53		.. and finding what they'd done that
54	..	worked really really well ..
55	right ..	
56		.. yes, .. to hear [nods]
57	.. so what I'm	
58	hearing is that what	
59	works is quite important .	

The substance of the dialogue in this excerpt from the beginning of a conversation with participant 7 is a form of interview, where the researcher is asking questions. It is clear that the exchange relies on their shared knowledge and insider status in the teacher community, with the unexplained references to a visiting education consultant: “Bill Rogers” (22-12), and teacher-only “Jumbo days” (22-26) where teachers from different schools were grouped for PD according to the subject(s) they were teaching for NCEA qualifications.

In accepting that meaning is created in the dynamics of the relationship, in the space between the participants, the meaning of such insider dialogue comes from the effects on the participants: how their thinking and behaviours represent a continual exaptation of the discursive environment through language. The mutual acceptance of the questioning invites considered reflection, as demonstrated by the un-interrupted “[pause to think how to express it — big inward breath]” (22-27). But the reflection requires only the simple acknowledgement “yes” (22-29) in order to continue. Audiencing is integral to the shaping of meaning, as shown by the mirroring of “[grinning]” (22-10). Producing language, voicing words not only depends on gaining responses, but also shaping them in anticipation, because “the word in living

conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 280). Accordingly, what might otherwise be taken as simply an answer to the question (22-10 — 22-40), punctuated as it is by the affirmations in response, is instead collaborative positioning. Accordingly, this excerpt is an illustration of two teachers co-constructing a position that is mutually agreeable, providing an example of the convergent effect of dialogue. It also highlights the connection-oriented discourses that are central to the teacher community, with "you know" (22-22) as an example, and the distancing evident in the "taught *at* .. to .. to .. by the facilitators" (22-49), in contrast to the "getting together with other teachers" (22-36) and "schools" (22-52). These positions illustrate the conformity discourses of the teacher community.

One effect of the interaction represented by this excerpt has been to confirm the experiential basis for teaching, "what worked" (22-32) and "what works" (22-58), with no challenge being raised on the basis of Biesta's (2007) call to question what a critical analysis of the idea might mean for changing the discursive context. Such a challenge of critical reflection is discussed in the next excerpt, a continuation of the conversation from the previous excerpt.

"Another straw": expectations of critical reflection

In excerpt 23 that follows, the teachers are troubling the idea of individual reflection to try to find a way of describing it that will fit with what they do. "I can know what someone else is thinking, not what I am thinking" (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 189e)⁵⁵. Although Wittgenstein's observation appears to be the opposite of common wisdom, it opens space for the idea that meaning and understanding are best understood as co-constructed. Individual reflection has already been positioned in earlier parts of the dialogue, but in this excerpt the reference to it as "stuff" (23-83) appears to support its place at the margins. What is evident, however, is that reflection as a cognitive activity is not what is being referred to: "oh no .. doing it definitely ... I'm doing it every day" (23-102). Instead, it is the written recording of reflection and inquiry, along with the busnocratic orientation of teachers, that is being pushed aside by the

⁵⁵ "Ich kann wissen, was der Andere denkt, nicht was ich denke" (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 189).

busy-ness of teaching demands. The effect of this conversational exchange is to do more than just highlight that difference between practice and documentation, since it also serves to show the resistance to a managerial style of organising the work that teachers do. Clearly, the teacher discourses that take priority include attending to the practical demands of constantly working with students: “have you got the time when you’ve got five classes” (23-90). However, the dialogue also allows the participants the reassurance of common ground and collegial support for re-framing, positioning reflection and teaching-as-inquiry as integral parts of practice rather than separate from it. In reaching that common ground, teaching-as-experience and discourses of teacher professional judgement are also reinforced.

Excerpt 23 — “Another straw”: finding the time to reflect

82	.. and the teaching-	
83	as-inquiry reflection stuff ..	
84	do you think that um .. that	
85	you are actually being	
86	encouraged or supported to	
87	reflect with .. around that	
88	theme of “what works” ?	
89		[hesitantly] yeah .. I do .. it’s just one of
90		those things .. have you got the time
91	..	when you’ve got five classes .. and
92	right ..	finding time .. and in the end,
93		when you’re really busy .. yeah, I just
94		feel that it’s finding the time, I mean you
95		do it, I do it, I do it and I think “ <i>oh gosh,</i>
96		<i>that worked well, and that didn’t</i> ” and I
97		know I will bring it in next year when I
98		do it, but .. as for sitting down and
99	[shaking head] right	graphing it .. I just find all
100	..	that .. another straw on the ..
101	yes, yes, so it’s not that	

102	you're not doing it ..	[quickly] oh no .. doing it
103	you're doing it	definitely ..
104	all the time yes .	I'm doing it every day ..
105	do you	yes, very much so ..
106	sometimes have thoughts go	
107	through your head as you're	
108	preparing dinner or .. trying	
109	to sleep or whatever ..	.. oh, totally, yeah .. I think
110		that's it – wake up at 2 o'clock in the
111		morning and it's buzzing around in your
112	[nodding] yes	head .. yeah, very much that ..
113	.. so I call that reflection	yeah, it is ..
114	.. you know .. just	
115	because it's not recorded ..	yes [nodding] yeah, very
116	.. . . . okay ..	much so ..

The question: “do you sometimes have thoughts go through your head as you’re preparing dinner or ... trying to sleep or whatever” (23-105) elicits and receives an affirmative response, which continues with the elaboration: “I call that reflection” (23-113) and the “yeah, it is” (23-113) response. Such dialogue, where there is a clear direction that is mutually predictable to the participants, constitutes a pattern of interaction, a *speech genre* (Bakhtin, 1986). This is important because such patterns of conversational interactions influence the range of positions available to the speakers and also act as normative constraints on the likely directions of the dialogue. Although many different responses are possible, as participants develop greater fluency in the specific speech genres of a community, it is more probable that the discourses that are central to that community will shape their conversational interactions.

From this perspective, every response positions both of the participants. This can be seen, for example, in the exchange from “as for sitting down and graphing it” (23-98), where the participants already collude on a position where policy is being interpreted to fit with practice. The position is described in ways

that progressively align with expectations of conforming, shifting from the positioning of the problem at the margins, as expressed in “finding the time” (23-94), to describing it as central in teacher practice: “doing it every day” (23-104). There is a sense of collaboration or collusion in the conversation that is different to the one involving a previous participant, for example, where the stance was that being at the margins was the preferred position, whereas here the position taken is one justifying the position by arguing that it is aligned to the central discourses of the community rather than challenging them. “Each rejoinder, regardless of how brief and abrupt, has a specific quality of completion that **expresses a particular position of the speaker**, to which one may respond or may assume, with respect to it, a responsive position” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 72).

In common with the teacher in excerpt 4 who showed resistance to the central discourses by walking out of a meeting about data, the stance within this utterance positions the participants more towards the margins than the centre. Nevertheless, that positioning still represents a place of equilibrium, since the dynamism and fluidity of the conversation retains its position *within* the community. The alternative, where outsider discourses are introduced, has not been evident in any of the conversations.

What works? collegiality preserves a community ethos: Summary

In this chapter the analyses of excerpts from the teacher conversations have shown an implicit and sometimes explicit acknowledgement of the connectedness of teachers in a collective, irrespective of whether they felt their positioning was aligned to the values and practices of that community, or whether instead they feel positioned more toward the margins because they did not subscribe to school structures or practices. Although they all conversed with confidence, there was a degree of tentativeness at times, mostly expressed by the women teachers and those in the middle years rather than the older ones. Classroom experiences and sharing of such experiences with other teachers were the two factors emphasised as shaping pedagogy, mostly restricted to ideas of “what works”. Individual reflection was constrained to viewing teaching through that lens of pragmatism. Collaborative inquiry had a slightly different

focus, with consideration focused more on the structures of decision-making, but the same measures were applied.

With many others, I view schools as internalizing certain myths about human beings and their ability to learn which are well established in our society. Schools are not strongly countervailing institutions. And the circumstances of schooling make it harder rather than easier to follow alternative assumptions and beliefs. (Goodlad, 1984/2004, p. 142)

Different views were expressed by the participants, reflecting individual responses to the demands of working in quite varied classroom contexts. However, the discursive positioning apparent in the dialogues exemplified an ongoing process of shaping by the community, with the participants positioning each other in the conversations according to the norms. What is noticeable throughout the interchanges is the recruiting and the supportive responses that result. This provides support for the idea that such conversations between teachers serve to strengthen positions that align with the norms of the teacher community rather than current ideology or policy. All of the participants in this study were experienced, long-serving teachers, and they relied on that experience and their length of teaching service to support the various positions adopted. Even where dissonant perspectives were voiced, one effect of the conversations was to embrace such distinctions as individual differences and at the same time affirm the inclusiveness of the collective and the connectedness of the teachers. That collegiality reinforces the values and traditions of schools and schooling.

Chapter 9 –resistance to perceived unfairness

One of the threads of this thesis is the construct of fairness that was explored in chapter 5. That construct is embedded in each of the three research questions. The first question involves the construct of community as a lens on teaching practice, and the ideas of fairness and unfairness are shaped in community by general agreement on beliefs and values. The second research question is about teacher positioning, so the discussion in this chapter explores how teachers are positioned in relation to constructs of fairness and unfairness. The third question explores the discourses of schooling. Such discourses may serve as the unnoticed measures of what is to be deemed to be fair and unfair.

Accordingly, in this chapter my analysis of excerpts of conversations shifts from the focus on the individual and community in the previous chapter to examining how discourses of fairness and unfairness are reinforced and challenged in the teachers’ perspectives on their praxis. The discourses of equity and deservingness are not only illustrated in traditions such as prize-givings and the differentiation of subjects for study between those that are considered *academic* and others that are deemed more practical. Instead, they are present in many of the ordinary assumptions and practices of teaching.

“Justice was done”: notions of fairness in the classroom

The following excerpt is part of the story told earlier in excerpt 1 and in this portion the teacher articulates a particular view of fairness based on community concepts of belonging and connectedness.

Excerpt 24 – “Justice was done”: notions of fairness

28		.. I rung the
29		mum .. I didn’t realize I’d taught the
30		mother .. she said to me: “ <i>oh, Sir, I’ll sort</i>
31		<i>it out</i> ” she texted her
32		daughter, the daughter came back into
33	[laughs]	the class 5 minutes later, she said: “ <i>Sir, I</i>
34		<i>didn’t know you taught my mum</i> ” and

35		she came and gave me the biggest hug in
36	[chuckles]	front of the class .. [chuckles] .. “ <i>I’m</i>
37		<i>sorry</i> ” .. and I said “ <i>that’s okay, it’s only</i>
38		<i>words, what’s important to me is your</i>
39		<i>learning</i> ” .. and I looked at the class and
40		they were just so happy that justice was
41		done .. to them, that was justice
42	yeah? ..	justice was done
43	[nodding]	she’d given me a hug
44	yep ..	I forgave her ..
45	[nodding]	

In Excerpt 24 above, the dialogue is a continuation from the earlier part of the conversation featured in excerpt 15. This excerpt illustrates a particular perspective on fairness as applied to the classroom situation. There is an implicit acknowledgement of hierarchy, evident in the words “I forgave her” (24-44), demonstrating not only power and status in the role of the teacher, but also a tacit acceptance of the rules of the community acknowledged in the repetition of the phrase: “justice was done” (24-40; 24-42). The emphasis in “they were just **so** happy” (24-40) also positions teachers and students as jointly understanding, and thereby validating, the sense of fairness as expressed in the rules, values and practices of the school as an institution.

The mother, in responding with “*oh, Sir*” (24-30), plays a key role in the story as a support for the authority of the teacher by retaining the generic form of address frequently used by students, even though she has long ago finished school and her daughter is now a teenager. The daughter, on re-entering the classroom, echoes this use, “*Sir*” (24-33) and in doing so submits to the institutional norms of behaviour. However, she then exceeds this, connecting with the teacher by giving him a hug while saying “*I’m sorry*” (24-36). Further, by stating that he “looked at the class and they were just **so** happy” (24-39), it is seeking the approval of the other students that allows the teacher to validate that response as representative of community opinion, emphasised by the words

“to them, that was justice” (24-41). In that statement, the teacher uses the agreement of the students as support for his actions and perspective.

This story is partly about the socialisation of students, but it is also about subjectification, “the way in which children and young people come to exist as subjects of initiative and responsibility rather than as objects of the actions of others” (Biesta, 2015, p. 77). The interaction between the teacher and the student, the way that the mother was involved, and the fact that it all happened publicly, with the rest of the class being a captive audience for the drama, all served to reinforce the positioning of the teacher as the authority. The girl at the centre of the story took the initiative when she protested at the class work and left the room. However, following that, she became subject to the actions of others: her teacher, her mother, and her peers. The socialisation of the students, the reinforcement of school norms of behaviour, became the focus.

In choosing to tell the story the teacher is implicitly seeking support for his perspective and his actions. In promoting such contact with parents the school reinforces discourses of institutional authority. The mother, still subject to that authority because she recalled having been taught by the same teacher, becomes implicated as an extension of institutional power. The teacher perceived the unfairness of the situation to be the student’s resistance to the school and classroom norms, and his resolution of the situation to be fair because the other students were “so happy that justice was done” (24-40).

Education is not a process of physical interaction but a process of symbolic or symbolically mediated interaction. If teaching is to have any effect on learning, it is because of the fact that students interpret and try to make sense of what they are being taught. (Biesta, 2007, p. 8)

How the students interpreted and made sense of this event is unknown apart from the perspective of the teacher, but the effect of the conversation on the teacher was to validate both his perspective about the fairness of the school expectations and his authority, because he had the final word “I forgave her” (24-44). Patriarchal discourses also played a role.

“I am really interested in” developing school policy

The next excerpt is an example of the researcher actively contributing to a conversation. The exchange illustrates discourses of leadership that are evident in the hierarchical organisation of many secondary schools, where something is more “interesting” (25-1) because it is expected to make an impact on school policy.

Excerpt 25 — “I am really interested in” developing school policy

<p>1 .. okay .. okay</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4 .. yep ..</p> <p>5 .. it makes</p> <p>6 sense because .. yeah .. the</p> <p>7 policy is going to drive the</p> <p>8 decision-makers and I</p> <p>9 .. it goes back to what</p> <p>10 I was saying earlier about</p> <p>11 how what’s-his-name said</p> <p>12 we’ve got all these skills and</p> <p>13 understandings around the</p> <p>14 school and .. where are we</p> <p>15 getting the opportunities to</p> <p>16 really .. um ..</p> <p>17 .. have those influence the</p> <p>18 school directions ..</p>	<p>.. um, but that’s interesting</p> <p>because that’s .. yes, that is going to</p> <p>develop policy coming out of that anyway</p> <p>.. .. which I am really interested in ..</p> <p>I .. you know ..</p> <p>.. yeah</p> <p>.. yeah</p> <p>.. [nodding] yeah ..</p> <p>.. [nods] ..</p> <p>[nodding]</p> <p>.. [nodding]</p> <p>yeah ..</p>
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Excerpt 25 occurs halfway through a conversation about creating subject-specific professional development for other teachers based on sharing experiences as well as learning from formal tertiary studies. There is a certainty expressed by both participants evident in “that is going to develop policy” (25-2) and “the policy is going to drive the decision-makers” (25-6). The assuredness

70		um .. I've been a little bit biased, but I've
71		been a classroom teacher for .. you know,
72		20-odd years .. so while I was open to ..
73		taking on board new ideas .. a lot of the
74		stuff wasn't new to me, it was .. it's bread
75		and butter stuff as a ..
76	[nodding] exactly,	
77	yeah .. so for experienced	
78	teachers, what we're getting	[nodding] yeah,
79	is something different ..	yeah, I would agree ..

Having classroom practice observed, “practical observations” (26-69) is dismissed as being less important than sharing ideas with other teachers in co-construction. That position is based on the “20-odd years” (26-72) of experience as a classroom teacher, illustrating, again, the impact of discourses of experience on teacher thinking.

What appears to be an innocuous explanation of the value of teacher experience also serves to reveal the discomfort with being under observation, particularly being observed by others with less teaching experience. It is not observation itself that is hinted as being the problem, but rather the critique of practice. If experience is to be the metric, then marginalising it can be deemed to be unfair to those who have gained it. In contrast to the “value” (26-66) found in “sharing those ideas” (26-68), which together illustrate the effect of affirming the status of the individual teacher who is positioned by having something to share, it would seem that “open to . . . new ideas” (26-73) represents a challenge to the authority that resides with experience and the particular subjectivities that accompany it.

Because the acknowledgement “I've been a little bit biased” (26-70) is instantly moderated by the disclaimer that follows “but I've been a classroom teacher for . . . 20-odd years” (26-70), the emphasis shifts from the *bias* to the authority of experience, and that position is expanded with the explanation “it's bread and butter stuff” (26-74), inviting and receiving support for that position with the

response “exactly” (26-76). This brief exchange signals that the teacher has not been challenged to change position but, more than that, has for a long time been accepting such position calls, with the phrase “but I’ve been a classroom teacher” (26-70), acting as a counter to any possibility of changing position. The distinction of being “experienced teachers” (26-77) anticipates the privilege expressed in “what we’re getting is something different” (26-78).

