

**Montessori Education in Aotearoa-New Zealand:
A Framework for Peace and Social Justice**

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of
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.

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ABSTRACT

In the first half of the 20th century, Maria Montessori (1870-1952) created a radical approach to early education that she believed had the potential to aid political and socio-cultural transformation on a global scale. This study utilises critical theory and insights from the reconceptualist early childhood education movement to contextualise the background and examine the currency of Montessori's vision of social justice for the child and subsequent world peace.

The research focuses on the reflections of graduates from the Bachelor of Education (Montessori Early Childhood Teaching), a model of teacher education developed at the Auckland University of Technology. The study utilised socio-biographical inquiry and case study as key research tools. Participants were drawn from graduates in their first, second and third year of early childhood teaching practice. The specialty degree aims to highlight the social advocacy role of Maria Montessori with regard to children's rights and as teachers qualify and enter the field, the project explores differences and similarities that they meet in the interpretation of Montessori philosophy. Information was also sought on the factors that support or challenge the development and resilience of teachers during their first three years of practice in the field.

In particular, the study considers the relationship between the philosophy and practice of Montessori teachers in Aotearoa-New Zealand with reference to Montessori's vision and explores how a teacher preparation model can be authentically reconciled with a social justice perspective. Case studies in four early childhood centres exemplify how a framework derived from Montessori philosophy supports development of the 'just community'.

This research has yielded information on the development of effective practice in early childhood education using the construct of critically engaged pedagogy. Insights arising from the project may therefore contribute to advancing both the literature and practice of Montessori education and especially in the New Zealand teacher education context.

Chapter One: Introduction

What distinguishes us from cannibals and pirates is the fact that the rights of the adults are recognised. Not so the child's rights. What cowardliness to recognize the adult's rights and not those of the child! (Montessori)

In 1999, the Montessori Association of New Zealand (MANZ) made a decision to focus on changes in teacher education as a move towards realisation of the potential of Montessori education in Aotearoa-New Zealand. The Association signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Auckland University of Technology (AUT University) in 2000 to develop an early childhood degree with a specialty at third year level in Montessori education. Since 2003, around 25 students per annum have graduated with the Bachelor of Education (Montessori Early Childhood Teaching) (hereafter referred to as the BEd (MECT) or the specialty degree).

The rationale for this study is that the Montessori philosophy of education, as conceived by Auckland University of Technology, offers an alternative model of Montessori teacher preparation that holds potential for transformation in the education of both teachers and children. The Montessori approach to education has now operated internationally for over one hundred years (since 1907). During that time, a number of both country specific and international models of Montessori teacher preparation have been developed. Over the period of this research, early childhood education (ECE) in Aotearoa-New Zealand was the subject of considerable policy development and professional change and this study is therefore timely in terms of the potential contribution that Montessori education can make to reconceptualising the approaches we use in nurturing and fostering learning in young children.

The study investigated Montessori early childhood education through the eyes of teachers with a BEd (MECT) during their first, second or third year in the field. In interpreting this information, I utilised the perspective of peace and social justice, a view that was of prime significance to its founder, Maria Montessori, and aligned her thinking with two documents that are of key significance to early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand: Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996), the early childhood curriculum, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) (United Nations, 1989).

Focus of the thesis

Montessori referred to the early childhood period (from birth to six) as the first *plane* of development and saw it as the foundation for both individual development and the development of a cohesive society. A century on from the first experimental school for children from three to seven, thousands of schools, teachers and families seek to fulfil Montessori's vision. This thesis addresses the origin of Montessori's ideas through a socio-historical study of her early life and development before turning to the question of the viability and efficacy of this pedagogy for the 21st century and consideration of optimal ways to support early career teachers who teach within this framework.

Following analysis of the contextual development of the Montessori pedagogical approach, the particular focus of the thesis involves an examination of the concepts of peace, freedom and justice alongside the process of Montessori teacher formation through, and subsequent to, the AUT degree. The project records the developing beliefs and practices of a cohort of graduates from the BEd (MECT) and my own reflections as the developer of the specialty and current lecturer on the degree.

The perspective that Maria Montessori held with regard to social justice, the child and the responsibilities of teachers provides the grounding for this study. She once said: “the child brings us a great hope and a new vision” (*AM*, 1949/1988 p.61)¹ “but the life of the child is fraught with repression and injustices” (*EC&P*, 1949/1972, p.87). She recognised in her first children’s house that the transformation of the teacher was a key element in changing attitudes towards children: “If we are to develop a system of scientific pedagogy...the transformation of the school must be contemporaneous with the preparation of the teacher” (Montessori, *MM*, 1912, p.28). After thirty years of observation and practice, however, the holistic nature of her approach became more evident and whilst she was in India during the Second World War she explained that: “The preparation of the spirit of the teacher, is a vital part of our method, much more important than the explanation of our material” (*CDinC*, 1998, p.103).

Montessori’s life journey is a reflection of the path of transformation followed by many teachers as they grow in their ability to observe, work with and learn from, children and their families and also to find their own place in the intricate and sometimes damaged web of relationships that connects our universe. The complexity of her life was associated with the growth of a new nation; change in opportunities for secondary and higher education for women; the cause of emancipation and practical feminism; the development of social science research, in the particular fields of psychology and anthropology; the visualisation and discovery of new approaches to education in the special needs, early childhood, primary and secondary sectors; peace studies and teacher education. Montessori’s interest and study

¹ An explanation of the abbreviations for Montessori’s books is found in the literature review on pages 24-26.

of philosophy provided a further complexity as I unravelled threads from the Greek Socratic philosophers; the transcendental idealism of Kant; the historical materialism of Hegel; the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels; the sovereign individuality of Nietzsche; and the creative evolutionism of Nunn and Bergson. Contesting the common interpretation of Montessori as a proponent of universal principles; I explore the sense in which her ideas could be regarded as antecedent to the postmodern challenge of Lyotard, Deleuze and Foucault.

There are many different ways to read and portray Maria Montessori. She was both a woman of her time, and portend of the future. In her attempts to push through the glass ceiling she often met with resistance but instead of confronting her opponents, she tended to side-step them. Much of the critique of Montessori that endures from the standard, dimly remembered, information delivered in contemporary lecture theatres, comes from the perceived rigidity of her practice; critique which she addresses in her writing but chose not to debate in person. Susan Feez (2007) quotes Montessori's son, Mario, as he sums up those who critiqued his mother:

Mario Montessori (1965, pp. ix) describes the 'opposition and ridicule' which his mother's work evoked in the following way: Religious people combated her for her positivism, positivists condemned her for using religious language, scientists ridiculed her for lack of serious objectivity and for indulging in demagogical expressions, educators accused her of megalomaniac pride for refusing to accept other educational theories ... for introducing intellectual subjects at an age when children were too immature for them ... for restricting freedom ... (Ch. 2, p.17).

Those who read her more deeply, the teachers who follow her pedagogical approach, have been similarly inclined to simply get on with the task in hand. It is the contention of this thesis that there is merit in returning to this

feminist thinker, to unravel what she took from her many male forebears and counterparts; and to discover how she reconceptualised their ideas into a unique contribution to contemporary society.

Modern-Postmodern Montessori

One of the early influences on Montessori's thinking was the work of a relative, Antonio Stoppani. Stoppani was an Italian scientist who identified that we are living in a new geological age in which humankind is recognized as no longer simply a part of creation but a species which is in the process of changing the face of the planet. In this time of heightened awareness of carbon footprint and climate change, Stoppani's contribution has only recently been acknowledged (Crutzen, 2002) as explained in chapter four.

Montessori took the ideas of Stoppani, and combined them with insights from Kant, Herbart, Vico, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Darwin, Nunn and Bergson as well as her own spiritual belief in Christianity² to create her own idea of a new age in which humanity must learn to live in an environment of his or her own making, that is 'supra nature'. In 1932, in an address to the International Office of Education in Geneva, Montessori discusses the end of an epoch lasting many millennia. She explains that where, previously, we lived a two dimensional life now "the marvellous, rapid conquest of the sphere above the earth has raised the conquests of man onto a level beyond its surface...now he has moved toward the third dimension" (*EE&P*, 1949/1972, p. 24). She understands the terror of new discoveries: "if man remains earthbound and unconscious of the new realities, if he uses the energies of space for the purpose of destroying himself, he will soon attain that goal" (p. 25) as she recognises that these are accessible to all and everywhere. There is a need therefore for a new, 'constructive' education

² Babini and Lama (2000) suggest that Montessori saw eternal life in terms of working for 'posterity' – future generations – rather than any notion of heaven or life after death (see p. 241).

that will enlighten human beings as to ‘the workings of the social mechanisms on which his interests and his immediate salvation depend’ (1936 address to the European Congress for Peace, *EC&P*, 1949/1972, p. 27).³ This will be an education, in which human beings will be led to be mindful and to acknowledge the service of every living being but most especially, of fellow human beings. In that spirit of gratitude she says: “Who in the new generations will dare to destroy man, the sacred being who provides for our needs as would a prodigious mother?” (*CSW*, 1989, p. 113). Montessori saw in the individual human being who acts freely to form society, a potential power of goodness and hope.

The key to such hope was education and in this Montessori wove together threads of ideas that she found manifested in the work of Aristotle, Comenius, Pestalozzi, Rousseau, Froebel, Herbart, Condillac, Itard and Seguin with patterns contributed both to and from her contemporaries, such as Dewey, Gandhi, Binet, Hall, Piaget, Vygotsky and Freud. She utilised her own studies of psychology, anthropology, mathematics and biology to create, with a nod to a broader vision, a curriculum that she called ‘cosmic education’ that she believed would meet the needs of children for the new age.

Living on the cusp of a multitude of discoveries rendered useful by the Industrial Revolution, Montessori understood the benefit that science presented to civilization and the contribution of ‘collective humanity’ to its advance. She also recognised, however, that:

³ It is interesting to note that the authors of powerful networking and information tools such as Google and Amazon, which have helped to transform our knowledge systems in just over a decade, attribute their creativity to the freedom and ideas offered by the Montessori education system. Lyotard comments: “Data banks are the Encyclopedia of tomorrow. They transcend the capacity of each of their users. They are ‘nature’ for the postmodern man” (1984, in Crome & Williams, 2006, p. 95).

The man of ill-will may be rendered dangerous by machinery; his influence may become unlimited as the speed of communication increases. Therefore a new morality, individual and social, must be our chief consideration in this new world. This morality must give us new ideas about good and evil, and the responsibility towards humanity that individuals incur when they assume powers so much greater than those with which they are naturally endowed. (*CtoA*, 1948/1976, p. 86).

Although Montessori mentions Kant only briefly in her main texts, it is evident from this extract, that her work was concerned with the classic (and Kantian) spheres of philosophical inquiry into epistemology (study of knowledge), ethics (and morality) and aesthetics (design and beauty). To this end she concludes her first book with the statement that “It is a pedagogical method informed by the high concept of Immanuel Kant: “Perfect art returns to nature” (*MM*, 1912, p. 377).⁴

Kant’s concern was to find reconciliation between the seemingly irreconcilable spheres of epistemology and ethics which he suggests could come through ‘taste’ (or aesthetics). Knowledge is seen as centred only in what we can experience (pure reason); morality or ethics is to do with the practical reason that makes judgements based on ‘the good’ and just (such reasoning is based on an idea that can be applied to experience; aesthetics or in Kantian terms, taste, is the possible bridge that enables that judgement to occur). Although Montessori stated that she saw “art as the product of the genius of isolated individuals, gifted with natural powers superior to those of other men” (*CtoA*, 1948/1976, p. 118), every part of her practice is to do with providing experience which would guide the eye to recognise design and beauty in both the natural and material world.

⁴ A brief article published as part of the ‘California Lectures, 1915’ reveals that Montessori was well acquainted with Kant: (see pp 334-5).

The question we must answer, if there is any use to be found in Montessori's ideas for the future, is whether her philosophy and pedagogy is flexible enough to go beyond the hope of the grand or meta-narratives of truth and justice in the modern era in order to encounter the fragmented conditions of the postmodern society, as first explained by Jean-Francois Lyotard (Crome & Williams, 1984/2006). It is his contention that "although universal consensus is no longer possible, 'justice as a value is neither outmoded nor suspect. We must thus arrive at an idea and practice of justice that is not linked to that of consensus' (1984, p. 66). This practice focuses on the individual 'little narratives' and their differences from each other, the fact that they are not all reducible to the criterion of efficiency" (Malpas, 2003, p. 30).

Montessori's insight was that the work of education was to convey the idea of interdependence and individual contribution to the collective. Her revelation was that we no longer depend directly on nature but upon both the physical and intellectual fruits of human labour and production. This is her concept of supra nature. "An infinite number of heroes" she says, "have struggled to render 'knowledge' possible. All that we study today depends upon some individual discovery, no matter how great or how small" (CSW, 1989, p. 112).

Lyotard sees:

the modern, in a constant state of upheaval because of its continual attempts to innovate and progress. The postmodern is an avant-garde force within the upheavals of this modernity that challenges and disrupts its ideas and categories, and makes possible the appearance of new ways of thinking and acting that resist those dominant modern theses of progress and innovation. (Malpas, 2003, p. 43)

Even though the concept of postmodernism was developed after Montessori's death, the following passage indicates a similar understanding to that exhibited by Lyotard when he explains that postmodernism is not the antithesis of modernism but arises in response to it; albeit in ways that disrupt or disorientate our present understanding, with 'art structures' or 'language games' confronting us to "raise questions of "what is art?" and "what is reality?" in their very structure" (Malpas, 2003, pp. 49-50).

Montessori says:

In every new method of education, there has always been first a movement of thought which has preceded the method. There is an external movement of thought and then...through the windows the light of thought enters the school....Now, our time of thought, which is modern thought, was begun by positive science...and that is why we find ourselves at this moment in a time of war...I want to speak of the siege which positive science is making on the school

Montessori refers to the onslaught of information regarding hygiene and anthropology and then continues:

But the reform of intellectual development is lacking. We might say that we are at the beginning and the end...because the method of education is lacking. [Montessori discusses the removal of aspects of the former methods]...this is not to have modernized the methods of education. This is surrender. This is the beginning of the reactions of the old. Now if one wants to penetrate into the school ...the concept that has already been formed in the outside must penetrate. (*CL1915*, 1997, pp. 144-146)

It is, perhaps, stretching the point to say that Montessori was a postmodern thinker but the legacy of her thinking is still provocative and powerful enough to disrupt and disorientate the thinking of current students. Barron (2000) is a Montessori teacher educator who uses the language of postmodernism to disturb established thinking and encourage her teachers to consider new possibilities in the interpretation of Montessori pedagogy. I

take heart from her example and have carried out this study in the hope that there can be movement and change to accommodate new thinking within what is already a radical change in orientation towards children and society.

Outline of the study

The project began with an examination of Montessori's early life and context through books and other documentary evidence; records of both early and contemporary practice; and information gleaned from the field; with a view to presenting a re-conceptualisation (Cannella, 1997; Hauser & Jipson, 1998; Jipson & Johnson, 2001; Lambert & Clyde, 2000; Shapiro, 1994) of the Montessori approach as an evolving educational philosophy, within the context of Aotearoa-New Zealand.

The research was guided by the following question and sub-questions:

Research question:

How do we best prepare and support teachers in a form of education that is consistent with a contemporary understanding of Montessori's life, work, and teachings? This question is interrogated more specifically by querying: the life, work and teaching of Montessori; how graduates of a course founded in these ideas report on their teaching experience; and the forms by which this education become explicit in practice.

It was anticipated that the research would encounter dissonance in the Montessori and early childhood education discourse as AUT Montessori graduates entered (or re-entered) the field equipped with a socio-cultural, ethical and political framework for practice. Through information gathered from graduates in their first, second or third year in the field following

qualification, the study was planned to investigate if the notion of social justice for the child is fostered or subsumed in practice. The particular issue of teacher control of children was addressed as teachers engaged with colleagues in the field. Teacher resilience (philosophical and pedagogical) was put to the test as AUT teachers began to engage with current practitioners who either have no Montessori background or have been ‘trained’ in different and sometimes more rigid Montessori practices. An expectation of the project was that it would lead to a collaborative narrative of transformative learning within an ethic of care (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Noddings, 1992; 2003; O’Sullivan, Morrell, & O’Connor, 2002; and Shelby, 2003).

Currency of research

The research took place at a time of international challenge to expand the possibilities of the Montessori education movement by returning to the initial focus of the philosophy on the rights of the child⁵ (R. Montessori, 2005). Internally within New Zealand, however, despite an earlier move to spread awareness of the role of the professional in collaboration and partnership with family, whanau and communities through the concepts of self-review⁶, there have been indications of a shift in focus to emphasise ‘best practice’ (with the consequent connotation of finality), quality assurance, and promotion of Montessori as a product (Seldin, 2005).⁷

⁵ The international Montessori Congress held in Sydney in 2005, had the theme: Champion the Cause of the Child. This was in response to a request from Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) President, Renilde Montessori, founder of the *Educateurs sans Frontières* project. This organisation and other initiatives (see Montessori Children’s Foundation, in Australia) led to an expansion of projects in the sphere of social justice and reform.

⁶ In February 2004, AUT ran a workshop for the Montessori Association, to give practitioners the skills of self-review.

⁷ This was initially expressed in a programme held following the 2004 conference of the Montessori movement, aimed at training “Master Teachers” and producing “Model Schools” (Montessori Newz, 2004) and was also evident in the Strategic Plan of the MANZ Council (MANZ, 2006).

The Montessori movement is also subject to a wider pressure on early childhood education in New Zealand and internationally, in terms of the privatisation and corporatisation of childcare, an issue that has been the subject of extensive consideration and discussion within the early childhood field (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Hughes & McNaughton, 2000; Fenech, Sumsion & Goodfellow, 2008; Meyers & Gornick, 2003; Penn, 2005; Press & Woodrow, 2005; Woodrow & Brennan, 1999). At the point when the project began, there was an initiative on the part of the then co-presidents of the national Montessori Association to sell their centres to Kidicorp – a New Zealand owned, corporate, childcare body. Their subsequent employment with the organisation and the takeover of a number of centres and expansion of new Montessori centres impacted on some participants in the study. The vulnerability of the movement and its teaching professionals to the influence of managerialism is thus a further complexity within this investigation.

In addition, the introduction of adult-centred quality assurance and management systems and increasing concerns regarding litigation and consequent risk management, have led to many care functions being carried out *upon* children (New Zealand Government, 1998; 2004). Increasing numbers of children are thus required to spend long days in highly regulated and protected environments as a consequence of workplace demands upon parents.

Not all commentators, however, shy away from consideration of economics in early childhood education. In Australia, Wong (2007) urged that strategic use should be made of nationalist and economic discourses in order to advocate for universally accessible and publicly funded ECE. She argues that the long-term ‘investment’ argument makes more sense to policy makers than the social justice discourse frequently used in the field. She

concurs with these writers, however, that there is a tension between nationalist and market-driven, neo-liberal discourse in which private investors see early childhood education as a commodity ripe for commercialisation. Ironically, the quote she selects to exemplify the neo-liberal perspective, from a newspaper report on investment in the 'reputable child-care sector', highlights one of the major corporate players in the ECE market:: "ABC is the best option for the risk-averse...the company has been an excellent performer, with good quality management and returns" (Barnes, 2005, cited in Wong, 2007, p. 147). This 'excellent performer' was one of the earliest Australian casualties of the recent recession and demonstrates both the fickle nature of the 'market' but more importantly, the incongruity of placing education into the marketplace.

A similar campaign was utilised in New Zealand and the Labour Government adopted this as an election plank in 2006, gaining widespread family and professional support despite concerns from the field as to how it would be implemented. Following re-election, the Coalition Government instituted '20 free hours' of early childhood education for all three and four year olds. This was alongside a concerted effort to encourage more women to enter the workforce. In addition, after a long drawn out campaign (beginning in the late '80s), the early childhood professional field came close to achieving the key objective in the Strategic Plan for Early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 2002) of seeing all staff in teacher led early childhood facilities (kindergartens, day-care, Montessori, Steiner and other specialist ECE) with three year (degree or diploma) qualifications. Following the recession, the National Government quickly moved to stem growing expenditure in this non-compulsory field, making a policy decision to lower this target to 80%, in a move that would hurt the 'industry' but not be perceived as taking away benefits from parents. Many ECE centres,

however, have been compelled to increase fees in order to recoup and continue to operate.

Other issues, similar to those that existed in the early part of last century, are evident in some current New Zealand early childhood centres: lack of independence; environments that are restricted and confining; and timetables that suit adults rather than the rhythm of the growing child. Montessori centres are not immune to these pressures and movement away from Maria Montessori's original vision has led to ongoing challenges to the Montessori movement. The Education Review Office (2002), for example, criticised some Montessori centres for a lack of creativity and outdoor play and continues to make explicit its views on adult directed and structured activity in some Montessori centres (2007). It is my belief that this view governs the early childhood community perception of Montessori education in Aotearoa. My informal observations of Montessori centres, during the supervision of students' practice teaching, have confirmed that there are wide variations in the interpretation of the approach.

Benefits to the profession

Research on teacher education in Aotearoa-New Zealand favours the compulsory sector (Cameron & Baker, 2004) so a point of difference in this project is a focus on the non-compulsory education sectors, both early childhood and tertiary. It is intended that the research will also add to knowledge regarding the process of becoming a registered ECE teacher. Kindergarten teachers have long been required to become registered but this is a relatively new process for the rest of the early childhood field.⁸ In

⁸ Harkess (2004) reports that, in 2003, 95% of all kindergarten teachers were fully or provisionally registered but only 33% of the Education and Care sector staff were similarly registered. Teachers in New Zealand are able to apply for Provisional Registration once they have successfully completed an initial teacher education programme. They then follow a programme of induction and mentoring in order to demonstrate that they meet

providing in-depth information on a particular group of newly qualified early childhood teachers, I anticipate that the project may assist further development of this experience.

The primary benefit of the research is, however, to inform a framework for Montessori teacher education within New Zealand. The development of early childhood teachers as knowledgeable and articulate professionals is pivotal to transformative practice (Schugurensky, 2002). The AUT specialty degree has been premised on the need for change, particularly in terms of expanding the qualification to enable teachers to reach the requirements of the New Zealand Teachers Council to become registered to teach in all early childhood settings. It follows the guidance of Montessori (*CtoA*, 1948/1976; *Ec&P*, 1949/1972), who outlined what she envisaged to be necessary in tertiary education. Noting the problem of student dependency, she suggests that in the ‘new’ university there should be provision for a mixed mode of work and education.

Fortuitously, AUT, as a new university, but with a background of providing technical courses, offers this option. Student teachers, in the School of Education *Te Kura Mātauranga*, attend lectures full-time for two days per week and have the option of a mix of paid employment and study for the rest of the week except when they are engaged in practice teaching, when full-time attendance in the workplace is required. As explained in the literature review in chapter two, however, Montessori did not provide a model for contemporary practice in teacher education. Insights gleaned from the project therefore contribute to advancing both the literature and

the *Registered Teacher Criteria* (prior to 2010 these were known as the *Satisfactory Teacher Dimensions*). This process takes two or more years. Once the New Zealand Teachers Council is satisfied that the teacher has met their criteria they will issue a practising certificate with full registration (NZTC, 2011).

practice of Montessori education and especially in the New Zealand teacher education context.

Positioning Montessori education in the New Zealand context

The influence of Montessori on New Zealand education began shortly after the publication of the founder's book, *Il Metodo della Pedagogia Scientifica applicato all'educazione infantile nelle Case dei Bambini* (Montessori, 1909). Miss M.S. Newman, a lecturer from Auckland Teachers' College made a visit to Rome in 1910 to observe the method in situ and made later comment on the Montessori approach to the teacher education community through the publication, *Manuka* (Newman, 1914, cited in Shuker, 2005).

In 1912, the Minister of Education, Sir James Allen, followed up interest generated in New Zealand by the publication of Montessori's book in English and the distribution of information through Tozier's articles in the *Fortnightly Review* (Kahn & Leonard, 2007, p. 74) when he met up with M.M. Simpson, a kindergarten teacher from Blackfriars teacher's college in Sydney. Simpson had started a Montessori project at Blackfriars Kindergarten College in Sydney and was on her way to Rome to join four other Australians who had made the pilgrimage to determine what was behind the publicity. She persuaded Allen to make a short detour in his journey to a defence conference in London to call on Dr Montessori in Rome in late 1912 (Miltich-Conway & Openshaw, 1988).

Mary Richmond, pioneering kindergarten teacher of New Zealand, was another who took the opportunity to attempt to call on Dr Montessori when she went to Europe with her sister, Emily, in 1914. Kerry Bethel (2008) writes that when they went to visit on 15 April, 1914, "to Richmond's regret, Montessori was away, 'made overdone [sic] by visitors

from all parts of the World come to study her system of kindergarten.’ Emily Richmond records in her diary that they accepted an invitation offered to visit “one of Mme Montessori’s kindergartens” on the 18 April (p. 268).

There are reports of Montessori materials being used in the crèche and primary school run by the Sisters of Compassion in Wellington (May, 1997; Shuker, 2005) in the same year that the English translation of her book was published with the title, *The Montessori Method* (Montessori, 1912). Subsequent to Allen’s visit and favourable report, experimentation with the Montessori method began in New Zealand primary schools in 1915 (McLune & Lord, 1917; Miltich-Conway & Openshaw, 1988, Shuker, 2005) but for a variety of reasons, including inadequate teacher preparation and post-war conservatism, it fell out of favour in the public system in less than a decade. A number of Catholic schools continued to use the approach for junior classes until the late 1950s but it was not until the mid 1970s that Montessori education came to be used extensively in early childhood education (ECE).

The second wave of Montessori education began in the mid 1970s when a number of parent co-operative groups established centres, followed by the development of teacher led centres. When I completed a study of development from 1975-2000, there were 96 Montessori ECE centres distributed throughout the country (Chisnall, 2002). In 2010, MANZ⁹ listed 81 early childhood centres as members of their association and noted that the figure represented 75% of the total number of Montessori centres, nationwide. The first primary school was established in 1988 and in 2002 a

⁹ In 2008, the Montessori Association changed its name to Montessori Aotearoa-New Zealand, as an acknowledgement of the Treaty of Waitangi and the bi-cultural nature of Aotearoa-New Zealand.

Montessori secondary school was opened in Wellington followed by another, in Auckland, in 2006¹⁰ (In 2010, MANZ lists 18 primary schools or units as members). In 1990 a one year Montessori teachers' diploma course was offered by the Aperfield Trust, based in Christchurch, and this led to an increase in teacher supply and subsequently, further growth in the number of centres. The length and content of this diploma was insufficient to support teachers to gain registration and this led to the initiative between MANZ and AUT in 2000 to establish a specialty within the early childhood degree that had recently been approved by Teachers Council.

The researcher's connection with Montessori education

I have been involved in Montessori education for more than twenty five years as a parent, administrator, teacher, and latterly, teacher educator. In 2002, I was appointed to develop and teach the Montessori papers on the AUT specialty degree.

My interest in this approach to education has been maintained throughout this period because of Montessori's philosophy regarding both the individual child and family (Montessori, *CinF*, 1936/1970) and the pivotal role that she sees the child plays for humanity. Involvement in the AUT BEd programme has afforded opportunities to reflect and share with students the implications of a social justice framework for Montessori education.

¹⁰ Both school have since closed due to financial and management issues. A third adolescent project was started in 2010, at Wa Ora Montessori School. This school was founded in 1988 with a long-term strategic plan to eventually offer all three cycles of Montessori education.

The plan for this qualification has taken a long time to realise and I have been intimately involved in its development. I attended the meeting in 1985 when Montessori teachers first articulated the desire to integrate Montessori teacher education with a New Zealand recognised early childhood education diploma and I took a leadership role in the investigation of options that might be open to teacher trainees. After tracking a long history of false starts: including an attempt to integrate Montessori studies with Massey University and then Palmerston North College of Education, which, in 1989, was thwarted by the education reform of the time; followed by the development of the Aperfield Diploma which was a one year distance learning diploma that met the need for a New Zealand based qualification but not one that was equivalent to the three year diploma recognised by the Teachers Council for registration as a ‘teacher’; and the development and establishment of a Private Training Entity (PTE) to oversee practicum placements; I was eventually appointed to develop and teach the final year Montessori specialty in the Bachelor of Education degree at Auckland University of Technology in 2002. The development of this phase of the project is recorded in my Masters of Education thesis (Chisnall, 2002).

Implementation began when I started teaching the Montessori specialty programme in 2003 after running a pilot paper in 2002. Students complete the initial years of the Bachelor of Education programme and then make the choice to continue or change to the Montessori specialty for their third and final year of study.¹¹ In 2003, 18 students made that choice. They were enrolled in four specific Montessori papers and, in addition, completed a professional paper and practice teaching in Montessori settings; a special topic paper focused on centre design (which was chosen for the specialty

¹¹ Additional specialty options now include Steiner and Pasifika education as well as mainstream but at the beginning of the study, Montessori was the only specialty.

given the emphasis on the 'prepared environment' in Montessori); a paper introducing research methods which at that time gave students the opportunity to search the literature and prepare a research topic in the Montessori field; and a paper which addressed critical social and political issues.