This excerpt illustrates how privilege works to preclude the consideration of other alternatives. Whatever is privileged renders other positions less visible, and learning from other perspectives more problematic. The effect of this particular portion of collegial interaction was to support ideas of *knowing* that reinforce certainty. Such certainty is entirely useful in some situations and counter-productive in others, for collaborative inquiry cannot easily co-exist with privileged pronouncements. Whereas collaborative inquiry opens possibilities for changing perspectives, the certainty that accompanies experience reduces the prospect of change, maintaining the discourses of privilege.

Evidence by the “bucket-load”: politics of resistance

In the next excerpt the teacher discusses problems from being on the margins, working with students who struggle to achieve academic success. What is articulated is a pressure to conform, to accept external measures based on norms that are “not relevant . . . to whatever we’re doing” (27-21). Resistance to the evidence-based framework is based on what she interprets as a challenge to her *mana* (status). In the 20 minutes of dialogue preceding this excerpt the discussion was partly about the effects on the school of changes in staffing, but mostly focused on ways of relating to students and making judgements about their learning needs. What became apparent was again a strong belief in the value of experience, but this teacher expresses a very different view to the others, primarily because of differences between the students they teach. In this teacher’s school there is a policy of streaming students into separate classes according to their perceived academic abilities. There are tensions that result for the teachers who are dealing with the learning needs of those students who struggle at school. This teacher discussed in detail the needs of several students,

explaining the barriers to learning created by policies predicated on academic measures of success. In this part of the conversation, the position of the teacher – “I’ve always objected .. in my own little way” (27-5) – becomes the focus with a discussion about her resistance to providing evidence at the co-construction meetings that conforms with what is expected. The use of the word ‘*little*’ serves to emphasise her stance and at the same time trivialise the expectation.

Excerpt 27 – Evidence by the “bucket-load”: the path of resistance

<p>1 .. makes me wonder about 2 some of these .. full staff .. 3 .. 4 5 [chuckles] 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 yes, .. yes 14 15 I know .. 16 17 18 I know, that’s 19 so right! .. and we’re not 20 trying to be difficult .. 21 22 yes, yes,</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">[nodding] PDs, yes .. I .. I’ve always wondered about them, I’ve always objected .. um .. in my own little way .. oh, it’s through the kids .. even going to the <i>Te Kōtahitanga</i> meetings and they come out with their evidence and all this and that .. and I’ve sat there and said ‘no evidence’ .. ‘oh well, you’ve got no evidence’ .. I’ve said: ‘yep, write it down, but if you want evidence, you come and visit me in my room, you can go away with a bucket-load if you want it’ .. I said, ‘come on, you know’ .. but I feel sorry for my team as well, because they’re trying their best to include me. [laughing] no .. it’s just that it’s not relevant to our, .. to whatever we’re doing ..</p>
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Even though joining the *Te Kōtahitanga* programme was optional for teachers, resisting the call to provide *evidence* at group meetings with other teachers

positioned their acquiescence negatively, so her sense of fairness moves her to acknowledge the tension caused for them and moderate it: “I feel sorry for my team as well, because they’re trying their best to include me” (27-16). This illustrates one effect of belonging to the teacher community, the recognition of the centripetal forces exerted by the norms on those positioned at the margins. Although there is justification, this is in response to the support offered by the use of *we* in the words: “we’re not trying to be difficult” (27-19).

This participant’s perspective is that for a teacher to challenge the expectation of evidence will be interpreted as non-compliance. The effect of the narrative is to recruit the researcher into a position of agreement, of colluding with the position of non-compliance, apparent in the repeating of the phrase “I know” (27-15; 27-18) reinforced by the assertion “that’s so right” (27-18). This teacher also argued for recognising contextual factors with the challenge: “if you want evidence, you come and visit me in my room” (27-13), implying that it is unfair to expect or demand otherwise. She also identifies a gap between the social and cultural discourses that have shaped her practice with non-academic students and the framework that demands evidence.

What can be learned from Wittgenstein’s (1953/2003, 1967) observations about *criteria*, alongside *evidence* and *truth-value*, is that evidence depends on criteria (Cavell, 1979). From this perspective, the teacher is fully justified in challenging a narrow interpretation of evidence. However, she could have chosen any form of evidence to bring to the meeting, she could have used her own criteria; so her resistance is not against evidence *per se*, or even against the sharing of evidence in the co-construction meeting with her colleagues. Rather, her resistance is a political stance against conforming to the demands of *inspectability* and the neoliberal *dehumanising* of teachers by categorising them as merely factors in an education equation of adding economic rather than social value.

“Try to do the same”: unequal comparisons

The challenge to the imposition of evidence-based practice apparent in the above excerpt is continued in the following challenge to the criteria being used with the words: “and how many times have we presented evidence, but whoever

wants it, it's not the evidence they want" (28-45), where the narrative positions her as being marginalized despite providing *evidence*. The issue is not really about the evidence, but more about being positioned by the demands for specific kinds of evidence. In a previous excerpt a different teacher dismissively referred to "admin rubbish" (18-11) when describing PD that he didn't need or want. This similarly experienced teacher is actually arguing that her teaching experience means demands for specific forms of evidence are demeaning.

Excerpt 28 — "Try to do the same as the other kids": ideas of equity

<p>38 .. yes, because this whole 39 evidence thing is [shaking 40 head] .. it's just .. ohhh .. 41 how long have we had that? 42 .. increasingly being pushed 43 down our throats ..</p>	<p>mm, [smiling] yes .. and how many times have we presented evidence, but whoever wants it, it's not the evidence they want .. SORRY! I can remember doing this with our previous leader when I . . . I took all the kids' books to him, and . . . he didn't want to know, he didn't want to know how far these kids that come in and doing certain things in an orderly way .. I said, 'well the only reason I did it was it gave them a sense of pride'. They'd come to me with wanting to try to do the same as the other kids ..</p>
<p>44 45 46 mm 47 .. mm, mm 48 49 mm 52 no .. no 58 .. 59 60 61 [slowly nodding head] 62 yes .. 63 64 65 66 So did? ... I remember 67 coming in to your class 68 occasionally, and they all</p>	<p>yeah .. they want to be the same, so</p>

69	were responding like that ..	what, it's my way of doing it too,
70		whatever's coming from them, if they
71		want to be as much like their peers as
72		possible, that's what I try to provide for
73	yeah	them to try and develop .. it's a difficult
74		thing, but sadly ... a lot of people aren't
75		interested in that, that personal growth

The narrative of the “kids’ books” (28-51) provides an example of unwanted evidence, with an anticipated result: “he didn’t want to know” (28-58), thereby maintaining a position apparently at the margins. However, the reference to a school leader (28-49) is a reminder that school administrators are frequently regarded as outsiders by the teacher community, regardless of any previous history those administrators have had as teachers. The perspective of a power differential creates changes to the relationships. The *us-them* perspective has been evident in other excerpts, but here it is shaped in terms of contrast with the teacher’s care and concern for the students: “that’s what I try to provide” (28-72), compared with: “a lot of people aren’t interested in that, that personal growth” (28-74). The story depends on a binary perspective of fairness, with the teacher claiming the moral authority, the position of *fairness*, emphasised by the inclusion of the word “sadly” (28-74), which positions those other people negatively. Fairness is conflated with the idea of equality of opportunity: “wanting to try to do the same as the other kids” (28-64).

“Trying to get kids to want to be at school”: a reason to teach

As the dialogue continues, the recruitment effect becomes more pronounced, with a broadening of the notion of evidence calculated to strengthen the position of the teacher in the moral stance portrayed. The challenge to the notion of evidence comes with examples that are fleeting but noticeable, the “smile” (29-86), the “greeting” (29-87) and the “body language” (29-88). These examples elicit only muted agreement, perhaps because the performance of the narrative has been interrupted. There are ephemeral aspects of noticing that are a key component in the way experienced professionals function, relying more on

the intuition built up from an extensive repertoire of experiences than on following rules (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1980). This teacher’s resistance stems primarily from a reluctance to conform because of the affront of being required to follow processes more appropriate to a lesser level of classroom skills and experience.

In contrasting “I really am sincere about what I’m trying to do with these kids” (29-94) with the reference to bureaucratic functioning in: “I could easily lock myself in that office and spend the whole time in there writing” (29-97), the teacher’s resistance is expanded. The subsequent laughter serves to strengthen the position where being a teacher includes a moral stance and an expectation of care for students. “Can I not say: a cry, a laugh, are full of meaning? And that means, roughly: much can be gathered from them” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 124e, §543)⁵⁶. In this case the laughter expresses resignation, a sense of powerlessness. Cavell (1979) asserts that “the mutual meaningfulness of the words of a language must rest upon some kind of connection or compact among its users” (p. 22), but the laughter is a sign that the compact has been broken through the narrowing of interpretation of what is evidence. That narrowing is consistent with neoliberal discourses, supporting a limited cause-and-effect view of teaching rather than a sociological complexity. However, the socio-cultural expectations of the wider community (Bell, 2012) that form the context within which these discourses are embedded, provide resistance to that narrow view in the response: “the point of education is not to collect evidence .. but to make a difference” (29-100).

Excerpt 29 – “Trying to get kids to want to be at school”: why teach?

76	This whole thing about	
77	evidence .. you know, .. it’s ..	yes [nods]
78	it’s very top down now ..	
79	with Hekia demanding ..	[nodding] yes ..
80	and you know, with all the	

⁵⁶ “Kann ich nicht sagen: der Schrei, das Lachen, seien voll von Bedeutung? Und das heißt ungefähr: es ließe sich viel aus ihnen ablesen” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 124, §543)

<p>81 National Standards .. as if ... 82 like, to me, what you said 83 earlier .. that you look at the 84 kids as they come in .. 85 there's the evidence .. 86 in their smile, or their 87 greeting, or their .. 88 [exaggerated shrug] .. body 89 language – there's the 90 evidence that you relate to .. 91 mm 92 93 94 95 96 97 .. but what's 98 the point? 99 100 well, yes, but the point, .. the 101 point of education is not to 102 collect evidence .. but to 103 actually make a difference, 104 isn't it .. 105 106 107 108 mm .. mm 109 110 and we don't want all 111 teachers to be identical 112 either ..</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">[nodding slowly]</p> <p>mm</p> <p style="text-align: right;">mm,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">mm .. body language</p> <p style="text-align: right;">mm</p> <p>... and if I had to write that down every day, I wouldn't bother .. I would choose, you know, choose not to .. but I can't, I haven't got time .. but if I really am sincere about what I'm trying to do with these kids .. [shaking head] ooh ..</p> <p>I could easily lock myself in that office and spend the whole time in there writing .. wonderful things ..</p> <p>I'd hate it, to start with, Maurice ..</p> <p>[laughing]</p> <p style="text-align: right;">nooo ..</p> <p style="text-align: center;">yes, mm</p> <p>[nodding] trying to get kids to want to be at school, to want to be who they are, to want to join in when they can, you know, just .. just to ah .. but I don't want them all to be like me .. [laughs] I'd say to them ..</p> <p style="text-align: right;">no, nooo .. that's what I</p>
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113		say to the others in here, my staff, how
114		valuable that they all are for their
115	yes	differences .. it's really up to me to use
116	yes	their strengths, which I do ..

In these portions of dialogue, the main effect has been to emphasise the sense of teacher solidarity against *outside* demands — whether those emanate from within the school, as with teacher colleagues in the *Te Kōtahitanga* group: “they” (28-46), or a school administrator: “our previous leader” (28-48), or even the Minister of Education: “Hekia” (29-79). Such dialogue serves not only to promote solidarity but also to strengthen the idea of individual teacher autonomy relative to colleagues. Countering that belief in individual autonomy is extensive research that indicates the social connectedness, patterning and predictability of individual behaviours (Christakis & Fowler, 2009; Fowler & Christakis, 2010; Kleinberg, 2013; Lazer et al., 2009).

However, what is absent from this conversation is any discussion of the fairness *to the students* of practices of inclusion in comparison with the alternative of streaming. Streaming was described by another teacher as a “cruel, debilitating practice” (excerpt 11) for separating students judged more academically able, and streaming is inherently racist — a realisation that led many schools to ‘de-stream’ during the 1970s (Middleton & May, 1997, p. 226). Education is not value-free or value-neutral (Biesta, 2007, 2015; D. Carr, 1992), so school practices inescapably promote some values more than others, and the practice of segregation links to the earliest days of schooling in Aotearoa/New Zealand that catered only for those considered deserving of the investment.

Teachers have become socialised to make judgements based on their experiences (Bishop et al., 2010). However, the *Te Kōtahitanga* co-construction group meetings that this teacher resists so strongly are designed to challenge the status quo, and such judgements in particular. For this teacher, a stance of moral indignation is elicited by: “we don’t want all teachers to be identical either” (29-110), which is confirmed by the response: “that’s what I say to the others in here, my staff, how valuable they all are for their differences” (29-112).

This thread of meaning was evident earlier, with the reference to generic offerings for professional learning: “makes me wonder about some of these .. full staff” (27-1), and the underlying argument that as teachers become more experienced they find distinct ways of demonstrating the differences in how they interact in their classrooms. Although these are often shaped by contextual differences, such as a working in a science lab or a school gymnasium, many similarities remain in the basic expectations that schools and parents have of teachers, and that teachers accept for themselves. Goodlad (1984/2004) calls these expectations the “implicit curriculum” (p. 30), noting that they shape how teachers work.

“To become the difference-maker”: knowing one’s own motivation

The next excerpt is from a conversation about the motivation teachers have for their work. “The point . . . is that in the case of a moral practice like education our aims and goals are not logically separable or distinct from the procedures we adopt for their achievement” (D. Carr, 1992, p. 249). The same pattern as expressed previously by another teacher indicating the impact of early experiences on later practice is also apparent in the following excerpt. In this new instance the teacher “worked out early on that I needed my own fundamental reason for doing what I’m doing” (30-10) and “got that **nailed** really early” (30-25).

Excerpt 30 – “To become the difference-maker”: motivated to teach

1	so, um .. my next	yep
2	thought on that is .. have	
3	you .. like, always thought	
4	like this as a teacher? .. or	
5	have you .. changed in your	
6	thinking .. about things?	mm
7		very early on, while I was training to
8		become a teacher .. and I decided to do
9		the training and to .. become part of the
10		profession .. I worked out early on that I
11		needed my own fundamental reason for

12	[nods] right	doing what I'm doing ..
13		becoming .. a statement that would jog
14	motivation ..	me to become something
15		motivational statement or vision
16		or mission statement or whatever you
17		want to call it, and I developed that early
18		on .. and it's in my mind constantly so if
19	..	.. if what I'm doing doesn't get towards
20		that .. that sort of vision then I .. then I
21		have to question myself so is this really
22		what I want to be doing .. is this heading
23		to where .. why .. and this informed why
24	.. right [nod]	for me
25		.. but I got that nailed really early .. and
26		the reason I'm in teaching is to become
27		the difference-maker for good in the lives
28		of the students that I work with and
29		teach and the colleagues that I share the
30	right	time with.
31		so that difference-maker, that linchpin,
32	that significance	

This teacher clearly links his aims and goals to his moral purpose and actively seeks to connect these with his practice, “to become the difference-maker for good in the lives of the students that I work with and teach and the colleagues that I share the time with” (30-26). That “mission statement” (30-16) forms the basis for his ongoing reflection, asking “is this heading to where .. **why**” (30-22), and providing criteria for their own performance assessment. Stating this position invokes the question in the next excerpt where the focus shifts to considering the teleological impact of this motivation on interactions with others.

“I’d probably leave the room”: the impact of positioning

In contrast to the previous teacher (excerpts 27 to 29) who made her position plain to the others in her group by non-compliance and voicing resistance, this teacher aims to understand the context for differences, allowing that “maybe this person is using this as a technique to get others to think” (31-51). However, it is a different scenario, because in the previous example the teacher was telling a story of what had actually happened, whereas this teacher, at this point, is not speaking about an experience but is hypothesising a situation.