Chapter Two: Literature Review: Montessori; Pedagogy; Freedom and Justice

How do we make sense of a world that has no sense? We infuse social justice in the curriculum...We teach peace and encourage the concept of peace. This will lead us to a pedagogy of hope. (Steinberg, 2003 cited in Soto & Swadener, 2005, p.17)

This chapter surveys literature that underpins the philosophy and practice of Montessori educational communities. Although Maria Montessori is well known for her pedagogical approach to early childhood education, there is less recognition of her overriding desire to achieve social justice for children and this forms a particular focus in this review. Adult transformation forms the pathway to the realisation of this objective and literature on teacher education and initial practice forms the final part of the review.

The task of encapsulating a century of Montessori practice accounts for the length of the review. Scholarly work on Montessori is not extensive so the review draws upon a range of sources to augment discussion. Unpublished work accessed from the archives of the Association Montessori Internationale [AMI] in Amsterdam; the Opera Montessori archives in Rome; and the Chiaravalle study centre in Montessori's birthplace; also forms part of this review.

The review is divided into three parts: the first section outlines biographical material and gives a brief overview of Montessori's published works. This is followed by literature on the concept of justice. Justice is examined from a relational perspective, incorporating work on the ethics of care, the paradigm of the gift and notions of the just community. The final section of

the review pertains to teacher education and the induction of new teachers and incorporates a Montessori perspective.

Introduction

Many thousands of words have been devoted to the well known story of the first Casa dei Bambini established in Rome more than a century ago. This event launched the so-called Montessori movement and for a time, Rome became a focus for early childhood educators, in the same way that Reggio Emilia, Penn Green and Budapest are today. Many trekked to see the phenomenon of young children, operating in an environment of freedom, choosing their own activities, taking care of themselves and their fellows, unafraid of adults and surprisingly, working with a range of materials in a tranquil and focused manner (Kramer, 1988). Their self-taught ability to write, read and cipher added to the scrutiny they received. Shuker (2005) discovered an account from the first New Zealand visitor in 1910 and Miltich-Conway and Oppenshaw (1988) record the visit of the New Zealand Minister of Education in 1912 and subsequent recommendations for the implementation of Montessori methods in New Zealand primary schools. At this time, May (1997) notes that Montessori materials were already in use in the crèche run by Mother Aubert in Wellington.

Less is recognised of Maria Montessori's advocacy for children and even less of her political campaign in the realm of emancipation for women. Montessori advocated for equal pay, better working conditions, votes for women and supported friends who established health and education initiatives for both women and children (Babini, 2000; Foschi, 2008; Kramer, 1988). Well known compatriots, Anna Mozzoni and Anna Kuliscioff, amongst others, laid the foundation for the Italian women's movement (Bell & Offen, 1983; Boxer & Quataert, 1978; Offen, 2000;

Stanton, 1895) but Montessori utilised her growing awareness, bred of positivist science, a burgeoning academic profile and socialist tendencies, to help advance the feminist cause (Babini & Lama, 2000; Trabalzini, 2003). This part of the story is expanded in chapters four and five.

A brief review of the biographical and Montessori literature

Before this investigation begins, it should be noted that the person, ‘Maria Montessori’ is one of great complexity. Any biographer is tasked with relating and interpreting a life expressed through the varying roles of daughter, girl student in a technical institute, female student of biology and medicine, doctor, feminist, psychologist, scientist, mother, public speaker and fundraiser, school director, teacher and teacher educator, academic, student of philosophy and pedagogy, anthropologist, designer, aspiring nun, author and grandmother, in addition to accounting for her leading role as founder of a pedagogical approach. In this final role Montessori travelled to many parts of the world and left a legacy that still influences a significant portion of the education community 100 years after its inception.¹²

An increasing volume of biographical literature begins with three books that provide first-hand accounts of Montessori’s life. Teacher and close colleague and friend, Anna Maccheroni (1947) wrote a personal account of her time with Montessori, entitled: *A true romance: Dr. Maria Montessori as I knew her*; E.M. Standing (1957/1998), admirer and colleague, wrote a biography that had Montessori’s approval and prior to her death, had been subject to her review – *Maria Montessori: Her life and work*; and grandson, Mario Montessori Jr. (1976) wrote an interpretation of Montessori’s ideas with reflections drawn from intimate knowledge of his grandmother as both a small boy and

¹² It is estimated that there are some 20,000 Montessori schools/early childhood centres worldwide. Figure retrieved 6 March, 2011 from http://www.montessori-namta.org/component/option,com_quickfaq/Itemid,90/cid,1/id,8/view.items/

after the war as a prominent psychoanalyst - *Education for human development: Understanding Montessori*.

Until recently, Rita Kramer (1976/1988) provided the most authoritative second tier account in *Maria Montessori: A biography* and this book remains the first point of entry for any researcher on the topic. Kramer was provided with access to many of the AMI files and was able to interview family members and first generation Montessorians as well as using contemporary publications and documents to supplement her information. When Burstyn (1979) reviewed Kramer's contribution she critiques her peripheral treatment of the context of Montessori's development, and notes that "...she does not explore the ways Montessori's choices were made for her by the male establishment, nor does she ask whether Montessori's routes for self expression were dictated by the fact that she was a woman" (p. 144).

Kramer's scholarship has been augmented in recent times by Italian academics who have been able to access local archives, giving rise to new information and interpretation of Montessori's life. Babini (2000); Babini and Lama (2000); Catarsi (1985); Foschi (2008), Trabalzini (2000; 2003) and Scocchera (1997; 2002) are some who have contributed particular insights. Two other books provide critical assessment of Montessori from a psychoanalytical and political viewpoint: Schwegman (1999) and Stewart-Steinberg (2007).

Babini (2000) and Babini and Lama (2000) in *Una donna nuova*, provide particular information on Montessori's involvement in the early feminist movement in Italy with an indication as to why Montessori gave up on the suffrage battle. They reveal that the group she was most connected to, the Roman Women's Association (*L'Associazione femminile romana*), was characterised by 'practical feminism' but recognise Montessori's role in publicising the feminist cause through her writing and presentations at both

national and international conferences (see chapter four for further information on this period). Trabalzini (2003) supplements the biographical work of Babini and Lama but has also provided detailed discourse analysis of two key books written by Montessori: *The Montessori Method* (1909/1912) and *The Secret of Childhood* (1936). She traced changes in successive Italian editions of *Il metodo* and finds evidence of some capitulation to the fascist government in the 1926 edition although Bosworth (2006) notes that Montessori, like other academics, became disillusioned with the regime once the excesses of Mussolini began to intrude upon her work. In 1934 she made a public move to oppose the regime and was immediately sent into exile.

There is also the work of Montessori herself. She wrote several books. The most well known is *The Montessori Method* (MM, 1909/1912) which is an account of the beginning of the *Casa dei Bambini* or children's house/home which she was asked to direct in San Lorenzo in 1907. Prior to this she had been engaged in anthropological research and from 1904-1910 held a position as lecturer in this subject at Rome University. The text resulting from her work and teaching, which is essentially on human development, is called *Pedagogical Anthropology* (PA, 1913). *Dr Montessori's own Handbook* (MoH, 1914/1965) was written in response to requests for a shorter account of her materials and curriculum for young children. In 1917 Montessori produced two further books explaining her developing ideas for primary education together with further reflections on issues such as attention, will, intelligence and imagination in *The Advanced Montessori Method: Volumes I and II* (AMM-1 and AMM-2, 1917/1965). *The Secret of Childhood* (SoC, 1936/1972) included a fresh perspective on the newborn child and on the transformation required of the adult who wishes to become an educator. *The Child in the Church* (1929) provided an account of experiments carried out in Barcelona using

the same children-centred approach as in her ordinary schools.¹³ *The Absorbent Mind* (AM, 1949/1988) was the product of her time in India and this had a new focus on children under three. In the same year, Montessori issued an updated version of her first work, entitled *The Discovery of the Child* (DoC, 1948/1967). Other volumes were authorised by Montessori as records of her various speeches. These provide important information, albeit with the inevitable bias of the listener. *The Child in the Family* (CinF, 1956/1970) is an account of lectures given in Vienna in 1926 to the Arbeitsgemeinschaft group of Lili Peller and associates such as Anna Freud and Erik Erikson.

In the decade of the thirties, as economic depression deepened and war clouds loomed, Montessori experienced the direct power of totalitarian regimes in Italy, Germany and Spain. Her books were burned, her schools were closed and she was forced to flee from both her home country and subsequently, her adopted home in Spain. Montessori concluded that it was time to campaign at a political level once more and she raised her concerns in a range of meetings throughout Europe; addresses which are recorded in *Education and Peace* (EandP, 1949/1972).

To Educate the Human Potential (TEHP, 1948/1989); *From Childhood to Adolescence* (FCtoA, 1948/1976); and *The Formation of Man* (FofM, 1955/1985) give more practical details on the implementation of the early childhood and primary curricula. Since Montessori's death, the Indian lectures have been assembled into two volumes, edited by Rukmini Ramachandran (1994), entitled *Creative Development in the Child*. These repeat some of the information in earlier books but also provide an account of continuing

¹³ These works have been further expanded through the writings of Cavalletti (1983): *The religious potential of the child* and Wolf (1996): *Nurturing the spirit in non-sectarian classrooms*. A specific arm of the Montessori movement, *The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*, addresses child-centred spiritual education primarily in Catholic churches and schools although some Protestant institutions have also adopted this approach.

reflection on child development. In 1997, Robert Buckenmeyer edited *The California Lectures of Maria Montessori, 1915 (CL1915)* which is a record of previously unpublished lectures, speeches and newspaper accounts of her visit to America. *The Child, Society and the World (CSW, 1989)* is another collection of unpublished manuscripts, edited by Gunter Schulz Benesch. This book gives access to several key documents which help to situate the child in an ever expanding environment, family, school, society and cosmos.

Political and philosophical influences

Political and philosophical influences were important to both Montessori as a person and for the movement she founded and Marxist theory was significant in shaping her early thinking. Marx [1818-1883] originated the ideas of both historical and dialectical materialism and his basic thesis was that the mode of production in material life determines social, political and intellectual life processes in general. Marx was the author of an economic theory driven by the injustices of capitalist exploitation and, for reasons that are explained in chapter four; Montessori (*MM, 1912*) adopted the theory and rhetoric of socialism in her explanation of the conditions of the impoverished citizens of San Lorenzo, Rome. Montessori modified her position on socialism over time, particularly with regard to the Marxist view that it is the social rather than the individual being that determines consciousness. Her deepening commitment to the Catholic Church prevented her from ever making a similar allegiance to communism and as time went by, some believe that she demonstrated more of an influence from Marx's predecessor, Friedrich Hegel.

Gimbel and Emerson (2009) note that there are 'shades of Hegel' in Montessori's writing, particularly from his early work, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. They cite a passage from *The Absorbent Mind* in which Montessori outlines the idea of a 'guiding life force', citing Wolff and von Baer, scientists whose influence may be traced back to Hegel. It is possible that

Montessori may have come into direct contact with the ideas of Hegel through her philosophy teacher, Antonio Labriola. Rieser (1970), however, points out that Labriola directed Croce (a prominent Italian academic and essayist) to the “ethical philosophy of Herbart and the social theories of Marx” (p. 244) and it was only in 1907 that Croce published a study on Hegel; some time after Montessori had finished her studies. Although Montessori does not cite Hegel in any of her books, both an early commentator (Culverwell, 1914) and Gimbel and Emerson find similarities in her interpretation of the dialectic process with regard to ‘Absolute Spirit’ and ‘Absolute Consciousness’ (p. 44). “The process of development of the universal mind is one that is guided towards self-awareness and self understanding. It is only in that state, Hegel argues, that human beings can be truly moral and live lives in accord with reason and with each other in a state of mutual care and respect” (p. 45). Brehoney (2000), however, intimates that Montessori’s progressive focus on the individual was at variance with the Hegelian view when it came to the “absolute value of the State” citing the English philosopher, Percy Nunn (1926) who asserted that “Hegelianism...could only be resisted by privileging the individual in education and elsewhere” (p. 124). Montessori was certainly aware of Nunn’s anti-Prussian view and cites, Nunn’s “excellent book, *Education, its Data and First Principles*, London (1st ed. 1920)” in the *Absorbent Mind* (1949/1988, p. 57).

Although Montessori’s moral and spiritual views became central to her work and therefore form a significant part of this review the following example demonstrates the ease with which she utilises Marxist rhetoric and will explain why I turn to critical theory to extend discussion on Montessori’s ideas.

The case of the ‘orthopaedic bench’

Montessori’s experience of teaching children with special learning needs led her to question the pedagogy of the time. In 1901, she returned to University to study philosophy, pedagogy, psychology and anthropology and became involved in research that took her into the elementary (primary) schools of the day. Here she was reminded once again of the injustices being wrought towards children and she began a new campaign, this time against the physical confinement of children in schools. In a key passage for understanding her approach we find an ironic account which demonstrates her familiarity with Marxist theory. Montessori situates her argument on children’s rights in the rhetoric of social liberation; citing an example of positivism taken to an absurd extreme:

It is incomprehensible that so-called *science* should have worked to perfect an instrument of slavery in the school without being enlightened by one ray from the movement of social liberation, growing and developing throughout the world. For the age of scientific benches was also the age of the redemption of the working classes from the yoke of unjust labor.

The tendency toward social liberty is most evident, and manifests itself on every hand. The leaders of the people make it their slogan, the laboring masses repeat the cry, scientific and socialistic publications voice the same movement, our journals are full of it. The underfed workman does not ask for a tonic, but for better economic conditions which shall prevent malnutrition. The miner, who through the stooping position maintained during many hours of the day, is subject to inguinal rupture, does not ask for an abdominal support, but demands shorter hours and better working conditions, in order that he may be able to lead a healthy life like other men.

And when, during this same social epoch, we find that the children in our schoolrooms are working amid unhygienic conditions, so poorly adapted to normal development that even the skeleton becomes deformed, our response to this terrible revelation is an orthopedic bench. It is much as if we offered to the miner the

abdominal brace, or arsenic¹⁴ to the underfed workman. (*MM*, 1912, pp. 18-19)

Montessori observed the imprisonment of children in desks and classrooms based on the Lancastrian monitorial system of England; and pre-dating Foucault, she notes the imposition of rote learning; the constant surveillance of children; and the exertion of disciplinary power by the adult. In this passage from a lecture delivered in Vienna in 1926, she outlines a way to redress this injustice through what has more recently been termed ‘the ethics of care’:

...it is well known that the adult, with his continual surveillance, his uninterrupted admonishment and his arbitrary commands, disturbs and impedes the child’s development...We must, therefore, quit our roles as jailers and instead take care to prepare an environment in which we do as little as possible to exhaust the child with our surveillance and instruction...the help we give must not amount to a passive indifference...rather we must support his development with prudent and affectionate care. (Montessori, *CinF*, 1956/1970, pp. 64-65)¹⁵

Today we have the benefit of both critical and postmodern theory to apply to the review of Montessori’s ideas and consideration of such forms the next section of the review.

¹⁴ This reference is a critique of Cesare Lombroso’s treatment of pellagra with ‘arsenicals’ (Chio & Mutari, 2004, p. 194). The consequences of this condition are discussed further in chapter four.

¹⁵ This reference from *The Child in the Family*, is derived from talks given to parents and teachers at the *Haus der kinder*, in Vienna in 1926. It was not translated into English until 1956 but contains views that are still considered radical (in Western terms) regarding freedom for very young children. Children, in Montessori’s view, should not be imprisoned behind the bars of a cot but allowed the choice to go to sleep and rise from a low bed; to not be fed but to feed themselves; to take a walk at their own pace rather than the adult’s....and so on.

Critical pedagogy

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1970/1972) explained that praxis was the process of “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 28). Freire’s recognition of human agency, transformed approaches to critical theories such as Marxism. His work inspired community action; liberation theology which notes that secularization arises from the individual’s awareness as “an agent of history, responsible for his [sic] own destiny” (Gutierrez, 1973, p.67); and most particularly, change in education. Freire critiqued the ‘banking’ model of education wherein teachers deposited information for students to process, and contrasted it with a problematising pedagogy or as Giroux (1988) later termed it, ‘critical pedagogy’. Keesing-Styles (2003) emphasises the importance of dialogue in this problem-posing process and Giroux (2004) notes that it “is part of a more expansive struggle for individual rights and social justice” (p.34).

In an examination of peace education, Duckworth (2006) creates a link from Montessori to critical pedagogy when noting that “An education for social justice must equip students to analyze critically for themselves, even when their views are in the minority. Montessori indicated that this is a critical form of resistance against political oppression” (p.43). Beginning in the final decade of the twentieth century, a number of early childhood educators and researchers, especially those working in the reconceptualist field (Cannella, 1997; Hauser & Jipson, 1998; Jipson & Johnson, 2001; Kessler & Swadener, 1992; and MacNaughton, 2000) began to critique the domination of developmental discourses in early childhood education (ECE). They adopted a critical pedagogical framework and Kilderry (2004) cites Kessler and Hauser (2000) who suggest that we must consider the “social purposes of early childhood education and, more particularly, the curriculum content, especially in terms of the unseen subjectivities and possibilities” (p.4).

Kilderry (2004) contends that a child centred curriculum that fosters uninterrupted free play “offers few opportunities for children to challenge their received social identities” (p.4) and may simply reinforce stereotypical and undesirable behaviour. Montessori (*AM*, 1949/1988) agrees and also problematises the concepts of play and ‘work’. Her observation was that nature provides the child with ‘interests of exceptional intensity’ leading to the kind of focused attention that enables the ‘creative work’ necessary for normal development. She comments that “freedom as an immediate release from oppressive bonds...means only the elimination of coercion” (p. 187). In contrast, freedom, in Montessori’s terms, “is a consequence of development” (p. 187) which is an active process, initiated by the child and “aided by education...It is the construction of the personality, reached by effort and one’s own experiences” (p. 187). Uninterrupted, freely chosen, purposeful activity was the key to a child’s social and self-integration or what she termed “normalisation” (*SoC*, 1936/1972, p. 195).¹⁶ Through this process, the young individual gradually gains active control of their will and is then able to contribute in a conscious way to both “cohesion in the social unit” (*AM*, 1949/1988, 212) and, potentially, societal change.

In a following chapter of *The Absorbent Mind*, Montessori gives an example of social co-operation in which the children responded to a visit of from an overseas diplomat. He turned up unannounced as he wanted to view the children’s house without the possibility of prior preparation. Unfortunately, it was a public holiday. The children, however, discovered the annoyed visitor and quickly advised him that they could get the caretaker to open the casa. They then went about their normal work without their teacher; which Montessori contends was a demonstration of “the construction of both

¹⁶ Freire suggests the process of transformation has the ‘humanisation’ of ‘man’ [sic] as its objective (Freire, 1972, p. 103), which seems a significantly better term for this concept.

personality and of social life [made possible through] the children's activity when they are placed in circumstances favourable to its fulfilment" (*AM*, 1949/1988, p. 213).

Glancy (2003) examines this idea further, with the possibility of teacher education that promotes the view of the individual as an active agent of social justice and transformation. In her view, critical teacher education and pedagogy "must move away from dominant pedagogy which exalts traditional approaches as a means of transmitting a dominant cultural capital" (p. 32). In her work she seeks, "to problematize schooling through a critique of social and cultural reproduction" (p. 36).

Glancy's challenge offers the same application to current Montessori practice in Aotearoa as it did to practice in Montessori's own time, however, this challenge is easily overturned. Although Montessori early childhood centres generally espouse equity and justice, some centres succumb to neo-liberal capture of their ideals. The provision of literacy materials and activities, for example, were originally a response to both child and parental request, recognised by Montessori (1912) as an issue of cultural capital for the impoverished families with whom she worked. An internet search, however, will quickly reveal many Montessori centres that create an illusion of academic advantage with which to attract middle class families to the early childhood education market place. The original project had an entirely different objective.

1907 Casa dei Bambini

In 1907, Montessori came to direct the Casa dei Bambini ('children's house or home'); a facility in a slum regeneration project, designed to protect the buildings from the ravages of children under seven years of age. By this

time, she had had much practice in both observation and campaigning for children and the care that she advocated was distinctly radical. Montessori was determined to offer these children physical and temporal freedom, but the care and responsibility which the children took for themselves and each other was unexpected. So too, was the children's capacity to focus and concentrate. For example, some months into the project, when she gave the children the means of learning the alphabet through letters cut from sandpaper, that was all that she intended.¹⁷ The children, however, demonstrated their ability to explore literacy in the same way that sensory objects and puzzles, given earlier, had extended their perception of their world. Montessori recounts that the children made the discovery of combining letters to make words and:

...with a species of frenzied joy, continued to write everywhere...In these first days, we walked upon a carpet of written signs. Daily accounts showed us that the same thing was going on at home, and some of the mothers, in order to save their pavements, and even the crust of their loaves upon which they found words written, made their children presents of paper and pencil. (Montessori, *MM*, 1912, p. 289)

Some months later, reading followed in a similarly organic fashion when one of the children appeared with a scrap of paper and announced that it contained a story. It was not too long before members of the Catholic Church realised the danger in her actions and denounced her work for its basis in freedom and consequent "abolition of rewards and punishments" (Foschi, 2008, p. 250).

¹⁷ Montessori, like others of the time, believed that children under six should not be forced to learn to read. Her partial capitulation followed requests from both the children and their mothers and recognition that this was an issue of cultural capital.

In an early book, Montessori (*MoH*, 1914/1965) took the opportunity to clarify the type of freedom that she offered the child:

Our intervention...is *indirect*; we are here to offer to this life, which came into the world by itself, the *means* necessary for its development, and having done that we must await this development with respect.

Let us leave the life *free* to develop within the limits of the good, and let us observe this inner life developing. This is the whole of our mission. (p. 134)

During the 1920s, Montessori continued her travels to many countries in Europe, North and South America where her focus was on explaining her pedagogical approach and ideas of freedom for children (Kramer, 1988; Radice, 1920).

Liberty and freedom: Political solutions

The ‘new education’ that Montessori proposed, required children to be set free to operate “without being influenced by the suggestion exercised by the adult” (*EandP*, 1949/1972, p. 124). Montessori explains that if children are able to follow their “natural path”, order and self-discipline is a likely corollary. Freedom changes as the child grows older, primary school children need the freedom to go out and learn from society and secondary aged children need the opportunity to participate in society. At tertiary level, Montessori advocates a balanced approach for young people to have the opportunity to study, work and earn a living.

Montessori did not work alone but worked in a time when other educationalists in the progressive movement were also seeking social reform (Baumann, 1999; Brehony, 2001; Cunningham, 2001; Potts, 1980; Selleck, 1972). In *Education for a new World* (1948) she proclaims that education has the power to support “the unfolding of the human soul and a new man [sic]

who will not be the victim of events, but will have the clarity of vision to direct and shape the future of human society” (cited in Devich, 2000, p. 17).

Following her exile from both Italy and Spain, Montessori actively advocated for a political party and a Ministry for Children to defend and promote the rights of children (Mayfield, 2006). In 1935 Montessori wrote a letter to her supporters outlining her ideas for a Social Party of the Child, ‘the forgotten citizen’ (p. 162).¹⁸ Two years later, in 1937, at the Montessori Congress in Copenhagen, held in conjunction with the New Education Fellowship, she put forward the following proposal:

To found a “Social Party of the Child” aiming at the scientific study of all questions related to childhood and at gathering all information regarding these questions with the view of initiating in different countries scientific, comparative studies and to work out those measures of social legislation deemed necessary to assure the general welfare of childhood and the recognition of its rights. [The motion was carried on 10 August, 1937.]

This international body would be a “power for peace” which would “recognize the child as a human entity....a citizen whose rights are as sacred as those of any other citizen, if not more so” (n.d. c. 1937, pp. 15-16). Montessori knew that children could not achieve either the protective legislation needed or the recognition that it is upon children that future generations depend, and so “it falls upon the adult to take up the cause of the child” (1937). One recommendation in the proposal was that there should be representation from young people to oversee the development of the party. Montessori also suggested that “we must...follow a twofold path and consider two parts in humanity – that which is forming itself and that

¹⁸ The first step towards global recognition of justice for children was recorded in the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, formulated in Geneva in 1924. It was not accepted officially until 1959 by the United Nations. Eventually, a more unilateral agreement, the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) was adopted by all nations, apart from the United States and Somalia.

which applies its formation...” (*EandP*, 1949/1972, p. 88). She concludes her rationale by suggesting that “the aim of the social party of the child....[is] to create a sphere of action that will enable all [human]kind to work together” (p. 89).

In 1941 Montessori reported on the progress of ‘The Social Party of the Child’ established in Denmark and other European and American nations’ in an article for *The Theosophist* (reprinted, 1969, p.8). Her great desire had also been to see a research centre for children and it was stated that this too had been achieved; however, the war interrupted progress on this project. Justice, however, remained an abiding objective and in the following section, I turn to examine literature that seeks to provide a contemporary understanding of this term.

Justice and the ‘forgotten citizen’

Within the social sphere, Gewirtz (1998) states that there are two approaches to justice: distributive and relational with hegemonic influences affecting both. She contends that it is consideration of the second dimension, at both micro (interpersonal) and macro (social and economic) levels, that is most helpful in expanding our theorisation of issues of power. For Montessori, distributive justice was seen in terms of the rights of children. It was her belief that children were the citizens whom society had forgotten (Montessori, 1935; *CSW*, 1989) and this was the foundation of her bid to found the Social Party of the Child. It was, however, in terms of relational justice that Montessori focused her pedagogical effort, attempting to develop a new understanding by challenging adults to acknowledge the voice of children.

Gewirtz (1998) discusses the postmodern conception of justice as recognition and Emilio Butturini (2002) suggests that Montessori’s understanding of this may be thought of as a “gift” in a similar manner to

the perception of the I:Thou relationship expounded by Martin Buber (p. 16). Continuing this conversation, Augusto Scocchera (2002), creates an imaginary encounter between Montessori and Einstein to explain their common view on the interdependence of all life and the collaborative mission of human beings: “Man’s worth should be placed in what he gives and not in what he can receive” says Einstein and Montessori comments, “we know, we have learnt that the higher quality of a being is his capacity to give help to life” (p. 42).¹⁹

Gewirtz (1998), however, draws the discussion back to Foucault’s critique of power in which, he contends, education professionals can engage, by resisting the “surveilling and disciplining of others” (p. 476). She cites a practical example of the concept of ‘justice as recognition’ from Leonard (1997, pp. 152-3) who explains that white Australians need to think again before they rush to ‘put right’ following comprehension of:

...the enormity of cultural losses experienced by many Aboriginal peoples at the hands of the state health, welfare and education services...But we are told to listen first...we may act if the Other wishes us to, and on their terms, but only after reflection.(p.476)

In the same way, Montessori stated that “the children are my teachers” (cited by Mario Montessori, 1958, p.1). She notes how children are made to waste energy in putting up unnecessary defences against the obstacles adults place in their way. Towards the end of her life, Montessori restated her belief that humankind must seek answers that are integrated and holistic. During the early part of her work, those around her placed emphasis on moral education and she too spoke in those terms (*MoH*, 1914/1965; *SoC*, 1936/1972; *CinF*, 1936/1970). As time went on, she reiterated again and

¹⁹ Scocchera is quoting from one of Montessori’s last lectures in which she admonishes her followers to look to the child instead of to herself and tells them that her philosophy, at its simplest, is to be ‘an aid to life’.

again that morality was not a question to be dealt with through either direct teaching or punishment (*SoC*, 1936/1972; *AMM-1*, 1917/1965; *CinF*, 1936/1970; *DoC*, 1948/1967; *FoM*, 1955/85). She likened the young infant and toddler to a psychic embryo (a being whose brain and organs of movement are still developing) who requires a delicate touch (*AM*, 1949/1988). Her advice became focused on an ecological approach that provides “the right environment, relaxation and...freedom from the continuous direction of adults” (*CSW*, 1989, p.78).

In 1949, Montessori gave an address which cites deficiencies in a solely materialist approach; returning to her bid to incorporate the ‘soul of humanity’. As she points out, “rights in one sense is a bad word” and should not be understood as simply providing “for the child’s good” but instead in terms of “the greatness and possibility of man [sic] to live, a cry that the spirit...shall be given the possibility...already reached on the material side” (*CSW*, 1989, p. 102). This passage continues to develop her idea of humanity as a ‘cosmic agent’.

Swan (1983) suggests that Montessori’s idea of the individual as an active agent in the world, enters modern psychology through the Gestalt School as well as the Phenomenology of Brentano²⁰ and attributes her with “a well-worked out Humanist-Existential psychology of the person fifty years prior to the foundation of the American school of Humanist Psychology represented by Charlotte Buhler, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow and others” (p. 7). He explains:

²⁰ Franz Brentano is attributed with introducing a modern understanding of ‘philosophy of mind’ which he outlines in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874). His concept of phenomenology is that intentional activity arises from the mind. This may be related to Montessori’s ideas on the child’s creation of the will through intentional activity. Nelson, *The Logic of Mind* – see Blackwell Reference Online.

The dynamic of learning proceeds from the learner's own activity – his concentration, tactile manipulation and exercises of practical life; from his impulse towards individuation, self-sufficiency and mastery. It springs therefore from his hidden drive towards personal freedom or the conquest of the various personal barriers to achievement in every sphere. Learning and education must, to her, serve the appropriation of personal autonomy. (pp. 6-7)

To conceptualise Montessori for today, however, we must consider her worldview. As a scientist, Montessori was required to fit with the positivist's theory of the day although Foschi (2008) points out “when she wrote in a political context, however, she was an ardent liberal and feminist” (2008, p. 240). As time went by and she learnt more about childhood, she moderated her writing and became steadily orientated towards an ecological understanding of humanity as a species, interdependent with all life. In this perspective, she drew upon the insights of a close relative, who was the first to recognise the lasting impact of humanity upon the earth and to draw attention to the coming of a new geological age (Crutzen, 2002):

Mankind's growing influence on the environment was recognized as long ago as 1873, when the Italian geologist, Antonio Stoppani, spoke about a “new telluric force which in power and universality may be compared to the greater forces of earth,” referring to the anthropozoic era”. (p. 23)

Having grown up with this knowledge, Montessori sought to create a new curriculum for primary aged children that would lead them to understand their responsibility in the cosmos. In the early childhood sphere, however, her chief discovery was in terms of revealing what was previously hidden and suppressed: “where the children have free choice and free expression in an environment free of obstacles, where the major hindrance, the dominating adult, [instead] becomes the child's guide towards independence” (Montessori, 1924, p. 12). It is then, she says, “that the deep springs of childnature [sic] begin to flow” (p. 11).

In order to situate Montessori's advocacy for a more just understanding of the child, the next section is focussed on a discussion of the historical origins and development of the concept of justice.

'Love, justice and peaceful social harmony'

Justice is a theme that is extensively discussed in Western philosophy and is fundamental to Montessori's pedagogy. The Greek philosophers, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, each devote time to the definition and exposition of the idea of justice as the result of either force or power. In terms of force, they saw the rulers creating the laws or conditions that are to be obeyed by their subjects or, alternatively, in terms of the fair exercise of power, gave consideration to justice, in which case, right judgement is accorded to the individual.

The Greek philosophers began to justify law in terms of 'truth' from the time of Socrates in the 4th century (BCE). In Book IV of *The Republic*, Plato records Socrates' discussion of justice; an understanding he limits to the educated, rational man:

Not with the outward man, but with the inward, which is the true self and concernment of man: for the just man does not permit the several elements within him to interfere with one another, or any of them to do the work of others- he sets in order his own inner life²¹, and is his own master and his own law, and at peace with himself. (pp. 354-55)

²¹ Likewise, Montessori discusses the positive outcomes of the children's house as being a help to the "progress of civilization ...it has solved many social and educational problems...and has helped to transform the home. It touches directly on the most important aspect of society, that is, man's own inner life" (*DoIc*, 1948/1967, p. 40).

Although theories of justice are commonly portrayed through the two aspects of distributive justice and relational justice, Kirkpatrick (2001) suggests that the distinction is between *communities* (citing the *koinonia* or early Christian groups), based on love and compassion, and *societies*, which are best characterised by the principles of justice. Montessori (1963), however, expresses a ‘remote aspiration’ for a *society* that is based on both love *and* justice leading to peaceful social harmony. This, she says, is contingent on the development of the spiritual life of individuals. This development, unlike Socrates’, is inclusive of men, women *and* children.

In a passage from *Pedagogical Anthropology*, Montessori writes of what she has learned in the Casa dei Bambini: “We have shown by experiment that [the little child] develops *through work, through liberty, and through love*” (1913, p. 144). In a public lecture given in London in 1919, Montessori clarified the type of freedom that she offers the child with an outcome that echoes Socrates:

Hitherto man has connected the word ‘discipline’ with the idea of mastery by someone else. Thence we have come to think that the ‘free’ child must be a child abandoned to its own devices. But this is not so. When order is not imposed from without, but formed naturally from within, discipline and liberty are identical...the [teacher] is indispensable, must provide the wherewithal and must be, like the mother, very much there indeed. (Radice, 1920, pp. 106-107)

This preliminary signal to the ‘ethics of care’, which emerged later in the 20th century (Gilligan, 1982; Hekman, 1995; Held, 2006; Noddings, 2003), was a continuing theme which Montessori developed further when she was detained in India during World War II (*AM*, 1949/1988). We may, however, find much earlier origins to this orientation in a fragment of text produced in the early sixth century before the Common Era (BCE) by a Pre-Socratic

philosopher and astronomer, Anaximander [c. 610-546 BCE]. This text is considered to be the earliest available piece of Western philosophy and because it has a focus on both care and justice it is of special importance to this discussion. The fragment is translated by Couprie (2005) as follows:

Whence things have their origin,
Thence also their destruction happens,
As is the order of things;
For they execute the sentence upon one another
- The condemnation for the crime -
In conformity with the ordinance of Time.

In revisiting both Anaximander and his most noted interpreter, Heidegger (1946), Oppermann (2003) looks to see if, in the ‘wake of the deconstruction’ of Heidegger there is ‘sufficient breath of thought’ to ignite ‘a new flame of justice’ in the work of Anaximander (p. 47). Oppermann’s (2003) translation of the fragment is less poetic but adds to our understanding:

But where things have their origin (*genesis*), there too their passing away (*phthora*) occurs according to necessity (*kata to chreon*); for they pay recompense (*tsis*) and penalty (*dike*) to one another for their recklessness (*adikia*), according to firmly established time. (p. 59)

Oppermann then proceeds to deconstruct the text as follows: “*tsis* is ‘philologically speaking, an appreciation. Whoever appreciates, cares’” (p.65) *Dike* is justice and *adikia* is a rendering to undo injustice. He interprets Anaximander’s concept of justice as “the whole of the process of rendering **both *dike* and *tsis***” (p. 64). The rendering (*didonai*) – the process of giving requires a knowledge of justice as law (*dike*) but Oppermann contends that this is insufficient without the sense of healing through care (*tsis*). We can never undo an injustice (*adikia*) – the rape, the fraud, the burglary – cannot be extinguished and hence we must understand the impossibility of making

‘whole’ restitution. Oppermann thus concludes that “*dike* is inescapable and yet repressive” (p. 67).

Derrida is another philosopher who recognises the intangibility of justice:

Justice, like the gift and time itself, is no-thing....it can never be fully present; it can only insist in laws like the spectre of our father haunting us to do right without being able to show us how....The place for the gift, the place for justice, is opened in a time out of joint... And yet, like the excess of the gift, it is the excess of justice – that which we can never make present, that sense which is forever beyond the reach of the present meaning of our words – that provides the force that makes the symbolic economy run. (cited in Lorraine, 2003, p. 43)

Oppermann (2003) suggests that it is, therefore, the element of care that matters:

Even if care can only be imagined and sought (and not yet realized) it can have a profound influence on ethical life. In recent years moral thinkers, some feminist, some religious, have tried to create an ‘ethics of care’...what the phenomenon may very well attest to is simply that the order, the regime, ultimately the *dike* within which our epoch dwells, are devoid of care and implicitly devoid of humanity as well...”...[Oppermann then asks...] What is the content of care in justice? I do not know. I only know care is needful. (p. 68)

As noted, other writers have promoted the idea of an ‘ethics of care’ (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984). Jane Roland Martin (1992), an American philosopher, took up this concept with regard to Montessori in a book which she called *The Schoolhome*. The title was a reference to Montessori’s (1912) description of the first Casa dei Bambini as a ‘school [situated] within the home’ (the apartments in the block at San Lorenzo). When Martin explored the context of her vision she concluded that Montessori “knew that a public world hospitable to peace would have to be very different...

[and would require] a very different kind of school” (2001, p. 228). Martin explains that in the incorrect translation of Casa dei Bambini as ‘The House of Children’ rather than the much more domestic and familial ‘Home of Children’ lies much of the misunderstanding of the social environment that Montessori intended as the milieu for her method, “...she left no room in her system for the radical dichotomies so often drawn between school and home, home and world, world and school” (p. 228).

The record of Montessori’s research and subsequent lectures to students of the Anthropology department at Rome University, *Pedagogical Anthropology*, published in English translation in 1913, includes a view on care:

Those whom we have been in the habit of oppressing with severity and punishment are the very ones most in need of the stimulus of affection....And this principle is especially true in the case of children; harshness of methods and severity of punishment will not avail to inculcate, and still less to create, goodness. Man is conquered through kindness and gentleness; amongst all the beatitudes, that of inheriting the earth...is given to the meek. (Montessori, 1913, p. 444)

If we return to Socrates, he too explains, in a manner reminiscent of Anaximander, that it is always better to suffer injustice than to perpetuate it, in that the man who is wronged suffers injury in body or in external things, while the man who does wrong injures his own soul by destroying what, to Socrates, is its greatest good - that equable temper from which all fitting actions flow.

Plato continues the discussion of his teacher but in his treatise on moral and political philosophy, *Republic* (c 375 BCE) he maps out an ideal or utopian society based on the concept of order. Ward (2004) suggests that this constituted a “jurisprudential gesture, for it is ‘justice’ which assures order” (p. 2).

The ideal commonwealth is determined by its good order, and this order is natural and metaphysical, which means it exists external to the individual. The metaphysical world and its order exist, whether or not you and I do, the 'highest category' of good to 'which everyone who is happy' must aspire. (Plato, 1987, pp 75, 103, cited in Ward, p. 3)

In Plato's terms, because we are all rational beings, we must necessarily share this aspiration. Justice has nothing to do with equality or fairness. Neither, accordingly, do just laws. Just laws constitute good order, the order that mirrors, or attempts to mirror, the ideas of natural order (Ward, 2004).

Postmodern philosophers view the reduction of "the philosophical task to theorizing and describing essences as a powerful means of controlling and containing what counts as knowledge" (Thayer Bacon, 2000, p. 19).

Contemporary political scientist, Susan Hekman (1995), comments that Plato was the first to see justice as a theme that is 'universal', an 'end in itself' (p. 35), a view echoed through history but one that, for our purposes, will be particularly noted in the work of Kohlberg (1981). When Hekman reviews Plato from a feminist perspective, she highlights his exclusion of the Guardians of the Republic from the "sordid troubles" of family life so that: "at the very beginning of the West's attempts to define the moral...the private sphere of the family...is defined as a threat to the unity of the *polis*" (p. 35).

Subsequent chapters will address Montessori's resistance to the domination of women and children; however, this was not at the expense of consideration of more global themes of life. Like Plato, order plays an important role in Montessori's philosophy but she reverses her forebears' focus on the endpoint. Instead, she highlights the place of order in the psychology of the child. When she observed the sensitivity of the very young child to the external order of his or her surroundings she concluded

that this must become an important part of the environment prepared for the child. A postmodern consideration of this factor might even conclude that it is the structured nature of the children's house (the 'striated space' of Deleuze) that allows the child to explore in comfort and find the 'smooth space' of concentration and flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; 2000; Taguchi, 2010). As time goes by and children internalise the order of things, disorder in the external environment can be more readily accommodated.

As to the order of the *polis*, Montessori shared the concerns of her compatriots with regard to the challenge of 'brigands, criminals and delinquents' but her focus was always on the causal factors in the development of such individuals (TEHP, 1989). If her project could be implemented on a broader scale with change in both environmental and pedagogical conditions, she believed that societal change would necessarily follow.

Theoretical framework – 'new child' and 'the gift'

I have outlined some of the reasons behind Montessori's social reform agenda and suggest that once she began to observe the results of the environment of freedom and choice offered to the young children of San Lorenzo, she began to reconceptualise her positivist stance, offering a more holistic interpretation of her findings. In Montessori's explanation of the teacher's 'call' she explains the contribution offered by "this new field of psychology" but also notes that "those with an interest in spiritual values...will recognise in our schools a work of love" (1924, p.12)

Montessori was asked near the end of her life to describe her philosophy and pedagogical practice. She replied that the sum of her contribution was simply to be "an aid to life" (Mario M. Montessori, 1992, p. 5). This is often

taken as the central principle of Montessori education and embodies the guide role for teachers.

Unlike Freud who sought answers in the pathology of children who presented with extreme psychological difficulties, Montessori focussed on study of what would happen if the child is provided with support rather than impediments to the psyche. She recognised the everyday obstacles that adults place in the way of children's development (for example, by not recognising the toddler's need for routine and order in the environment). These, for her, were a much greater cause of repression than Freud's Oedipus theory:

The child's activities are thwarted by the adult, he is forced into obedience. But the adult has another way, that of allowing him to do nothing for himself. Others must wash him, dress him, do his hair for him, wheel him out in a pram, put him to bed. He is treated as though he were incapable of moving or willing. This creature for whom action is a vital need...is thwarted by every act of *unnecessary* aid. (Montessori, 1936/1970, p. 26)

When children were supported in a safe environment that they could control and in which they could make their own discoveries; Montessori began to see what she dubbed as the 'normal' state of childhood: focused, happy, joyful children who were eager to engage in real activities as opposed to the isolation and make-believe toys of Victorian nurseries. She thus commenced what her son termed both her "lifework and her bequest: to fight for the soul of the child" (Mario Montessori, 1952, p. 49).

Providing a connection to critical theory, a more recent writer, Jennifer Crawford (2005), suggests the exploration of 'spiritually engaged love' as a feminist praxis. She says that:

our capacity for love, humility and the other virtues is directly related to our ability to apprehend reality...[and] that a transcendent or sacred horizon is also essential to the apprehension of reality...not in opposition to the physical world, but in a post-deconstructive sense of recognising the already existing (w)hol(i)ness of the world. (p. 121)

Montessori gives a very practical example of this love in relation to young children.²² She tells a story of an American observer of a group of Montessori children at the table: soup was served but one child had difficulty putting up his napkin and the visitor felt concern that he was not offered help. The child, however, persevered and when he succeeded: “she suddenly heard the cries of joy around her; then she saw that some of the children had their spoons held in mid-air and were watching with the same interest as she was”...however, Montessori detects a difference in the two sets of attention: “...they were looking at this child who had succeeded with a tenderness which was almost maternal, and one might say that these children were really watching the progress tremblingly while the lady was watching with a cold interest” (*CL1915*, 1997, p. 156).

Crawford (2005) continues, using the concept of attentive love first noted by Simone Weil, which she suggests “is the hallmark of a post-rational stage of development...an epistemological strategy adopted by women across a variety of domains from mothering to scientific research” (p. 122).

Montessori observed that the freedom and choice offered in the children’s house setting provides the opportunity for the growth of a ‘highly developed inner life’ and ‘inner richness’ which expresses itself initially through a focus of attention and then in the capacity to respond to others (*CL1915*, 1997, pp. 157-8). Angelo Caranfa (2010a) is another who

²² In a set of lectures for parents and teachers in Vienna in 1926, Montessori calls children ‘the love teachers’ (1956/1970, pp. 15-17)

recognises the parallel between Montessori and Weil's concept of attention although he suggests that Montessori's pedagogy is informed as much by Friedrich Nietzsche as by Rousseau or Kant in terms of his view that "the deficiency in today's education is that "no one learns, no one strives after, no one teaches – *the endurance of solitude*" (Nietzsche, 1982, p.188 cited in Caranfa, 2010b, p. 577, emphasis in the original).²³

This capacity for giving out has also been termed 'the gift paradigm' with the authors citing the example of the work of Montessori teachers (Vaughan & Estola, 2008). The essence of understanding in this concept is that rather than operating in a system of direct exchange we act "based on the conviction that adults must honour children's own worlds. This can be understood as appropriate to the gift paradigm because the adults have to satisfy the children's need for independence and autonomy" (Vaughan & Estola, 2008, p.31).

Jane Bone's research into spirituality in contemporary early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand reveals an example of how this paradigm is absorbed by children within a Montessori centre. She relates the actions of an older brother and associates this with Derrida's notion of the 'hospitable moment as a gift':

Leo displays tact and his kind heart in his unwillingness to hurt Rea's feelings even at inconvenience to himself.in fulfilling his responsibility Leo allows me to witness the spiritual act of putting someone else first....In the Montessori *casa* such learning is intentional. Children welcome, listen, and care for each other because in this environment certain expectations realize

²³ Montessori (*MM*, 1912) discovered early on, that children were often to be found in silent contemplation of elements of nature and likewise, that they delighted in a game that she devised upon a whim, the game of silence.

Montessori's vision of 'awakening the divine forces within every person's soul'. (Miller, 2002, p. 232, cited in Bone, Cullen & Loveridge, 2007 p. 350)

The just community

At the same time as Montessori was advocating for children and for alternative solutions to conflict; other feminist philosophers were engaged in similar discussion. Edith Stein [1891-1942], Simone Weil [1909-1943] and Hannah Arendt [1906-1978]; followed later by Iris Murdoch [1919-1999]²⁴ and Iris Young [1949-2006]²⁵; were just some of the women who were concerned with the topic of community, peace and justice.

Simone Weil is of particular interest as there is some evidence that she and Montessori were set to speak together in 1938, in a forum for peace.²⁶ Fox (2006) suggests that Weil's primary oppositional category is between might and justice. In Weil's view, the purpose of politics is justice and the struggle towards the good and must teach individuals the place they occupy morally, both in their own community and also in the course of history.

In this conception, politics could be seen as a symphony, as the correct and harmonic arrangement of societal elements: for example, an educational system which produces the right kind of citizens, who have the kind of knowledge necessary for a government based on freedom and justice rather than coercion. (Fox, p. 10)

²⁴ Refer to Antonaccio, M. (2000) *Picturing the human: The moral thought of Iris Murdoch*. Oxford: OUP. Also see http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb3440/is_n4_v29/ai_n28695859/

²⁵ Iris Young (1990) – see *Justice and the Politics of Difference* – 'which challenges the prevailing philosophical reduction of social justice to distributive justice.' (Benhabib, S. State University of New York retrieved 28 April 2010 from <http://press.princeton.edu/titles/4722.html>)

²⁶ In March 1938 Weil signed a statement by French anti-fascists urging their government to negotiate with Germany for the sake of world peace, and she agreed to speak that summer with Maria Montessori for peace. (Sanderson Beck: *World peace efforts since Gandhi, Volume 2*, retrieved from: <http://www.san.beck.org/GPJ28-WomenforPeace.html>) .

Although Weil recognises the need for hierarchy within her community she notes that once the community loses its compassion it tips from the relational to a politics based on might, the totalitarian state.

Weil's lectures on philosophy lay the groundwork for the 'just community' as she leads her high-school students through the many propositions which lead to understanding of this harmonic arrangement (1959/1978). This idea leads us to further consideration of justice in the context of human development.

Lawrence Kohlberg [1927-1987], a psychologist, sought to extend the ideas of Piaget by creating a six stage scale of moral development. His research established a hierarchical progression of development from pre-conventional (stages one and two) in which rules and social expectations are largely seen as external to self with moral decisions made on the basis of the expectation of reward or punishment; to conventional (stages three and four) where the shared norms of society and consideration of the needs and concerns of others forms the basis of moral decision-making; to post-conventional (stages five and six) wherein decisions are based upon the utilitarian notion of the 'greatest good for the greatest number' and on universal principles of justice, liberty and equality possibly applied at the expense of social norms or laws. In Kantian mode, his project aimed to isolate abstract principles of justice that would represent the basis of the most advanced moral reasoning. By privileging the notion of distributive justice he was accused of downgrading relational aspects of justice, fixing those who place higher regard on inter-personal relations and care for others (often women) at a 'lower' stage of moral development (the conventional stage). He was also critiqued for ethnocentrism and subsequent research has challenged Kohlberg's model refuting his claim to the universal application of his theory (Miller & Bersoff, 1992 and Snarey,

1985, cited in Gump, Baker & Roll, 2000), instead, suggesting that it is “specific to Western culture” (Gump et al., p. 2).

Carol Gilligan’s (1982) response is found in the presentation of what has become a classic feminist critique of Kohlberg, entitled *In a different voice*. Her thesis was that women tend to regard interpersonal relationships, care and concern, as the basis of moral decision making which immediately places them at a lower level on Kohlberg’s model. Hekman (1995) conducts a postmodern survey of the field of moral theory in which she reviews the work of Gilligan and others and establishes that there is not just one but multiple voices to be heard in feminist moral theory. Montessori, not cited in Hekman, is a feminist voice who has frequently been overlooked in this discussion. In 1981, however, Krogh provided a small but important assessment of Montessori education in response to Kohlberg. Krogh suggests that the Montessori education approach creates an environment and structure that fosters a much earlier response to social justice thus addressing Kohlberg’s relegation of young children to the initial stages of moral development.

Krogh argues that the Montessori community for children of 3-6 years of age can be seen as a simplified or embryonic form of Kohlberg’s ‘just community’. She outlines Kohlberg’s belief that moral development was possible only with children from primary age as related to Piaget’s concrete and formal operational stages. Children in his experimental school came to assume responsibility for the behaviour of both self and others. Krogh (p. 43) points out that Montessori observed such behaviour in the 3-6 year olds in her children’s houses:

It is interesting to see how, little by little, these [children] become aware of forming a community...they come to feel part of a group to which their activity contributes...the children no longer act

thoughtlessly, but put the group first and try to succeed for its benefit. (Montessori, *AM*, 1949/1988, p. 212)

Krogh notes several factors supporting this development, some of which present challenges to aspects of current early childhood practice including the limits set on the number of materials in the prepared environment (one set of geometrical solids, one globe, one puzzle map of the world and so on) which led to children sorting out temporal sharing; [in the days before regulations] there was a higher pupil to teacher ratio and a mixed age-group which led children to seek help from their older, more experienced peers whilst they, in turn, learnt “compassion, helpfulness and independence”; an emphasis on care of the environment also led to the creation of community because the children’s play was with real objects. This led children to develop a sense of competence, self-worth and responsibility. In addition, the dignity accorded to children by teachers gave them “freedom to grow in cognition and affect...leading to “inner discipline and structured self-direction” (p. 44).

The formation of embryonic, ‘just community’ in early childhood education will be discussed in Chapter seven when I examine evidence gathered from case studies of Montessori centres. The preparation and ongoing praxis of teachers who decide to become involved in Montessori’s critical, engaged pedagogy is the subject of the next section of this review.

Montessori education: a critically, engaged pedagogy

Kenway and Modra (1992) note that discussions regarding pedagogy often rest “upon an instrumental, transmission model of teaching which fails to make problematic the learner, teacher, or knowledge, or the relationship among them” (cited in Hollingsworth, 1996, pp. 22-23). In like manner, a

Montessori commentator, Joy Turner (2001), suggests that if we continue to ‘concretize’ the Montessori approach it becomes “just another pedagogical entity...but if we regard it as a set of ideas, then our legacy becomes a guideline for a dynamic, transformational process of educational expansion” (p. 32). Montessori, herself, contrasts this process to shortcomings she perceives in higher education:

If the spirit of an undergraduate, reacts to social injustice, or to political questions concerning deeply felt truths, the order of authority goes out...what happens then is that young people leave the university with their minds so shackled and sacrificed that they have lost all power of individuation and can no longer judge the problems of the age in which they live. (Montessori, *AM*, 1949/1988, p. 10)

In *To Educate the Human Potential*, Montessori (1948/1989) considers the role of the teacher, not as “tyrant or missionary, but as essential leader of the rising generation” (p. 77). She discusses those teachers who understand only half the message “They agree that it is necessary to cultivate the will in children, for spontaneous interest, but contend that it must be strictly controlled and restrained. That is a contradiction in terms; *you cannot develop by repression*” (p. 84, emphasis added).

In any philosophy, there are challenges and difficulties in interpretation. The high expectations Montessori held for her teachers have sometimes translated into rigid practices as they seek to follow the tradition handed down to them. Malm (2003) documented the teaching stories of eight Montessori teachers in Sweden. She highlighted the tendency to focus on ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ ways of practice and noted that “This may result in a reluctance to experiment and subsequently change the existing order of things” (2001, p. 14).

Montessori, however, makes an early reflection on the flexibility of the schedule that she set up for the first *casa dei bambini*:

...which we have never followed entirely, (a sign that a schedule in which the material is distributed in arbitrary fashion is not adapted to the regime of liberty) we begin the day with a series of exercises of practical life, and I must confess that these exercises were the only part of the programme which proved thoroughly stationary. (MM, 1912, p. 121)

Following Montessori's death in 1952, pre-service education or as it is more often termed, 'training', for teachers, has consisted of a careful showing of the "Montessori method", albeit to willing subjects; a process that has not encouraged discussion or change. Montessori teacher training is generally delivered by oral transmission with an expectation that student teachers will note and learn the processes by heart. The result is sometimes disheartening. In teacher preparation, Montessori early childhood centres (often known as *children's houses* after the original *Casa dei Bambini*) are envisioned as ultimately calm and quiet communities of self-regulated children. With high ideals to live up to and Montessori's own admonitions towards her teachers, it is not surprising that they are often just so. Underlying the calm, however, is the spectre of teacher control, as Montessori consultant and teacher educator, Eduardo Cuevas (1997) points out:

I am all too often confronted with all but perfectly established *Casa* environments, where nothing is missing except life... (Teachers) are so worried about losing control that (they) do not allow for that space of time where it seems to us that the child is "doing nothing," but where in reality the child is unknowingly coming in contact with the inner drives that will propel him or her toward meaningful work. (pp. 108-9)

In Cuevas's statement we see how a technical interpretation of Montessori's work results in sterility and the opposite of her intention. Her original vision was expansive:

The immense influence that education can exert through children, has the environment for its instrument, for the child absorbs his environment, takes everything from it, and incarnates it in himself. With his unlimited possibilities, he can well be the transformer of humanity, just as he is its creator. The child brings us a great hope and a new vision. There is much that we teachers can do to bring humanity to a deeper understanding, to a higher well-being, and to a greater spirituality. (*AM*, 1949/1988, p. 61)

This manner of speaking and writing about the child; a mix of science, spirituality, romance and socialist vision, initially met with an enthusiastic response from a broad range of progressive educators eager for change at the turn of the twentieth century (Boyd & Rawson, 1965; Cole, 1950; Culverwell, 1914; Findlay & Steele, 1914; Holmes, 1914; Radice, 1920; Selleck, 1972; Stewart, 1968) but by 1949 Montessori's credence had fallen such that she was listened to by only a tiny fraction of her former adherents. Cohen (1974) was later to claim that her "experiments were hopelessly amateurish" (p. 63) and likened her movement to a cult due to the refusal of Montessori to enter into dialogue with other educationalists.

Donahue (2002), writing to McVicker Hunt (a professor of psychology prominent in the Head Start programme in the United States of America) in 1963, explains this further when he notes that "the routinization of charisma by the Association Montessori Internationale,²⁷ following her death in 1952

²⁷ Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) was established by Montessori, in 1929, to safeguard her work. In order to maintain the integrity of the philosophy, AMI accredited teacher training centres are staffed by teacher educators who have traditionally undergone a minimum of four years preparation. A two year programme, which began in 2007, is designed to overcome the barrier this imposes on the future development of the movement.

has only intensified the difficulties of unravelling the charismatic and scientific elements” (p. 17) of Montessori’s thought and practice. The Americans sought a more open system and thus, a new organisation, the American Montessori Society (AMS), was established to create a “culturally relevant” (ibid) system. Independent teacher preparation courses (often linked to universities), conferences, a journal containing articles subject to peer review, plus the establishment of pathways to research, have resulted in a flourishing movement.

The original Montessori organisation, Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), held on to a singular interpretation of Montessori and for many years became moribund despite the efforts of younger members who agitated for change from within the organisation. The North American Montessori Teachers Association publication, *The NAMTA Journal*, however, continued to provide a strong literary presence throughout this time and featured conference papers and reflective essays that served as historical markers for the movement. David Kahn, long time editor of the journal, signalled that changes might be afoot, in 1981, in an editorial entitled: ‘Training, teacher and praxis’ regarding the disparity between Montessori training programmes; social conditions that demand more teachers; and traditional (AMI) Montessori courses:

Montessori training has excelled in many areas. It has made every effort to convey a *spirit* of pedagogy so that the teacher is not merely an imitator of Montessori styles, but a thinking teacher, one who is on a certain mental quest....If duration of the training permits, Montessori expertise becomes more than the knowledge of a curriculum; it is participation in a way of life, where the soul of learning is rooted in the development of the child. (p.2)

Within the same issue, a first generation Montessori teacher trainer, Lakshivi Kripalani, reiterates Montessori’s philosophy of teacher education “The true

function of teacher training is to prepare aspiring adults, who are respected and treated as adults for a lifetime inquiry into the natural needs of the child” (p. 28) and notes her belief that:

...if Dr Montessori were alive today, she would have proceeded with her continuous research in the area of teacher training...*At present the majority of the Montessori teachers that are in the field are coming out of the training centers so rigidly attached to the didactic material and their presentation that the child is lost in the shuffle.*What the trainees need, besides learning the techniques of directing, is personal change in themselves while they are being trained for the children. (p. 30)

Montessori (AM, 1949/1988) was well aware of the need for personal transformation and recognised that it was integral to successful education for a profession. She says, “Practising of a profession does not just mean learning a technique. Dedication to it produces inward changes necessary to success” (p. 39). We have already established her concept of justice for the child but taking the concept one step further, she notes:

On this higher educational level justice is something truly spiritual; it tries to ensure that every child shall make the best of himself...Justice, here, is to give every human being the help he needs to bring about his fullest spiritual stature, and service of the spirit at every age...means helping those energies that are at work to bring this about. (p. 260)

Clearly, understanding of both aspects of preparation, extrinsic and intrinsic, is central to the education of the teacher. Knowledge of the didactic material and preparation of the environment is coupled with intrinsic understanding of both self and child but a wider notion of the role of the teacher is also part of the legacy of the movement.