Excerpt 31 — “I’d probably leave the room”: dealing with mismatch

33		yeah, and um there’s .. it’s sort of
34		that .. [motion with hands]
35	so if something is at odds	
36	with that .. um .. I’m not	..
37	sure how, but say you went	
38	to a Jumbo day for .. some	mm mm
39	subject teaching with some	mm
40	presenter or whatever that	yeah
41	was doing his stuff whatever	
42	that was not, not congruent	
43	with those ways of doing it	
44		
45		yeah .. I would’ve internalized what
46	yes	they’re doing see how it matches with my
47		fundamental beliefs about why I’m doing
48	[nods] right	what I’m doing and if it’s starkly opposite
49		then I’d probably leave the room
50		or I’d .. maybe not leave the room but I’d
51		sit and listen .. but it would be from the
52		position that .. maybe this person is
53	[nods slowly]	using this as a technique to get others to
54		think .. I mean .. maybe it’s

55		a .. so um .. I think .. when I said
56	.. right	I'd leave the room that's very .. that'd be
57		the extreme sort of situation –
58		somebody's totally .. you know .. the
59		fundamentals: if they're rude, if they're
60		disrespectful, if they're um .. racist or ..
61		homophobic or anything like that and it
62	yes, .. yes	comes out strongly then I won't be
63		around .. that sort of discussion .. if
64	[nods] yes	that's what comes forward in their
65		thinking .. in their discourse, then
66	right	that's not something I want to be a part
67		of .. if that comes out strongly
68	[nodding]	then I want to distance myself ..
69		bit different if there's somebody has a
70		different purpose for being in the
71	yep ..	profession .. then I would, then I
72		would attempt to understand why they'd
73		take that position and why .. the
74		fundamental for me is to make a
75	yes [nods]	difference for good in here in the lives of the people that I work with

His first response was that he'd “probably leave the room” (31-48) if faced with a conflicting position, but that is soon moderated as he reflects on how he might respond “maybe not leave the room but I'd sit and listen” (31-49), because “I think .. when I said I'd leave the room that's very .. that'd be the extreme sort of situation” (31-54). However, he does not here suggest any possibility that he might change his own views in response to someone else's.

Being a member of a society, a *polis*, is to accept that citizenship includes “exercising . . . responsibility for it” (Cavell, 1979, p. 23). The same can be argued for being a member of the teacher community. In the example that this

teacher provides, “if they’re rude . . . disrespectful . . . racist . . . or homophobic or anything like that” (31-60), then “I want to distance myself” (31-68). Such positioning, a withdrawal, serves to leave the unfairness only tacitly challenged. The *laissez-faire* attitude serves to acknowledge differences without necessarily accepting them. However, it has also been described as being “politically inert” (Kelsey, 1997, p. 297), a term used in reference to the small amount of resistance to counter the radical structural changes imposed by successive neoliberal governments in Aotearoa/New Zealand from the late 1980s. In the community of secondary school teachers there are different alliances as well as a hierarchy of subject disciplines, but there are also very high levels of solidarity shown in the membership and support for the PPTA teachers’ union. “A trade union . . . is an organ of inner democratic surveillance over the intensity and direction of the various views of its members” (Polanyi, K. (1925), cited in Polanyi Levitt, 2013, p. 50)⁵⁷. That *inner democratic surveillance* exerts a constraining, conformist, normative effect on the secondary school teacher community, illustrated by the expressed reluctance of this teacher to engage with alternate views that conflict with his “fundamental beliefs” (31-47) and his aversion to openly dissenting with colleagues.

“Let me try to understand”: seeking perspectives

What is noticeable in this whole interaction is that it is in the nature of an interview, where the researcher is positioned in the role of asking questions and does not evade that positioning. The effect of such questioning is that the researcher’s participation is restricted to a position of active audiencing through encouraging further pondering or voiced reflection with both verbal and non-verbal indicators of agreement.

⁵⁷ *Some reflections concerning our theory and practice, 1925*: A translation by Kari Polanyi Levitt of Karl Polanyi’s *Neue Erwagungen zu unserer Theorie von Praxis*, originally published in *Der Kampf*, (1925). Reprinted in Gerald Mozetic, ed., *Austro-Marxistische Positionen*, Vienna, Austria: Bohlan-Verlag, 1983. Available online from http://www.karipolanyilevitt.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/4_KP-Reflections-concerning-our-theory-and-practice.pdf

Excerpt 32 — “Let me try to understand”: different reasons

76		.. but if somebody has a
77		different fundamental reason for being in
78		the profession, different to mine, I don't
79	[nodding] ..	see that as a weakness or I don't compare
80		.. you know, it's not about my purpose is
81	.. no .. [nodding]	better than your purpose
82	[nodding in agreement]	it's that " <i>ohh, is that ..</i> " .. I would find
83		some interest in that purpose and
84		attempt to look from their perspective
85	yes, .. yes	why .. because then it might inform my
86		fundamental belief about why I'm doing
87	.. yeah	it .. or it might enable me to
88		support them in their purposes or their
89		aspirations or whatever .. so for me it's
90	[nodding]	not about contending .. um ..
91	[nodding]	fundamental beliefs .. it's about .. ohh, let
92		me try and understand .. I'm in this for a
93		different reason
94	yes .. yes, yes, yes	you're in this for a
95		different reason .. so let me try and figure
96		out .. gain an understanding of why
97	yes ..	you're in this profession .. you
98		know, and that sort of thing .. and it
99		helped because .. how can that help
100		inform what I do and support what you
101	yes [nods] yes ..	want to do .. but if .. I got
102		back .. if it's starkly racist or derogatory
103	[nodding]	or over the top in those instances I'm not
104		interested in that sort of stuff ..

Although the teacher in this conversation is committed to his own core values, and expects to find others with different perspectives, he states that he does not seek to privilege his own, because “it’s not about my purpose is better than your purpose” (32-80), but rather a potential source of learning that “might inform my fundamental belief about why I’m doing it” (32-85), because “you’re in this for a different reason” (32-94). That statement is an example of a position based on principles of equity, where discourses of collaboration can thrive through the sort of questioning displayed in “how can that help inform what I do and support what you want to do” (32-99). The effect of such positioning in dialogue may be to open space for inquiry with an orientation to community rather than an emphasis on individual development. However, “let me try and . . . gain an understanding of why you’re in this profession” (32-95) expresses the reluctance to challenge alternate views, and only to seek to understand them, identifying this as a language game based on individual beliefs. “One can mistrust one’s own senses, but not one’s own belief” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 162e)⁵⁸. Beliefs are rooted in community, and the personal beliefs this teacher espouses align with the democratic ideals of the progressive era despite the fact that he started teaching after the neoliberal restructuring of education. The values and principles of a caring, sharing teacher community have survived the neoliberal positioning of each teacher as a self-interested individual. The democratic ideals have not been displaced.

Experience trumps inquiry: Chapter conclusion

The approach I have taken in this chapter has been to consider the positions that teachers have displayed in their interactions in relation to discourses of fairness and unfairness, embedded in the traditions of progressive education and liberal or neoliberal perspectives. I have explored these positions to identify where discourses of privilege prevail and where discourses of equity are evident. What has been apparent is that concepts of fairness influence the range of available positions for interactions as well as the nature of the interactions themselves. Discourses of rights are apparent in association with positions that privilege individuality. The conversations show that an orientation towards

⁵⁸ “Man kann den eigenen Sinnen mißtrauen, aber nicht dem eigenen Glauben” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 162).

inquiry provides a greater potential for collaboration. What is also noticeable is that early experiences in teaching exert a lasting influence through providing readily available perspectives on practice that become resistant to displacement.

The excerpts show that what teachers assess as being fair or unfair depends on their positioning. On the one hand, the teacher's role as a classroom authority means that a student's challenge to that authority is deemed unfair to other students, while on the other hand a teacher's reluctance to conform to external pressures demonstrates a different perspective on unfairness because it is based on the criterion of *experience*. However, conformity to the norms of the teacher community is apparent in the reluctance to challenge alternate views directly, on the basis of a democratic entitlement to difference. Equally, that democratic outlook does not exclude traditional privilege, which remains apparent and only obliquely challenged. To an extent, in the sense that some community norms are the subject of criticism, the conversations demonstrate what might be termed collusion, but at the same time they also express participants' solidarity in the face of challenges to such collective values and understandings as the importance of experience in shaping teacher praxis. What is accepted as fairness is for teachers to criticise their context as insiders, but criticism by those who lack relevant classroom experience can be discounted because they are positioned as outsiders. This positioning becomes problematic for attempts to change the nature of schooling because teachers are individually and collectively shaped by "localized discourses" (B. M. Atkinson & Rosiek, 2009, p. 192). Moreover, such shaping happens "whether or not there is an awareness of the constitutive force of discursive practices and the means of resisting or changing unacceptable practices" (Davies, 1990, p. 359). The determinants of what practices are unacceptable or unfair are to be found in the discourses of schooling that prevail, shaping teaching as a moral and community endeavour.

Chapter 10 – cultural perspectives

The purpose of the previous chapter was to explore teacher positioning in relation to the construct of fairness and in this chapter the focus shifts to explore some of the different perspectives of Māori and Pākehā. These cultural perspectives have shaped the discourses of schooling in Aotearoa/New Zealand as previously outlined. Cultural perspectives have also shaped the individual teachers participating in the study, and therefore the conversational interactions within the localised teacher community. One of the topics of conversation with several of the participants was *Te Kōtahitanga*, inviting an exploration of teacher positioning in relation to that professional development programme. Divergent positions are apparent, contributing to the exploration into the effects of the conversations on positioning. In addition, using a cultural lens to examine the excerpts provides further insights as to how the conversations act as a mechanism that conserves the prevailing discourses in relation to Māori cultural understandings and approaches.

“Some really good upskilling and thinking”: effects of group debate

In the following two excerpts the topic of discussion is the impact of Māori culture on classroom teaching. Some differences in perspective are articulated, but most of the dialogue illustrates familiarity with the position calls being made and responded to. There is little explanation sought, and while both participants may feel they have expressed their opinions and been heard, there is no debate to reflect on or challenge positioning. It is apparent that for both participants their teaching experience provides a ready familiarity with the discourses of schooling and an acceptance that having adapted to the pervasiveness of those discourses makes it unlikely that significant position shifts would be expected.

The dialogue in excerpt 33 follows on from a discussion centred on the topic of tertiary studies for experienced teachers and the impact that such studies might have in developing broader understandings, and in particular, whether such understandings might influence any change of direction for a school. That focus on the likely impact invited this comparison.

Excerpt 33 — “Some really good upskilling and thinking”

19		I did quite like the co-construction stuff
20	mm – hmm	within <i>Te Kōtahitanga</i> .. in that we ..
21		there was there was robust discussion
22	[nodding] .. sure ..	regarding educational philosophy .. and ..
23		and pedagogy .. um .. which hadn't
24	.. mm ..	happened in the past so
25		there was some really good upskilling and
26	.. right	thinking going on in those groups ..
27	.. yes, yes	.. and hopefully if we can build on
28	.. yep ..	that .. who knows .. you know ..

What is noticeable is a shared wondering-out-loud, a sort of collaborative reflection. Tentativeness invites expressions of possibility rather than categorisation, as can be seen in the punctuation of the sentences with pauses and “ums”, and the use of modifiers “quite” (33-19) and “really” (33-25). That collaborative reflecting is enhanced by agreement, as shown with “[nodding] .. sure” (33-22). The ongoing effects of such agreement are to position the participants in a space of acceptance, predictability, sameness, where *insider* discourses are reinforced. At least in this example, shared reflection does not prevail against the centripetal, normative tendencies of collegial dialogue. Yet there is positivity expressed about “robust discussion” (33-21), indicating an awareness, or perhaps an illusion, of marginal, or other positions available if assumptions are challenged.

The distancing apparent in the reference to “**those** groups” (33-26) shows a position of non-alignment, waiting for affirmation before suggesting “hopefully we can build on that” (33-27), in referring to a future when the *Te Kōtahitanga* initiative is over. In saying “*hopefully*”, the implication is clear, that the “upskilling and thinking” (33-25) may not continue. This is a recognition of the relatively short duration of such projects in the context of the teaching histories of the participants, with a tacit criticism of the policymakers and the emphasis on immediate gains in contrast to deeper understandings.

There is also a clear distinction from the discourses of practical experience and the theoretical drivers referred to as “educational philosophy” (33-22). Such theorising, grounded in practice, has its edges defined by insider-outsider discourses. Insider positions inform experience-based praxis, as Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) noted. The “robust discussion” (33-21) that this teacher appreciates contrasts with the concerns expressed by the teacher in the previous excerpt about viewpoints and reasons for teaching that differ from his own. These contrasting stances illustrate both the tension and the potential caused by having experience as a basis for pedagogy, since similar experiences may have quite different meanings attributed to them by different teachers. Just as different things become clear when adjusting the focus of a microscope (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003)⁵⁹, so becoming aware of different perspectives in co-construction meetings can make alternate points of view apparent. At the same time, however, co-construction meetings will be inherently normative and conformist, because “New Zealand society has a tendency to emphasise conformity to the detriment of diversity and freedom of expression. The outspoken are treated with disfavour” (Tauroa, 1982, p. 13).

“The value is in the conversations”: collegial influence

As the discussion continues, some hesitation and ambivalence is apparent, even slight discomfort in answering the direct questions posed. It might be expected that such forms of interaction, such troublings of the routine and the commonplace, would shift the emphasis or interpretation of education discourses. However, what is noticeable is the extent of my response. The hesitation invites collegial support, which is forthcoming. It cannot be called collusion because that might imply conscious positioning. Rather, it appears to be an unremarkable effect of the influence of community, an outcome or consequence of belonging and participating.

⁵⁹ “Es ist, als hätte man die Einstellung eines Mikroskops verändert, und was jetzt im Brennpunkt liegt, sah man früher nicht” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 140, §645).

Excerpt 34 — “The value is in the conversations”: sharing ideas

36		.. um, there was some stuff that
37		made me think a little bit, like .. my own
38	..	practical teaching .. was okay, that’s fine ..
39		it was some of the stuff around my
40		classroom that I hadn’t really thought
41	.. yes [nodding]	about .. like putting Māori icons and
42	.. yeah	things like that in my class .. yes, that
43		made me think a little bit about that .. but
44		it’s finding relevant sources that we can
45		use .. I don’t want to just go out
46	yep ..	and make something that .. you know ..
47	just for the sake of it	yeah ..
48	.. that’s interesting .. um ..	yeah
49	because .. cos, like my	
50	experience has been .. the	
51	value is in the conversations	
52	[nodding] the dialogue .. um	
53	.. that we have about	
54	the stuff, not in the	[nodding]
55	observations themselves ..	
56	because that’s someone	[nodding]
57	seeing what you do through	
58	their lens .. I’ve been lucky	
59	that it’s been someone I	
60	know well	
61	.. who already has an	[nodding]
62	understanding of working in	
63	the area .. I don’t know	
64	what ..	[nodding]

For the other teacher, there “was some stuff that made me think a little bit” (34-36), indicating that movement was considered, even if no movement

happened, as is evident from the assertion that “I don’t want to just go out and make something that ..” (34-45), with the modifier “you know” (34-46) added to invite support. That support is forthcoming with immediate agreement, but slightly conditional, as expressed with the slight change of direction to suggest that the “value is in the conversations” (34-51), and the nodding of agreement, which is then reciprocated. “We eliminate misunderstandings by making our expressions more exact; but now it may look as if we were moving towards a particular state, a state of complete exactness; and as if this were the real goal of our investigation” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 37e, §91)⁶⁰. In searching for how to best express my thoughts, the words were triggered by responding to the flow of ideas already expressed, and continuing with that direction. However, there was no goal of exactness, but rather an attempt to develop common understandings. What appeared to be attempts to be more exact, for example, moving from “my experience has been” (34-49) to “the value is in the conversations” (34-50), and then, clarifying that further with “the dialogue .. that we have about the stuff, not in the observations themselves” (34-52) — that process of rewording, searching for how to phrase the idea in the very act of its formation, that process is constantly being co-constructed with feedback. In this whole section, however, there is some awkwardness, apparent in the use of non-specific descriptors of “stuff” (34-36,39), and “things like that” (34-42) indicating that *Te Kōtahitanga* is a topic that troubles the Pākehā perspectives.

What is also evident is that the researcher mirrors the tone of the response by moderating the bluntness of the earlier question “did you get any surprises” (19-32). Instead of continuing with that directness, there is a level of vagueness that continues to suffuse the extended response, including saying “that’s interesting” (34-48) to indicate a non-committal, non-judgemental collegial concern, and then the use of the modifier “like” (34-49) to reduce the seriousness, and “my experience has been” (34-49) to offer solidarity. It is in such ways that relationships are maintained and community discourses are preserved. The change-back effect from the open-ended positioning in

⁶⁰ “Wir beseitigen Mißverständnisse, indem wir unsern Ausdruck exakter machen: aber es kann nun so scheinen, als ob wir einem bestimmten Zustand, der vollkommenen Exaktheit, zustreben; und als wäre das das eigentliche Ziel unserer Untersuchung” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 37, §91).

“hopefully if we can build on that .. who knows .. you know” (34-27), to the directness of “did you get any surprises? .. you know, when you got your feedback?” (19-32), to the use of “really” (34-40), to soften the statement “I hadn’t really thought about” (34-40), contributed to the tacit, shared understanding that the conversation was edging towards awkwardness. That awkwardness appeared to be associated with being invited to enter direct discussion on Māori perspectives rather than maintaining position in the certainty of dominant Pākehā discourses. Similarly, the addition of a diminutive in the phrase “made me think a little bit about that” (34-44) signalled the boundary of community norms. Viewed from this perspective, the use of “just” (34-45) and “you know” (34-46) in the expression “I don’t want to just go out and make something that .. you know” (34-45) act as an invitation to moderate the demanding tone of the earlier question, and the unthinking response is to do exactly that, to conform to the norms as illustrated by the inclusive use of “we” (34-53), as well as the interpretation offered in “someone seeing what you do through their lens” (34-56), and the aside “I’ve been lucky” (34-58), all acting as mollifiers and having the effect of withdrawing a challenge that might have been perceived as being too robust, even though that “robust discussion” (33-21) had been the expressed criterion for what had been appreciated.