Montessori teachers

There is a good deal of professional literature available regarding Montessori teachers. Patricia Yonka, an American Montessori teacher and consultant, highlights Montessori's own ideas, quoting her first from *The Secret of Childhood* and then from *The Discovery of the Child*:

The educator must not imagine that he can prepare himself for his office merely by study, by becoming a man of culture. He must before all else cultivate in himself certain aptitudes of a moral order...The educator must prepare himself *inwardly*. [i.e. with regard to defects that could become barriers to children]... (Montessori, 1978, pp. 109-110, cited in Yonka, 1999, p. 24)

She must acquire a moral alertness which has not been demanded by any other method, a mingling of calm, patience, love and humanity (Montessori, 1966, p. 206 cited in Yonka, 1999, p. 24)

The role of emotion and moral disposition has been the subject of more recent consideration in the general education literature and similar qualities were highlighted when Gu and Day (2007) reviewed the literature on the role of resilience in teachers. They refer to Frederickson (2004) who records the role of positive emotions such as “joy, interest, contentment and love” in building both “social bonds and discovery” to “fuel psychological resilience” (p. 1304). Zembylas (2007) goes a step further and advocates for a ‘politics of emotion’ in education. He suggests with Hoy (2004) “...that emotions play an important political role in enabling critical resistance” (p. *xiv*). Zembylas draws on the suggestion of Levinas who suggests that “the fundamental concern of Western philosophy is to make the other an object of knowledge...and thus controllable” (p. 16). If, however, educators embrace ‘unknowing’ as a means of relating to the Other then enactment offers ‘hope’ and “initiates relatedness, attentiveness, and generosity” (p. 16).

In a passage from *The Secret of Childhood*, Montessori explains her understanding of ‘unknowing’ which is possibly derived, via her study of St Francis, from *The Cloud of Unknowing*²⁸ (a medieval text). She outlines the requirements she had of the teacher she employed who was:

...a working-class mistress without the ambitions or prejudices of a real school teacher. Here was a situation that might be considered one of "intellectual calm." It has always been recognised that a teacher must be calm, but the calm demanded was one of character and nerves. Here was a deeper calm; a state of emptiness or (better) of freedom from mental slumber, producing an inner translucency, a freedom from intellectual attachment. Such a state approaches the intellectual purity that St. Francis of Assisi felt, and which was confused with ignorance, whereas it was a mental state predisposing to that illuminative state open to divine enlightenment. Similar to this is the spiritual humility which prepares us to understand the child, and which should, therefore, be the most essential part of a teacher's preparation. (*SoC*, 1936/1972, p. 145)

Crawford (2005) explains this idea with reference to the philosopher, Iris Murdoch who explains that “attentive love [is] ‘an exercise of justice and realism and really *looking*’ (1970, p. 91, cited on p. 112). Like Montessori and Zembylas, she goes on to explain that it requires:

An ‘unselfing’ of ourselves so that we can truly see the Other...a deconstruction , of the individual, phenomenological self by means of the *discipline* of attentive love leads us into the extended form of nondual subjectivity that comes after the subject. [It is, she says,] ...a non-dominating praxis, a way of knowing and being in the world, that finds application in the many domains in which women function in the contemporary world. (p. 113)

²⁸ "For He can well be loved, but he cannot be thought. By love he can be grasped and held, but by thought, neither grasped nor held. And therefore, though it may be good at times to think specifically of the kindness and excellence of God, and though this may be a light and a part of contemplation, all the same, in the work of contemplation itself, it must be cast down and covered with a cloud of forgetting. And you must step above it stoutly but deftly, with a devout and delightful stirring of love, and struggle to pierce that darkness above you; and beat on that thick cloud of unknowing with a sharp dart of longing love, and do not give up, whatever happens."¹¹¹ (Anon, 2001)

Goodman (2002) is another who suggests a link to the emotional and spiritual aspect of teacher preparation:

[It] involves experiencing a deep structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; our body-awarenesses; our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (p. 197)

The notion that attentive or ‘spiritually engaged knowledge’ involves discipline is emphasised by Crawford and this is an aspect that Montessori addressed in 1917 in the second volume of *The Advanced Montessori Method* which is also known as *Spontaneous Activity in Education* (1917/1965). She writes about the changes wrought by science in university teaching so that students no longer face the authoritative professor in ‘ermine-trimmed robe’ but a professor who takes ‘the lowest station’ and ‘often clad in a gray linen blouse like a workman’...accompanies them in their quest for knowledge.

The students are initially prepared for complex study by:

the quiet and restful work of preparing an infusion, or the section of a rose-stalk, and thus experience, as they observe through the microscope, that emotion born of wonder, which awakens the consciousness and attracts it to the mysteries of life with a passionate enthusiasm. (p. 139)

Even though Montessori envisaged her work, in that sense, a scientific pedagogy, she considered it was incomplete without recognition of spirituality. Once again, she calls upon Francis, the saint whose attention was often focused on a familial regard for creatures, to illustrate her point. She quotes his hymn of praise as he pictures a grasshopper, wondering:

...who gave me these little fairy feet, furnished with healthy and flexible little bones, to enable me to spring swiftly....who gave me

eyes, crystal globes that revolve and see before and behind....who gave me wings, delicate tissues of gold and green and blue, which reflect the color of the skies and of my trees. (p. 137)

She concludes that “the vision of the teacher should be at once precise like that of the scientist, and spiritual like that of the saint” (p. 137). Towards the end of this volume, Montessori terms her approach to children “a work of liberation” (p. 324) in which the children whose intellectual and internal needs are satisfied have “entered upon the paths of peace” (p. 324).²⁹

Montessori is at pains to point out that “the structure of our educative method [may start with] an act of concentrated attention to a sensory stimulus” (p. 325) but if limited to this “it would evidently not take the whole man into consideration” (p. 325).

For the intellect, we have the various objects, colours, forms, etc.; but for the spirit, the objects are ourselves....[like the objects] ...we too should wait; not coldly, but rather making the child feel that we contain a rich material which is at his disposal, ready to be taken as soon as he stretches out his hand to grasp it. (p. 332).

And undoubtedly the day will come when his spirit will become sensitive to our spirit; and then he will begin to taste that supreme delight which lies in the intimate contact of soul with soul...we shall see the child who suddenly becomes aware of his companions, and is almost as deeply interested as we are in their progress and work. (p. 335).

Dow (2003) refers to Noddings’ (1994) work on the desirability of making an ‘ethics of care’ a central premise from which to teach but notes that it is “critical that we examine the costs and risks associated with teaching in ways that encourage a more nurturing engagement and those that necessitate a

²⁹ For Montessori the internal sense which lies at the root of life, is ‘love’. Montessori agrees with “those biological studies...which have recognized love as the key to life” (*SAinE*, 1917/1965, p. 326) and notes that animal species would fail to survive without the selfless love of adults for their weaker offspring. It is, therefore, this vital sense that lies at the root of existence, rather than [Darwin’s] theory of the survival of the fittest.

more critical, uncertain approach, as both of these broad characterizations require that educators teach from a place of vulnerability” (p. 139). The final section of this review focuses on the way in which such reflections may be fostered during the induction phase of beginning teaching.

Teacher formation: Models of change and transformation

Pre-service preparation is followed by continuing development as teachers enter the field. There have been several attempts to create models of teacher development beginning with Frances Fuller’s stage model (Fuller, 1969; Fuller & Bown, 1975) which focused on ‘concerns’ of novice teachers. This model sees movement in stages, from the first stage: concerns about self; to the second: concerns about tasks/situations and finally to the third: concerns about impact on students (Conway & Clark, 2003). Conway and Clark expand this model by adding aspirations or ‘hopes’ to the ‘concerns’ of Fuller. “Attention to both hopes and fears together, we believe, provides the opportunity to present a more balanced and expansive view...” (p. 468). They suggest that what Gibbs (2006) has termed ‘journeys towards authenticity’ are both ‘outward’ “from self, to task, to impact on students” and ‘inward’ as a “progression is made towards greater self-awareness/self-knowledge and efforts subsequently made at greater self-organization and self-development” (Conway & Clark, 2003, p. 470).

There have been other models describing the teacher’s journey: for example, Malm (2004) utilised Huberman’s idea of teachers’ professional life cycles (based around the themes of survival, discovery, stabilization, experimentation/activism, self-doubts, serenity, conservatism and disengagement) in her study of eight Montessori teachers in Sweden; Katz (1972) suggested four stages: “the survival stage, consolidation stage, renewal stage, and maturity stage” (cited in Voth, 2002, p.9); and a more

recent model proposes seeing phases of teacher development as “the Novice, the Apprentice, the Professional, the Expert, the Distinguished, and lastly, the Emeritus” (Steffey, et. al. 2000, cited in Voth, 2002, p.4).

These models focus on the self efficacy of the individual teacher but do not address the wider vision of freedom that Montessori had for her educational project. Other studies examining the effect of teacher preparation in Montessori education include Vaughn (1999) who investigated the dialectic of freedom and control between teachers and students in Montessori primary schools and Hedeon (2005) who has explored the notion of ‘decentering’ in the traditional role of the Montessori teacher. He suggests that when the teacher steps back, students are empowered to “exercise their volition and engage in learning activities that meet their interests” (p.188). Leonard (2002) lends a further explanation when he cites ‘what Montessori calls “the threshold of intervention” for each child...[through] patient observation of the child’s activity together with self-observation of our own mental and emotional responses....we develop the discipline of a moment of pause...” (p. 13).

Each of these writers is referring to a conscious, deliberate mode of response in the teacher which is contrary to some of the more provocative, questioning emphases in contemporary early childhood education. Barron (2002), however, has begun to address the question of change and transformation, through the Montessori teacher education programme she heads at New York University. Challenges from her article, “Post-modern Montessori” form a discussion point in one of the Montessori papers at AUT when students are asked to re-consider traditional ways of presenting materials to children in favour of more exploratory approaches. In addition, Turner (2001) has outlined key curriculum issues for Montessori in the North American context and other Montessori studies have examined

teachers' practice and reflections on their life and work (Cossentino, 2006; Malm, 2003). It is proposed that this study will build on such work but also provide specific knowledge on Montessori in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

Montessori education in Aotearoa New Zealand: The induction of teachers

The revival of Montessori education in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1975 followed a similarly independent path to that of the American Montessori Society but for a variety of reasons it had less success in establishing links with the wider education field (Chisnall, 2002; Shuker, 2005). It took almost two decades of effort before Government recognised the need to support this small but growing movement in terms of teacher preparation.³⁰

The AUT degree was established, in part, to help meet the imperative, established by government, to ensure that all early childhood centres had a minimum of one person, at all times, holding a recognised qualification, by January 2005. Subsequently, the government's Strategic Plan for early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 2002) continued this expectation of improvement of standards such that by 2007, half of all teaching staff were required to meet registration³¹ requirements, with the expectation that by 2012, *all* early childhood educators would be required to hold a three year diploma or degree qualification (Freeman, 2005). Policy

³⁰ Minister of Education, Hon. Trevor Mallard, gave AUT a dispensation from the moratorium on new primary pre-service teacher education, to offer the primary Montessori specialty, in 2002, following the introduction of the ECE specialty in 2001.

³¹ Registration with the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC) relates to the requirement that newly qualified teachers become provisionally registered and then complete two years satisfactory teaching alongside an induction and mentoring programme with a mentor teacher. Evidence is collected to demonstrate that the candidate has met the standards set out in the Registered Teacher Criteria of the NZTC before full registration is granted.

changes have since reduced the target for centres, to 80% qualified staff, amidst considerable controversy and dissent from the field.

In the AUT degree there is an expectation that students will complete their study with well-articulated philosophies and the development of a feeling of capability or self-efficacy as future educators (Gibbs, 2006). In New Zealand, this is followed by a two year induction programme that supports teachers to work towards teacher registration; the process of becoming a fully qualified teacher (<http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/>).

This is a relatively new requirement for all qualified early childhood teachers and the process of induction and registration is currently being organised on an ad hoc basis. In July, 2005, the Ministry of Education began monthly allocations to centres, for each newly qualified and provisionally registered ECE teacher. This was designed to support beginning ECE teachers in a similar fashion to beginning primary teachers who are funded for a .2 release, each week.

Research on the induction of beginning teachers in the compulsory sectors, is extensive (Brennan, Thames & Roberts, 1999; Cameron & Baker, 2004; Ingersoll, 2004; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Jones, 2004; Rogers & Babinski, 1999; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Scherer (2003) offers a handbook on inducting, mentoring and sustaining teachers from an American perspective and Fletcher (2000) and Tickle (2000) do the same from a British standpoint.

In the early childhood field, however, such research is more sparse, primarily due to the fact that the status of early childhood teachers (other than kindergarten teachers) as professionals is relatively recent in both New

Zealand and elsewhere. Goffin & Day (1994) opened the debate for ECE. In a New Zealand review of the subject, Cameron & Baker (2004) made only brief mention of ECE studies although later studies (Aitken, 2005; Aitken & Kennedy, 2007; Cameron, 2007; Mahmood, 2008) began to situate the debate for ECE in Aotearoa.

More recently, some key researchers within the New Zealand ECE field, have begun to delve deeper into this topic. The work of Katherine (Kate) Ord (2010) is of particular note. Building on Mahmood's studies of early childhood student teachers in Aotearoa, she investigated two ECE teacher education programmes, one field-based and one full-time and concluded that 'preparedness' is a concept that equates with the knowledge that teachers gain through their qualifications. She argues for a reconceptualised view of teacher preparation that does not privilege theory over practice but that "knowledge for teaching must take account of practice theories of knowledge" (p. 1). Whilst her study focuses mainly on the way teachers were prepared for their role, the reflexive perspective of her participants, when interviewed as newly qualified teachers, meant that they were able to relate that their "knowledge of teaching was something that could be inspected, interrogated, and interpreted through a very active process of engagement in the teacher education classroom and in the life-world of the centre, and at times beyond" (p. 182). This concept of 'engagement' became important in the interpretation of the work of my own participants.

A New Zealand Teachers Council funded study, which took place at a similar time to the data gathering phase for this thesis, involved five ECE settings with nine Provisionally Registered Teachers (PRTs) as part of a review of all sectors supporting registered teachers. The authors, Aitken, Ferguson, McGrath, Piggott-Irvine and Ritchie (2008) recognised the particular difficulties experienced by the ECE sector and one of their

recommendations included the development of an external support and mentoring model with the appointment of induction coordinators to provide support for mentors. It was noted, however, that the diverse nature of the sector means that one size will not fit all. Amongst their observations, the report noted extensive documentation (compared to other sectors) was a feature of the ECE case studies with PRT portfolios, perhaps because of mentor inexperience or uncertainty. In addition, issues to do with accountability and transparency of funding were raised, especially to do with mentor payment and release time and the report recommended additional auditing of the sector regarding the use of the funding grant.

Wang, Odell and Schwille (2008) reviewed the literature on induction for first year teachers since this is a “crucial and problematic period”, a period that “shapes teaching patterns and influences teacher retention” (p. 133). They identified three levels of support: mentor, peer, and external programmes of professional development and highlighted a British study by Williams, Prestage and Bedward (2001) which found that structured collaboration between mentors and beginning teachers had a sustained effect on professional development when teachers worked in a collaborative and supportive environment but that this effect was limited for those who worked in an individualistic environment.

The literature in the compulsory sphere tends to focus on the teacher as a sole operator responsible for work plans and assessment. ECE has a different complexity in that it requires team work within the centre and between parents and other community stakeholders. With more staff and different ratios to maintain; shifts to manage; and children’s routines to be protected; creating non-contact time is more difficult, another factor noted by Aitken et al. (2008). This poses a particular difficulty for Montessori centres where an uninterrupted work cycle for children and constancy of

staff is highly valued. When new graduates are employed to meet licensing requirements another intricacy is added.³² The following studies, however, offer possibilities that could be transferred to the early childhood situation.

Wang et al. (2008) reported studies of peer support that helped to sustain beginning teachers such as Eik's (2002) study which noted that when teachers develop and share the same vision for teaching in pre-service settings, they can "explore teaching by reflecting, observing, modelling, and supporting one another's teaching" (p. 142). A further cited study (Rolheiser & Hundey, 1995) shows that such peer collaboration can also sustain new teachers in negative school environments.

Norman and Feiman-Nemser (2005) took an individual case-study approach to follow the development of a mentoring relationship between two beginning school teachers. They demonstrated the positive effect of mentoring as 'new teacher development' rather than simply 'short term support' (p. 695). In one case, the mentor and beginning teacher worked together "at the edges of their own knowledge of teaching and the knowledge-base of the field" to work out new ways of developing student skills. They point out that "...this sent a powerful message about teachers as learners and teaching as an experimental practice" (p. 695). In a second case, however, the beginning teacher was resistant to the concerns of the mentor and as she was working with an inexperienced team "did not have regular and easy access to the "wisdom of practice"" (p. 696). The researchers concluded that "if a new teacher is resistant or emotionally needy or slow to take seriously the legitimate concerns of the mentor...then the mentor may

³² Regulations require one qualified teacher to be with children at all times and during the period of the research, there was a critical shortage of qualified staff. This meant that new graduates were frequently the only person available for this role.

not be able to move the novice as far or as quickly as she would like” (p. 695) in which case a two year period of induction is likely to be insufficient.

An Australian study by McCormack, Gore and Thomas (2006), drew upon Feiman-Nemser’s framework of ‘Central Tasks in Learning to Teach’ (CTLT)³³ and noted her belief that induction occurs during the first three years of teaching but acknowledges that “ learning continues for thoughtful teachers as long as they remain in teaching” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1039, cited on p. 98). This particular study highlighted the many and complex tasks that primary and secondary teachers face in their first years of practice as they face getting to know unfamiliar school and wider communities, utilising their subject knowledge, creating a positive, safe and respectful learning community, in addition to establishing a professional identity. The participants in this study found that the structured induction programmes were valuable but “throughout the study participants highlighted the value of informal discussion and sharing of concerns in a collaborative setting as an integral part of their early professional learning” (p. 108).

In early childhood, the move to give voice to practitioners, parents *and* children arises from critical pedagogy (Carr, 2001) and sets the beginning ECE teacher on a collaborative pathway right from the start. Lave and Wenger (1991) developed the idea of ‘communities of practice’ which has been adopted by ECE to explain this sort of “participatory framework” (Penn, 2005, p.49). An early childhood study of nine teachers in England by

³³ The CTLT framework includes pre-service tasks to do with developing subject knowledge, examination of beliefs and development of tools and dispositions towards teaching; Induction tasks include learning the context, designing a responsive instructional program, creating a classroom learning community, enacting a beginning repertoire and developing a professional identity. The framework continues with further professional development to extend and refine knowledge and practice and a step up to expand responsibilities and develop leadership skills (this is my summary of Feiman-Nesmar’s framework as cited in McCormack et al. p. 98).

Wood and Bennett (2000) contributes a model of professional development based on these insights. They posit that “building knowledge from an ‘inside-out’ perspective” by utilising the idea of communities of practice, addresses the problem of “enacting policy changes from a ‘top-down’ perspective” (p.636). Drawing on Fenstermacher’s concept of ‘practical knowledge’ in which teachers integrate academic knowledge through reflection on practical experience; they found that his three stage process of shared discourse and reflection; problematisation of practice; led, in all cases, to the final stage of re-conceptualisation of key elements in both theory and practice.

In an endorsement of this idea, MacNaughton (2005) has suggested the model of “critically knowing early childhood communities that are collaborative, inquiry-oriented, knowledge building, dialogical and change-oriented could offer us the opportunity to link what is so often produced as separate ‘truths’ – theory, practice and policy” (p.212); and the rhizome theory of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) has been another influence in moving ECE beyond a linear logic towards a lateral (local logic) view. Views such as these provide alternative ways of developing theory and reflection on practice and could lead to the generation of professional discourse that is necessary to continue the work begun a century ago by Maria Montessori.

Conclusion

This literature review has traversed the problem of difference in discourse between contrasting approaches to teacher preparation; resilience; and current thinking on philosophy and pedagogy in the field. I have also considered the connections that may be drawn between current and historical ideas on peace and social justice and the implication of these concepts for transformative learning. In early childhood education, in

contrast to the compulsory sector, teaching practice is collaborative. The Montessori model provided an early site for resistance in education, challenging conceptions of the child, the teacher and the practice of learning and teaching. The review revealed evidence of both innovation and routinization of practice and teacher education in the Montessori movement.

This study will investigate the life of Maria Montessori to give further insight into the rationale for her radical stance; will examine how her ideas are played out in both contemporary and historical settings; with the intention of developing insight into teacher formation that can support the development of just relations between children and future society. The next chapter outlines the methodology used for the present study.

Chapter Three: Design of the study: Responding to a 'Rain of souls'

"Children are sent to us as a rain of souls, as a wealth and a promise that can always be fulfilled; but that needs our efforts to help in bringing that fulfilment"
(Montessori, 5 May, 1952)

Introduction

The methodology for this thesis combines historical, genealogical research with contemporary empirical research to explore what compelled Montessori to care so deeply about children and to consider the elements of her philosophy and pedagogical practice that continue to engage current early childhood teachers.

Historical research typically involves interpreting and reconstructing narratives of the known past (Stahl & Hartman, 2004). As Levisohn (2010) has pointed out, the creation of such stories demands that the historian identifies their "ideological or creative predilections" (p. 5). My epistemological standpoint draws from the realism of critical theory and, in particular, insights arising from Duckworth (2006), Freire (1970/1972), Giroux (1988, 2004), Griffiths and Macleod (2008), Keesing-Styles (2003), Kilderry (2004), and Shor and Freire (1987), whose work seeks to counteract the effects of oppression expressed in regimes of power in both classrooms and wider society. The research project is grounded in Montessori's imperative that adults transform their controlling attitudes and actions towards children whom she termed "forgotten citizens" and is therefore premised on a challenge to some of the current assumptions and practices of Montessori education in Aotearoa-New Zealand. The research has a dual focus on searching for evidence of adult and child transformation and for

signs of the ‘just community’ (Krogh, 1981) within those Montessori early childhood centres who were participating in the study.

Socio-biographical [Historical] Research

Foucault’s well-known essay on ‘Nietzsche, genealogy and history’ (1971/1977) critiques the emphasis in philosophy on the search for foundations and transcendent origins. This work provides a key to this inquiry into the life history of Maria Montessori. The standard historical studies of Montessori (Kramer, 1988; Standing, 1957) provide a wealth of details and insights into the “progression” of her overall life and educational practice. Due to their linear nature, they tend to summarise her life work; either critiquing her contribution or sanctifying her person. This study, however, focuses on a search for multiple, possible beginnings in her political and social orientation towards the emancipation of women, children and teachers. Foucault suggests that such a genealogical search is not to be found in an ‘unbroken continuity’ but more in an “unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers...” (p. 82). This approach to history is said to uproot traditional understandings and foundational beliefs (Clarke, 2005). There is also always Nietzsche’s possibility, that of uncovering the ugly and unpleasant nature of such roots; although, continuing the metaphor, de Botton (2000) points out that if cultivated with knowledge and faith in their potential, these may eventually provide a fruitful reward. In chapters four and five, I have thus selected a range of both antecedent and parallel historical events, actions and accounts as a contribution to the complex ‘assemblage’ of Montessori’s life history (Goodson and Sikes, 2001).

Levisohn’s discussion on negotiating historical narratives assisted in clarifying the approach to history, taken in this thesis. Levisohn (2010)

challenges White's (1973) 'fact-narrative divide' and suggests with Carr (1994) that historical narratives always come with their own history. The historian does not simply select a series of facts to assemble into a narrative but recognises that the historical person or event is always situated within a present which has an eye to both past and future and as such brings their own narrative to the tale. The extensive trail of publications and documents left by Montessori is an instance of Levisohn's point. My own approach has been to seek out additional layers of those 'present' moments as a means of interpreting how and where Montessori and her contemporaries placed themselves in the sequence of history. Levisohn says that "the constructive work of the historical inquirer, then – the creation of historical narratives – is always a product of negotiation among multiple narratives, both 'first level' primary-source narratives and 'second level' historiographical narratives" (p. 12).

Montessori's own view on history was through a sometimes Kantian, sometimes Hegelian (Gimbel & Emerson, 2009), but primarily Marxist frame. She makes many references to history in her own and related texts but the focus of her work and thought changed over time, from dialectical materialism towards a greater emphasis on humanism.³⁴

The following passages serve to highlight the changing nuances of Montessori's historical, sociological and spiritual beliefs. The first, relatively early example is drawn from her record of university lectures delivered to

³⁴ An Adobe search of eighteen of her own and related texts reveals more than three hundred instances of the word *history* and some seventy of the word *justice*. The occurrence of more value laden words is far greater: *love* yields a count of six hundred; *peace* over three hundred; and *care* more than four hundred.

students in 1904 and first published in 1909. It demonstrates a modernist standpoint, possibly influenced by the writing of Nietzsche³⁵:

In our own times, now that the great conquests of the earth have been made and the victorious people consequently brought into harmony, the moment has come for conquering the environment itself, in order to wring from it new bread and new wealth. And this is the proud work of human intelligence which creates by aiding all the forces of nature and by triumphing over its environment; thus to-day it is the man of intelligence who is superior. (Montessori, *PA*, 1913, p. 259)

Montessori then heralds a new ‘human epoch’:

In which an assured peace will promote the brotherhood of man, while morality and love will take their place as the highest form of human superiority. In such an epoch there will really be superior human beings, there will really be men strong in morality and in sentiment. (p. 259)

Montessori concludes this passage, conclusively solving the Nietzschean ‘riddle’, by playing the feminist hand:

Perhaps in this way the reign of woman is approaching, when the enigma of her anthropological superiority will be deciphered. Woman was always the custodian of human sentiment, morality and honour, and in these respects man always has yielded woman the palm. (p. 259)

Thirty six years later (1946), after two world wars; a depression; the experience of initiating and designing a new educational approach; travel as a teacher educator and public speaker throughout Europe and the Americas; exile from her home country of Italy (1934), and then again from both Spain

³⁵ Montessori (1917/1965) later wrote regarding Nietzsche: “His conception offered no help in overcoming the ills of humanity; rather was it as a chain binding man to earth, there to seek means to create of himself the man superior to himself; and thus leading him astray into egotism, cruelty and folly” (p. 346).

(1936) and the Netherlands (1939); and a seven year period in India (where she and her son, Mario, were interned for the duration of the Second World War); Montessori's writing changed to emphasise the interdependence of humanity. Exposure to Eastern philosophy contributed to this outlook but the cosmic twist we now see in her perspective was also due to the experiments in ecology that she and Mario carried out whilst preparing the new primary curriculum:

The cosmic construction of human society must be the core of the study of history and sociology. How can we appreciate humanity if we do not consider first of all its merits, its creative efforts, its obedience to cosmic laws that have unconsciously urged society towards an effective union that today unites the whole of humanity in one vital aspect?

However, as the passage continues, Marxist theory remains evident:

It is necessary that the new generations realize that in this union every man is dependent on other men and each must contribute to the existence of all. We no longer depend directly upon nature, but on all that man produces in different parts of the world and is put at the disposal of all through mutual exchange. For our material life we depend upon the working man, on him who produces for us and for all the necessities of life. And we depend also upon the intellectual workers for every item of progress which renders our life easier and richer. An infinite number of heroes have struggled to render "knowledge" possible. All that we study today depends upon some individual discovery no matter how great or how small. (CSW, 1989, p. 112)

Although Montessori posits the idea of supra nature; of the material world created by humankind which now overlays the natural environment, she totally rejects Nietzsche's focus on the individual 'superman' or 'overman' – the *ubermensch* who leave behind the masses. Her project is, instead, one of hope for all humankind. She rejects communism because it too leaves a void: "Does what men would enjoy in a worldwide communist regime

represent all the welfare that man needs?" (CSW, 1989, p. 100). She suggests that the 'merely economic formula' of communism ignores the internal 'psychic' construction of human beings:

Are men developed to the maximum of their energies or do they possess repressed energies? If their activities have been artificially repressed, do we not go back to the old point from which revolutions begin: oppressed man? ...the merely utilitarian culture will leave a void which will gradually fill with ignorance: ignorance which will urge man to seek and demand new rights. Then, old causes of rebellion will raise their heads anew. (CSW, 1989, p. 100)

In her recognition of the emptiness of utilitarianism, allied to current ideas of neo-liberalism; Montessori then foreshadows the concept of existential humanism:

The preparation of the citizen of tomorrow depends entirely on the psychological foundations of man. Men are by nature social beings. They choose to live together, not as a herd but as independently functioning beings who associate together. This instinct is displayed by very young children who, as soon as they have worked as independent beings, associate with others.

Again, to speak of a democratic school community seems to be asking for misunderstanding. It is a community of children, a community of future men and women, real men and women....Children must experience social life through living, through experience, before they enter it with all the many forms of mechanisms that control it. (CSW, 1989, pp. 104-5)

As noted in chapter two, Montessori's concept of the human being as an active agent is a prominent aspect of her thinking. This humanistic strand, however, is but one thread in the historiography of Montessori; the thesis also visits her involvement and break with feminism; considers the nature and role of child abandonment, disease, deviance, delinquency and labour in the development of her thinking; the part played by philosophy; the

response of young children to her ‘experiments’; the engagement of other radical feminists in her project; and her commitment (and partial rejection) within the Catholic Church. Other aspects were left out as my consideration of Montessori’s life history was pivoted on her ideas on rights and justice for children and of the role of teachers in protecting the space for this to occur.