This excerpt provides an example of collaborative sense-making against the *Te Kōtahitanga* backdrop of acknowledging the difficulties for Māori in a Pākehā system of schooling. It could be viewed from the perspective that “there is no other way toward an understanding of social phenomena but through our understanding of individual actions directed toward other people and guided by their expected behaviour” (von Hayek, 1948/1980, p. 6). However, the conversation was not atomistic actions guided by the *expected behaviour* of the other, it was instead a moment-by-moment dynamic of collaborative reshaping during the course of the extended utterance that contributed to the effects of the interactions. Nor was the negotiated meaning restricted to this specific interaction, because previous interactions have influenced the expected responses and therefore the form of this exchange, and this dialogue frames the directions for future conversations. It was, however, negotiating awkwardness.

The observation that the type of discussion that occurred in the co-construction meetings “hadn’t happened in the past” (33-23), indicates some of the impact of *Te Kōtahitanga*, as does the acknowledgement: “some of the stuff around my classroom that I hadn’t really thought about .. like putting Māori icons and things like that in my class” (34-39). Nevertheless, the dialogue served to support Pākehā education discourses, simply because the participants maintained the patterns of previous interactions where Pākehā perspectives prevailed. Thirty years after the publication of the report by the Race Relations Conciliator, it is still clear that “the foundations of a bi-cultural society exist, but at present Pakeha values are encouraged and Maori values at best are tolerated” (Tauroa, 1982, p. 51).

“But my style will always remain the same”: having firm opinions

In the excerpt that follows, the teacher who in excerpt 4 expressed his conviction that he was comfortable with his style of teaching confirms and elaborates that viewpoint in relation to the expectations of *Te Kōtahitanga*, where the expectation is that classroom observations will provide evidence that teachers can discuss with their facilitator and change their approaches to make it easier for Māori students to establish an effective working relationship and be better placed to achieve success as a result (Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

Excerpt 35 — “But my style will always remain the same”: certainty

<p>36 .. so the .. um .. like the 37 observations for Te 38 Kōtahitanga and the 39 feedback feed-forward co- 40 construction all that .. you 41 accept that but it’s not likely 42 to change .. um .. your 43 approaches .. 44 45 .. yep .. 46 47</p>	<p>no, you’re dead right there .. I .. I take on board what people say .. but I don’t, I don’t have to change because they’ve said it because .. those people .. the people in charge of that .. are</p>
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48		very very inexperienced as far as teaching
49	.. yep [nods]	goes .. and they're all young
50		and they think they have fantastic ideas ..
51	right ..	but they don't have the control ..
52		.. and for them to comment on it, yeah, .. I
53	..	.. I can accept that because you know,
54		young people have a lot of decent ideas,
55		but as far as .. um .. I take on board that
56		picture .. I may change slightly because of
57		it but my style will always remain the
58	.. so what I'm	same ..
59	hearing is .. that you .. um ..	
60	your personal experience as	
61	your professional identity if	
62	you like .. informs the	
63	changes you're going to	
64	make rather than some	
65	outsider or somebody who	
66	just has brief time because	
67	in the scheme of things it is	
68	brief – no-one's there	
69	longer than you are ..	

The probe “you accept that but it’s not likely to change .. um .. your approaches” (35-40) has the effect of affirming the certainty of the teacher’s previous position claim in expressing: “that’s the way it has been and will always be” (18-35), yet the response is only to retract slightly: “I take on board what people say” (35-44), and the affirmative responses “yep” (35-45; 35-49) and “right” (35-51) act as indicators of collusion with that claim. Such *other* ideas are positioned as temporary and subject to change as those who promote them gain more experience, as with: “the people in charge of that .. are very very inexperienced as far as teaching goes .. and they’re all young” (35-49). This echoes the concerns raised by another teacher about “new ideas” (26-73).

However, the absence of strong support appears to influence the direction of the ongoing dialogue, in particular the softening of the initial adamant stance through an acknowledgement of other perspectives: “they think they have fantastic ideas” (35-50). This apparent softening can also be seen in “I take on board that picture .. I may change slightly because of it” (35-55). However, the apparent compromise is quickly distanced again with the phrase “but my style will always remain the same” (35-57).

The comments I made in response (35-59 to 35-69) conform to what is desired, initially doing no more than paraphrasing what the teacher has stated, and then supporting that stance with the words “no-one’s there longer than you are” (35-68). This alignment of perspectives is one of the effects of the interaction, maintaining levels of conformity. This excerpt echoes the previous one in displaying conformity to the dominant Pākehā ethos, illustrating the gap between those entrenched discourses and the school policy of supporting *Te Kōtahitanga* to improve outcomes for Māori student success.

“This tuakana’s gonna help”: acting on connectedness

The Māori terms of tuakana and teina refer to the relationship between older (tuakana) and younger (teina) siblings (Pihama, Smith, Taki, & Lee, 2004). However, by extension these terms also refer to the wider education community of relationships where those who are more knowledgeable about a topic share their understandings with those who are learners. In this sense it is a fluid rather than a static relationship that is described.

Excerpt 36 — “This tuakana’s gonna help that teina”: connections

100	[nodding] mm ..	there’s no need to look at their
101		reading levels ..
102	[nodding] mm ..	because .. well, you can look at them,
103		and then you can say, well this tuakana’s
104		gonna help that .. teina .. and
105	[nodding] that’s the	they go forward together
106	difference	.. I .. we’re going there .. I’m
107	you’re	not that same person

108	not that same person, that's	
109	fantastic! ..	.. [laughs] in that, .. in the scheme
110	because ..	of things .. there's been movement
111	it's been what, three	and trust
112	weeks, four weeks, five	
113	weeks .. whatever it's been ..	
114	it's a .. it's just .. we always	
115	move on and	yeah ..
116	that's why we're always	
117	becoming .. isn't it	yeah ..
118	..	and to .. um .. to .. change my point
119		of view .. I had to get
120		myself into those forums .. and listen to
121	[nodding] yes ..	what
122		they were saying ..
123	yes ..	to understand

The tuakana-teina model mentioned here (36-103) represents a way of thinking, an approach that acknowledges interdependence and inter-connectedness. In the context of this piece of dialogue it is a pragmatic response to a classroom learning model where students are expected and encouraged to work together to help each other to learn rather than having them all dependent on the teacher for direction and support. That is the essence of what is meant by the comment “we’re going there” (36-106), and the subsequent elaboration “there’s been movement and trust” (36-110). At the same time, this is an example of the Māori discourse of *whanaungatanga*, relationship.

The response recognises the inclusive perspective with the use of the word “we” (36-114; 36-116), and links this conversation to an earlier such discussion: “it’s been what, three weeks, four weeks, five weeks” (36-111). It also recognises the change involved with the comment “that’s why we’re always becoming” (36-116). That comment similarly invites a response, which is forthcoming as a position analysis: “to change my point of view .. I had to get myself into those

forums” (36-118). The effect of this snippet of interaction included positioning the participants as learners and collaborators in a relationship, in a paradigm where “identity can only be understood as a process of ‘being’ or ‘becoming’” (Jenkins, 2008, p. 17). The comment “they go forward together” (36-105) shows a commitment to the ideal of collaboration, even while engaged in the pursuit of individual credentialing. This commitment to Māori values in a Pākehā context shows a break with conformity, an explicit challenge to the dominant discourse.

“The factory model of learning may be leaving”: hope for change

Following on from the previous excerpt, the focus shifts back and forth between reflection on personal identity stances and referencing participation in earlier meetings with others. It can be noticed that the *us-them* binary separation evident earlier in the conversation with this teacher has now been replaced with “our school” (37-124).

Excerpt 37 — “The factory model of learning may be leaving”

123		.. so the factory model .. of
124		learning .. may be leaving our school
125	yeah, would be interesting ..	
126	[laughing]	well, you were in there
127	[laughing] .. yes	.. you know, I heard the
128		magic words: “twenty-first century
129	I .. I .. said it	learning”
130	but I didn’t actually expect it	
131	to be picked up on ..	you were cautious
132		yeah .. well, yeah, that was in the meeting
133		before .. and then when we got to the
134		next meeting .. “can we move these four
135		goals over to be three? .. and have
136	mm	twenty-first-
137	[grinning] mm ..	century learning as another .. goal”
138	mm mm ..	[laughs excitedly] .. I was
139	that’s	jumping for joy ..
140	progress, I um .. yeah ..	well, a moment ago ..

The enthusiasm in this excerpt for an anticipated departure of the “factory model of learning” (37-123) illustrates that the discourses of progressivism have retained a space in the teacher community, albeit in the guise of “twenty-first century learning” (37-128).

The problem with the language of learning — both the language itself and the ways in which it is used and contextualised in research, policy and practice — is that it tends to prevent people from asking the key educational questions of content, purpose and relationships. (Biesta, 2015, p. 76)

Despite Biesta’s note of caution above, this utterance demonstrates a continued *troubling* of the centrality of traditional discourses of schooling represented by the focus on literacy and the structural approaches of goal-oriented planning. That *troubling* can be seen with the use of the conceptual frame of “tuakana - teina” (36-103), as well as the reference to “the factory model” (37-123), which refers back to the earlier reference of “co-construction .. rather than models for models’ sake” (17-99). However, the excitement about a different perspective: “the magic words” (37-130), disguises the normative discursive effect of collegial engagement within the context. The context has not changed, only the perspective that frames the utterance. The participants have also shifted their positions during the course of the conversation. This can be seen in the move from the earlier *recruiting* stance to a more interactive positioning of shared reflection that can be seen in such phrasing as: “well, you were in there .. you know” (37-126), and “the interesting thing for me was that .. you didn’t disagree with stuff that you said there” (38-151). Such comments illustrate collegial trust as well as friendship, as signified by the laughing (37-125; 37-127; 37-138), and the other non-verbal positioning indicators of closeness that align with the discourses of *whanaungatanga* (connectedness) and *manaakitanga* (respect) which are fundamental to the professional learning project *Te Kōtahitanga* in which these teachers had been participants.

“I’m excited for the kids coming”: optimism for outcomes

In the following excerpt, the credentialing function demanded of schooling shows the influence of economic discourses that demand schools prepare students for employment.

Sometimes we do want our students to focus on mastering particular knowledge or skills and pay less attention to the domains of socialisation and subjectification . . . But one-sidedness always comes at a price, [and] . . . the current emphasis in many countries and settings on just enhancing academic achievement . . . comes at a very high and potentially too high price. (Biesta, 2015, p. 79)

This teacher was excited by what she saw as creative thinking being applied with the integration of workplace skills into other activities: “the act of assessing literacy on a school trip” (38-162), rather than the traditional approach where students were “getting hammered in class” (38-169) with teachers exerting pressures on their students because the teachers were themselves being compelled to emphasise qualification at the expense of socialisation and subjectification. Although some of the other teachers expressed reservations about the value of *Te Kōtahitanga* for their own professional learning, this teacher is excited about teachers discussing their practice in “korero” [discussion] (38-146).

Excerpt 38 — “I’m excited for the kids coming”: optimism

141	.. [thoughtful]		can we hear what the rest of the
142			older me said?
143	.. that’s it ..	yeah,	Oh that’s it ..
144	that’s it, yes		
145	[nodding]		okay .. so there’s .. was a cusp, eh .. the
146		mm ..	korero
147	[nodding] mm		about the cusp .. which way we
148		the um	were going to go ..
149	.. the interesting ..		I’m excited .. I’m excited for

150	.. [smiling] the	the kids coming
151	interesting thing for me was	
152	that .. you didn't disagree	[chuckles]
153	with stuff that you said	
154	there but you ..	mm hmm ..
155	recognized .. yes,	had more stuff
156	you recognized you had	
157	also moved on from that	
158	point already	
159	exactly ..	and how was that – through
160	mm [nods]	conversations through
161	[nods] mm ..	conversations for people .. who are now ..
162	..	poised .. for possibility yay! .. like I mean
163	mm .. [grinning]	even N .. the act of assessing literacy on a
164	[nodding] mm	school trip you spread that right
165		through all the trips you train people to ..
166		to .. to um .. responsibly .. assess that
167	of course you could,	way .. you could apply that to every trip
168	yep ..	in the school
169	mm	every .. so that they're not getting
170		hammered in class .. to “get your
171	mm, mm ..	literacy up, gotta get your literacy up”
172	mm .	it is done in a natural way in any
		setting ..

The alternate position taken to an emphasis on credentialing is that the focus can be shifted to a different approach to assessment, where “it is done in a natural way in any setting” (38-172) and is achieved “through conversations” (38-158). This is an important distinction, because the Pākehā focus is on written literacy skills, whereas Māori traditions have emphasised oracy. “The korero about the cusp ... which way we were going to go” (38-145), as well as the final phrasing: “in a natural way in any setting” (38-172), are further examples of the importance of conversations in shaping and reshaping understandings.

This excerpt of the dialogue also directly demonstrates the *tuakana-teina* approach, where knowledge and expertise is shared by each with the other, rather than having one participant remaining positioned in the teacher or authority role. The recognition of *ako*⁶¹ means each participant is learning from and with the other, rather than being situated within “the factory model of learning” (37-123). Such phrasing demonstrates the influence of discourses of *progress* that are frequently found in the company of ideas such as “twenty-first century learning” (37-128) that exemplify values and beliefs associated with promoting change. Anticipating challenges to such change is implicit in the use of the word “responsibly” (38-166), which adds weight to the argument in the realisation that it might otherwise be dismissed. This is extended with the interchange “you spread that right through all the trips” (38-164) and the response “of course you could” (38-166). Collaboration between the two contributors appears to be not only the result of alignment and agreement but also the purpose of engaging with opportunities for change, and the effects are related to those intentions. In this excerpt, the dynamics of interaction reveal progressive education intentions and make visible the effects of positioning these as central. “Language ... is populated — overpopulated — with the intentions of others” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 294). Intentions may not have been recognized or even acknowledged by either speaker, but influenced the ways in which words were chosen as much as the ways in which they were responded to.

In all these excerpts from conversation with this teacher, one of the main effects was positioning the participants relative to others. Another effect was to be observed in the changing positioning of the participants relative to each other. Earlier, in excerpt 15, there were indicators of recruitment, but these were not one-sided. On the contrary, the responses of each participant both pre-empted and pre-figured the direction of the conversation. Nodding, and saying “mm” or “um” served to maintain the direction of the utterance and concur with the intention of the speaker. However, by this point in the conversation, the enthusiasm, the grinning, laughing, and saying “that’s it, yes” (38-144), or “yay!” (38-162) all provided further endorsement that supported the mutual positioning. The effect was to bring the participants into greater alignment,

⁶¹ *Ako* is reciprocal learning, as opposed to teaching in a transmissive mode

achieving the intention of finding common ground through the process of recruitment and ambivalence until agreement and endorsement was reached.

“On the same kaupapa”: *Te Kōtahitanga* — unity of purpose

The Māori teacher in the following excerpts has a different stance, with the point of view being more of an *observer* of the group dynamics, illustrated by the comment “I haven’t seen that synergy ... for probably half a year” (39-15). The narrative that recalled and clarified that perspective was punctuated by affirmations or checking, such as: “all just the one class, eh?” (39-27). In this way the story about co-construction was itself co-constructed. Part of this observer/story-teller stance involved a reflective, interpretive positioning, as evident in the comment: “I think that was a very .. it enabled, it empowered the discussion to have meaning” (39-28). In the story meaning was understood as deriving from the conversational interactions within the group. That lens was consistent with the process evident in this excerpt.

Excerpt 39 — “On the same kaupapa”: unity of purpose

1		I think that .. for .. thinking about
2		professional learning .. what made this a
3		powerful meeting yesterday .. everybody
4		went away feeling like we had made some
5		progress and that there was a good
6		contribution .. like, people had come
7	Right, right	prepared ..
8	..	we had a very good situation when some
9	.. yes ..	come in cold to a meeting .. without having
10	..[nods] yep ..	given some prior thought .. looked at some
11	.. so	stuff, considered what might be said ..
12	were you on .. all on the	
13	same wavelength then?	.. ummmm .. that is ..
14		in a .. we were on .. the same .. yeah .. on
15	right ..	the same .. kaupapa .. we had .. and I
16	.. right	haven’t seen that synergy in .. that meeting

17	.. okay ..	.. for probably half the year .. only because
18	.. right, right ..	there was absences .. the last time we met
19		as a group .. for that discussion .. for that
20		group of students, there were only three of
21	ok this was	us there .. yesterday there was seven
22	one o' the co-construction	
23	..	.. so there were .. um .. there was a mass of
24	[nodding] yes	.. bodies, of ideas, of emotions, of thought,
25		of feeling, of evidence of achievement ..
26		yeah, all focused on one particular class ..
27	.. all just the one class,	
28	eh?	so in the .. I think that was a very ..
29		it enabled, it empowered the discussion to
30	. right .. okay ..	have meaning .. and we could go away with
31		things to do .. we found that our goal for
32	.. yes ..	that particular .. our co-constructed
33		goal didn't need to change .. it's been the
34		same goal for the last term, and actually it's
35	.. right ..	a good goal .. for this particular group ..
36		um .. yeah, so you know, there was an
37		enabling and a .. encouraging atmosphere
38	.. yes, ..	there .. and there was some, also some ..
39		not, not significant debate, but there was
40		some .. differences in how .. particular
41		members of that community viewed one or
42		two students ..

This narrative about a teacher co-construction meeting for *Te Kōtahitanga* was punctuated by frequent affirmations “right” e.g. (39-7), “okay” (39-17; 39-30) and “yes” e.g. (39-9). The account provided an example of the effects of such story-telling with the *thinking-out-loud* co-construction of meaning, even though there were only the three checks of understanding interspersed: “were you on .. all on the same wavelength then?” (39-12); “this was one o’ the co-

construction” (39-21); and “all just the one class, eh?” (39-27). Such checking served to ensure that participants were “on the same kaupapa” (39-14) and in agreement or at least finding common understandings. In this way the community norms were maintained and existing positions were conserved. The reported focus “on one particular class” (39-26) with a “co-constructed goal [that] didn’t need to change” (39-32) needed to be considered alongside the observation that he hadn’t “seen that synergy . . . for probably half a year” (39-16). Taken together those comments could be seen to indicate limited commitment, particularly because of the “absences” (39-18), yet the opportunity to trouble this passed without further comment, except that the speaker explained anyway “yesterday there was seven” (39-21), indicating an acknowledgement of the dissonance between the reported enthusiasm and the history of group meetings. Further non-alignment was described as “differences in how .. particular members of that community viewed one or two students” (39-40), but the debate was “not significant” (39-39). What was evident from these apparent contradictions was that participation and teacher engagement with the “kaupapa” (39-15) (=purpose) of the meeting was what was deemed most important, for such engagement was closely associated with the renewal of group understandings, important in Māori expectations of achieving consensus.

“Co-construction meetings are aimed at developing *professional learning conversations* ... [rather than] *professional conversation*, where teachers focus more on the profession of teaching — that is, on themselves and their teaching — than on the achievement of their students” (Bishop et al., 2010, p. 141). The group focus on student learning is deliberate to discriminate between ordinary collegial conversations and what becomes possible with “greater collaboration among teachers and more collective responsibility for students” (Timperley et al., 2007, p. 205).

“Give them a different perspective”: co-construction benefits

There was, however, another aspect referred to — the idea of co-construction conversations being not only a place where participants could modify their stance or change their position as a consequence of the interactions, but also a stimulus for that to happen. This was referred to in the exchange which began

with: “one staff member is sparking another .. to .. change their thinking a little bit” (40-86). That perspective was expanded with the comments: “or to challenge that thinking .. yeah, or to change it or to .. um .. give them a different perspective” (40-89).

Excerpt 40 — “Give them a different perspective”: sharing ideas

77		there were ones who were behaviour
78		issues and other staff members saw ..
79		um .. had some of the context around
80		that and could add to that .. so the
81		learning around that particular student
82	.. right ..	was wider .. and understanding was
83		increased .. and maybe the
84		strategies that were talked about could
85	.. so	help .. improve things for that student ..
86	who .. one staff member is	
87	sparking another .. to ..	
88	change their thinking a little	.. yep .. mm ..
89	bit ..	.. that’s right .. or to
90		challenge that thinking .. yeah, or to
91	.. right .. [nodding]	change it or to .. um .. give them a
92	.. on that student ..	different perspective ..
93		on that particular student .. so through
94		that .. what I appreciated about that ..
95		efficient learning yesterday was that ..
96		through being prepared, getting that .. it
97		meant that worthwhile discussion
98		enabled .. was enabled to get ..

The desired effect of the co-construction meeting was to modify teacher opinions, and particularly to challenge “deficit theorising” (Te Kōtahitanga, 2009, p. 15) that limits engagement with students, and Māori students in particular. The problem encountered was that the discourses of teaching as an

experience-based practice supported the development of individual teacher theorising to explain student disengagement or lack of success in terms of the standard metrics of school achievement. In contrast, the holistic view of students propounded within *Te Kōtahitanga* requires a constant guardedness against premature interpretations of attitudes or behaviours.

However, what this excerpt of conversation also illustrates was teachers instructing *each other* through conversation. Although both of the participants were equally familiar with the processes and interactions within co-construction groups, the excerpt showed (40-77 – 40-94) a carefully detailed scene-setting for the comment “what I appreciated about that .. efficient learning” (40-94). The effect was to emphasise the importance of this to the speaker, to reinforce the position being taken that “being prepared” (40-96) was the prerequisite for “worthwhile discussion” (40-97). Those neoliberal discourses of efficiency and value were the main point, stressing the individual responsibility of teachers to their colleagues.

“We need the best teachers”: using evidence collaboratively

The teacher in the following excerpt referred directly to how she interpreted her role as one with a position of responsibility. In doing so she was unequivocal in her judgements and positioned her thinking as closely aligned to the discourses of data-led decision making: “using data better” (41-5).

Excerpt 41 — “We need the best teachers”: defined by data

<p>1 .. where do you see your 2 focus with inquiry going 3 for yourself? 4 mm mm [nodding] 5 6 7 8 9 10</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">my own plan? um .. I’ve just moved on from my goal for Te Kōtahitanga using data better for my planning so we’re just doing a unit on Māori heroes so ... [unclear] .. so that I can group them better, so using that data I can better within the unit – so it’s still topic-based, but it’s also very much</p>
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11		directed of where students are at .. so if
12		there are .. groups for reading and writing
13		within that topic, so that I can get an idea
14		of ... where .. where it could be .. really, we
15	mm ..	need the best teachers
16	where does that comment	
17	take us? .. yes	you mean: “the best teachers”?
18	.. but? ..	I’ve got that ..
19	but you’re saying they’re	
20	not the best teachers ..	they’re not that
21	what are the	strong anyway ..
22	best teachers?	no, I mean one’s still doing lots of
23	right	work on bringing up his competency .. but
24	.. right	having our buddy here has been a help ..
25		Yeah, the team thing is working really well,
26		but I know a lot of people are doing
27		individual professional development, so ..
28	.. so you’re not worried	
29	about the individual?	not at this point,
30		because I think as a department we need a
31	[nodding]	lot about the scheme, using data to inform
32	yeah ..	... when you look at some of my staff ..
33	right ..	I don’t know if they’d ..
34		does that sound mean?
35	[shrugs] it’s what it is,	
36	you know ..	

Even though I invited an individual response by asking “where do you see your focus with inquiry going for yourself?”, it was evident that the leadership role for the department was given priority over a co-construction approach, for “my goal for Te Kōtahitanga” (41-5) was immediately conflated with the expectation imposed on the other teachers in the department “so *we*’re just doing a unit on Māori heroes” (41-6). This perspective was then justified by the observation that

“we need the best teachers” (41-14), in contrast to the ones in her department who were “not that strong” (41-20). I was invited to agree, “when you look at some of my staff” (41-32), and responded accordingly “right” (41-33). However, there was still some tension because of her views on the teaching practice of the teachers for whom she was responsible. That was shown in the recruiting comment “does that sound mean?” (41-34). The non-committal response “it’s what it is” (41-35) served as an invitation to re-position her assessment, continuing the troubling of the construct begun with the earlier question “where does that comment take us?” (41-16). What this illustrated was collaborative reflection, but this was only possible because sufficient trust already existed between the participants.

One of the main features of this exchange was the emphasis on teachers working together: “the team thing is working really well” (41-25), as opposed to the “individual professional development” (41-27). The neoliberal discourse of managerialism was invoked to justify keeping teachers “all up to the mark” (Olssen, 1996, p. 340) because the professionalism of individual teachers was questioned: “when you look at some of my staff .. I don’t know if they’d” (41-32). That comment separates the speaker from her colleagues.

“Yeess, although”: qualified repositioning

What is apparent in the following excerpt from a conversation with a different participant is that although not all teachers may endorse the practice of an education policy initiative as it applies to them directly, such initiatives may still cause a re-evaluation of their practice or theory.

Excerpt 42 — “Yeess, although”: a form of repositioning

<p>60 so what I’m hearing is that 61 what works is quite 62 important .. 63 .. so do you have 64 conversations about that in 65 your department meetings? 66 .. what works?</p>	<p>.. yes, .. to hear [nods]</p>
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67	.. and, .. um um .. about what works, [nods]
68	and Te Kōtahitanga?	yes, definitely .. yeah [nodding] .. and
69	.. the co-construction	that's good .. aahh ..
70	or the ..	yes, yes ..
71		definitely the .. ummm .. yeah .. in the ..
72		in the co-construction .. yees, although
73		I find it's usually with the .. when I'm
74		talking to the facilitator, .. afterwards ..
75		that we get what worked well and what
76		didn't work and how I'd really like it to
77		work better, but yes, in our co-
78		construction group we do say [nodding
79		thoughtfully]
80		.. to at least a degree .. what's working
81		for them .. and .. that's good ..

This excerpt shows that sometimes teachers have reservations or hesitancy about co-construction and sharing with colleagues outside their subject area, as evidenced by the comment “yees, although” (42-72), and “to at least a degree .. what's working for *them*” (42-81), a distancing that is absent from the earlier use of “we” (42-75). “There is not only the question of whether particular ways of doing are the most effective to reach certain ‘outcomes,’ but also the question whether they are the most educational ways” (Biesta, 2015, p. 79). In *Te Kōtahitanga*, as in much professional development available to teachers, formulaic approaches are favoured not only because they have already proven to be effective for some, but because they have been *measurable* and therefore allow for teachers to be compared. What Richardson and Ashton-Warner demonstrated, however, was that teachers who develop their own distinctive ways of teaching open space for new perspectives on practice. In excerpt 42 above, the hesitancy of the teacher to share in co-construction: “we do say .. to at least a degree” (42-78) was in contrast to the observation that “I find it's usually . . . when I'm talking to the facilitator .. afterwards” (42-73) that benefits were found.

Both of the teachers participated in the searching for words to shape meanings. The researcher began by posing several questions together, in an unrehearsed response to recognising the research interview modality and in an attempt to steer the conversation away from that positioning into a more dialogic co-creation of shared understandings and meaning. This approach, resisting early closure, continued throughout the excerpt. In response, the teacher included many pauses while answering, as well as other indicators of reflecting, considering how to contribute, such as “aahh .. yes, yes ..” (42-69). The effect of this was the adoption of a reflective stance by both the teachers, which continued beyond this initial excerpt into the rest of the dialogue. The topic of conversation was set by the questions, but the mode of engagement and interaction was influenced by the established relationship between the teachers, and the mutual engagement in inquiry contributed to the effects.

“How do I find the 'right' word? How do I choose among words?
... At last a word comes: "That's it!" Sometimes I can say why.
This is simply what searching, this is what finding, is like here”
(Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 186e)⁶².

Reflection involved searching for words and ideas to come to a realisation that was acceptable for the context. In the conversation the reflection was nudged towards considered criticality by the combined histories of previous understandings and interpretations of positioning about the topic.

“What matters is that teachers consider their teaching practices and the theories that underpin them, in order to maximise their students’ opportunities to learn” (Timperley et al., 2007, p. 201). The interaction showed an examining of practice from the perspective of “what worked well and what didn’t work” (42-75), an accessible theory of teacher practice as grounded in experience. With that, what was absent but implicit was the expectation that Pākehā discourses would continue to prevail amongst teachers, that Māori discourses would be adapted and assimilated into the patterns of relationships within the teacher community.

⁶² “Was finde ich das 'richtige' Wort? Wie wähle ich unter den Worten? . . . Endlich kommt ein Wort: "Das ist es!" *Manchmal* kann ich sagen, warum. So schaut eben hier das Suchen aus, und so das Finden” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 186).

“Frenemies” find a common focus: shared values and beliefs

“Communities are organised around relationships and ideas. They create social structures that bond people together in a oneness and that bind them to a set of shared values and beliefs” (Sergiovanni, 1999, p. 15). In the following excerpt the teacher continued her earlier reflections, commenting on the different ideas that made it difficult for teachers to agree. The school being discussed had accepted the agenda of raising Māori student achievement, but the different theories that teachers had formed, based on their classroom experiences, sometimes generated quite divergent beliefs about the most appropriate ways to proceed in order to make this happen. In order to “focus on the common goal” (43-206), the *shared* beliefs and values needed to be prioritised above those of each individual.

Excerpt 43 — “long-term frenemies”: co-constructing despite differences

198		yeah, we can get long-term
199		enemies .. frenemies I call them because
200	mm, mm .. [nodding &	they're not to their faces are they
201	smiling]	enemies .. long-term frenemies who are
202		actually .. co-constructing together ..
203	[chuckle] yes ..	because they've got a common goal of
204	yes	raising Māori student achievement .. and
205	[nodding] mm	they can let all the other .. stuff .. go
206	stuff go .. yes ..	and focus on the common goal ..
207		genuinely ..
208	genuinely	and people who have
209	focus ..	lost their reputations are regaining them
210		..
211	interesting ..	yeah .. so those who have lost their mana
212		because the .. um .. it led to projects that
213		have failed .. for the kids .. it's gone
214	uh huh .. [nods]	underground would indicate we are .. you
215	[hesitantly] yes ..	know, we've always been collective ..

216	[nodding] mm	but there's .. there's been a surface
217		to it .. we didn't go under ..
218	right .. [nodding]	and one of them was that , getting
219	right	organized for success for Māori students
220	[nodding]	.. and come together with this new
221	mm ..	.. challenge .. which we met .. and
222		we did it in two years .. supposed to take
223		five .. they call us the Rolls-Royce model
224	.. really? !!	of the schools .. our phase ..
225		because the change happened across 17
226	wow! [nods]	schools faster than it did in the last
227		phases .. so that's that
228		accelerated .. um .. because we .. because
229		it was the spiralling model .. what
230	[nods] right ..	we learnt in the first, second, third and
231		fourth phases .. we were able to
232	mm ..	step on their shoulders and see further ..
233		but we don't
234	that's pretty fantastic! ..	think we are .. we think we've got a
235	..	long way to go .. [laughs]
236	well, but that's	
237	a good recognition to have	
238	too, isn't it?	

In adopting a macro perspective on the impact of *Te Kōtahitanga* on the school, the politics of difference are examined: “we can get long-term enemies .. frenemies I call them . . . co-constructing together” (43-198). With greater collaboration between teachers, opportunities had arisen where they could set aside their differences such as loss of reputation, “those who have lost their mana” (43-211), and work more closely together. In contrast to the previous teacher's construct of individuality, saying “I find it's usually . . . when I'm talking to the facilitator . . . that we get what worked well and what didn't work and how I'd really like it to work better” (42-73), this participant ascribed

teacher learning to being embedded in community “we’ve always been collective” (43-215).

Perhaps in response to the hesitancy (43-215) and limited support for that suggestion “mm” (43-216), she accepted the superficiality of some changes with “there’s been a surface to it .. we didn’t go under” (43-216), but persisted with the overview, comparing the progress made with the previous phases of *Te Kōtahitanga* implemented in other schools “they call us the Rolls-Royce model” (43-223), and acknowledging the learning from those earlier phases “we were able to step on their shoulders and see further” (43-231). The effect produced by these statements is very affirmative: “wow!” (43-226) and “that’s pretty fantastic!” (43-234). That elicited the obligatory modesty shown in “we think we’ve got a long way to go [laughs]” (43-234), demonstrating an emphasis on maintaining connectedness. The final “but that’s a good recognition to have too” (43-236) referred back to the original “smarty-pants” positioning.

It is not possible to know to what extent *frenemies* existed because of the combined discourses of individual competition and responsabilization, but the Māori *whanaungatanga* (connectedness in relationship) was the lens through which this participant viewed the co-constructing. Also of note was the reference to *mana* (status) implicit in “people who have lost their reputations are regaining them” (43-208), being associated with “we’ve always been collective” (43-215). Those comments positioned democratic issues at the centre of teaching, rather than the view of teachers as self-interested, separate individuals. “It is not the case that in education we can simply use any means as long as they are “effective” . . . This is why education is at heart a moral practice more than a technological enterprise” (Biesta, 2007, p. 10). The structure of schooling in Aotearoa/New Zealand has reinforced social inequality (Wylie, 2013a) rather than reducing disparities between Māori and Pākehā. *Te Kōtahitanga* was a policy response to the deficiencies of the system, addressing *deficit theorising* by teachers (Bishop & Berryman, 2009). Teachers in this study have illustrated that different cultural discourses invite different perspectives, that the pervasive discourses of schooling continue to influence their understandings and practice, and that *tikanga Māori* (Māori ways of doing things) remains central for some and at the margins for others. This

reaffirms that the individual has limited impact on the discourses of the teacher community, a point well recognised by the call for whole-school reform (Bishop, 2011; Bishop et al., 2010).