The Empirical Research

In order to provide a connecting link between the historical and contemporary phases of this study, I drew upon the concept of *praxis*, a Greek philosophical term, originally used by Aristotle to differentiate practical knowledge from theoretical understanding (*episteme*). When I first met this idea in the early seventies, Freire (1970) was utilising *praxis* to instigate social change in Brazil. He provided a space for oppressed individuals and communities to tell their stories in a process he labelled *conscientization*, setting up a cycle of action and reflection, leading to transformation (social and political change). New Zealanders subsequently used this understanding as they organised action against the Vietnam War and the apartheid regime in South Africa; raised consciousness regarding issues of race, culture and gender in Aotearoa; and sought change within and alternatives to, existing educational institutions. The early childhood sector in New Zealand began to expand and develop within this climate of critical pedagogy (May, 2001).

Griffiths and Macleod (2008) use Aristotle’s terminology to explain that *praxis* requires the *phronimos* (the possessor of knowledge) to exercise *phronesis* (practical wisdom) as they make social and moral judgements. They distinguish between theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) applied to derive *episteme* from ultimate truths or principles and the type of technical knowledge (*techné*) which is produced by *poiesis* or the knowledge of a master. Both

sophia and *techné* work towards finality of knowledge whereas “*praxis* is open to new perspectives and understandings. It is therefore open to revision, drawing on new perspectives offered by the singular and unique stories of individual human beings” (Griffiths & McLeod, 2008, p. 129). They offer the term ‘auto/biography’ to describe these narratives and suggest that they have “the power to change the understandings of their listeners – and indeed those of the tellers – about educational policy and practice” (p. 130). They subsequently build a case to demonstrate the influence of narrative across a range of policy changes in Britain.

The dynamic and practical qualities embodied in the *praxis* of ‘auto/biography’ provided the grounding for the contemporary stage of the project which was designed to discover how graduates of the AUT Bachelor of Education (Montessori Early Childhood Teaching) interpreted and applied their knowledge in the field. I was interested to discover how practical knowledge might change with experience and therefore, planned to interview and observe a range of teachers at different stages in their practice. Interviews and case studies in Montessori early childhood settings were therefore carried out with first, second and third year practitioners. One of the anticipated outcomes of the study was that the narratives gathered from the participants could provide information for change in education policy and practice.

Research Questions

The questions guiding the thesis link the retrospective study of Montessori’s life to contemporary interpretation of her ideas. The study sought information regarding the experience of newly qualified teachers during their first three years of practice, in order to address the key question and supplementary questions two and three:

How do we best prepare and support teachers in a form of education that is consistent with a contemporary understanding of Montessori's life, work, and teachings?

1) What does a biographical, philosophical and social investigation reveal of Montessori's life, work and teaching?

2) How do graduates of a course founded in these ideas, report on their teaching experience?

3) How does this form of Montessori education become explicit in practice?

In interviews with the newly qualified teachers, these questions were examined according to the following dimensions: context; personal and professional beliefs; pedagogical philosophy and practice; policy: development, implementation and effect; and relationships with children, families/whānau, colleagues and employers (see Appendix 12).

In particular, I was interested to reveal any changes that might occur during the first three years of practice and to see if the hopes and concerns of Montessori teachers coincide with Montessori's concepts of teacher formation. Through the reflections of beginning teachers, I sought to identify and acknowledge the tensions that may exist between differing interpretations of Montessori philosophy; to explore how AUT Montessori teachers, educated within a framework that emphasises social justice for the child, adapt and adjust, conform to, or transform the educational situations they find themselves in as newly qualified teachers (NQTs)³⁶ in New Zealand early childhood centres.

³⁶ I used the term 'newly qualified' teachers as many students in the early childhood degree programme have already spent a number of years teaching without qualifications or with partial qualifications (including Montessori diplomas) that don't meet the three year teaching diploma or degree requirement of the New Zealand Teachers Council.

Research Methods

To put this amalgam of Montessori's own thought and practice, and the later thought and practice of Montessori-educated teachers together, the research project utilised a qualitative design, initially employing socio-biographical methods to research the early life history of Maria Montessori and then autobiographical and case-study methods involving observation and interviews with AUT graduates.

Archival data for the socio-historical research phase

A qualitative approach is recommended for the exploration of ideas or problems that are primarily of social or human origin. Cresswell (2009) notes that "data is typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data" (p. 4).

The historical phase of the research, intended to establish the context and origin of Montessori's ideas, was begun in New Zealand, but was considerably strengthened by archival searches in Italy (see p. 89) and the Netherlands. At the Association Montessori Internationale library in Amsterdam (situated in Montessori's last home), I was given access to early newsletters such as *Montessori Notes* and *The Call of Education* together with early copies of the AMI journal, *Communications*. Further study, in the British Library and the Fawcett (Women's) Library, based at the Metropolitan University, London, provided information on associated school, hospital and nursery projects run by Montessori teachers in Europe during the early part of the twentieth century including the short history by A. And T. Harper Smith (1989), *Acton's Montessori schools*. The Fawcett library provided a rich source of feminist literature including out of print books: Annie Kenney (1924) *Memoirs of a militant*; C. Luanardi (1984), *From equal suffrage to*

equal rights: Alice Paul and the National Women's Party, 1910-1928; Sylvia Pankhurst (1930) *Save the mothers*; E. Phipps (1928) *A history of the National Union of Women teachers* and hard to source pamphlets such as Taylor (1993), *In letters of gold: The story of Sylvia Pankhurst and the East London Federation of the Suffragettes in Bow*. New Zealand university libraries were also well stocked with suffrage history. The Otago University library yielded a copy of Theodore Stanton's book from 1895: *The woman question in Europe: A series of original essays*, which proved to be most useful in establishing early information on the Italian suffrage movement and women's involvement in university education.

In the empirical phase of the research, two methods were utilised: semi structured interviews and case study.

Case study approach

Case study has traditionally been employed in qualitative research to provide material that is relatively objective and the case studies are designed to add depth to the stories of specific teachers, giving examples of context and helping to describe some of the layers of complexity involved in early childhood education and specifically, Montessori ECE communities of practice.

Creswell (2005) situates case study in the ethnographic tradition and defines it as "an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection. *Bounded* means that the case is separated out for research in terms of time, place or some physical boundaries" (p. 439). The case studies I carried out were in four separate Montessori early childhood centres with participants at different stages of practical experience. Recognising with Merriam (2009, citing Bogdan and Biklen, 2007) that managing multisite case studies

simultaneously would be too difficult; I carried out each study in a separate period of time.

Kervin, Vialle, Herrington and Okely (2006) cite Stake (1978) who suggests that case study research is ideally suited to the researcher where “the aims are understanding, extension of experience, and increase in conviction in that which is known” (p. 70). Given my own experience as a Montessori teacher and teacher educator, I anticipated that the opportunity to observe in four Montessori settings would provide both confirmation and questions relating to interpretation of Montessorian philosophy. Kervin et al. also note that the key critique of case study is lack of generalisability but they then cite Donmoyer (1990) who argues that although case studies are not generalisable to other cases, they are generalisable to theory and are thus useful in the process of theory formation. Creswell (2005) notes that what Stake (1995) terms ‘a collective case study’ in which multiple cases are described, can provide the basis for comparisons in the examination of a particular issue and this was the approach taken in this study. Consequently I expected my case studies to provide insights into the overall picture of my thesis.

In a further development of the question of generalisation in theory testing and formation, Bassey (1999) suggests that the experiences detailed in case study reports may lead to propositions or generalisations that are more or less tentative or ‘fuzzy’. The term ‘fuzzy’ is utilised to suggest levels of possibility or uncertainty and was introduced by Bassey as a way of qualifying possible generalisations. These generalisations are “a valuable way of bringing research findings into professional discourse, which in turn can influence the practice of teaching and formation of educational policy” (p. 57). It was anticipated that insights from participants in the case studies

would lead to qualified or ‘fuzzy’ generalisations with application in future teaching practice and teacher education and this proved to be the case.

Semi structured interviews

The semi structured interview was chosen as a method which would provide a flexible means of obtaining autobiographical experiences from the NQTs. Merriam (2009) notes that “a mix of more and less structured questions ...allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (p. 90). As with the case studies, it was anticipated that the opportunity to draw generalisations between participants would be balanced by the particular experience and insight of each individual teacher.

Participant selection and interviews

Participants were initially drawn from the cohorts of students completing the Montessori specialty (or the elective paper, Montessori Philosophy and Curriculum, 297340) in 2004 and July 2005. Following ethical approval, a written invitation was sent to all graduates in these cohorts. Participants self-selected to become part of the research project and were found to be working in a variety of settings, including Montessori, kindergarten, a hospital centre and childcare.

The study commenced in 2005 with interviews of participants i.e. newly qualified teachers (NQTs) who were provisionally registered with the New Zealand Teachers’ Council. To augment this part of the study, additional participants were sought from the graduates of the 2005 end of year cohort. They were interviewed early and late 2007; and graduates from the 2006 cohort were interviewed at the end of 2007. This added strength to the evidence from the field giving the possibility of one set of participant

information from year one, two and three; a second set at year one and two; and a third set from practitioners who had completed just one year of practice.

An outline of the type of data that we might collect and exchange in the project was discussed at the first meeting. During this interview (see schedule, Appendix 12) the project was explained, and once consent was granted, information was collected from each individual on their current situation; hopes and aspirations for the coming year; an outline of the centre or setting in which they were working; and reflections thus far. In addition, I explained the range of ways in which further data might be created for the project (for example, personal essay, reflective journal, e-mail transcripts, telephone conversation, observation, focus groups with colleagues, classroom artefacts and subsequent interviews).

Interviews with 10 participants were completed and transcribed during 2005 and early 2006. A further 14 participants were drawn from graduates of the 2005 and 2006 cohorts, following approval for an extension of the project in April, 2007. When possible, participants provided additional information and reflections via e-mail, telephone and during further meetings. In all, 35 interviews were completed with the 24 participants.

Transcriptions were completed using the advice of Lamb (cited in Seal, Gobo, Gubrium & Silverman, 2007, p. 73) in which words are transcribed using conventional spelling; repeated and broken-off words and utterances such as 'um, mmm' are ignored; uncertain or inaudible passages are indicated; there are no indications of pauses, stresses, volume, pace or intonation, except in conventional punctuation. This convention was adopted to ensure the readability of the material as suggested by Seal et.al.

Case studies - 2007-2008

The central core of the empirical phase came with the decision to add further depth to information gathered from participants during interviews and written reflection, by carrying out a series of four case studies. Teachers who had shown a particular interest in the study were approached at the beginning of 2007 with a request that I might have the opportunity to observe them in their teaching setting. It was felt that the opportunity to 'dwell' in a teacher's classroom would be likely to yield different information to that gained from reflection alone and this proved to be the case.³⁷ Following an extension of approval from the AUT ethics committee in April 2007; field observations in one Montessori setting commenced in May, 2007. The first case study (Rata centre) was completed over the course of one week as the centre was situated out of Auckland and it was not feasible to travel back and forth for repeat visits. The second case study (Matai centre) commenced in August (one day per week, on alternating days for ten weeks) and a third (Kahikatea centre) was completed during the course of one week in December 2007. The fourth case study (Pukatea centre) was carried out in June and July of 2008. Field notes were shared and discussed with the participants and opportunities were given to enable participants to accept, amend or reject transcribed information and interpretation.

The four case study sites included the following participants:

Rata Centre – Joy, a third year practitioner with a BED (MECT). A co-teacher (Jennifer) with a BEd from a different provider gave useful reflections in this site;

³⁷ Le-Play, a French sociologist, is noted by Montessori (MM, 1912) when she describes the information that she encouraged her teachers to gather in order to "outline a history of each family (p. 80)". Le-Play is generally known as the 'Father of the case-study method' based on the information on European workers that he collected and published in several volumes, starting in the mid 1800s. **Frédéric Le Play**. (2009). In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved August 08, 2009, from Encyclopædia Britannica Online: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/333416/Frederic-Le-Play>

Matai Centre - the focus here was on two teachers – the head-teacher, Holly, who had completed an AUT degree, BEd (ECT) and had been teaching with a Montessori qualification for many years prior and a co-teacher, Robyn, BEd (MECT) in her third year of practice who had worked in two Montessori settings since graduation);

Kahikatea Centre - included three, first and second year newly qualified teachers – two of whom had prior Montessori qualifications and had taught for many years before completing the BEd (MECT) – Rachael and Francine, and Qingzhao who was in her second year of teaching after completing the Montessori specialty; and

Pukatea Centre - the focus was on Shelley, a first year teacher with a previous childcare background and a BEd (MECT) and to a lesser extent on a co-teacher in her second year who had a BEd (MECT) but had only recently shifted to the centre from another Montessori setting.

Information was collected through multiple observations during which time I took field notes as I moved between the classroom and outdoor areas. Photographs were taken with parental consent and children's assent, to highlight particular learning experiences. Notes were typed up at the end of each day and returned to participants for checking.

Historical phase analysis

When establishing historical material on Maria Montessori most theses draw upon the two main biographies of her life by Kramer (1976/1988) and Standing (1957). The latter was written by a contemporary so while it is written with the insight of one who knew Montessori intimately it has limitations due to its sympathetic and uncritical eye. Kramer, on the other

hand, did not know Montessori, but relied on written sources and comment from first generation Montessorians. Her perspective through the lens of 1970s American historical study; also falls short and Feez (2007) comments that Kramer, “catalogues the general contribution of Montessori’s pedagogic innovations, in particular those naturalised into the mainstream by the 1970s, but her description of the practice of Montessori pedagogy does not recognise the scope, nor the detail, of this legacy” (p. 12). Burstyn (1979) makes the point that Kramer’s focus on the personality of Montessori “masked the significance of her psychological insights into individual cognitive and emotional development” (p. 144). Since then, a number of researchers have delved into aspects of Montessori’s life including the discourse analysis of Trabalzirini (2003) who has contributed a detailed and exhaustive review of the varying editions of Montessori’s main work: *The Montessori Method*; historical research into the early period of Montessori’s life characterised as that of the ‘new woman’ by Babini and Lama (2000); archival research of Foschi (2008) into her Catholic connections; and the interpretive research written from a psychoanalytical perspective, from Stewart Steinberg (2007) and Schwegman (1999). In addition, Feez’s (2007) doctoral thesis has added a further perspective by examining the origin and legacy of Montessori’s sensorial learning theory and the materials which she proposes were designed to mediate between children’s developing language and experience. Feez makes connections in the historical chain, through the more usual French doctors, Seguin and Itard, back to the Abbè de Condillac and creates a useful link to Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory and Piaget’s developmental constructivism since both recognise that Montessori provided ground for their thinking.

In this project, it was my aim to utilise the insights of each of these authors but to provide further information on the context and socio-political and scientific influence on Montessori’s thinking. To do this, I examined studies

in Italian history (Cammarosano, 1991; Davis & Ginsborg, 1991; Duggan, 1994; Ipsen, 2006; La Vigna, 1978; Lyttelton, 1991; Quine, 2002; Riall, 1994; Stewart-Steinberg, 2007; Thomson, 1966) and have also looked to philosophers such as Vico, Hegel, Kant, Marx, and Montessori's teacher, Antonio Labriola, in an effort to reveal the source and nature of her political orientation. The information accessed in the Italian libraries was primarily in Italian and although this slowed down the analysis, there was sufficient material available with English translation to guide the search. Researchers associated with the study centre in Rome have recently uncovered information on Montessori's early life which is pertinent to understanding her political and social stance and, in particular, her involvement in the Italian suffrage movement (Babini, 2000; Babini & Lama, 2000; Dompe, Tabasso, Trabalzini, 2006; Foschi, 2008; Scocchera, 2002; Trabalzini, 2003). This subsequently became a focus for chapter five of the thesis.

Empirical phase analysis

To analyse the data from the interviews and case-studies I referred to Saldana (2009) for advice on coding and found that my initial instincts to use a manual coding method were endorsed. Saldana draws on earlier work from Charmaz (2006); Corbin and Strauss (2008); Glaser and Strauss (1967); and Strauss and Corbin (1998). As I examined the interviews, the original 'dimensions' identified before the interviews (context; personal and professional beliefs; pedagogical philosophy and practice; policy: development, implementation and effect; and relationships with children, families/whānau, colleagues and employers) were re-evaluated in light of the data before me. I eventually organised the interview material according to the following five basic themes, drawing on both descriptive terms and also on broader concepts. These themes were: (1) *rationale for choosing Montessori*, including discussion on Government policy changes, the contrast between mainstream and Montessori and comment on the opportunities and

challenges presented by the AUT degree; (2) *relationships with centre management and other staff*, both positive and negative; (3) *aspects of Montessori philosophy* (including comments on justice, freedom, respect, relationship and independence); (4) *the process of teacher transformation* (Montessori concepts) *and teacher registration, induction and mentoring* (Governmental and professional requirements and support); and (5) *professional growth* including examples of resilience and the future hopes and aspirations of participants.

The case studies required a different approach: they provided information that was drawn from a more holistic picture of the Montessori early childhood education environment. Montessori, herself, gave me the concepts for the analysis of the case study material. These categories underlie the formation of the ‘just community’ and were first amalgamated, in a Montessori context, by Krogh (1981). For my purposes, this community concept was grounded in Montessori’s phenomenological understanding of the casa which she saw as a “community of children...and children must experience social life through living” (CSW, 1989, p. 105).

Montessori, according to Krogh (1981), used the following categories to prepare the environment of the casa: children are accorded dignity and respect; they learn in an environment of limited resources and in a social group of mixed age and ability; they are offered authentic opportunities to learn practical and social skills; they are given freedom to independently discover relationships through the properties of materials that strengthen perception; and are given time to concentrate and problem-solve thus strengthening both inner motivation and independence and enabling the completion of a cycle of investigation or activity that ultimately leads to self regulation and self efficacy. I adapted these ideas so that I could use them as a basis for examination of the case studies, thus maintaining the spirit of Montessori’s thought in my data analysis.

Using borrowed categories presents a possible danger in that I could be seen to be attempting to fit the observations to a set framework. Glaser and Strauss (1967) claim that “working with borrowed categories is more difficult since they are harder to find, fewer in number, and not as rich; since in the long run they may not be relevant, and are not exactly designed for the purposes, they must be respecified” (p. 37, cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 185). Montessori’s depth of thought is such that her categories are more than adequate, and enable me to fulfil precisely my purpose, that of evaluating contemporary practice against Montessori’s objectives.

I began the thesis with a bold trio of themes: love, peace and social justice. Justice became a focus because of a concern with neo-liberal capture of Montessori education. Since the Montessori approach offers realisation of academic potential, it often attracts families with the means for its implementation. When Montessori education is implemented with the focus on academic achievement, however, the result is a lop-sided pedagogy which creates an obstacle to the formation of a just social community. In this scenario, the rights of neither rich nor poor children are served. As I worked my way through the accumulation of material, I was able to combine the original themes through the definition of justice as relationship. The discussion and conclusion of the thesis is therefore focused on emancipation of both teacher and child from aspects of power and control in early childhood education.

Notions of validity, truthfulness and perspective.

Traditionally, empirical studies are required to establish their validity, reliability, credibility and perspective via triangulation. In considering the meaning of these terms for qualitative study I returned to Griffiths and

Macleod (2008). They point out that the etymological meaning of validity is derived from the Latin, *validus*, meaning strong. I endeavoured to increase the strength of my research by seeking perspectives from a range of participants working within and outside of the Montessori education community and from both beginning and experienced teachers in individual and collective settings. The reliability of the study was strengthened by careful recording of the data collection trail (Kervin et al., 2006; Toma, 2006) and through the return of transcriptions and field notes to participants for verification and additional comment.

The utilisation of multiple methods of data collection in both historical and empirical phases of the project provided a rich source of information and enabled me to bring multiple experiences of Montessori education and practice together. In reflecting on this material, I was mindful of the advice of Toma (2006) that a prime aspect of credibility in qualitative research is that “it must ring true with colleagues” (p.413). From the conception of the study through to the final stage, I have, therefore, taken opportunities to report back to the New Zealand and Australian Montessori and wider academic communities on the current state of my thinking through a range of conference presentations in Australia, England, Italy, New Zealand and Switzerland (Chisnall, 2003; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2010; and 2011).

Acknowledgement from the Australian Montessori community came when I was asked to join their research committee and to begin the research process as they began to track various projects with Indigenous partners in Cape York and the Torres Strait. I retain close links with the New Zealand Montessori community and provide advice and support when called upon, including a quarterly contribution to the MANZ publication, *Montessori Voices*, which has a wide circulation in New Zealand and internationally. I have also, recently, become a trustee of the UK charity, Montessori

Education for Autism, and provide peer review for their associated research projects.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was required to interview the newly qualified teachers (received on 27 April 2005), and when the case study phase was added, for their teaching colleagues to become involved in the study. All students enrolled in the Montessori specialty (or who have completed the elective paper, Montessori Philosophy and Curriculum, 297340) in 2004, 2005 and 2006 were invited to participate (see Appendix 1) and those who agreed were subsequently given participant information sheets and consent forms (see Appendix 2 and 3). The second stage of the data collection (for cohorts from 2005 and 2006 and the case studies) required an extension of ethics approval and this was obtained on 16 April 2007, arising from the March meeting of the ethics committee. Appendices 4 and 5 detail participant information and consent for the focus teachers in the case studies.

Centre management were informed of the study and written consent was gained for each of the case-study centres (Appendix 6 and 7). Colleagues of the focus teachers in the case-studies were also provided with information and consent forms (Appendix 8 and 9). Parents were approached by supervisors to inform them of what I was planning and consent forms were collected from those who were happy for their children to be observed and photographed (Appendix 10). In the event that parents did not wish their children to be part of the study (only one or two per centre), I took care not to include them in the data. It was also considered to be very important that children were informed of the reason for my presence in the centre and an assent form was designed to help parents gauge the level of comfort that children would have with me as an observer (Appendix 11). The form included a small photo of the researcher and provided an opportunity for children to colour in their 'yes, no, not sure' response about being observed and photographed. This proved to be a useful ice-breaker as several children

approached me in each centre to tell me that they knew my name and why I was there. I also took time to check with children when I took photographs, to see if they felt comfortable with my doing this. I tried to do this prior to observing particular activities so that behaviour was not affected by my noticing. As there is a tradition of regular, silent, adult observation in Montessori communities, I was able to slip in and out of the environment without the children showing concern. The children were generally keen to see their photos on the digital camera.

Concluding reflection

Zeichner (2006) suggests that researchers need to consciously build on the work of others and provides a model to situate multiple layers of research. The nature of the study began to change, in line with Zeichner's suggestion, as I read more of the historical documents. In 2009, as a direct result of what I had read I made the decision to spend more time uncovering Montessori's motivation for working with children and her subsequent thinking on social change. Both Burstyn (1979) and Depaepe (2007) confirm that examining context and searching for the origin of ideas is an important task when considering the work of 'classic authors' such as Montessori.

The notion of multiple origins became important and although I became aware of many other studies that had sought to find a rationale for Montessori's work, I believe that my line of questioning and subsequent findings will add another useful layer when considering the complexity of her social, political and educational legacy. In the final writing of the thesis, the initial framework was strengthened, as a consequence of the historical study, to address the strongly emerging themes of emancipation, social justice and teacher transformation. The narratives recorded from both interviews of participants and the case studies were then employed to

illustrate these themes in communities of practice within the New Zealand context.

The next chapter explores aspects of the socio-cultural origins of Montessori's philosophy and pedagogy. A brief discussion concerning the formation of the modern state of Italy sets the scene for Montessori's birth.

Chapter Four: Maria Montessori: A confluence of influences

This chapter chronicles people, issues and events that impacted on the early life, philosophy and pedagogy of Maria Montessori. It reveals some of the complex layers of Montessori's life through family, school, university, post-doctoral research, personal and political engagement and professional careers.

Maria Montessori was a pioneer in medicine, politics, psychology, anthropology and education. She was born in 1870, in the small town of Chiaravalle, near the port of Ancona, nine years after the unification of Italy in 1861. She was the only child of Renilde (nee Stoppani) [1840-1912] and Alessandro [1832-1915] Montessori. Both parents supported the reforms of the newly unified country and her father fought for the Risorgimento. A short historical account of the events leading up to unification follows and will provide the reader with some understanding of the early political context of Montessori's Italy.

Risorgimento: the background to Montessori's Italy

Risorgimento is generally translated as 'Resurgence' and refers to both the period and process by which Italy became a unified nation. Prior to 1815, '*Italia*' did not exist.

Major disruptions occurred to the '*ancien régime*' rule by kings and dukes during the French-Napoleonic invasions and occupations in both the 1790s and the 1800s. The period of French rule introduced new ideas of rights, law and governance and created changes to the infrastructure of the Italian

states. Feudal systems of power were challenged and a new, centralised civil bureaucracy was created. That is not to say that the Italian republics were liberated in the process, instead they became virtual colonies of France, subject to “providing raw materials for French industry and a market for French textiles” (Thomson, 1966, p.62). Thomson suggests that “it was only when populations found French masters no less exacting than their old regimes that they were fired to ideas of self-government” (p.51). In Italy, however, this process was forestalled when the former rulers were ‘restored’ by the Congress of Vienna in 1814-15, after Napoleon was defeated once in 1814 and then, definitively, at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

After the division by the Congress, in 1815, a series of separate kingdoms were controlled primarily by the Austrian Empire, the Pope, and two former kings, King Charles Albert and King Ferdinando IV.³⁸

Spurred by the experience of Napoleonic rule, the various Italian states became subject to a series of internal challenges and changes to their political and economic structure. Notable uprisings occurred in Piedmont and the Two Sicilies in 1820 and 1821 and in 1831 another conspiracy led to the short-lived overthrow of the Papal government in the northern region of that state. A more general state of revolution in Europe during 1848-9

³⁸ The Kingdom of Sardinia (encompassing the cities of Turin and Genoa in Piedmont, Savoy, Liguria and the island of Sardinia) ruled by King Charles Albert, remained relatively independent; the Kingdom of the two Sicilies (southern Italy and Sicily) was ruled by the French Bourbon King, Ferdinando IV who made a defensive military alliance with Austria; the Papal states (including Rome and Bologna) were under the control of the Pope but with an Austrian military garrison established at Ferrara; Lombardy-Venetia (including Venice and Milan), was ruled by the Austrian Empire; and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and the Central Italian Duchies of Modena and Parma were controlled by members of the Habsburg dynasty of the Austrian royal family (Riall, 1994).

was also experienced in the Italian states. Giuseppe Mazzini,³⁹ a famous figure in Italian history, was behind the 1848 uprising. His aim was the creation of a democratic republic, uniting the whole of Italy. His first victory, in Palermo, Sicily, caused King Ferdinand to hastily grant a constitution and institute parliamentary process. The revolt spread quickly with further demands for independence and rulers in Piedmont, Tuscany and Rome instituted similar measures in a bid to stave off widespread revolution (Thomson, 1966). At the beginning of 1849, Mazzini, having caused both the Pope and Grand Duke Leopold of Tuscany, to flee, declared the Roman Republic. A parliamentary Assembly was voted in by universal suffrage. The rest of Italy, however, was unconvinced and in July, Catholic Europe combined forces to restore the Pope. In a heroic attempt at resistance, Mazzini, assisted by Giuseppe Garibaldi⁴⁰ and his revolutionary army of 5000 volunteers, held out for a month against four foreign armies (France, Austria, Spain and Naples) and 30,000 men. Riall (1994) contends that it was the intervention of outside forces quashing this bid for freedom; that helped to fuel a growing desire for nationalism.

The state of Piedmont became a leading light in this struggle, partly as the result of King Vittorio Emanuele (successor to Charles Albert) who instituted a constitution which enabled freedom of the press, association

³⁹ When political opposition was forced underground, dissent continued in the form of a number of secret societies. Mazzini was a member of the Carbonari (a loosely organised society founded in 1810 with the chief aim of resistance to Napoleon) and later became a leader of the Freemasons, a Grandmaster of the Orient. Filippo Buonarroti, an influential revolutionary writer, created the sect of the 'Sublime Perfect Masters in 1818: organised in three graduated circles with the inner circle "pledged to the abolition of private property" (Duggan, 1994, p. 103). Thomson, (1966) also notes that he "urged the use of Freemasonry as a facade for conspiracy" (p.144). Mazzini founded another, more tightly organised society called the Young Italy movement in 1831 which drew in the services of Giuseppe Garibaldi (Duggan).

⁴⁰ Garibaldi was another Freemason and he too became Grandmaster. He trained a revolutionary band in Uruguay, distinguished by their red shirts. He escaped the siege of Rome, finding refuge in Tuscany (Thomson, 1966).

and assembly, together with the establishment of a parliament. Although the parliament was based on a narrow band of male suffrage, it enabled a moderate liberal, Count Camillo Cavour, to enter government and, in 1852, to become prime minister. Cavour, a French-speaking member of the Piedmontese nobility, also had Swiss Protestant relatives who contributed to “his exceptional concern for freedom, religious tolerance, and the work ethic” (Duggan, 1994, p. 122). He was thus characterised by a keen but conservative social awareness and went ahead to institute a series of constitutional, economic and financial reforms including setting limits to the powers of the monarchy.