“Diving deeper into the power of conversation”: reflection

The final excerpts include a discussion with one of the Māori teachers about the study itself. The key concept was the notion of “deeper” (44-8; 44-10; 44-21), with the expectation that analysis could produce more than a superficial understanding of what was involved in conversations. In a sense, the transcripts paused the flow of time and offered up the words and meanings to such reflection. Yet there is no more finality in the written texts than in the oral versions. “I can know what someone else is thinking, not what I am thinking” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 189e)⁶³. The meaning of the conversations was situated and illustrated in the (re)positioning of the participants.

Excerpt 44 — “diving deeper into the power of conversation”

<p>1 .. so do you see? .. how 2 much alignment do you see 3 between what you 4 understand of what I’m 5 trying to do .. and 6 your purposes? 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 [nods] 14 15</p>	<p>[nodding] yeah mm [nodding] yeah .. I think .. the .. the investigation or the .. the .. deeper look at conversation that you’re .. that you’re trying to have with colleagues .. that sort of diving deeper into .. into the power of conversation and what it might mean in the context for us as teachers .. that’s .. that’s .. sits well and aligns itself well because I .. I’m .. I have been aware since a very young age of</p>
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⁶³ “Ich kann wissen, was der Andere denkt, nicht was ich denke” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 189)

16		being taught and brought up the way I
17	mm ..	have been that conversa.. that
18	..	talk is powerful .. the words we use can
19		make or .. or break or whatever, can
20		inform or prejudice or whatever .. so um
21		.. it sits well with me the deeper look at
22		how our conversations can shape or can
23		inform or misinform or whatever ..

Discourses of positioning were apparent in “talk is powerful” (44-17), “the words we use can make or break” (44-18), and “how our conversations can shape or can inform or misinform” (44-21). Also evident in the same comments were discourses of connectedness, of social democracy, and of shared meaning. “When I think in language, there aren't 'meanings' going through my mind in addition to the verbal expressions: the language itself is the vehicle of thought” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 90e, §329)⁶⁴. The process of thought was apparent in the changes being made as words were used and then replaced with others: “that’s .. that’s .. sits well” (44-13), and “that conversa .. that talk is powerful” (44-17) forming the response to the original question, searching for an answer and expressing it with “sits well and aligns itself well” (44-13), then an explanation, followed by the confirmation “it sits well with me” (44-21). What was also evident was that both of those slight changes of word choice followed feedback: “[nods]” (44-13) and “mm” (44-17), indicating the effect of interaction on the shaping of meaning. What the process also illustrated was that the interaction created a convergence, with the participants establishing a mutually acceptable position.

“It’s quite nice to be misunderstood sometimes”: provocations

In the following excerpt of dialogue, the *process* of pursuing knowledge and understandings was viewed as more important than the meaning ascribed to what was said, “because we often try to communicate our understanding and

⁶⁴ “Wenn ich in der Sprache denke, so schweben mir nicht neben dem sprachlichen Ausdruck noch 'Bedeutungen' vor; sondern die Sprache selbst ist das Vehikel des Denkens” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 90, §329).

sometimes it gets misunderstood” (45-31), and the excitement of that process was captured by the recall of a concept: “the important thing . . . is not that we’re understood .. but that we’re misunderstood” (45-27). The idea of being misunderstood was explored further by both participants, but because they were at the same time trying to reach agreement, it was also slightly incongruous. The interaction shows an element of fun, of playing with the idea, confirming by nodding (45-35, 45, 56), laughter (45-48, 49), and verbal agreement “yes” (45-35, etc.), that were all indicators of trust between the participants. “Because all our knowledge is based on multiple acts of trust, the experience of pursuing knowledge is not simply reassuring, does not make us feel comfortable and safe, but is exciting, exhilarating” (Lingis, 2007, p. 79). The engagement between the participants was based on trust, and the effect of the conversation was to reaffirm that. In this excerpt, unlike the style of *pronouncements* in excerpt 26, the comments were tentative, including modifiers such as “often” (45-31), sometimes (45-33, 49), as well as being inclusive with the use of “we” (45-31, etc.), and phrasing such as “you know what I mean?” (45-54). That inclusiveness was consistent with Māori discourses of connectedness.

Excerpt 45 — “It’s quite nice to be misunderstood sometimes”

24		.. yeah .. that’s something that I .. I
25		can’t recall who said it but it’s .. I heard
26		somebody say on a podcast or something
27		I listened to the other day .. “the
28		important thing isn’t .. is not that we’re
29		understood .. but that we’re
30	right .. that’s	misunderstood”
31	nice .. that’s nice ..	.. because we often try to
32		communicate our understanding and
33		sometimes it gets misunderstood .. and
34		that’s when the conflict or [shrugs]
35	[nodding] yes	tensions arise or
36	yes, where interpretations	
37	are put .. that you didn’t	

38	mean at all [shaking head]	
39		yeah .. and that's how I see these
40		conversations revealing is that it's
41	yes ..	important for us to understand each
42		other but in that you need to be cognit ..
43	yes ..	cognitive of .. sensitive .. that we ..
44		misinterpret or don't misunderstand
45	[nodding] yeah, yeah	each other so the clarity
46	..	can come with all .. having said that,
47	yeah ..	Maurice, it's quite nice to be
48	[laughs]	misunderstood sometimes ..
49		[laugh] and sometimes it's nice to
50		be purposely put .. putting people in that
51		situation not in a manipulative manner
52		or destructive manner but in a manner to
53	right ..	cause .. cause thought to .. cause
54		discussion you know what I mean?
55	yeah .. I think I do, yes ..	
56	[nodding]	

The point being made was that value occurs in the *process* of interaction rather than in referring back to what had previously been understood, and that being misunderstood was also part of that process, because misunderstanding was “when the conflict or [shrugs] tensions arise” (45-34), where the shrug indicated an acknowledgment that there was also the possibility of negative consequences for an interaction. However, that also afforded an opportunity to collaborate further to find shared meaning through “putting people in that situation . . . to . . . cause discussion” (45-50), and it was agreed that it was “important for us to understand each other” (45-41). Nevertheless, being misunderstood and provoking further interactions could contribute to meaning-making through deconstruction, as “in a manner to cause . . . discussion” (45-52). “Human communication is not about the transportation of *information* but the exchange of *meaning*” (Biesta, 2010, p. 78), and such meaning would require interaction.

That aspect was offered as support for the value of the study, in the expectation that the conclusions would be broadly applicable. The comment about conflict or tensions was based on understandings of community, in particular the “need to be cognit [seeking the word *cognisant*] . . . sensitive” (45-41) to others for the better functioning of that teacher community. The well-being of the community was the basis for engagement in this portion of dialogue.

Educational communication — but for that matter any form of human communication — is therefore not a matter of give and take, but more a matter of give and mistake. It is here that we can begin to see deconstruction occurring in education in that the condition of possibility of educational communication appears to be at the very same time its condition of impossibility. (Biesta, 2010b, p. 79)

Where teachers apply deconstructive principles in a spirit of accommodation, as in the conversation excerpt above, their communication has the effect of strengthening connections in the teacher community. Tracing such connectedness is the essence of *whakapapa*, so aligns with a Māori worldview. Supporting connections, *whanaungatanga*, is part of being in community. For Māori, conversations are about the community more than the individual.

The social construction of schooling: Chapter conclusion

The exploration of conversations in this study has been based on a view that interactions between teachers and discourses of schooling are socially constructed, and I posit that that view has also been socially constructed. Over the three chapters of analysis of excerpts I have explored some connections to the philosophical issues of positioning as well as the implications of these on teacher theories and considerations of community. In this chapter my exploration has been on how teachers were influenced by Māori or Pākehā discourses, primarily with the changes and challenges encountered in *Te Kōtahitanga* with expectations of collaborating in co-construction meetings.

One of the main features of *Te Kōtahitanga* was the co-construction meetings where groups of teachers discussed particular students and their learning progress. Some of the teachers in this study supported that debate for the

personal understandings that resulted, while others described them in negative terms, particularly when the teacher's own positioning was challenged. In contrast, the benefits of co-construction meetings were seen to be in developing greater cohesiveness within the groups of teachers and the greater unity of purpose that afforded.

Although there was some excitement expressed about the value of *Te Kōtahitanga* for the improvements in student engagement and learning outcomes, what was also noticeable was the general absence of direct comment about Māori perspectives. Māori language terms were sometimes used interchangeably with English equivalents, but the conversations showed little engagement with the dominance of Pākehā discourses on the structures of schooling and curriculum.

One aspect that did receive attention was the evidential basis of teacher professional development, and in particular how *Te Kōtahitanga* was contributing to more of a department focus in contrast to individual teachers working on their separate classroom programmes of work. However, no connections were made between practices of collaboration and constructs of connectedness embedded in Te Ao Māori (the Māori worldview). Mentions of evidence were therefore restricted to concepts of data rather than discussion and consensus.

The effects of the discussions about *Te Kōtahitanga* and Māori perspectives were mixed, ranging from one of the teachers who positioned them as central, others who had integrated some of the key ideas into their theorising, and some teachers who challenged the relevance of such perspectives for their practice. Of particular consequence, however, was the space that was opened up for discussion of the bounds or limitations on how teachers conceptualised their own positioning. Those and other implications are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 11 – Conclusions and implications

Teaching is a social activity and a socially-oriented profession. Interactions between teachers shape the teacher community and the discourses of schooling.

Excerpt 46 – "I involved all the rest of my staff in it"

I was so excited that .. that I .. um .. I went to .. I involved all the rest of my staff in it .. they all came to the second one and .. um .. and now they're all excited as well, so she's a fantastic motivator.

This excerpt exemplifies the collegial, collaborative spirit within the teacher community, characterised by an ethos of sharing. Such sharing indicates a valuing of interdependence, rather than self-interest, although it could also be seen as an investment in the expectation of later reciprocity.

Using the concept of community alongside the idea of individuality as the prism for meaning-making encourages perspectives that emphasise the interplays of positioning and the processes of social construction of discourse and identity. From this perspective, participation in community is built on shared understandings. Those understandings and meanings are shaped by discursive traditions and moderated by interactions within the community as well as impacted by ideas from outside. The effects of such interactions can be seen as changes of position by participants relative to the community as a whole and to each other, as well as changes to the relative influence of the constitutive discourses.

In this chapter I review the different strands that have been integral to the study in the same order as they occurred earlier. Although these strands are reviewed separately, they are closely connected and I have attempted to make apparent some of the links between them. I begin with a discussion of the philosophical orientation of the study, the view of the social construction of the individual and the teacher community. From that beginning I review the ways in which language shaped the conversational interactions and the effects of the dialogues. Next I consider the different perspectives and understandings of fairness and unfairness as illustrated in the conversations and the implications of those

positions. Those considerations serve as an introduction to a discussion of the influence of various discourses of schooling and teaching. Before concluding, I offer some suggestions about the contribution that teacher research could make to the profession.

Always under construction: the social dynamics of community

In this study the participants are integral to the teacher community and are also subject to the influence of geography. The district of Tairāwhiti is relatively isolated, and because of the high proportion of Māori who trace their *whakapapa* links over many generations to the first arrivals, the discourses of connectedness between individuals are very apparent.

As socially constructed beings, teachers are positioned in community by the discourses that have shaped them and by the stances of those with whom they find themselves interacting. There are tensions arising from that positioning created by the interplay of different discourses. The values and beliefs that are represented by positions within a community find expression in a context where meaning is recognised and understood through the practices that constitute the collective values and beliefs. From the outside, meaning is ascribed differently.

Rather than accepting meaning as being resident in individual minds, the study showed that meaning was created by interactions, that it was accordingly fluid, and that external discourses of individuality and (mis)understandings of the nature of language as being separate from its users served to perpetuate education policy constructs that ignored the inseparability of participants in dialogue from what was being communicated. Equally, “the tendency to treat cognition as a purely individual matter and the tendency to ignore the world” (Putnam, 1975, p. 271), which have become increasingly apparent in education policy from the 1940s, situated cognition in discourses of individuality. In contrast, the social constructionist perspective of this study situated meaning in the spaces where participant interactions and their common understandings intersected.

Individual thinking, incorporated in community

The teachers in this study had all been teaching in Tairāwhiti schools for many years, and had all been shaped by the culture of the district where tikanga Māori

(the Māori way of doing things) has influenced the Pākehā inhabitants over several generations towards a similar understanding of social connectedness.

In contrast, von Hayek, one who argued strongly for *pure individualism* and was an advocate for liberal economics, makes an observation based on his own experience:

I remember well how surprised and even shocked I was myself when as a young student, on my first contact with English and American contemporaries, I discovered how much they were disposed to conform in all externals to common usage rather than, as seemed natural to me, to be proud to be different and original in most respects . . . This cult of the distinct and different individuality has, of course, deep roots in the German intellectual tradition. (von Hayek, 1948/1980, p. 26)

That German tradition of discourses emphasising individuality also limited von Hayek's capacity to reflect from an alternate perspective. The context for this study provides a contrasting frame of reference to such individualistic traditions. Even so, teachers are frequently regarded as discrete *selves*. Education policies and planning assume that teachers have relative autonomy in their work, and individual differences are predicated on interpretations that favour perspectives of heterogeneity rather than commonality, even though those same perspectives are shaped and strengthened in community, confirmed by interactions, and expressed in discursive positioning.

Within the community of teachers in this study there was evident diversity, with competing discourses acknowledged and accepted. Paradoxically, this tolerance for difference rather than sameness appeared as both solidarity and conformity. Interactions within the community constantly re-positioned the participants according to their expertise and interests, and the effects of their interactions included consolidating some positions and shifting others.

Through the lens of community, the notion of autonomous selves clearly distinct from others can be seen as a useful artifice. As a notion that is central to the functioning of the community, it is useful in that it serves to enhance simple ideas of individual identity and psychological coherence rather than the more

complex perspectives of multiple subjectivities and context-influenced interactions. Current secondary schooling structures and policies in Aotearoa/New Zealand are predicated on ideas of individuality, evident in the emphasis on individual learning and credentialing, despite the education traditions that align more closely with conceptions of community, such as organizing students into subject classes and year-levels. Equally, the administration structures of schooling emphasise the perspective that teachers are individually rather than collectively responsible and accountable. In the conversations of this study, teachers illustrated the effects of individualistic discourses with an acceptance of community norms, but at the same time demonstrated their sense of belonging to a greater whole with the use of the first-person *plural* and the sharing of stories intelligible only because of common understandings.

Shared meaning-making: the effects of language

Language is a community resource: it is shared meaning-making, enhanced and supplemented by gestures and other non-verbal components. “As social beings . . . the way we use language plays a crucial role when enhancing, maintaining, and challenging relationships in interpersonal communication” (Locher, 2008, p. 509). Language is a key factor in relationships and community cohesiveness, instrumental in shaping understandings, conserving culture and preserving privilege. More than simply a tool for communication, language is implicated in cognition and limits what it is possible to think. Language positions people in relation to others and to discourses of the community. The “traditional philosophy of language, like much traditional philosophy, leaves out other people and the world; a better philosophy and a better science of language must encompass both” (Putnam, 1975, p. 271). In this study the focus on the language interactions and the effects of those interactions both contributed to an understanding of how teachers were positioned by the discourses of schooling and teaching.

In examining the *effects* of the conversations what became apparent was that the participants were positioning themselves and each other in ways that maintained community norms, both in the ways in which meaning was being

co-created during the interactions and also in relation to the various discourses. Included among those effects of the conversations were the ways in which the participants reinforced their positions relative to each other and to the background context. This was particularly evident when the dialogue became an unconscious form of collusion and resistance. There were instances where one of the participants sought to shift the direction of the dialogue, to challenge the discursive stance, or to bring something from the margins to a more central position. However, the established patterns of interactions mostly redirected such attempts, with whoever was audiencing either ignoring the speaker challenge or changing the direction of the dialogue until it aligned more closely with the collective norms.

Collegial conversations as a conserving *mechanism*

The study showed that the participants collaborated in the producing and refining of their professional expectations, and that re-positioning was an activity negotiated through their collegial relationships. Language provided the links between their experiences and the interpretations assigned to them. The words that were used, as well as the grammars that linked them into forms of expression, were always connected to existing usage, to meanings that had been previously assigned, to ways of thinking that had been reified. “Typically, teachers politely reinforce each other's practices” (Annan et al., 2003, p. 34), and such patterns of agreement were clearly apparent in this study. However, that respectful collegial support was also necessary for the maintaining of a caring community. The school reform project of *Te Kotahitanga* required teachers to actively participate in challenging the discourses and assumptions of schooling (Bishop et al., 2010), but because those discourses and assumptions were inextricable from the teachers' own experiences and their subjectivities, demands for change prompted some resistance. The conversations in the study became a mechanism of resistance, dependent on the anticipation of collegial support, and the effect of performing and audiencing such resistance in dialogue was to conserve the existing beliefs and values against the expectations of change.

The prevailing language of secondary schooling, of personal responsibility and individual accountability, promoted and sustained discourses of teaching and learning that impeded the realisation of alternate perspectives. Moreover, there was “no way to step outside such discourses” (W. Carr, 1995, p. 125). Accordingly, the ongoing subjectification of the participants continued to be a shaping by the discourses of schooling that were available to the teachers. Those discourses carried forward the thinking and traditions of education from the past, enmeshed with the influences of the physical structures of classrooms and the changing technologies of teaching.

Re-positioning: towards and away forces

One of the things that became apparent from my analysis of the conversations was that the teacher interactions conformed to the norms of the local teacher community. Regardless of what position was taken, there was agreement and support offered. Even when that agreement or support was less than fulsome, or where it was offered somewhat conditionally, it was expressed nevertheless. As a result, the mutual understandings of positioning within the community were maintained. Whenever teachers made remarks that positioned themselves more towards the margins, for example by challenging school policy, those remarks were supported and that position was maintained. The conversations served to only slightly modify any stance that was taken.

Communities are characterised by a relative equilibrium between the values and ideas that are central and those that are more marginal as well as a constant movement between the centre and the margins. Bakhtin (1981) refers to these as centripetal, for those with an inward movement, and centrifugal, for those being pushed out more towards the margins. As outsider or marginal discourses colonise space in the community, they increasingly encroach upon what is at the centre. This results in displacement of other discourses that previously occupied that space. It is in this dynamic that learning and change become visible, as central discourses are modified by the pressures of others from the margins.

Using this perspective to consider the conversations and the discourses implicated in those interactions, what was evident was the lack of distinction and categorisation of the discourses. Many discourses made their presence felt

in the guise of analogies and stories. The philosophical incongruity of accepting conflicting progressive and neoliberal discourses as part of schooling did not appear to create dissonance for the participants. Rather, the teachers appeared to accept that schooling produced ideological conflicts and were generally more concerned with discussing the needs of their students. Their perspectives were inclusive of the different schooling dimensions of individual qualification as preparation for employment, and socialisation as part of developing an understanding of citizenship. In addition, because all of the participants understood that students needed pastoral care, they also showed awareness of schooling as subjectification. For instance, the teacher in excerpt 15 who was telling the story of making home contact when a girl stormed out of his class, or the teacher in excerpt 6 talking about the student who didn't go home because they were "going to get a hiding", or the teacher in excerpt 29, "trying to get kids . . . to want to be who they are" (29-105), or the teacher in excerpt 36 saying: "well this tuakana's gonna help that .. teina" (36-103). All such comments indicated that the teachers recognised the importance of helping their students to learn to be responsible as well as knowing how and when to take the initiative.

It is worth reiterating that all of the participants were experienced teachers, so all had learned ways of working that aligned with the local discourses of schooling. The result was a belief that teachers had individual approaches to teaching in a secondary school and a variety of perspectives, even though the community norms induced conformity.

It was apparent that the teachers found it important to maintain harmonious collegial relationships, or at least to keep those relationships in working order. One effect of troubling the discourses of the teacher community is isolation, being positioned more towards the margins than the centre. Some of the teachers in the study, however, were adapted to such positioning. For them, participating in the study did not represent any pressure either to conceal their position or to shift it to a more ideologically standard stance. Although "teachers were typically unaware of the impact of their prevailing discourses on the way they thought" (Timperley et al., 2007, p. 167), they expressed commitment to the values and beliefs that had shaped their practice and resistance to any

mandates for change. The criteria for teachers to retain their status as practising professionals requires that they “critically examine their own beliefs, including cultural beliefs, and how they impact on their professional practice” (Education Council New Zealand, 2015b). Few of the teachers in this study, however, displayed evidence of applying such critical thinking to their *beliefs*, since the prevailing discourses of schooling did not invite such reflection. Indeed, to do so would have been to challenge the myths that were so tightly woven into the fabric of education practice. It is visible, for example, in excerpt 11 where the teacher comments on the practice of streaming students by ability, commenting that it’s the “elephant in the room” and a “cruel, debilitating practice”. However, the teacher in excerpt 23 illustrates the practice of conforming with accountability requirements in stating: “next year when I do it, but .. as for sitting down and graphing it” (23-97), which at the same time illustrates the gap between the expectation that teachers provide evidence of reflection and the classroom realities that cause teachers to reflect on classroom activities that did *not* work as expected.

Many of those who have both studied and influenced education policies, including Beeby (1986), Codd (2005), Goodlad (1984/2004), and Hattie (2014), have acknowledged that education thinking is based on assumptions and unknowns. Accordingly, the reliance of teachers on personal experiences to shape their working theories of education was unsurprising. Such theories seem to the teachers to be deeply personal, as with the teacher in excerpt 18 insisting that no professional learning or reflection will cause him to “change my teaching style” (18-32). Similarly, the teacher in excerpt 22 claiming that “we were all self-taught” (22-46), but then observing that “what was good was the getting together with other schools .. and finding what they’d done that worked really really well” (22-51), indicating that the stories that other teachers told made a difference. These *individual* working theories of practice are not only what these teachers learned from experience, they are also supported by the discourses of individuality that prevail in schools, diminishing the contributions that others make to enhance their understandings.

Conventions and conformity

What my analysis of the conversations showed was that despite the strength of the discourses of individuality, there was also an unarticulated expectation that other teachers would confirm the appropriateness of their *individual* positioning in the context of any topic. For instance, the teacher in excerpt 27 who was resisting the call for evidence despite the accountability discourses “yep, write it down” (27-11) — that teacher was showing the expectation of collegial support for her positioning. The conversation analyses showed that teacher subjectivities were entwined with the discourses of schooling rather than learning, that constructs of fairness were more closely connected to historical patterns of privilege than to moral reasoning about equity, and that past practices and school structures carried the values and beliefs of embedded discourses from previous generations of teachers.

What was noticeable in the conversations was how little of the dialogue had a direct focus on teaching and how much was attending to the relationships between the teachers. This is consistent with the findings of Annan, Lai and Robinson (2003). Equally, most of the dialogue about addressing the different learning needs of students through an emphasis on professional learning provided by *Te Kōtahitanga* avoided any direct discussion of differences between Māori and Pākehā perspectives. Instead, there was a tendency to focus on the construct of evidence — an indication that scientific discourses currently prevail in determining education policies and therefore loom large in teacher thinking. These scientific discourses stem from the 20th century notion of education as a form of science, amenable to the same approaches. However, the effect of the focus on evidence in the dialogues was to privilege the status quo of teacher experience as the key factor in classroom practice.

Interpretations of unfairness

Different constructs of fairness and unfairness became apparent in the study, including the discourse of equality of opportunity and the concomitant endorsement of embedded privilege, and the alternate call to address social inequalities through an emphasis on equity of outcomes with particular attention to the need to address Māori achievement through the *Te Kōtahitanga*

project. However, what the participants determined to be fair or unfair *for the teacher* depended on how they interpreted themselves to be positioned as well as on the context. In the context of Pākehā discourses of individuality, being constrained by discourses or practices of personal accountability was interpreted as unfair in the sense of impinging on professional freedom. Based on the discourse of self-determination at the heart of neoliberal ideology, position calls to be subordinate to the school, *Te Kōtahitanga* or the teacher community was characterised by resistance.

There is all the difference in the world between treating people equally and attempting to make them equal. While the first is the condition of a free society, the second means, as De Tocqueville described it, "a new form of servitude." (von Hayek, 1948/1980, p. 16)

Essentially, in several different scenarios, the neoliberal categorisation of the teacher as an *agent* was subverted by the participants to become instead a claim of professional autonomy and agency.

The ideas of privilege and equity can be regarded in the same way as the notions of individuality and community, as neither makes sense without the other. They are differing responses to ideas of fairness and human dignity. In the early years of schooling in Aotearoa/New Zealand it was argued that education was a privilege, not to be squandered on those who would return fewer benefits to society, and to a certain extent that perspective still exists. "Majorities appear compelled to reject multicultural ideology when it is seen as a threat to their higher social status" (Crisp, 2015, p. 14), despite the benefits to society as a whole from reducing inequalities. In contrast, there have been many who believe that investing in education both early and widely, will prevent a later drain on society's resources from those who would otherwise not be able to contribute their share, and to reduce inequality, for "the true measure of public education is not in individual achievement, but in the success of participatory democracy" (O'Connor, 2014, p. 263). In Finland, for example, teachers are expected "to view themselves as public intellectuals who combine conception and implementation, thinking and practice in the struggle for a culture of

democratic values and justice” (Niemi, 2012, p. 35). With greater interaction between school teachers, university staff and local communities, something similar could also be the case in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Colonisation and embedded privilege

The conversations in this study illustrated many of the discourses that are embedded in the teacher community and the practices of schooling. In particular, the accentuating of Pākehā perspectives and attendant prejudice against *tikanga Māori* made apparent the ongoing effects of colonisation. Similarly, the interchanges between the participants made it apparent that the early emphasis on assimilating Māori into the Pākehā understandings of civilisation, as well as the subsequent ‘two-worlds’ discourse that applied only to Māori, ensured that in the meeting of two cultural traditions there was a stark imbalance. Māori were expected to change and find value in Pākehā ways but not the reverse.

The study explored some of the effects on teacher positioning created by the conversations against that backdrop of Māori-Pākehā discourses in schooling. The construct outlined by Timperley et al (2007), that prevailing discourses underpin conceptions of teaching, was illustrated by how teachers were positioned, and how those positionings influenced their interactions with each other. The effects on the individual teachers were intensified by both implicit and explicit pressures from colleagues to conform. Principles of conscience inform understandings and subjectivities (Laughlin, 1996), and the ways in which the participants interpreted their rights and responsibilities were shaped by such principles alongside the constructs of accountability. Normative pressures complement discourses of *autonomization* and *responsibilization* (Rose, 1999), and such pressures to conform were apparent in the fact that the teachers felt compelled to justify their resistance. Several such principled positions were ardently articulated by the participants, expressed in various forms of resistance to positions they did not endorse.

Despite the tensions, participants in the study typified the confidence of experience, a standard metric of credibility in the teacher community. That experience also aligned them with the discourses of being successful within the

teacher community, with their standing enhanced by having been appointed to some position of responsibility within the school. Accordingly, they had all been shaped by the institutional discourses of competition and accorded status. Troubling the discourses of status and professional freedom would also involve troubling the notion of competition itself, that of necessity demands losers in order to declare winners.

Independence-focused or connection-oriented

What was also apparent in the conversations were the differences between the expectations of professional autonomy of some of the participants and their school leaders, as well as conflicts between the internalised constructs of personal professional responsibility of the teachers in tension with the performance measures to which that they were expected to conform. In addition, there was an apparent lack of awareness in some dialogues of the impact that the dominance of Pākehā mores was having on teacher perspectives and any associated capacity for improving cross-cultural understandings. “If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 75e, §242)⁶⁵. The teachers’ judgments were the result from their perceptions, and those perceptions were shaped by their experiences, their positioning in the teacher community, and the discursive environment of schooling. That environment has become permeated with neoliberal discourses, but also includes residual discourses of teaching as a vocation and a social good that remain embedded in the teacher community and the PPTA teachers’ union.

Nevertheless, the lack of acknowledgement that Pākehā perspectives dominate education policy is of particular concern with the recent policy announcements called *Investing in Educational Success* (Ministry of Education, 2015c) that incentivise schools to work together in clusters. Some clusters of schools that share a common ethos will be successful as communities of learning, but others will struggle to adapt to the additional sets of relationships and the cultural differences in the school communities. More significantly, the change from a

⁶⁵ Zur Verständigung durch die Sprache gehört nicht nur eine Übereinstimmung in den Definitionen, sondern (so seltsam dies klingen mag) eine Übereinstimmung in den Urteilen (Wittgenstein, 1953/2003, p. 75, §242)

system that has been built on competition between schools to one that calls for greater collaboration is a cultural shift that will require adjustments. Currently, interschool collaboration occurs in a minority of schools, and most of these are “high-decile” (Wylie, 2013a, p. 7). The main risk from this policy is that inequality will increase further, as the more privileged students in high-decile schools have learning opportunities further enhanced while other schools struggle to integrate because the discourses of separateness and atomisation retain their influence. Teachers cannot avoid being affected by the changing approaches and discourses, as well as the tensions between differing constructs of fairness and equity.

Finnish goals for education include not just recognizing diversity but learning from it (Sahlberg, 2011). Similarly, in Aotearoa/New Zealand there is support for inclusive perspectives and practice (Alton-Lee, 2003), but there remains a lack of understanding amongst teachers of how to explore their own prejudices. Such understandings could be promoted with teachers to reduce prejudice and engender intergroup understandings with greater likelihood of success by using such techniques as “imagined contact” (Stathi, Crisp, & Hogg, 2011). Doing so could contribute to troubling the authority of the assumptions that underpin the biases that prevail within the teacher community.

That which has been sanctioned by tradition and custom has an authority that is nameless, and our finite historical being is marked by the fact that always the authority of what has been transmitted . . . has power over our attitudes and behaviour. All education depends on this. (Gadamer, 1975, p. 249)⁶⁶

However, following Gadamer’s logic, the traditions of schooling and the ordinary understandings that apply within the teacher community serve to author individual teacher attitudes and reinforce the historic bias towards Pākehā perspectives. Collaboration between Māori and Pākehā teachers could begin to address the issues resulting from the historic marginalization of non-

⁶⁶ Das durch Überlieferung und Herkommen Geheiligte hat eine namenlos gewordene Autorität, und unser geschichtliches endliches Sein ist dadurch bestimmt, daß stets auch Autorität des Überkommenen . . . über unser Handeln und Verhalten Gewalt hat. Alle Erziehung beruht darauf. (Gadamer, 1960/2010, p. 285)

Pākehā knowledges in the curriculum and promote more inclusive approaches to teaching by acknowledging traditional Māori forms of knowledge and learning. It would be important for teachers to address this directly, because although the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) is open-ended and intends to be valuing of Māori ways of learning, it still “structures knowledge in ways that privilege a particular construction of knowledge and the history of knowledge” (Peters, 2015, p. 644). Those structures of knowledge are dominated by Pākehā traditions and understandings that are the boundaries for teacher reflection. Without system changes that support troubling those discourses, teachers cannot be other than complicit in continuing to promote the dominant Pākehā constructions of knowledge, embedded as they are in the discourses of schooling and teaching.

“The structure of the New Zealand school system as originally laid down . . . was based on the principle of *selection*” (Fraser, 1939, p. 3), and this was evident in the ongoing influence of discourses of privilege. Those discourses emphasise the development of a narrow range of learning that is deemed to be *academic*, rather than the holistic development of students described in the national curriculum. That overarching curriculum framework emphasises “interpersonal relationships” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 38), and such relationships are expected to contribute to the holistic, social character of schooling. Moreover, according to education policy, the function of assessment is “to improve students’ learning and teachers’ teaching” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 39), rather than determine the curriculum, or drive classroom learning. Despite this policy, an increasing emphasis on comparing the performance of students and schools in NCEA results has increased the competition between schools (Wylie, 2013a). Because socio-economic factors have been shown to be associated with the particular kinds of knowledge that are valued in schooling (Snook & O’Neill, 2014), the adverse effects on the already disadvantaged and the lower-decile schools ought to be described as unfairness, particularly because the widely assumed link between student results and school performance has been shown to be illusory, for “if selectivity is present, then the inference from student results to school performance is unwarranted” (Kinkead, 2015). Much of the prejudice against low-decile schools is unjustifiable, shaped by discourses of

deservingness and the neoliberal ideology of self-interested individuals rather than any recognition of interconnectedness and interdependence.

Equally, the prejudice by Pākehā against tikanga Māori continues because of the prevailing discourses. “The proportion of Gisborne region's population identifying as Māori is projected to increase from 47 percent in 2006 to 50 percent in 2021” (Statistics New Zealand Tatauranga Aotearoa, 2013). According to prevailing ideas of democracy and equity, those changing demographics should challenge the Pākehā assumptions and structures of schooling, especially since Māori students form the majority in all the district's state secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 2015a), and have done so for a number of years. The numbers demand a recognition of the needs as well as the values and beliefs of the majority of the district's student population, yet the thinking and the structures of schools as well as the norms of teacher practice are conserved, in part by the ordinary conversational interactions between teachers.

If the work of teaching is to encourage and support learning, then teachers as *ākonga* (learners) also need ongoing learning interactions. Some of those need to be supportive to create and consolidate understandings of pedagogy, and such empathetic interactions are frequently available within the community of teachers. Other interactions, however, are also needed to challenge assumptions about schooling as well as teacher practice. Such challenges may be more appropriate from those less directly influenced by the prevailing discourses of schooling, those outside the teacher community. “The most important question for educational professionals is . . . not about the *effectiveness* of their actions but about the potential educational *value* of what they do [emphases added]” (Biesta, 2007, p. 10). Challenging the assumptions that support unfairness demands confronting the discourses of self-interest and community.

Discourses of schooling: blended discourses, mixed messages

Several participants in this study showed resistance to being positioned poorly by discourses of accountability and measurement. The principle of accountability had its roots in eighteenth century education (Hoskin, 1993, 1996), but the application of neoliberal principles to schooling in Aotearoa/New

Zealand strengthened the emphasis on accountability at the expense of teacher professional judgement. However, understanding teaching as a vocation rather than simply an occupation challenged the application of *accountability* rather than *responsibility* as applied to the work of teachers (Gorz, 1989; Laughlin, 1996), particularly noting teachers who demonstrated an “*unconditional* desire to help other people” (Gorz, 1989, p. 144, cited in Laughlin, 1996).