Cavour entered into an alliance with Napoleon III which was sealed in the so-called Pact of Plombières, and in 1859 engineered a war against Austria to secure the independence of Piedmont and to gain the territory of Lombardy. When Napoleon backtracked and withdrew his support for the complete handover of Italian territories held by Austria during the treaty process at Villafranca, Cavour resigned in protest. The growing tide of nationalism, however, was not so easy to halt and the following year, Cavour was back in power; the governments of Tuscany, Modena and Parma were overthrown; and “the Papal States also fell to the Piedmontese army which marched south to meet Garibaldi’s volunteer army” (Riall, p. 15).

This truncated view of the history does not allow for the complications of the story but it does get us to the point of the first Italian parliament which met in Turin in January 1861, under the leadership of Count Cavour, and to March in the same year, when Vittorio Emanuele II [1820-1878], the king of Piedmont, was declared king of a united Italy.⁴¹ Cavour died three

⁴¹ Vittorio Emanuele was excommunicated from the Catholic Church in 1860 when his successful attack on the papal army at Castelfidardo drove the Pope to retreat into the Vatican.

months later, arguably at the point when his continued guidance was most needed.

Venice was ceded in 1866 but it took until 1870 (the year of Montessori's birth) for Rome to become part of the new nation. In August 1870, Napoleon III declared war on Prussia and consequently withdrew the troops that were guarding Rome. The Pope rejected a peaceful annexation so on September 20th, the Italian army moved in to declare Rome the capital of a united Italy. Roman citizens were canvassed for their opinion on 2 October and of 135,000 votes cast (including 1500 residents of the Vatican City, who requested a special polling booth), only 1500 opposed union with the Kingdom of Italy. When Rome fell, Pope Pius IX pronounced himself a prisoner in the Vatican. The following year, in June, the capital moved from Florence to Rome.

The attitude of the Catholic Church to both liberal and nationalist forces was singularly obstructive. The insular nature of the church was demonstrated in 1854 when there was an outbreak of cholera of epidemic proportions and the church was approached to provide access to convents to set up additional hospital space. Their refusal provided a tipping point. Cavour agreed to support measures to remove the state's financial support of the Church (Quine, 2002). They had much to lose: from 1860 to 1866, laws were enacted to suppress religious orders. In 1864, the Pope reacted with an encyclical, *Quanta Cura*, denouncing everything to do with 'modern civilization' and forbidding Catholics to become involved in the political organisation of the new democracy.⁴² In 1870 he pronounced himself infallible.

⁴² The suffrage base was narrow and confined to men of property, over the age of 30 years.

The Catholic Church retained its isolated position for nearly fifty years and this paved the way for the secularisation of the State. The Government moved swiftly to strip out the influence of the church in the education and social sphere, closing monasteries and seizing valuable land. As with many post Risorgimento families, Montessori's father took an anti-clerical stance and he also retained close links with the Freemasons who played a significant role, behind the scenes, in liberal Italy. This alliance was to provide Montessori with a set of influential contacts in her later career.

Family

Maria Montessori was born on 31st August 1870, just three weeks before the final realisation of the unification of Italy. The Montessori family moved to Rome when Maria was five years old as result of her father's employment.

Alessandro Montessori and the tobacco industry

Ipsen (2006) characterises post unification Italy as "the Liberal-Masonic-Judaic Italian state" (p. 110), which continued to experience the hostility of the Catholic church until the second decade of the twentieth century.

Montessori's father, Alessandro, was a true citizen of the time. Upon re-entering civilian life, he settled back into a conventional role in business and the civil service. His ancestry was in a family of the nobility from Bologna and although Standing (1957/1998) characterises him as conservative, the fact that he retained his anti-clerical views and his membership of the Freemasons suggests otherwise. He appears, however, to have held traditional views on women but although he resisted Maria's choice of further education, he was unsuccessful. Alessandro served as an inspector in both the salt and tobacco industries, and, later, as an accountant in the government run tobacco business. This final position led him and his small family to settle in Rome in 1875 (Kramer 1988).

Italy had the European monopoly on the production of cigars, both before and after Unification. It was work that relied on women. Cammarosano (1991) reports that “in 1861 there were about twenty factories mostly in the north and centre of the country... [and] in 1880 they employed 13,707 women as against 1,947 men” (p.176). Workers laboured for eight hours in the winter but at the height of tobacco production, in summer, their work would begin at 7am and continue until 11pm. The close proximity in which they worked led to the frequent spread of infectious disease. Cammarosano explains that the tobacco workers featured prominently in the statistics for tuberculosis where ‘hundreds and hundreds’ died from what was then known as galloping consumption.

Work discipline was reinforced and made more odious by its being linked with repressive moral control, which was exercised over the workers not as workers but as women. At Modena the documents of the cigar factory archive have revealed that the managing director was in direct contact with the police, the *carabinieri*, and the local magistrate’s court. Anonymous letters, or those written by the foreman, denounced ‘the immoral behaviour inside and outside the factory; of this or that female worker. (Cammarosano, 1991, pp. 176-177)

These practices were far from the experience of Maria and her mother and it will remain a subject for conjecture if they had the opportunity to reflect on the plight of these women or if, as is more likely, this was a subject that Alessandro thought not fit to share with his household.

Renilde Montessori: moral and academic influences

In setting the context for Montessori’s early life, we see that Renilde Montessori, played the role of wife and mother as expected in a conventional marriage of the time and yet, she and her family, appear to have provided the spark for many of the ideas her daughter was to explore

in her lifetime. Renilde Stoppani was an intelligent and well educated woman and Maccheroni (1966) says she: "...realised very early that the child was something quite out of the ordinary, but she found in this fact no cause for either vanity or presumption; she allowed these unusual qualities to develop, and directed the education of her child with a rectitude that had a touch of austerity" (p. 39). Kramer (1988) records that Renilde made sure her daughter was aware of her moral obligation to "less fortunate neighbours" (p.25) and there are tales of the young Montessori's compassion for her fellows that reached beyond completion of regular daily knitting. It was in the academic field, however, that Renilde and her family appear to have yielded most influence.

Great Uncle Stoppani [1824-1891] was a household name in Italy as a geologist, palaeontologist, priest and interpreter of new scientific ideas for his compatriots. Stoppani had a liberal outlook and participated, alongside other priests, in the uprisings of 1848 and 1849. In 1877 he was advocating for further establishment of compulsory schooling and for open access to libraries, museums and scientific institutions. He wrote several books but one in particular, a fireside guide to the new science of Lyell and Darwin, *Il Bel Paese* (The beautiful country) continued to be a best seller for more than one hundred years after its publication in 1875 (Babini & Lama, 2000). In 1907 (Anon.), a reviewer assessed the impact of Stoppani's life:

Antonio Stoppani (1824 - 91) was a geologist by instinct from boyhood, a natural collector of stones and shells, an observer from whom nothing pertinent to his special interest escaped...he was ever the ardent naturalist; and with that, too, the poet and patriot. He early arrived at geological conclusions, the importance of which he did not suspect until a savant was sent down from Vienna to prepare a treatise on the geology of Lombardy, and found that Stoppani had already done the work in the rough. Stoppani's re-searches [*sic*] were published soon after, under the title of "*Studi Geologici e Paleontologici sulla Lombardia*". [A study of Geology and Palaeontology

in Lombardy] With this he at once stepped into the front rank of the world's naturalists.

It was as teacher, as educator in various schools and universities, and as public lecturer that Stoppani left his mark upon the new Italy of today. In Pavia, in Florence, as head of the great Ambrosian Library in Milan, he helped to make the Italians conscious of their own possibilities, and taught them to treasure the past, and to prepare for the future. It was one thing to give Italy the appearance of a political unit. It was quite another matter to make it truly united. Stoppani realized this, as did Manzoni.⁴³ He would have preferred a confederation first, to lead up to a centralized state by degrees. But the fact of political union being accomplished, the next best thing was to raise the morale of the whole people by every possible means, and this Stoppani laboured long and enthusiastically to accomplish. (<http://www.oldandsold.com/articles23/italian-lakes-22.shtml>)

It is only recently, however, as we gain more evidence of humanity's impact on global change, that Stoppani's role in recognising and naming a new geological age, the Anthropocene period, has been recognised. Nobel Prize winner, Paul Crutzen, writes in *Nature*:

Mankind's growing influence on the environment was recognized as long ago as 1873, when the Italian geologist Antonio Stoppani spoke about a "new telluric force which in power and universality may be compared to the greater forces of earth," referring to the "anthropozoic era". (2002, p. 23)

Montessori's later work includes overtones of Stoppani's thinking. She took pride in citing his work as she formulated her own ideas regarding the development of cosmic education. Towards the end of her life, she discussed the new science of ecology in which:

⁴³ Alessandro Manzoni was a patriot and famous Catholic writer; author of *I Promessi Sposi* (The Betrothed). This historical novel, published in 1827, sought to create a picture of the 'forbearance and humility of ordinary Italians' through the ages (Duggan, 1994).

...the vision of evolution is completed by the action of living things on the environment...life is not present on the earth merely to preserve its own existence, but to carry on a process vital to all creation, and therefore necessary for everything that lives.(1949/1988, p. 52)

In common with other philosophers of the day, such as Teilhard de Chardin, Bergson and Nunn,⁴⁴ Montessori recognised a purpose that went beyond self-construction within the child. She called it, the ‘human creative essence’ and says it enabled the child to:

...realize the present stage of an evolving society, a society which comes from antiquity lost in the hundreds of thousands of years that have gone, and which has a future before it of thousands and perhaps millions of years. Nor is this present level that he has to achieve, without limits in past or future, ever quite the same. (1949/1988, p. 53)

Recognising the actions of human beings who use their creative spirit to construct what Montessori terms ‘supra natura’ or ‘supernature’; she assigns responsibility to humankind: “the master of colossal forces, he has to know how to use them, have them serve him, set them to work. He has created a miraculous supernature by harnessing and using the energies of nature” (Montessori, 1949, cited by Grazzini, 1993, p. 14), She cautions, however, that with human creation, must come the realisation of the possibility of destruction as well as the hope of infinite progress.

There was quite a contrast between the Montessori and Stoppani families with one wedded to business and the other to academia. Montessori, for her part, took aspects from both. Whilst in her early life she was much more inclined to academic and feminist pursuits; she was later to market her

⁴⁴ Bergson spoke of the *elan vitale*, Percy Nunn, the *horme*, Teilhard de Chardin, the *noosphere* (Montessori, *AM*, 1949/1988, p. 49; Montessori, *CSW*, 1989, p. 29)

‘method’ (Fresco, 1993) and pragmatically guarded her intellectual property after she renounced her university positions and came to rely upon income from courses for teachers and sales of her materials. We shall see, however, that a strong sense of justice and moral sensitivity continued to underscore her actions and served to inspire writing, public speaking and advocacy for children’s projects throughout her life.

Education and Montessori

Maria entered primary school when the family moved to Rome. Shortly after she began school, the landmark Coppino law (1877) was passed, which introduced compulsory schooling for all six to nine year olds. The liberal politicians behind the move promoted it as a “fundamental civil right...they believed that mass elementary education would cement national unity by integrating peasants and workers into the polity, creating a collectivity with shared social values, and disseminating a common language and history” (Quine, 2002, p. 38).

At this point in time, it is estimated that the number of people who were literate, ranged between twenty and twenty five per cent of the population. The rate for women was barely five percent and those who had access to education were “confined to fashion, French, and the fundamentals of the faith” (Lowenthal, 2008, p. 166). The new law was often ignored and there was little expectation that children would go to school when families required their younger members to help with agricultural or manufacturing tasks (Cammarosano, 1991).

The teaching profession held little status and was poorly paid. Female teachers were paid only one third of their male counterparts and Duggan (1994) cites an 1886 report that “drew attention to instances of school mistresses who had died of hunger and neglect” (p. 154). Teachers were

badly trained; rote learning techniques were widely employed; and children were expected to sit for long hours at fixed benches and desks.⁴⁵

Montessori, as with many gifted children, feigned indifference to the uniform and rigid curriculum. Kramer reports that she reacted to a teacher who criticised “the expression in “those eyes”...by never raising her eyes in that teacher’s presence again” (p. 28). Her mother, however, nurtured her lively intellect and Montessori developed a passion for mathematics, in spite of the system.

Six years later, Montessori rejected the ‘French and fashion’ expectations for a young woman of her class and persuaded her parents to enrol her in one of the new, technical schools. These schools had been established as a result of the 1877 legislation to provide an alternative to secondary schools which taught in the classical tradition. At this time, the small number of girls who went on to secondary education usually attended private schools so when Montessori began, she had only one other female student for company.

Montessori completed seven years of secondary education, the first three in the technical school and then four years learning Italian, French and German, some science and mathematics at the Leonardo da Vinci Institute. Many of her fellow students were heading into business or trades and her first thought was to follow them. Montessori resisted her father’s advice to become a teacher, decided to study engineering and then changed her mind and applied to enter medical school in 1890. Along with other pioneering women of the day, she entered tertiary studies at a time when the number of women enrolled in Italian universities would have reached no more than

⁴⁵ This ‘imprisonment’ was one of Montessori’s first experiences of injustice and she later referred to the plight of schoolchildren as being ‘pinned like butterflies’ to their desks (*DofC*, 1948/1967, p. 11). She later highlighted the role of the school desk in creating physical deformities.

twenty at any one time.⁴⁶ Amongst male students, medicine was a popular subject, but it was seen by most to be highly unusual, if not abhorrent for women.

Poverty and pellagra

Trabalzini (2007) notes that Montessori's Italy was a country of some 34 million inhabitants.⁴⁷ Montessori's middle class position was not shared by the vast majority of her fellow citizens and Duggan (1994) calculates that in 1881, only one million people or 6.7% of the population could be counted in this class of teachers, public servants, professionals, shop keepers and managers. Life for the majority of the population was very hard. At the time of unification in 1861, infant mortality in the first year was one in four. Although the figures began to trend down over the next twenty years, by 1890, the rate was still almost one in five (Quine, 2002) with life expectancy, consequently, set in the early twenties. Other indicators of poverty were to be found in diseases of malnutrition: rickets, goitre, scurvy and pellagra.

The 1881 census, revealed that 104,000 people (primarily in the northern and central regions) suffered from pellagra (Whitaker, 1992). This disease was an expression of social, political and economic conditions in the regions affected. As land was enclosed and small-holders were displaced, the number of landless labourers (*braccianti*) increased, and they were frequently paid in kind with a portion of the lowest value crop, which was maize. Access to traditional foods, such as chestnuts, which contained the niacin needed to provide protection from pellagra, was restricted due to the

⁴⁶ Trabalzini (2007) calculated that between 1877 and 1900, 257 women graduated from higher education institutions.

⁴⁷ Whitaker (1992) gives figures for population growth from 12 million in 1600; to 15.7 million in 1750; to 24.8 million in 1850; 26.8 million in 1871 and 38 million in 1921 (citing Livi-Bacci, 1990; Neufeld, 1961).

entailment of common lands. The vitamin B₃ deficiency, common in those who subsisted on a diet of maize, caused skin lesions, and eventual dementia and death.

Small holders lost land due to high taxation and they too became reliant on the killer food. As the peasants lost their links to landowners who had previously supported their workers “in terms of medical care, credit, and risk protection” (Mack Smith, 1969 cited by Whitaker, 1991, p. 83) their poverty became extreme. Millions escaped through emigration and for those who remained a gradual rise in wages and diversification of crop production led to an easing of the situation. Industrialisation, which occurred principally from the mid-1890s, also led to a significant drop in the proportion of the population dependent upon agriculture. It was not, however, until 1937 that the cause of pellagra was finally confirmed. For many years previously, the focus was on Cesare Lombroso’s theory that it was due to the use of corn and corn products that had become mouldy (Livi-Bacci, 1986). For Montessori, this became a disease that she confronted every day in her future work, both as a doctor and as an anthropologist, as many victims of pellagra were erroneously classed as mentally ill and cast into lunatic asylums. Montessori discusses this social justice issue in *Pedagogical Anthropology*, where she notes both the cure (‘large amounts of nitrogenous meat’) and the economic circumstances contributing to pellagra and suggests that “the real battle against pellagra must be won through agrarian reforms” (1913, p. 161). In 1909, she records her critique of Lombroso’s treatment of pellagra with ‘arsenicals’ whilst campaigning against the experimental treatment of scoliosis in children. She likened this case of treating symptoms rather than the cause to that of “offering arsenic to the underfed workman” (*MM*, 1912, p. 19).

During her medical studies, Montessori took a specialty with Professor Angelo Celli, a socialist academic who was in charge of experimental hygiene and had a particular interest in malaria. Other infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis, typhoid fever, measles, cholera and diphtheria,⁴⁸ were also rife. The poor sanitation and overcrowded conditions faced by the Italian population meant that typhoid deaths in the years 1887-91 were 880 per million, annually, whereas in England, the rate was a mere six per million (Quine (2002)). The following section reveals how working conditions also contributed to disease and suffering.

The labour of women in modern Italy

Although it was unusual for a woman of Montessori's background to seek out paid work, in 1881, De Grand (1976) cites national employment rates of between 40 to 51 per cent for women and girls over ten. Aside from tobacco work, other occupations in which women figured prominently were those related to silk, cotton, linen, hemp and wool production. At least 300,000 women on the Italian peninsular were involved in spinning and weaving at the time of Unification (Cammarosano, 1991) but this was set to increase dramatically during the rest of the century. Women outnumbered men, at a rate of almost four to one (Federici, 1963, cited in De Grand, 1976). Women began this work from about the age of ten (or younger) and although some worked in factories many other women fitted the long hours that were necessary to make any income, around their home duties. Those who worked at home were penalised with a lower piece rate and to compensate these women would often work until late at night.

⁴⁸ This disease did not discriminate. Montessori's American contemporary, John Dewey, lost his two year old son, Morris, to diphtheria when he was visiting Milan in 1895 (Martin, 2002).

When mechanized spinning and weaving looms were introduced, textile production became even more accessible to women as the requirement for physical strength was removed. This led to many gender based conflicts as while it ensured that women had equal status, they did not receive equal pay for their work (Cammarosano, 1991).

Silk was one particularly important aspect of the textile trade in which Italy's production was second only to China. It relied on the dexterity and speed of women workers. It was dangerous and intense work which involved the use of very hot water to steep the cocoons of the silk worms. Cammarosano cites an interview with Lea Baravalle, working in a mill after the First World War, in which she explained that if those at the bottom of the chain were not quick enough to provide thread to the throwsters, they would "hit us and then scooped up the boiling water and splashed it in our faces, or drenched us from head to foot...as a punishment...because they in turn had to meet the demands of production" (Guidetti Serra, 1977, cited by Cammarosano, p. 166). Living conditions were very rudimentary and Baravalle notes that "there were rats and mice which climbed over everything" (p. 167). Ipsen (2006) records that in 1876, "between 20 and 30 percent of silk workers, were girls of under 12" (p. 91). They were set in charge of the initial task of beating the cocoons in hot water and in the early days, even younger girls were employed to knot threads broken in the spinning process.

Agricultural work increasingly fell to the lot of women during the second half of the nineteenth century, as their men went further afield during the non-harvest season, to find work on the railways and in other public works. Rice growing was one particular crop that relied on both women and children in planting and tending the fields. Aside from the backbreaking effort involved in this work, disease was a familiar hazard with malaria being

a frequent consequence of working in the damp conditions. This was neither new nor confined to rice production: Ramazzini (1713), a doctor, noted that women, having responsibilities for removing bundles of flax and hemp from the stagnant water in which they were steeped, “fall prey to violent fevers and expire within a very short period of time” (cited in Cammarosano, 1991, p. 168). In order to escape these conditions, migration to the cities and further abroad, increased.

Urban migration

In 1871, when Rome became the capital of the new kingdom, there was a huge influx of peasants and labourers, alongside the resettlement of a large number of public servants (Kramer, 1988). In the cities, many women moved into tailoring positions, including specialised work such as lace-making and glove-making. Although many flocked to the cities to stay and seek work, many more were attracted to join the growing tide of migrants leaving to disperse to new colonies in Africa and the Americas. Of those who remained, almost one million women and girls were engaged in textile production.⁴⁹ Children were also set to work with women, in mines and factories, from the age of nine and sometimes younger.

Higher education and the middle classes

The decline of the church after 1860 removed one method of social progress for families of the petit bourgeoisie. Lyttelton (1991) notes, that in the past, small scale manufacturers had been able to steer some of their sons into the priesthood as a means of lessening the pressure on inheritance, and as a way of improving social status. Without this option, “fathers tried to make them employees or professionals” (p. 234). This, combined with the

⁴⁹ Cammarosano (1991) reports that in the 1881 census, “877, 837 women and 80,745 girls under the age of nine” worked as spinners (p. 158).

number of landowners ruined by the depression in the 1880s, led to a major swell in the numbers entering university.

It was unsurprising that social and economic conditions drew many in the universities to adhere to the theories of Karl Marx. Socialist ideals also filtered through to rural life. From the early 1880s onwards there were a growing number of strikes involving increasing numbers of rural workers. Their slogan was “*pane e lavoro* (work and bread)” (Whitaker, 1992, p. 85). In 1884 there was a mass strike of rural workers who refused to bring in the harvest (Ginsborg, 1991) and a little later socialist ideas began to be implemented through the establishment of workers’ organisations and labour legislation. Anna Kuliscioff (and her partner, Filippo Turati) founders of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) both instigated and supported mass rallies of women; held hundreds of meetings up and down the country; and in 1902 succeeded in having a law passed to regulate the industrial labour of women and children after more than a decade of work (La Vigna, 1978). By the same year, nearly 250,000 workers had been formed into unions led by the socialists (Duggan, 1994). Later, in 1906, the year in which Montessori’s children’s project was conceived, came the formation of both the Foundation of Steel Workers and the Confederation of Labour.

The growing student population led to a concomitant pressure on the professions. Doctors and lawyers were produced in abundance and this meant that every small centre had their own representatives. Litigation became a focus for public entertainment. Allum (1973) relates that Arturo Labriola⁵⁰, described the law courts in Naples, “as the only centre for the

⁵⁰ Arturo Labriola was a well known syndicalist socialist who advocated violent revolution rather than Turati’s more moderate, intellectual approach in the Italian Socialist Party. He worked as a lawyer and taught political economy at the University of Naples (Drake, 2003). He was not related to Montessori’s Marxist philosophy professor, Antonio Labriola.

formation of new currents of public opinion” (cited in Lyttelton, 1991, p. 239). On the other hand, the number of lawyers who found their way into politics had the effect of preventing discussion on real issues: “Pasquale Villari and Francesco Nitti⁵¹ both blamed legal education for the politicians’ formalism and ignorance of social realities” (p. 239). After the 1880s, Duggan (1994) notes that many leading socialists were lawyers but others were drawn to “the far right [such that] the Nationalists and later the fascists included many struggling journalists,⁵² writers and lawyers, whose frustrations...turned to anger with the entire political system” (p. 157).

With regard to the medical profession Lyttelton (1991) explains that although the public health law of 1888, introduced by Prime Minister Francesco Crispi, gave security of tenure to those doctors who delivered medical care, funded by the communes; they were still subject to a three year registration process that was awarded under the patronage of the local elite. It was partly because of this that public health doctors were:

...in the forefront of the battle against rural poverty...[and] their anti-clericalism and their anger against the inaction and penny-pinching of successive governments led many of them to sympathize with the radical Left. Doctors were very well represented among the founders of Italian socialism. (p. 243)

⁵¹ Villari was a well-known academic in the subjects of history and philosophy, a senator and Minister of Education, and noted social commentator, especially regarding conditions in southern Italy. Nitti originally studied law and then became a professor of finance at Naples University, he was a radical politician and served as Prime Minister from 1919-1920.

⁵² Montessori records that “An obscure and austere journalist was working there [at the Umanitaria Society in Milan – founded by Jewish socialists to help workers and the poor]...a fact that is perhaps worth recording since he later became notorious throughout the world. His name was Benito Mussolini” (*DofC*, 1948/1967, p. 41). Likewise, a lawyer, Teresa Labriola (Antonio Labriola’s daughter), campaigned with Montessori for women’s suffrage, but later turned to the fascist cause.

In 1890, when Montessori enrolled for her degree, there were 900 medical graduates but only two thirds gained positions in public or private practice. Many were forced to join the Italian Diaspora.

Montessori and university education

Italian women were granted the right to enter the universities in 1874 but by 1900 only 224 had received an undergraduate degree.⁵³ Quine (2002) reports that according to the 1901 census Italy had 29 female doctors, 22,139 male doctors and 13,886 midwives but “no women lawyers,⁵⁴ architects, notaries, accountants or engineers” (p. 356). According to Babini’s investigation, however, only five women had studied medicine before Montessori and only one of those had graduated from Rome and “from the time she enrolled until 1900 she was the only woman to obtain a degree in medicine” (2000, p. 48). It is possible that the doctors captured in the census had studied outside Italy. Whatever the figures, female doctors were a rarity although it is important to note that in contrast to the claims of most of the literature on Montessori, she was not the *first* to qualify either in Italy or in Rome (see chapter five).⁵⁵

⁵³The figures are unsurprising as the baseline for literacy was low. Kuliscioff (1894) quotes from “statistics on literacy from the 1881 census, in Italy 73.51% of the women were illiterate and 61.03% of men” (cited in La Vigna, 1978, n.65, p. 180). Note that Tralbalzini updates the figures and gives a slightly higher number of graduates.

⁵⁴Women, in fact, were prevented from entering the legal field at this time (Babini, 2000).

⁵⁵ Access to medical studies was an issue that was high on the European agenda from the 1850s onwards. Offen (2000) records the campaign: the University of Zurich allowed women to audit its courses from 1864; the following year, the first woman passed her examinations in Paris and with the support of Empress Eugenie, women were formally admitted to the Paris Faculty of Medicine in 1868. Ernestina Paper completed her studies in 1877 at the University of Florence [D’Istria, 1895; Tralbalzini, 2003]; Maria Valleda Farnè graduated in Turin in 1878; Anna Kuliscioff in Naples, in 1885; Giuseppina Catani graduated from Bologna in 1889, followed by Maria Montessori in Rome in 1896. Clark (2008), however, maintains that Montessori was the second woman to graduate from Rome University.

It is important to recognise that the history of women in medicine in Italy goes back to the Middle Ages. Trotula de Ruggiero (sometimes known as Trotula of Salerno) was born in the 11th century in Salerno, home of the first medical school in the world – the *Scuola Medica Salernitana*. It was the

Montessori appears to have decided on a medical career on a whim. She told her friend, Anna Maccheroni, that she happened to see a young child playing with a scrap of red paper and this, for some reason, made her decide to study medicine. She applied to Rome's *La Sapienza* University and was interviewed by the head of the medical school, Professor Guido Baccelli. Although her initial application was rejected she declared her determination to achieve her aim.

Baccelli's refusal to enrol her has always been explained with reference to her gender (Kramer, 1988; Standing, 1957/1998) but Valeria Babini (2000) contends that it was more likely to have been educational background that precluded her entry. The technical school that she had attended did not offer the required studies in classical languages. In fact, Baccelli appears to have admired her spirit and was later to provide Montessori with considerable support in gaining influence in the women's movement and also helped her later academic career.

Montessori spent the next two years in the science faculty studying mathematics, physics, chemistry and natural science. At the end of this period she passed the necessary examinations "including Italian and Latin" (Kramer, 1988, p.35), in order to gain a Diploma di Licenza (effectively, a 'pre-med' qualification). When she applied again, she gained a place, thus

first institution to offer academic degrees and was open to both men and women. Trotula specialised in the field of women's medicine and wrote a foundation text on gynaecology and obstetrics called *Passionibus Mulierum Curandorum* (The Medieval Woman's Guide to Health) which continued to be used as a teaching text for the following 400 years. Following Trotula, women continued to practice medicine and Olsen (1994) records that "from 1273 to 1410, there are twenty-four women doctors in Naples, Italy" (p. 50). In 1732, Laura Bassi was appointed as the Professor of Anatomy at the University of Bologna followed by Anna Manzolini in 1760 (Ferraris & Ferraris, 1997; Olsen, 1994; Wynn, 2000).

supporting Babini's view that she was originally refused entry because she did not meet the entry criteria.

Montessori's experience at medical school was difficult. She was ridiculed and jostled by the male students and was always required to take a back seat. Anatomy classes were particularly difficult and she was required dissect her cadaver separately from the rest of the students, at night (Kramer, 1988).

Amongst Montessori's professors there were a small number who were sympathetic to the feminist cause and, perhaps, impressed with her determination to succeed. These lecturers tended to be those who were inspired by the promise of socialism and believed that their work would lead to regeneration of the newly formed nation. The professor of experimental hygiene, Angelo Celli [1857-1914], recognised the social and economic connection between such diseases as malaria and tuberculosis and Clodomiro Bonfigli, who arrived half way through Montessori's studies to take up a chair in clinical psychiatry, became engaged in debate with Lombroso, defending his view that pellagra was a consequence of economic and political conditions. Later, he was to head up the National League for the Education of Retarded Children, formed in 1898, which had "Montessori as one of its more active members" (Kramer, 1988, p. 78).