The commitment and passion articulated in some of the conversations of this study exemplified that sense of vocation alongside the self-interest commensurate with neoliberal perspectives, showing that the interactions between teachers in this study were shaped by both progressive and neoliberal discourses of schooling and teaching and the collective understandings built on those discourses. The ways that the teachers in this study interacted in conversations indicated that face-to-face talk functioned as a normative mechanism that conserved the values and beliefs of the community.

Absent but implicit⁶⁷: oriented to conserving rather than changing

One of the notable features of the conversations was the lack of critique of the impacts of prevalent discourses of schooling. What was also missing from the dialogues was collaborative reflection that might counterbalance the emphasis on experience in shaping pedagogy. Since the “conventional socialization” (Ball & Cohen, 1999, p. 15) of teachers has them learning their practice in isolation, it is not surprising that talking to improve practice via analysis, critique and challenge was largely absent from the conversations. Typically, the teachers followed the community norms to reinforce each other's positions on practice without inquiring into the effectiveness of such practice.

It was only after expert support was provided that teachers . . . began engaging more fully in learning talk. This suggests to us that such support is necessary to ensure that teachers achieve the level of inquiry required to eradicate ineffective teaching practice and invent more effective ones. (Annan et al., 2003, p. 34)

⁶⁷ “absent but implicit” (White, 2000, p. 36)

Social inequalities are not *created* by schooling, but schools contribute to the problem as they perpetuate ideas of individual abilities rather than connected understandings. However, any *learning talk* between teachers is influenced by the relationships that they have, and everyday exchanges play an important role in maintaining connectedness. In doing so, they contribute to the resilience of the teacher community as a whole and the supportive insider discourses of belonging.

Understandings of pedagogy, when aligned with the benefits of experience, contribute to improving teacher practice. The focus of *Te Kōtahitanga* was on understanding and rejecting *deficit theorising* (Bishop et al., 2009, p. 3), and the focus of *learning talk* is improving reflective inquiry. Both are examples of theory-based practice. The theory of connectedness that underpins this study is similarly important to appreciating conversation as a mechanism that conserves the discourses of the teacher community. The emphasis on an interconnectedness of community collaborations through language challenges conventional thinking, where prevailing discourses of schooling assign individual subjectivities to teachers. This is particularly visible in secondary schools where learning is separated into discrete disciplines and those fields of study further divided into topics for assessment. My intention has not been to deny individual differences but to argue that these can best be understood as constructed in community when viewed through a lens of connectedness.

Almost half a century ago the secondary school teachers' union applied considerable effort attempting to address problems arising from the emphasis on competition and individual achievement (NZPPTA, 1969), but even changes in official education policy and discourse did not produce the desired changes in secondary school teacher praxis (Alison, 2007). This study reaffirms that position. Policy changes do not influence values and beliefs as much as tradition or the context of the local teacher community.

Teacher collegial research: suggestions for future action

The participants in this study were all experienced teachers with stories to tell and insights to share, and the dialogues illustrated the investment in audiencing that colleagues make to acknowledge and support their relative positioning.

In such audiencing, the participants demonstrated the role of the teacher community in validating different individual interpretations of jointly-constructed meaning. Further research is needed to build on this base, where teachers actively engage with each other in collaborative inquiry, reflection and innovation. In this study, at the same time as meaning was co-created through interacting in the performing and audiencing with language, relationships of trust and connectedness in community were also being strengthened. Those relationships and connections are pivotal in teachers' positioning, affecting the whole of the teacher community. Further research by teachers is important, not least because it “emanates from teachers' own questions and frameworks, it reveals what teachers regard as the seminal issues . . . [and] what teachers bring will alter, and not just add to, what is known about teaching” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, p. 8). Several of the participants had committed time and effort to the completion of university studies beyond their initial teacher training, and some of those included research components that offered them different perspectives on their work, which they discussed with some of their colleagues. Further opportunities for collaboration could enhance the benefits of such individual study.

Any teacher research on innovative practice would be entangled with the multiple perspectives within the teacher community, and that would be a strength rather than a problem, because “for those seeking an archaeology that will support an equitable society, a decentered, interdependent, communal subjectivity may be a necessity” (Scheurich, 1997, p. 175). Problems of inequality are not caused by schools (Snook & O'Neill, 2014), but such problems that schools unwittingly perpetuate can be addressed (Bishop et al., 2009, 2010). Teachers must be involved, by choice rather than compliance. “Research on the characteristics of effective professional development indicates that teachers must be active agents in analysing their own practice” (OECD, 2005, p. 217), but “contrived collegiality” (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 110) is counterproductive, because teachers lose the sense of community and trust that supports their interaction.

Teacher collegial research needs to be supported both with sufficient time and suitable facilitators. Such inquiry should be optional rather than mandated, connecting different strands of the curriculum, and rigorous enough to justify

publication. In Finland, the main focus of teacher training has been to develop ways of thinking so that teachers can effectively research their own practice (Niemi, 2012; Sahlberg, 2011; Silander & Välijärvi, 2013). In Aotearoa/New Zealand, most teachers have not arrived in schools with such skills, so outside assistance would be needed, as with *Te Kōtahitanga*. In Finland it took 20 years to develop a research-based culture of education (Sahlberg, 2011). There, “the aim is that teachers internalize a research-orientated attitude towards their work. This means that teachers learn to take an analytical and open-minded approach” (Niemi, 2012). For education to progress and inequalities to be addressed in Aotearoa/New Zealand, such teachers are needed in every school, but particularly in schools serving those with greatest need (Snook & O’Neill, 2014).

It is also particularly necessary to integrate a research component as professional learning for experienced teachers, because the institutional memories they share are expressions of the conventions and values of the teacher community. Foucault (1994) argued that institutions constrain individual thinking over time, so long-serving teachers sustain the norms of the community. In collaboratively investigating such norms teachers can highlight not only areas where the community has traditions that have proven a strength, but also where there exist prospects for change. Those insider knowledges deserve acknowledgement and respect, rather than being viewed as obstacles to progress.

My own commitment to the EdD programme developed primarily from working with a group of other candidates rather than the insularity of individual study. That is a model I would endorse for the teacher community in Aotearoa/New Zealand, a community of teacher researchers with overlapping interests and areas of inquiry. The strength of such collaboration would benefit even those who do not manage to complete their studies, but the greatest benefit would be to those who support each other to completion. Such a programme could make an immense difference to the future of education in this country and also align well with the collaborative purposes of *Investing in Educational Success*. Equally important, from the perspective of one who has experienced it, the benefits of different cultural perspectives could contribute to re-evaluating the

dominant discourses of schooling and encourage secondary schools and teachers to focus more on the marginalised aspects of the national curriculum. That might encourage greater experimentation and creative teaching and better prepare students for their uncertain futures.

Chapter conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to discuss the conclusions that I have drawn from my analyses of the conversations in the previous three chapters and then to briefly discuss some of the implications. Implicit in that purpose is the intention to direct attention to the philosophical orientation of the study and the links between that and an ethics of schooling appropriate to an ambicultural understanding of connectedness and separateness, community and individuality in the overlapping world-views of Māori and Pākehā in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Positioned by language use: a philosophical orientation

This study has been framed by a theory of the social construction of both the individual teacher subjectivities and the teacher community within which those subjectivities are shaped. Overlapping that theory has been a theory of language where meaning is constructed in connectedness and co-constructed in conversation.

The understandings and values that are central in the teacher community discourses have been maintained through traditions that have privileged ideas of the individual as separate from others, rather than notions of being connected in community. The theoretical position taken has been that positioning and re-positioning is constant and ongoing, with the dominant discourses of the community being unconsciously reinforced by the ordinary conversations that teachers engage in with each other. The ways language is used by the teachers invites conservatism rather than creativity and agreement rather than challenge. Instead of challenge, what is demonstrated is a tolerance or acceptance of positioning in relation to discourses that are evident more at the margins than at the centre. One effect of language use has therefore become a predictability of positioning, leading to conservatism.

Conformity to the traditions of schooling that were translocated with the colonisation of Aotearoa/New Zealand was more recently intensified by the influence of neoliberal ideas and the increasing competition brought about by the changes of *Tomorrow's Schools*. Those changes increasingly promulgated an ethics of the individual rather than the community, extending privilege rather than promoting equity.

The ethical problem of having state schooling perpetuate social inequalities rather than address them has been illustrated by more than just the achievement gaps between Māori and Pākehā *ākonga* (learners), it is visible in the emphasis on Pākehā ways of thinking and approaches to schooling and the curriculum. Teachers are necessarily implicated in this emphasis, but so is the wider community, and particularly the policy-makers who influence the directions in which schools direct the efforts of the teachers.

The absence or marginalization of communitarian perspectives, the role of language in supporting constructs of separateness rather than connectedness, the ethics of schooling that perpetuates privilege, and the consequences for more equitable Māori/Pākehā relationships, these are strands that have been present in my analysis and critical to my interpretation of the implications of the study.

Strengthening the bonds of collegiality: “you think ‘yeah, perhaps’”

What was most apparent from my analyses of the conversations was the extent to which the teacher community influenced the interactions of the participants. Regardless of the position taken by either participant, the response of the other was to acknowledge and support that. Where there was non-alignment, whoever was audiencing first supported the position taken and then offered a slightly different perspective, nudging the idea into a slightly different direction rather than expressing disagreement. Such nudging is important because it not only has a normative effect but also serves as an illustration of the influence of community discourses, as well as contributing to the cohesiveness of the collective and a reinforcing of the common ground, the insider status of the participants. The conversations also served to strengthen collegial trust, as evident in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 47 – “Perhaps that is what I meant to say”

1		well it’s something probably that I hadn’t
2		really thought about, I mean [wagging
3		head] .. a lot
4	yeah ..	in terms of sometimes you just get
5		on with the job .. but sitting thinking
6		about it, you don’t often have those
7	[nods] nooo ..	conversations
8		.. and sometimes you go away from a
9		conversation like we had and I thought
10		afterwards, I thought “ <i>oh, why didn’t I</i>
11	okay ..	<i>say that</i> ” you know what I
12		mean .. or it started those lines of
13		thought and you think “ <i>ohh, I don’t</i>
14		<i>know, what was that all about, cos what</i>
15	right [nods]	<i>I really meant was this</i> ”
16	right ..	you know, .. and then ..
17		then when you come back and you look
18		at it again and you think “ <i>yeah, perhaps</i>
19		<i>[nodding] I was .. perhaps that is what I</i>
20	right ..	<i>meant to say</i> ”

This exchange features reflection by one of the participants on a previous dialogue. What is apparent from the comments “*oh, why didn’t I say that?*” (47-10) and “*ohh, I don’t know, what was that all about, cos what I really meant was this*” (47-13) is the collegial commitment that forms the fabric of the teacher community. Wanting to contribute, to be helpful and supportive, to do justice to the shared experience and common concerns of teachers – that is the underlying intention. The remark “you just get on with the job” (47-4), while ostensibly about the routines of teaching, actually serves to emphasise the point that “you don’t often have those conversations” (47-6), underlining the value being attached. That acknowledgement signals support, while the self-directed

criticism of “I hadn’t really thought” (47-1), and “I thought afterwards” (47-9), serves to enhance the meaningfulness being attached to the dialogue. By attaching significance to the act of participation, the importance of collegial understanding is highlighted and increased. The final reflection, “*perhaps that is what I meant to say*” (47-19), provides closure in recognition that the meaning of the exchange has been agreed.

Community as context: summary of analysis

Across the study as a whole, while individual differences of perspective were sometimes apparent in the conversations, that diversity was constrained by an urge to consensus, and interpreted in ways that were consistent with shared experiences. Common understandings of teaching were mostly linked to experience, particularly to the formative experiences from the early years of teaching. Where attributes of individual distinctiveness were asserted, they were aligned with prevalent discourses of schooling, but position calls of connectedness were also claimed in relation to a school, the teacher community, or Māori cultural values.

Conformity rather than experimentation was the norm, with the conversations having the effect of signalling both the understandings and behaviours that were positioned as central in the community, and those regarded as more eccentric or towards the margins. The collective intelligence showed mainly acceptance of the status quo, the dominant discourses of schooling, moderated by expectations of some change. The frequent references to formative experiences in their early years of teaching indicated their ongoing influence. Accordingly, it would appear that patterns of schooling in the present and the future are strongly tied to what happened in the past. Conversations between the teachers provided opportunities to relive both recent and more distant experiences, with the principal effect being to support the discourses of experience as central to the teacher community. That is both a strength and a weakness, providing resilience to the collective discourses of privilege and keeping considerations of equity constrained to the margins.

The first of the three key questions that the study engaged with was:

What does the construct of community offer as a lens on teaching practice and education policy?

The study shows that the construct of community is not only a viable alternative to the neoliberal emphasis on autonomous individuals, but it also supports the perspective of the “highly collaborative” (Ministry of Education, 2015b) nature of learning expected in the future. For instance, collaboration and co-construction are discussed in excerpts 2, 7, 34 and 43. It is noteworthy that in the production of research papers, and in particular papers that are well cited, teamwork is the norm:

In science . . . many authors have established a rising propensity for *teamwork* in samples of research fields, with some studies going back a century . . . [while] in arts and humanities and in patents, individuals were *never more likely than teams* to produce more-influential work [emphases added] (Wuchty, Jones, & Uzzi, 2007, pp. 1036–7)

This finding should encourage greater teamwork in schools, both for teachers and for students. It also suggests that more attention be paid to the *key competencies* in the New Zealand curriculum, particularly *relating to others* and *participating and contributing* (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 12).

The second key question was:

What effects do collegial conversations have on teacher positioning?

The study showed that collegial conversations support teachers to maintain whatever position they take, whether that be conforming with the norms towards the centre or resisting them from the margins. This represents both a challenge and an opportunity. The opportunity is present in the support teachers give each other in conversational interactions, while the challenge arises from the need for teachers to be positioned as inquirers and researchers, exploring possibilities rather than conforming to existing norms. “Teachers’ roles as co-constructors of knowledge . . . are informed by their *stance* as theorizers, activists, and school leaders [emphasis added]” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 276). As instanced in excerpts 7, 16 and 40 in particular, teacher

conversations have the effect of supporting collegiality in the teacher community, so if discourses of active inquiry are prevalent, then teachers are likely to adopt such a stance towards their own learning and practice.

The third key question asked by the study was:

How do teacher conversations promote or diminish the discourses of schooling?

This question is particularly important because of the ongoing impact of neoliberal discourses now “embedded” (Kelsey, 2015, p. 112) in both education and the wider social context of Aotearoa/New Zealand, with entrenched inequality and a “disproportionate number of Māori and Pacific people living below the poverty line” (Rashbrooke, 2013, p. 3). The discourses and structures of schooling in Aotearoa/New Zealand have preserved Pākehā privilege over generations, and teachers, probably unwittingly, continue to participate in the maintenance of those discourses. This is apparent, for instance, in excerpts 11, 21, 26 and 35. What the study showed is that teacher collegial conversations serve as a mechanism for conserving the dominant discourses of schooling. While this mechanism prevents radical shifts in emphasis in the short term, it also explains how policy changes are reshaped and reinterpreted by teachers, and why such changes frequently fail. Whether teachers are collaborating or colluding, their conversations serve to emphasise the position and value of experience within the teacher community.

Acknowledging complexity: summary of implications

The study was a snapshot of teacher collegial conversations, but the analysis shows an alignment with other research studies so the implications are stated with some conviction. There was an emphasis on know-how as the foundation for theories of practice, consistent with conceptions of teaching as a profession based on learning from individual experience. The corollary of this emphasis is that critical inquiry and experimentation, particularly that associated with coalitional thinking, enjoy less backing than is necessary to support the ongoing evolution of teaching as a component of social change.

Creative approaches to teaching suffer from a policy overemphasis on *best practice*, because the attendant risk-avoidance robs teachers of opportunities to

continue to develop their pedagogical skills and understandings. To counter this, there needs to be a greater acknowledgement of the multifaceted nature of teaching and learning, and much more encouragement for experienced teachers to address that complexity and move away from a reliance on rubrics of curriculum presentation and towards more problem-solving.

Both co-construction of collaborative critical inquiry by teachers and a greater involvement in researching with one another their models of practice need support from both inside and outside the teacher community. This is particularly needed to promote greater connectedness and horizontal understandings between the various subject divisions of secondary schooling. Such critical inquiry needs to encompass both Māori and Pākehā perspectives, stressing community and collective intelligence in order to address the current overemphasis on separateness and individual performance. The success of IES and other similar initiatives depends on developing and maintaining coalitional understandings between different teacher communities. Without critical inquiry to add depth to the dialogue, collaboration between schools would simply validate the common ground. Equally, Innovative Learning Environments (ILEs) depend on the creative, connected approaches that teachers bring to their practice. The answer is not to obviate teachers in the learning process by attempting to replace them with technologies, but to provide better conditions for them to contribute to the learning of *ākonga*. Teachers remain pivotal in the practices of schooling and the prospects for future development.

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