It is in this climate that Montessori became involved in social medicine, feminism and politics (see chapter five). Professor Celli had earlier founded a clinic known as *Soccorso e Lavoro* (Aid and Work) for the poor children of the city and it is possible that Montessori became associated with this. She notes the Sunday classes that Angelo and Anna Celli held for members of the working class in *Pedagogical Anthropology* (1913). She relates her own experience with young working class families in *The Montessori Method* (1912)

and it is evident from her account that she combined political advocacy with both caring and medical roles in her practice.

Montessori's application to her studies paid off. She won a major prize in her fourth year of study which came with the financial boost of 1000 lira, and, the following year, she won the opportunity to work as an assistant in the university hospital, thus gaining valuable clinical practice. In her final year, her father's conventionalism was overcome when he was persuaded by an acquaintance to attend a seminar given by his daughter. His pride in the way she won over the audience dissolved his longstanding disapproval of her studies and he then became one of her chief supporters. Some years later, Kramer (1988) records that on her 30th birthday he presented her with a book which contained over 200 newspaper clippings relating to her academic and political achievements.

In her final year, Montessori wrote a thesis in the relatively new field of psychology: *A clinical contribution to the study of the delusion of persecution*. Her viva was carried out in front of eleven examiners, and must have been impressive as they awarded her 105 out of a possible 110 marks. In 1896, Montessori, completed her degree and became a doctor of medicine and surgery, receiving an elaborate document that had to be corrected in pen and ink to accommodate her gender (Kramer, 1988).

Conferences

The *Associazione Femminile* selected Montessori to represent Italian women at an international women's conference, held in Berlin shortly after her graduation in 1896 (see chapter five). In 1899, Baccelli, now Minister of Public Instruction, selected her to give a series of lectures to teachers, following a fervent address to the national pedagogical conference held in Turin in September, 1898, in which she put before the teachers the need to:

“find another solution, *another formula for social justice*” Kramer, 1988, p. 74). Montessori was referring to the failure to reform adult criminals by punishment and suggests that the answer lies in education and a ‘shift in focus to the child’ (p. 74). Baccelli also nominated her to attend and speak at a second International Women’s conference to be held in London in the same year and further information on this is given in the next chapter.

Post doctoral research and collaboration with Sante de Sanctis

Montessori was living in a time of discovery for psychological research. In 1896, when she had finished her degree, she began work at the psychiatric clinic run by neurologist, Ezio Sciamanna (Stewart-Steinberg, 2007). She worked there, in a voluntary capacity, with Sante de Sanctis [1862-1935], a colleague who supervised her thesis preparation. De Sanctis was a pioneer in experimental and developmental psychology and together, they reviewed articles for *Rivista quindicinale di psicologia* – a fortnightly magazine of psychology, psychiatry and neuropathology (Babini & Lama, 2000).

Montessori became aware of the plight of children in lunatic asylums shortly after she began to work with De Sanctis. One of her tasks involved the selection of people from the asylums to come to the psychiatric clinic associated with the University hospital and on one of these searches, she was shown a room full of children. Montessori, ever the scientist, quickly noted that the children were not the animals that their caretaker reported them to be. She realised that their environment was devoid of stimulation and that the children were on the floor, searching for crumbs with which to play. It struck her that there was the possibility for transformation in this pathetic activity.

Quine (2002) notes that the Government had made attempts to compile statistics on the numbers of people who were in psychiatric asylums in 1889, 1898, and 1908 but the results were not complete. There was an estimate made in 1908 that 2000 of the 45,000 people in such institutions were minors but it was felt that there were many more locked away in lunatic asylums. “Reformers believed that many tens of thousands of ‘abnormal, corrupted, and abandoned’ children were in some kind of residential establishment that might be damaging to their physical and mental development” (Quine, 2002, p. 223).

Montessori began a search for information that might help the so-called ‘deficient’ or ‘feeble-minded’ children. It is said that she read the works of all the major educational theorists and her later writing certainly refers to a long line of educators from Aristotle, to Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, and Herbart. She made a particular study of the work of two French doctors, Jean Gaspard Itard and his successor, Edouard Seguin. Itard had worked with the so-called ‘wild boy of Aveyron’ (Victor), a child who had been abandoned for some years in the woods in France⁵⁶. Itard worked with Victor for a period of two years in an effort to teach him to communicate and some basic social skills. Seguin continued Itard’s work, developing an approach to teaching children with intellectual disabilities which saw him recognised as the ‘father of special needs education’. Montessori searched for his books and when she finally received a copy of his second book, proceeded to translate it from English into Italian; transcribing more than 600 pages so she could better understand it (Kramer, 1988).

⁵⁶ Modern interpreters of Itard’s work have suggested that Victor may have been autistic (Feez, 2009).

Education to set them free

In 1900, Montessori became co-director, with Giuseppe Montesano, of a school for children with special (so-called ‘deficient’) learning needs, the *Scuola Ortofrenica* or Orthophrenic School. Early on she determined that the key to their liberation was to be found in transforming educational practices. She notes that following her success in developing pedagogical solutions for these children, “I became convinced that similar methods applied to normal children would develop or set free their personality in a marvellous and surprising way” (MM, 1912, p. 33). Whilst emphasising that her approach was based on love and respect for the child, Montessori also endeavoured to carefully test her methods through an empirical model of observation and reflection.

Babini (2009) appraises Montessori’s contribution to early work in child psychiatry in Italy and says:

Do not forget that child neuropsychiatry in Italy has a tradition of high innovation found in Maria Montessori and Giuseppe Montesano, and in the theoretical reflection of Sante De Sanctis. In this field, in the early twentieth century, Italy was more than keeping pace with the rest of Europe: in short, there is an illustrious tradition behind it. (p. 172)

An account written by William Ireland, a regular contributor to the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, provides a further context for this assessment and explains the background to the development of the Orthophrenic School. Ireland uses glowing terms to describe his visit to the asylum, *Santa Maria della Pietà*, alongside his meeting with the superintendant, Clodomiro Bonfigli:

...and his brilliant staff of young physicians and pathologists. The survey of the numerous buildings presented many novel features. The library, the offices, the wards, with some unwonted types of insanity, the grounds gay with early flowers and the trees and shrubs of a warmer sun...[and so on]. (1902, p. 559)

He also records a visit to “a new training school for imbecile boys”, noting that Professor Bonfigli had taken the case of these children to the Chamber of Deputies some five years prior:

The Minister of the Interior, while admitting the desirability of the object, declared that the State was not prepared to assume such a charge. Turning his hopes upon private charity, Bonfigli founded in 1898 the League for the protection of Deficient Children, which received the adhesion of the principal scientific and political men of Italy.⁵⁷ Doctress [sic] Montessori undertook to lay this object before the public, which she eloquently advocated through the principal towns of Italy. (p. 559)

Montessori threw her boundless energy into the work of the school and for two years she and Montesano explored and expanded this new area of research.

Personal rupture and child abandonment (1898)

Montessori was thus a modern young woman; a professional working as an equal among her colleagues. She worked closely with Dr Giuseppe Montesano, and they carried out experiments and wrote papers together as part of the group working with De Sanctis. Close contact with Montesano, turned into an affair and early in 1898, Montessori gave birth to a son, Mario.

⁵⁷ Babini points out that “the league was supported by the Minister of Public Instruction Guido Baccelli. It was also run by a committee that included many names drawn from the Roman aristocracy, especially women” (2000, p. 53).

It has been said that Montesano's family opposed a marriage (Kramer, 1988) and perhaps Montessori herself saw the complications that a child might bring to her career. For whatever reason, Mario was sent to family friends in the country and until he was seven lived there with occasional visits from an unexplained 'lady'. He spent another seven years at boarding school but when he was fifteen he challenged Montessori to declare the truth of their relationship and asked to go home with her. Renilde Montessori had died in 1912 and so, in a move that once again stepped beyond the conventions of the time, Montessori agreed. Mario was first known as her nephew and then her adopted son. Regardless of acknowledged relationship, Mario took his mother's name and became her companion and life-long supporter throughout both his marriages⁵⁸ and the birth of four children (Kramer, 1988).

After the birth of their son, and their principled decision to remain single but committed to each other, Montesano and Montessori continued to work closely together at the Scuola Ortofrenica. Three years later, Montesano broke their pact and declared his impending marriage to Maria Aprile in October 1901. Montessori, understandably, felt compromised and left the school project (Babini, 2000).

The civil rights of children

Montessori, as a middle class woman of some independent means, was able to make some provision for her own child and he was fostered by family friends. Immediately prior to Montesano's marriage, she obtained his agreement that he would give Mario the Montesano name. Babini (2000) records that there is a note attached to Mario's birth certificate; dated 28

⁵⁸ Helena, his first wife, gave Mario the choice of 'your mother or me' and Binda Goldsbrough (Personal communication, 2001) records that he chose his mother.

September, 1901, which documents his paternity. This private advocacy echoed a more public campaign by the feminists who wanted men to face up to their obligations to “76,000 infants who were excluded from the civil rights given with paternity” (Schiff, 1897, p. 282).

Attitudes to single motherhood were punitive and Italy had developed a societal solution to this situation which became a topic of intense national debate during the early years of Montessori’s medical career. Questions were focussed on foundlings and their subsequent care, but for the Catholic Church the key issue was the spiritual matter of both gaining and saving souls. For Montessori, child abandonment related to the contrary discourse of child rights and advocacy; exemplified in this discussion of the system of wet-nursing in *The Advanced Montessori Method*:

What are the rights of children? Let us consider them for a moment as a social class, as a class of workers, for as a fact they are labouring to produce men. They are the future generation. They work, undergoing the fatigues of physical and spiritual growth.... Let us see how social justice receives the infant when he enters the world. We are living in the twentieth century; in many of the so-called civilized nations orphan asylums and wet nurses are still recognized institutions. What is an orphan asylum? It is a place of sequestration, a dark and terrible prison, where only too often the prisoner finds death, as in those mediaeval dungeons whence the victim disappeared, leaving no trace. He never sees any who are dear to him. His family name is cancelled, his goods are confiscated.... But who will lift up his voice for our foundlings? Society does not perceive that they too are men. (*SainE*, 1917/1965, pp. 11-13)

The issue Montessori was referring to was a particular problem for Italy but one that was experienced to greater or lesser degrees by all Western countries, that is to say of a moral code, backed by the severe strictures of the Church that regarded procreation outside of marriage, a sin. Birth control was little understood and from the time of St Augustine, teaching

within the Catholic Church condemned any attempt to avoid or regulate the birth of children. Measures were required to prevent both abortion and infanticide and consequently to manage the inevitable arrival of both unwanted babies born within marriage and infants born outside wedlock.

The history of foundling homes

Italy's system of foundling homes dates back to the Middle Ages. For hundreds of years the Church's attitude to abandoned infants was one of compassion to the child but condemnation for the women who bore them.

"Only through a heart-felt confession, religious reclusion, and a long penance, could fallen women be rescued and saved...from eternal damnation" (Quine, 2002, p. 179 and n. 26, p. 341). We can relate this to Montessori's own experience as a 'fallen woman' since Kramer (1988) points out that after Mario's birth she spent two weeks of every summer in spiritual retreat in a convent in Bologna.

The teaching of the Catholic Church originated from the synod of Arles in 314 which "affirmed the dignity of childhood...and from its earliest beginnings...church law defined children as a trust from God. The idea that parenthood did not confer ownership meant that church legal doctrine emphasized parents' responsibilities, rather than rights" (Quine, 2000, p. 176). Action to rescue children from 'fallen' women dates back to Milan in the eighth century, when the earliest known home for abandoned children was established. "These *bretfotrofi* had a profound cultural and social significance: their mere existence affirmed that medieval Christian society believed that forsaken children had rights" (p. 176). The rights that the church recognised were, however, spiritually driven.

Ipsen (2006) states that ‘ruota’ or ‘turning cradle[s]’ were inserted into the entrance walls of various foundling homes to enable “infants to be deposited anonymously” (p. 25). The boxes were just big enough for newborns (in order to dissuade parents from abandoning older infants and children) and were only made available at night, and thus allowed a parent to deposit a child under the cover of darkness. The teaching of the church was that children should not be held to blame for the ‘sins’ of their mothers and this process enabled the *‘esposti’* to be given the chance for the saviour of their souls. Baptism ceremonies were held as soon as possible after reception. In an earlier paper, Ipsen (1999) tells us that in Naples, children who were placed in the turning cradle were believed to be “blessed and became ‘children of the Madonna’” (p. 7). This particular belief created a mystique around these children which was designed to attract the voluntary care of external wet nurses.⁵⁹ Kertzer, Sigle and White’s research indicates that foundlings in this area, however, ‘died at a horrific rate’ specifically because of the lack of payment (1999, p. 305).

With the rise in rural manufacturing in the 19th century, the numbers of women prepared to act as wet nurses was significantly reduced but the number of children did not diminish. Quine’s research led her to calculate that over half a million children were abandoned in the period from 1865 to 1879. Ipsen (2006) adds that “from 1893-1896, the annual number of abandonments was 30,000” (p. 35). Children began to be placed in situations that amounted to ‘baby farming’ where women with no other source of income took in infants in order to collect the paltry subsidy attached to this work. They did not receive any additional help with food, clothing or medical support and many of the children died, not least because their caregivers were often suffering from tuberculosis or pellagra (Quine,

⁵⁹ The south was the only region in Italy that did not offer any payment for wet nurses.

2000). Kertzer (1999) raises the additional and significant problem of syphilis, which was easily spread both to and from the wet nurses.

When wet nurses could not be employed, foundling homes experimented with various methods of artificial feeding but poor hygiene and unsterilized milk meant that between 40 and, at times, up to 90 percent of these babies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, died within their first year.⁶⁰ This was compounded by the rising occurrence of child abandonment. Barbagli (1991) points to a clear correlation between economic downturn and the numbers of children abandoned in the 18th century: “In crisis years the number doubled and even tripled, while there was a corresponding increase in the number of legitimate children who were abandoned” (p. 126). In the 19th century a new phenomenon developed. Here, it seems that, in addition to the stigma of illegitimacy, the cause of abandonment was related to women’s requirement to work long hours to aid the support of their families. As most couples lived in nuclear families there was no support available from other family members when an infant arrived. Mothers reluctantly gave up their babies but sometimes, were able to reclaim them through the use of intermediaries so they could claim a subsidy as a wet nurse to aid with family support.

Ipsen (1999) provides a different and harsher interpretation related to the change in distribution of labour from agriculture to manufacturing, in which women were a major factor:

⁶⁰ Kertzer et al (1999) focussed their study on the area of Bologna and revealed a pattern of declining mortality rates: 1809-10 – 30% reached their first birthday; 1829-30 and 1849-50 – 41%; and 1869-70 – 57%. Ipsen (1999) focussed on the case of the Annunziata foundling home in Naples, which became the subject of national outrage – here only three out of 856 infants survived their first year during the period from 1895 to 1896. He notes, “seemingly an extreme case, the Neapolitan situation turned out instead to be a fairly typical example of Italian neglect of foundlings” (p. 2).

In nineteenth-century Italy...the demand for labour was weak, and the strategy of abandonment and the foundling home frequently served not so much for the redistribution of children as for their elimination, by a sort of institutionalized infanticide, an unfortunately rational choice in a context of surplus population. (p. 3)

Montessori was not alone in recognising child abandonment as a significant social problem and a travesty of children's rights. None of the Liberal governments after Unification, however, took the opportunity to institute greater protection for these children. Two bills were introduced, one in 1877 and one in 1891, but both were rejected without discussion. It was not until the fascist government came to power that legislation was enacted in 1927, leading to the recognition of the needs of both mothers and children (Quine, 2000).

Issues of abuse and violence were also associated with child abandonment. Paediatricians formed a national Society for the Protection of Children in 1892 which worked to expose the problems of child trafficking, and many cases of horrific child abuse. They had little success in pursuing these through the courts, however, as parents were given paltry sentences and families and neighbours frequently refused to testify for fear of vendetta.

Quine explains that change came to some of the foundling homes when they instituted a process to contract mothers to stay on after birth to feed both their own infant and others within the home. The hope was that by increasing the potential for a maternal bond to be formed, babies would be less likely to be abandoned. The effect was positive on the abandonment statistics but the process of bringing mothers into hospital resulted in a maternal death rate that was four times that for home birth. Clinics were often set up with the principal aim of giving doctors opportunities to

experiment with aggressive “instrumental and manual interventions” in the birth process. “In the era before asepsis, antisepsis, and antibiotics [these new techniques] posed a major hazard to patients” (Quine, 2002, p. 211). It is likely that, after experiencing time on the hospital wards, Montessori had good reason to focus on psychology instead of a gynaecological specialisation.

Montessori carried her personal, private experience of unmarried motherhood throughout her life. She attempted to resolve this tension through a growing Catholic faith but an outward expression of her personal feelings may be seen in her very public work on behalf of women and children which is the subject of discussion in the next chapter. Many of her later children’s houses catered for ‘orphans’; sometimes true orphans as in the case of the earthquake victims at the Via Giusti children’s house run by the Franciscan sisters in Rome but most often the children of unwed mothers. For example, the first centre in Barcelona, Spain, was Casa de Maternidad, established in 1915 at “an orphanage for children of unwed mothers” (Kahn & Leonard, 2007, p. 32). Before this came to pass, however, another chapter of her life led her into the field of pedagogical anthropology.

New studies in philosophy, psychology, pedagogy and anthropology

In 1901, when Montessori decided that she needed to move on from the Orthophrenic School, her father was 71, her mother was 63, and Montessori was without steady income or support. She needed a fulltime position which was not possible in medicine. One of Montessori’s associates in the feminist movement, the wife of a former Minister of Instruction, Giacinta Marescotti, petitioned the current Minister, Guido Baccelli, to appoint Montessori to the women’s training college to teach anthropology and

hygiene. Some concern about her suitability was expressed by the management of the college, but Baccelli intervened and the appointment went ahead (Babini, 2000).

Montessori was glad of the work but could see that it was not going to give her the new career that she was seeking and she also wanted to find out how to make progress with her discoveries with 'feeble minded' children. In the following year, she wrote: "...wishing to undertake the study of normal pedagogy and of the principles upon which it is based, I registered as student of philosophy at the University" (*MM*, 1912, p. 33).

At the University she came into contact with a celebrated Italian philosopher, Antonio Labriola. He had emerged as the Marxist of the agriculturally based South, whereas Antonio Gramsci was the socialist theoretician associated with the Northern, industrialised region of Italy. Scocchera (2002) describes Labriola, as a "tireless representative of the socialist movement: philosopher, university professor, theoretician of the trade-union movement, revolutionary, interventionist" (p. 258). His lectures drew together many of the "young progressives within the university" (Babini, 2000, p. 59). His approach demonstrated his democratic principles and he encouraged his students to become actively involved in classroom debate. He drew upon the teachings of Herbart whom both he and Credaro (lecturer in pedagogy) saw as a source for establishing a scientific foundation to an integrated approach to the theory and practice of education.

In the same month, at the suggestion of Giuseppe Sergi, another left wing academic and politician, Montessori applied to study anthropology. She became involved in a research project that was required before she could

become a University teacher in this subject.⁶¹ Her project was designed to add weight to other research that was pointing to the significance of both inherited and social conditions in the development of cognition (Montessori, *PA*, 1913). Barres (2007) is of the opinion that Montessori and her colleagues wanted to see if, by changing social and environmental conditions, they could redirect the fate of children previously destined to poverty and possible criminality.⁶²

The conclusions she came to were clearly spelt out in her lectures to students and definitely favoured the educational pathway to change. She had a dual path to tread, however, and Foschi points out that “when she operated in the scientific context, she tended to write as though she was a supporter of ideas like Sergi’s, [incorporating tables of anthropometric measurements that were fundamental to the positivist viewpoint]. When she wrote in a political context, however, she was an ardent liberal and feminist” (2008, p. 240).

Again, this is another difficulty when we attempt to unravel information about Montessori. As a pioneering female scientist, there was a limit to the political views she could express. When it came time to present her research, the originality of her work was recognised as being “one of the first anthropological studies on the ethnic characteristics of a living people” (Babini, 2000, p. 61), but she was criticized for the structure of her essay, including passages that reflected on personal experiences during her

⁶¹ Despite Sergi’s support for Montessori, he regarded both women and children as inferior from an evolutionary point of view. Montessori included material in the book that drew from her research, *Pedagogical Anthropology* (1910.1913), on the proportional size of the female brain from Manouvrier which helped to discount this view.

⁶² Lyttelton (1991) points out that “the 1890s were the great decade of criminology, when law and medicine joined hands, confident of their ability to prevent and detect crime by the methods of modern empirical science” (p. 239).

research. She describes, for example, how she was often chased away in the course of her data collection. When she approached women to see if they would join her study, she had to contend with the suspicions of male family members who misunderstood the reasons for her research. She voices their concerns:

If I was a doctor...why did I want to meet women who were attractive, young and healthy? No, for them...I was a sorceress, a witch. I was working to place the young in brothels, a spy from the prisons, a manufacturer of illustrated postcards... (*PA*, 1913, cited in Babini, 2000, p. 61).

Nevertheless, her research was accepted and she was appointed as an 'honorary' member of the Anthropological Society in 1903. This allowed her to teach at the University, which she did from 1904 until 1910.

Pedagogical Anthropology and Scientific Pedagogy

In the book based on her lectures to students: *Pedagogical Anthropology*, published in Italy in 1909 and translated into English in 1913, Montessori presents the view that in the middle of the 19th century, Cesare Lombroso⁶³ rescued the study of anthropology from obscurity and led it to new forms of "practical service". She suggests that his completion of the work of Morel (who had looked at social aspects of degeneracy) led him "to consider [humanity] in relation to...his environment" (1913, p.6). She states the role of educators: "Now it is not yet in our power to achieve a social reform based on the eradication of degenerative causes-since society can be

⁶³ Lombroso is more often berated as a physical anthropologist whose views on biological determinism and the degenerate criminal classes aided the cause of eugenics. He argued that there were fewer female criminals because they were less developed in an evolutionary sense and were of lower intelligence [for a discussion on the ambiguities in his view on women, see Gibson, 1990]. Despite this view, he contributed significantly to the advance of humane treatment in criminology.

perfected only gradually-it is nevertheless within our power to prepare the conscience for acceptance of the new morality, and by educational means to help along civil progress” (1913, p. 9).

Montessori’s approach to the amelioration of preventable and treatable disease focussed on the concept of ‘scientific pedagogy’. *Pedagogical Anthropology* was primarily a human development text for teachers, written from a biological perspective, but it also includes discussion on social ethics. She begins with an historical reference to the ‘violent elimination of the weak’ in ancient Greece in contrast to the ‘respect for human life’ to be found in modern Italy. She notes that the consequence of this right to life is that many of the weak “are destined to become a burden, as parasites, upon the social body of normal citizens” (p. 169). “Maladies due to the vices and ignorance of men, such as syphilis, other maladies such as tuberculosis, malaria and pellagra...” (p. 170) are seen as causes undermining the social structure of the time. Montessori suggests that a solution that is both economic and humane could be found in “a gathering in of the weaklings”:

The establishment of special schools for defective children, sanatorium-schools for tuberculous children, rural schools for those afflicted with malaria and pellagra, infant asylums for rachitic children, is a work of many-sided utility...Very small would be the cost of schools for defective children, asylums for the rachitic, tonics, quinine, the iodide treatment, school refectories for little children afflicted with hereditary taints and organic disease: very small indeed, in comparison to the disastrous losses that society must one day suffer at the hands of these future criminals and parasites gathered into prisons, insane asylums and hospitals, in comparison to the harm that may be done by one single victim of tuberculosis by spreading the homicidal bacilli around him. It is a principal [sic] of humanity as well as of economy to utilise all human forces, even when they are represented by beings who are apparently negligible. To every man, no matter how physiologically wretched, society should stretch a helping hand, to raise him. (*PA*, 1913, p. 169)

Montessori's lively lectures were free to teachers and very popular. Anna Maccheroni relates that the large hall in which they took place was "crowded with young people of both sexes...she spoke not about anthropology, but about schools. She told us what a school should be like....I remember some students saying, 'Her lectures make us want to be good'" (Maccheroni, 1947, cited by Kramer, p. 98).

Montessori also concerned herself with the cause of delinquency. Quine (2002) records:

...at the Fifth International Congress on Psychology, held in Rome in 1905, De Sanctis, Sergi, Morselli⁶⁴ and other prominent figures, such as Teresa Labriola, who was a [law] philosophy lecturer at Rome University, and Maria Montessori, who was a doctor of medicine and anthropology lecturer at Rome University, committed themselves to devising effective 'social therapies' against the corruption of young people, in an uncaring society. They and other campaigners argued that environment was the principal cause which led a minor to commit an offence against society" (p. 221). Another conference held a year later, the International Congress on Criminal Anthropology, recommended that minors should be sent to "specialized reformatories and institutes with an educational purpose. (p. 221).

Montessori and the hope of education

The following passage from the preface to *Pedagogical Anthropology*, summarises the cause that Montessori now held dear. It outlines her hope that a combination of social action, science and education would transform the prospects of all children:

The present-day importance assumed by all the sciences calculated to regenerate education and its environment, the school, has

⁶⁴ Montessori (1910) discusses the work of Enrico Morselli, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Genoa, in *Pedagogical Anthropology*. She notes, that in his book, *General Anthropology* (1906) he "sought to unite experimental science and philosophy – taking his content from the former and his form from the latter" (p. 21)

profound social roots and is forced upon us as the necessary path toward further progress; in fact the transformation of the outer environment through the mighty development of experimental sciences during the past century, must result in a correspondingly transformed man; or else civilisation must come to a halt before the obstacle offered by a human race lacking in organic strength and character (Montessori, 1913, pp vii-viii).

In this chapter, I have explored some of the ‘social roots’ of economic, health, education and labour issues experienced by Italians, particularly women and children, following the Risorgimento and unification of the country in 1870. Because Montessori had first-hand experience of unmarried motherhood, she had a heightened awareness of the problem of infant abandonment; she understood the factors contributing to the widespread disease of the times; and was convinced that social policies were required to change the living and working conditions of her compatriots. As the country moved to try and free itself from the historical influence of the Catholic Church and to forge a new identity as a secular, industrial society, Montessori joined in the search for modernity and confidently communicated her ideas on the possibility of ‘transforming’ humankind through scientific pedagogy. In the next chapter, I continue to explore the social and political context in which Montessori lived, with particular reference to her involvement in the ‘woman question’ and her evolving interest and final focus on children as the hope for the future.

Chapter Five: Freedom and Emancipation: from 'New Woman' to 'New Child' to 'New Teacher'

We ought to want more, for what we want is what we get, if we want it hard enough. For example, women want the vote, men want better conditions of labor and children want more freedom. And remember, what we really want we get. (Helen Keller, 1914)

In New York in 1914, Helen Keller told Maria Montessori, “You are fighting for the freedom of children. We are fighting for the freedom of parents, for the industrial revolution.” Montessori explained, “I began as a sympathiser with political revolutionists of all kinds. Then I came to feel that it is the liberation of this, what we have in our hearts, that is the beginning and end of revolution” When Keller challenged her on whether education could overcome the conditions of families and workers, Montessori replied, “Certainly, certainly, that is true. But we must educate children so that they will know how to free themselves and others from bondage.”

As Montessori intimated in her conversation with Helen Keller; she considered herself to be both a socialist and a feminist in her early adult life (Montessori, M.M., 1977) but her support for the women’s movement was extended, and eventually superseded by her life-long work for recognition of the child’s right to freedom.

This chapter outlines aspects of the early history of feminism in Europe, in particular in Italy, as a prelude to recording the contribution made to this movement by both Montessori and some of her internationally based teachers. This phase of the Montessori movement is a further important link in grounding the pedagogy in an ethic of freedom and social justice and also

placed Montessori within the context of a much wider movement for change in Europe and beyond.

The origin of the modern women's movement

Italy draws upon a long history of women's participation in political, economic and social life from the time of the Roman Empire but France was the initial focus for events that led to a reawakening of "socialists, individual women, societies, and newspapers" taking up the 'woman question' once again (Stanton, 1884/1895).⁶⁵ "Among the women's rights journals were *La femme nouvelle* [The new woman],"⁶⁶ which appeared from 1832 to 1834" (p. 240). In 1851, the first political bid was made to give both women and men the vote.⁶⁷ It was rejected.

In 1861, John Stuart Mill, an English philosopher, who in 1866 was the first politician to advocate for votes for women; wrote a landmark essay entitled: "On the subjection of women". It dealt with gender issues in marriage, education, and politics and gave impetus to the campaign for women's rights. This was widely disseminated in Italy in the year of Montessori's birth, after translation by the feminist leader, Anna Mozzoni.

During the 1870s, electoral law reform was high on the agenda of many liberal and left-wing thinkers. The question of male suffrage was the main focus and Stanton (1895) records a wide variety of ideas regarding the basis

⁶⁵ Theodore Stanton finished his book, *The woman question*, in 1883 and it was first published in 1884. The American edition accessed is dated 1895. Stanton was the son of Elizabeth Cady-Stanton, one of the founders of the American emancipation movement.

⁶⁶ Offen (2000) notes that this was a publication from the Saint-Simonian women. The term 'the new woman' was used again in Russia in the 1860s and in England in the 1890s. It was also used as a derogatory term "in the antifeminist press, notably in *Punch*" (p. 189). Various authors and playwrights used the term to explore feminist issues. Babini and Lama (2000) entitled their book, *La donna nuova* – utilising this concept to examine the early life of Maria Montessori.

⁶⁷ The first call for women's suffrage is commonly dated from 1848 at the Women's Right's Convention held at Seneca Falls, New York.

for counting votes. Although ‘one *man*, one vote’ continued as the accepted objective in suffrage reform, the movement agitating for women began to gather momentum. France and England, however, were not the only contenders in lobbying for women’s causes and many Italian women played an interesting part.

Leaders in the Italian women’s movement

Italian women featured strongly in the European movement for women’s emancipation and they led by practical example. Three women serve as prominent examples in the history. The first was Cristina Trivulzio Belgiojoso [1808-1871], the so-called ‘Revolutionary Princess’.⁶⁸ At the time, she was the richest heiress in Italy; she married at 16 and after four years of marriage lived an unconventional life apart from her husband. She associated with Mazzinian revolutionaries and when she was forced to flee by the Austrian authorities, established a salon in Paris which became a meeting place for Italian activists such as Vincenzo Gioberti, Niccolò Tommaseo, and Camillo Cavour. She also came to know members of the French intelligentsia including Alexis de Tocqueville, Honoré de Balzac and Victor Hugo. On her return to Italy in 1840 she renovated the family estates and, inspired by the utopian socialism of Charles Fourier and Claude Henri Saint-Simon, established kindergartens and schools for the children of the community.⁶⁹ In the 1848 Italian revolution she organised and financed

⁶⁸ See also - http://www.servinghistory.com/topics/Cristina_Trivulzio_Belgiojoso::sub::Works

⁶⁹ Ipsen (2006) explains that the first provision of early childhood care began with the development of the *asilo* movement beginning in 1830. The originator was a priest, Ferrante Aporti, who drew from the tradition of British infants’ schools begun a decade earlier. The *asilo* movement sought to provide care and protection for the youngest children of the working class who up to then were often left unattended in the streets; sometimes in the care of an elderly woman; or at home ‘perhaps leashed to a bed or other piece of furniture’ (p. 169) while their parents worked. Ipsen cites the work of Catarsi and Genovesi (1985) who estimated that in 1843, *asili* accommodated some 15,000 children, steadily growing to cover some “half a million children or about 25 percent of the age group” (p. 171).

a band of over 100 soldiers and led them to fight in Milan for Italy's independence against Austria. When the Roman Republic was formed by Mazzini⁷⁰ in 1849 she became a hospital director for the short period until foreign forces moved in to suppress the republic.

Belgiojoso lived in exile until 1856 and wrote books and articles that recorded the history of Italy and its inhabitants; she translated *The New Science* by Italian philosopher, historian and jurist, Giambattista Vico, into French and in 1866 published *Of women's condition and of their future*. Based on her travels through Asia and the Middle East this book challenged romantic views on women and contended that the harem was a patriarchal device to marginalise women (Maronne, 2007). In the same year she wrote for "the first issue of a new liberal publication *Nuova Antologia*...and queried, "what would happen to the family as it is presently constituted, if women were initiated into masculine pursuits, and shared with men public, social, and literary activities?" (cited in Offen, 2000, p. 143). She worked with Camillo Cavour for Italian unification from 1856 until 1861 and when she retired she continued to write and publish political books and commentary until her death in 1871 (Marrone, 2007).

The 'woman question' as it was referred to (Stanton, 1895), was officially brought before the Italian parliament in 1867 when Salvatore Morelli, a Minister of the Chamber of Deputies, introduced a bill to overturn the explicit exclusion of women from the right to vote which had been recorded by the parliament of 1861. It was unsuccessful. Anna Maria Mozzoni [1837-1920], the acknowledged leader of the Italian feminist movement, had written a tract in 1864 regarding women and revision of the Italian Civil

⁷⁰ Mazzini openly supported women's equality, was the author of *Women and Science* and was another who translated Mill's essay.

Code. This was primarily aimed at reform for middle class women, however, her concerns for education, including access to university, and legal reform gradually expanded as she gained knowledge of the needs of women of other classes.

Other groups became active and publications such as the fortnightly journal, *La Donna*,⁷¹ edited by Gualberta Alaide Beccari, which began its life in Venice in 1868 (eventually ending up in Turin in 1892), published Mozzoni's work and added to the growing impetus for change in women's lives.

In addition to the question of suffrage, other issues were prominent in discussions on women such as: education; the intelligence of women; and their place in the workforce. Dora D'Istria (1895) records information on the development of education for girls – citing the Casati law which was introduced on 13 November, 1859 to make primary education compulsory for all. She also notes “A short time ago [1877], to cite but one example, a Russian lady, Miss Paper, passed the examination for doctor in medicine at the University of Pisa, took her diploma, and is to-day practicing with success at Florence” (p. 327). Stanton notes, in a footnote to D'Istria's chapter, that he had received a communication from the author of a substantial volume on women's contribution to Italian life, Professor Gabba, recording that “Our universities are open to women as listeners and students. Several, during the past few years, have taken doctorate of medicine and the doctorate of literature” (p. 327).⁷² D'Istria also comments on the argument regarding the inferiority of female intellect: “Before

⁷¹ Kramer (1988) notes that the popular press enjoyed a growing readership during the 19th century, with literally hundreds of journals and papers appearing either daily or weekly across Italy. Montessori featured in many different publications both nationally and internationally.

⁷² In addition to Ernestina Paper; Maria Valleda Farnè graduated c1878 in Turin; Anna Kuliscioff in Naples in 1885 and Maria Montessori in 1896 but there are said to be two others who qualified before Montessori.

pronouncing woman an inferior species...it would perhaps be better to wait and see if intellectual culture may not have on her the same effect as on the men” (p. 328).

In the meantime, Mozzoni delivered the opening speech at the International Congress on Women’s Rights held in 1878 during the period of the Paris International Exposition. Although the question of suffrage was not addressed at the congress; in 1881, Mozzoni and a broad coalition of radicals, republicans and socialists made a call for universal suffrage and later that year, she founded the *Lega promotrice degli interessi femminili* –League for the promotion of the interests of women – in Milan. Stanton (1895) reported that “it is a very active organisation, and counts among its members senators, deputies, priests,⁷³ professors of the university, distinguished writers of both sexes, and a large number of working men and women” (p. 317). Mozzoni, however, seeing little progress over time, gradually moved her political position towards the socialist left (Shepherd, 2009).

Anna Mozzoni is usually paired with the other leading light of the Italian feminist field, Anna Kuliscioff [c1854-1925], a radical Russian Jew who was initially influenced by the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin and eventually became a Marxist socialist. She was sent to study in Zurich and like Montessori; she began in the field of engineering and also took courses in philosophy. She became involved with anarchist radicals; returned to Russia and after her first husband died in prison, eventually ended up in Paris where she and her second partner, an Italian anarchist, Andrea Costa, were frequently arrested and imprisoned for their political activities. She resumed university studies in Bern and then because of ill health due to tuberculosis she returned to

⁷³ It is not known if Antonio Stoppani (liberal priest, academic and writer, based in Milan) was among their number but his niece, Renilde Montessori, as a keen reader and supporter of the Risorgimento, would possibly have been aware of this organisation.

complete medical studies in Naples, eventually graduating in 1885. Her work as a doctor was primarily with working class women and this experience added weight to her political activities.⁷⁴ In 1890 she gave her first speech on feminist matters in Milan which was published shortly afterwards. It was entitled, *The Monopoly of Man and Shepherd* (2009) records that it became an important feminist tract. Kuliscioff went beyond the claims of Mozzoni for education and political rights and called for equal pay for women, including payment for housework within the home. In 1891 she became an editor of *Critica Sociale*, a major socialist paper. Prior to that, in 1889, she and her new partner, Filippo Turati, formed the Milan Socialist League which became the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) in 1893. As co-editor of *Critica Sociale*, she invited contributions from Engels, August Bebel⁷⁵ and Antonio Labriola (Montessori's philosophy professor)⁷⁶. Kuliscioff wrote a number of essays on women's emancipation and from the early 1890s, she and Turati organised mass rallies in Milan, to draw attention to industrial hazards affecting women and children in an attempt to increase the protection offered by the Berti law of 1886. This legislation had set the minimum working age at 9 years (the age at which children would complete their compulsory education) and a working day of 8 hours for children up to the age of 12. Since there were only two factory inspectors appointed to enforce the law for some 300,000 industrial child workers across the entire country, adherence was limited. Kuliscioff put a proposal to the Socialists in 1897 for

⁷⁴ Babini (2000) notes that "hospitals and other institutions were reluctant to accept women...witness the case of the socialist Kuliscioff who in 1887 was prevented from taking part in clinical practice at the Ospedale Maggiore in Milan" (p. 48). Clark (2008) also records the difficulty that Maria Farnè had in gaining private patients even with the patronage of Queen Margherita, who made her a court physician.

⁷⁵ August Bebel was the leader of the Social Democrats in Germany and in feminist circles, was best known for his 1879 work, *Women and Socialism*. The ideas that it contains may well have given Montessori food for thought in her own writing on the 'communising of the house' – see <http://www.marxists.org/archive/bebel/1879/woman-socialism/index.htm> for a link to Bebel's book. See also Offen (2000), p. 166.

⁷⁶ Other writers included Enrico Ferri, Lelio Basso, Paul Lafargue, Ivanoe Bonomi, Antonio Graziadei and Jeanne Jaures.

legislation that would set the minimum working age at 15 and the minimum underground and 'dangerous' trades age at 20 with similar restrictions for women. Angelo Celli (one of Montessori's professors), advised on the debilitating effect of child labour to the Italian race, in what Ipsen (2006) suggests was now, "a typical feature of Western medico-anthropological discourse" (p.116). In the end, a revised bill was put forward and a 12 year age limit was set with an 11 hour working day. The legislation was finally passed in 1902 (Ipsen, 2006; Shepherd, 2009).

Whilst Kuliscioff sympathised with feminist issues, she chose to concentrate the majority of her efforts on the cause of the working class. La Vigna (1978) "argues that utopian forms of socialism that emphasise class cooperation rather than class conflict are...in theory more compatible with multiclass feminism than is Marxism" (p. 146). When opportunities arose to agitate on behalf of women, Kuliscioff took them, but never at the expense of the wider class struggle.

In contrast, Montessori, whilst sympathising with Marxist analysis, and on occasion employing it to explain her purposes, was never focused on proletarian opposition to the capitalist class. In terms of party politics, her style was avowedly apolitical and, for a time, even led her to work under the Fascist regime in Italy. In this she was not alone and Duggan (1994) explains that it was because the regime allowed a good deal of freedom to its citizens so long as lip-service was accorded to its leader. He cites the example of the academic profession, who, in 1931, were required to swear an oath of loyalty to the regime: virtually all 1,200 professors, nationwide, acquiesced, "presumably...because they knew it would be no barrier to them continuing to say more or less what they wanted in academic journals or behind the closed doors of lecture halls" (p. 224).

Montessori – early formation

Montessori's mother, while not an activist herself, seems likely to have been aware of issues surrounding the 'woman question' and as such, was a strong supporter of her daughter's education and later involvement in the feminist movement. Kramer (1988) records that Renilde Stoppani, was "unusually well educated for the time, a girl who devoured books in a town in which it was a matter of pride to be able to write one's name. She was also fiercely patriotic, devoted to the ideals of liberation and union for Italy" (p. 23). Renilde's uncle, Antonio Stoppani, was a well-regarded writer, poet, scholar (a geology professor at the University of Milan) and priest who, unlike most in the Catholic church of the time, "argued for a rapprochement between church and state under the new regime" (p.24). Renilde, living relatively close to the northern centre, with both academic and political interests, is likely to have been aware of the key players in the establishment of the women's movement in Milan.

We know little of Montessori's early life although two anecdotes are testament to her spirited nature. One, recorded in Kramer (1988), regards a comment she made about her teacher's bid to inspire her pupils with tales of famous women. Montessori's response was that it was not her wish to add to the cares of future students by adding yet another biography to the list. One wonders, however, if, in imbibing the tales of such as Belgiojoso and Mozzoni she found some inspiration for her coming life. Later, Montessori's granddaughter, Renilde Montessori, recounted a tale of a request by the adolescent Maria for a hatpin. Her mother, seeking the reason for this, was told that Maria and her only female companion at the boys' technical school were sick of being goaded through the keyhole whilst they were locked in a classroom during their lunchbreak and required a means of retaliation (personal communication, 2005).

Associazione Femminile

Montessori, having made bold choices for her secondary education, subsequently decided to undertake a medical degree. Amongst her professors were a small number who were sympathetic to the feminist cause including Jacob Moleschott, Angelo Celli and later, Clodomiro Bonfigli. Guido Bacelli and Giuseppe Sergi were also supportive of Montessori.

The prizes and awards she gained during her studies drew the attention of other women involved in Roman society. Towards the end of her degree, in March 1896, a new women's organisation was established in Rome, the *Associazione Femminile*, of which Montessori became vice-secretary. The group was made up of middle class and aristocratic women who had a focus on 'practical feminism' that would show that women were capable and just as worthy of the vote as men. An initial action was to send support to the International Union of Peace in Paris. The group then set about organising health lectures; collecting and making available reading material for female workers, and also amassing a large collection of newspapers and magazines relating to women's issues at their headquarters (Babini, 2000). It seems reasonable to assume from this that Montessori had access to the work of many feminists, including Mozzoni and Kuliscioff.⁷⁷

Soon after the completion of her degree, Montessori was chosen to represent women's groups from throughout Italy at the first international women's congress to be held in Berlin. The conference was organised as part of the Berlin Exposition held in 1896 (Offen, 2000). As a charming, and clearly intelligent young woman, Montessori captivated both the press and her audience within and without the Berlin conference. A reporter of a weekly newspaper, *The Women's Signal*, portrayed her as:

⁷⁷ She later wrote about the provision of similar reading rooms for families in the apartments surrounding her children's houses (Montessori, 1912).

...an only daughter, and looking at her round rosy cheeks, bright eyes, and general appearance of vigorous health and strength, one hardly knows whether to marvel most at her having become a *dotoressa* or at her having been so delicate as a child that her parents felt obliged to spoil her. Study, long and sustained, has, however, improved instead of impairing her health. (Hill, 1896, pp. 209-210)

Kramer (1988) suggests that they saw her as a refreshing change from the many earnest but blue stocking feminists who populated the gathering. Montessori's enthusiasm, Roman gesticulation and attractive appearance led to newspaper interviews and requests for copies of her speeches. It is reported that she laughed these off and showed the empty piece of paper that she held as a prop since she always spoke extempore. Her message, however, was radical and serious.

Prior to her first speech Montessori was asked to speak to a group of Socialist protestors who had put together a petition representing 3000 socialist women who objected to the bourgeois nature of the more than 1000 delegates at the congress. Kramer (1988) reported that she conveyed greetings from the women of Italy to all engaged in "the struggle for the rights of all women...and to the socialist women in particular" (p. 54). She gained an enthusiastic response and went on the next day to speak to the Congress. She gave accounts of the activities of groups including those from Rome, Trieste and Milan (the home of Mozzoni and Kuliscioff), noting, in particular, advances in the provision of women's education.

In a second address, Montessori echoed Kuliscioff when she spoke about the working conditions of "the six million Italian women who work in factories and on farms as long as eighteen hours a day for pay that is half what men earn for the same work and sometimes even less" (Montessori,

cited in Kramer, 1988, p. 55). Her subsequent proposal for equal pay for equal work was unanimously accepted.

Montessori's recognition of the social and economic conditions that called women to take their place as wage-earners was in direct opposition to the papal encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (On the condition of the working man) issued by Pope Leo XIII in 1891. The pope's letter defended the primacy of the male as breadwinner; challenged the socialists by claiming the "necessity of private property as the foundation of the family"; and pronounced that the place of women was in the home wherein she could "preserve her modesty;...promote the good bringing up of children and the well-being of the family" (cited in Offen, 2000, p. 197). However, it was not until she attended her second international conference in 1899 (and during her fund-raising tour earlier that year) that Montessori began to stir up significant public opposition and it was still later that the Catholic Church judged her of sufficient notoriety to attack her publically through the propaganda organ of the Jesuits, *La Civiltà Cattolica*. They objected to the freedom that Montessori claimed for children. Foschi records one critique from this source:

All social life is obedience, submission to one's duty, to the established, familiar, civic, religious and political authorities. To represent a man as free from any obligation means to create his own unhappiness; the most autonomous men and women are the most unhappy adult people. (Anonymous, 1911, p. 200, cited in Foschi, 2008, p. 250)

Catholic politics were not, of course, completely black and white. Ipsen (2006) notes that although the 1891 encyclical was a landmark in documenting the opposition of the church to both Socialists and Communists it was "at the same time setting out in general terms a program of worker protection" (p. 110). The document made the point that "women are not suited for certain occupations" but did not discount all work and

included a general statement that echoed the concern of those seeking law reform for children, noting that: “great care should be taken not to place [children] in workshops and factories until their bodies and minds are sufficiently developed” (ibid.). Ipsen also notes the existence of a radical Catholic group, *Cultura Sociale*, which gave full support to the legislation proposed by Kuliscioff and Turati.

Recognition of children born out of wedlock was another issue that occupied the women’s movement. Paola Schiff⁷⁸ reported that the Federation of Women’s Leagues had been occupied in the abolition of Article 189 of the Italian Civil Code which denied 76,000 children the right to know their fathers and with that all rights conferred by paternity (Schiff, 1897, p.282). The campaign regarding the rights of illegitimate and abandoned children was ongoing. Montessori made her own stand on this issue when she required the father of her child to change Mario’s birth certificate to admit his paternity in 1901 just prior to his marriage to another woman.

Practical feminism

Babini (2000) believes that the Roman Women’s Society, engaged in ‘practical feminism’ as a way of proving that women were equal to the task implied in the emancipation they sought. The female philanthropists with whom Montessori worked were deeply involved in issues relating to public

⁷⁸ Pauline Schiff is profiled in the 1899 ‘Portrait Album’ for the London Congress of Women, as “Perhaps the chief authority on the woman question in Italy. Is Professor in the University of Padua. Of socialist tendencies. Address Via Santaccio 19 Milan” (p.39) It is noted that not all participants were entered in the album due to the late arrival of ‘much information’. Montessori was one of the omissions, however, amongst those included were Margaret McMillan, Mrs Pember Reeves, Mrs Beatrice Webb, Mrs Grace Neil and Mrs McCosh Clarke from New Zealand; Countess Taverna from Italy; Hon. Mrs Bertrand Russell; Mr Cecil Reddie, headmaster of Abbotsholme; and Frau Lina Morgenstern from Berlin.

health, particularly with regard to women and children. The society set up clinics for children, sanatoria for women with tuberculosis, homes for abandoned children and ran health workshops to help raise awareness amongst working class women (Babini, 2000). As such they were part of what Ipsen (2006) terms “a broad save the children movement...gathered momentum through the 1890s and into the twentieth century” (p. 167).

Montessori's contribution was associated with her work at Sciamana's Psychiatric Clinic. She was charged with selecting patients from the Rome Asylum and when she discovered the plight of children housed within this facility, she took up their cause. It was natural that she would become a founding member of the National League for the Care and Education of Mentally Deficient Children which was established in 1899 by Montessori's former professor, Clodomiro Bonfigli [1838-1919]. At this point she had already begun to redirect her own education; auditing courses on pedagogy at the University of Rome to assist in reviewing educators of the “past two hundred years” (Kramer, 1988, p. 61). Perhaps she also drew on her memories of the speeches given at the first Congress she attended in Berlin, in which delegates explained and displayed the work of the German Kindergarten movement; heard an address from Dr Henriette Goldschmidt, of Leipzig, on the promotion of the Froebel system; and also from a Miss Park, on the Anderston Day Nurseries, established in Scotland in 1873 (Hill, 1896).

1897-1899 – New ideas for children: Conferences and publications

In 1897, Montessori spoke at a medical conference in Turin regarding her ideas on delinquency and the need for social and educational measures and in the summer of 1898, Kramer (1988) reports that Montessori wrote an article for a political review, *Roma*, entitled, “Social miseries and new scientific discoveries”. The focus of this sell-out paper was criminal anthropology in which Montessori declaimed that punishment was not the

answer to crime and that reform must begin with children rather than adults (Trabalzini, 2003). Montessori was responding to the steadily increasing occurrence of 'minor-age convictions' and consequent public concern. In 1876 these numbered 12,000; in 1890 – 30,000; in 1900 they reached 43,000; by 1906 - 70,000; and in 1907 – 77,000 (Quarta, 1908, cited in Ipsen, 2006). She was not alone in pressing for a pedagogically based solution and when Alessandro Doria took over as director general of prisons and reformatories in 1902, he instituted a set of reforms, including the introduction of qualifications for those working in youth facilities that would enable an 'educational manual labour method'. When Montessori visited a new reformatory in Rome, in 1904, she proclaimed: "In Italy we no longer have prisons for children...Let it be so in all the world: no more prisons for children" (1906, p. 301, cited in Ipsen, p. 144). Her pronouncement was a little premature but her enthusiasm was, no doubt, on account of seeing her ideas being put into practice.

In November of 1898 she was asked by Professor Bonfigli who was superintendent of the Rome Mental Asylum - Santa Maria della Pietà - to speak to a conference of 3000 teachers regarding the cause of education for the mentally retarded and socially delinquent. She chose to speak on the topic of 'Moral Pedagogy', pointing out the need to go beyond the physical gymnastics and medical treatment of the time to address deeper needs within the child. Her solution drew upon the ideas of Edouard Seguin, the French doctor who had successfully developed a philosophy of special education that focused on sensory learning. Up until this point, children with mental disabilities or special learning needs received little help. Those who could not keep up with the demands of schoolwork were often lost to a life of petty crime. Montessori records that she believed she "touched a chord already vibrant, because the idea, makings its way among the

physicians and elementary teachers, spread in a flash as presenting a question of lively interest to the school” (*MM*, 1912, p. 32).

Montessori was then called by the Minister of Education, Guido Baccelli, to deliver a series of lectures to teachers in Rome, on the education of ‘feeble minded’ children. This led to her appointment as co-director (with Giuseppe Montesano) of the Scuola Magistrale Ortofrenica – the State Orthophrenic School, wherein children were gathered from primary schools “who were considered hopelessly deficient” (*MM*, 1912, p.32). After a time, Montessori records that they added to this group “all of the idiot children from the insane asylums in Rome” (p. 32).

Montessori sought out methods to use with these children in London and in Paris and also asked a friend in Germany to assist. She spent time at the Bicêtre Asylum in Paris, observing teachers using Seguin’s materials but she felt they were missing the spirit of intent in his work and because they were simply using the didactic material in a mechanical way, were not achieving the results that Seguin had predicted. When Montessori began to implement the ideas of both Seguin and his mentor, Itard, she declared that her teachers must prepare themselves to be “attractive in both voice and manner, since it is their task to awaken souls which are frail and weary” leading them forth to “lay hold upon the beauty and strength of life” (*MM*, 1912, p. 37).

Montessori devoted the next two years of her life, working long hours to observe children; prepare materials and activities; implement her plans; observe and reflect on their effect; and then to modify her materials once again, based on her findings. She and the teachers she taught (64 in the first term), tried all manner of means to call to the children: including hot, cold

and steam baths, massage, aromatherapy, and stimulants such as coffee (Montessori, *AMM*, 1917). When her methods resulted in some of the eight year old children successfully passing State examinations, she began to question the expectations for normal children in elementary schools.

La donna nuova – the new woman

In February 1899, Montessori continued to keep up her public profile when she spoke at another women's conference, this time in Milan. Her speech was entitled 'The new woman' in which she addressed the question of the intelligence of women, a subject raised by Dr. Leonce Manouvrier, in 1889, at the congress on women's rights.⁷⁹ Countering Broca's argument that the path of evolution revealed a decreasing size in the brains of women (Broca, 1873, cited in Bell & Offen, 1983), Manouvrier "argued that women's brains were larger in proportion to their body mass than men's (Offen, 2000, p. 181). Montessori put the view "that in approaches to the issue of the inferiority of women, science is not opposed to women but rather to male scientists and challenged Lombroso and Sergi, who in trying to demonstrate the absurdity of the feminist's position ended up, themselves, becoming ridiculous" (Trabalzini, 2003, p. 48, author translation).

Montessori's next public task in 1899 involved a fund-raising tour to raise money for the 'League for Protection of Deficient Children'. She combined fund-raising with the quest for civil and political rights, giving lectures on both 'The New Woman' and on the need for education for the sixty five thousand Italians with special learning needs (the so-called, 'delinquents', 'deficients' and 'idiots'). She included in her discussion, a new conception of

⁷⁹ Montessori continued to use Manouvrier's calculations in her lectures to students (see *PA*, 1913, p. 257).

charity; advocating preventative measures such as improvements in nutrition and housing (Babini & Lama, 2000).

In the lecture on *La donna nuova*, Montessori presented her view of 'social maternity' in which woman would first of all have choice in motherhood, a view which represented a further challenge to the Catholic church; and secondly, to advocate for early education, suggesting that women would become the carers of not just their own children but also of other children who were in need of care. She quoted Michelet, Proudhon, Comte and Fourier, Lombroso, Venturi and Sergi critiquing their paternalism and quasi scientific explanations for the inferiority of women (Kramer, 1988).⁸⁰ It is reported that her speech was received with 'furious applause' and many women surrounded her, "one of them, Ada Negri, a famous young socialist poet and passionate feminist, was moved to tears and jumped to her feet, weeping and crying, "Brava! Brava!" (Kramer, 1988, p. 82). Anna Kuliscioff was also in attendance and wrote in a letter to Turati that although Montessori did not say anything particularly new she did speak "with a splendid voice" (Babini & Lama, 2000, p.72).

Later we see her advocacy of women reappearing in *The Montessori Method* (1912)...in which she predicts a society transformed to: "assume the functions of the woman...the social wage-earner" (pp. 66-67). Alongside the childcare offered in the Casa dei Bambini, her ideas included a house-infirmary in which the sick children of working women would receive care; a communal kitchen that would provide cooked meals for women to take to their families at the end of the day; and tenement houses which are turned into:

⁸⁰ Refer to Bell & Offen (1983, p. 360) for more information on the liberal challenge to the progress of women. The liberal's basic argument was that women's key function was reproduction, no more, no less.

Centres of education, of refinement and comfort...the new woman shall be liberated...she shall be, like man, an individual, a free human being, a social worker; and like man, she shall see blessing and repose within the house, the house which has been reformed and communised. (pp. 68-69)

Montessori, although demonstrating a clear understanding of Marxist theory and frequently employing socialist rhetoric, did not advocate for proletarian struggle against capitalism, instead choosing a more co-operative pathway. She was, to use La Vigna's term: a utopian socialist (1978).

Presenting issues of social justice at the 1899 International Congress of Women

For Montessori the feminist cause was never solely for the emancipation of women. She sought to remedy injustice wherever she saw it occur. Her next assignment followed her appointment by the Education Minister, Guido Baccelli, to represent Italy at the International Congress of Women, held in London during the month of June, 1899 (Babini, 2000). At this conference she gave papers on "Children working in mines and dangerous trades" (particularly, child labour in the mines of Sicily); the inadequate working conditions of female elementary schoolteachers; and also on the "Parliamentary Enfranchisement of Women". She subsequently published a two part report on the London Congress, entitled '*La questione femminile*' (the woman question), in a journal edited by her friend, Sibilla Aleramo (Trabalzini, 2003).

Montessori brought the plight of 36,000 schoolmistresses to the attention of the Congress, pointing out that female teachers were paid at considerably lower rates than their male counterparts (between 100 and 250 lire p.a. as opposed to 5-600 lire for men). She noted not only their physical isolation but also 'intellectual starvation' and recorded the work of the Society for

Women on their behalf. She explained that the society was planning a periodical as an 'intellectual stimulus' for the women and invited the collaboration of other countries in this endeavour.

In a second presentation, Montessori reported on the working conditions of children in the Sicilian sulphur mines.⁸¹ The employment of the so-called 'carusi' had first been signalled in 1876 when Leopold Franchetti [who was later to play a supportive role for Montessori] and a compatriot had carried out research into issues in Southern Italy. They highlighted the "hard nature of the work, the bleakness of the children's world, and the physical damage they suffered" (Franchetti & Sonnino, 1877, 472-89 cited in Ipsen, 2006, p. 96). These children became the subject of government investigation along with other young child workers in areas such as textile factories, agricultural work, glass and brick works, and other mining operations. The legislation passed in 1886, was, however, relatively ineffectual, with the result that public concern and political lobbying continued throughout the remaining years of the century.

American, Booker T. Washington, visited southern Italy in 1910, following the introduction of child labour laws in both 1902 and 1907, and gives a graphic account of the former plight of the 'carusi', who carried the sulphur ore from the depths of the mine some two to four hundred feet up to the surface. At the time of Montessori's speech, Washington records that the number of children under fifteen had grown from 2,419 in 1880 to 7,032 in 1898 "of which 5,722 were employed inside the mines" (Washington & Park, 1984, p. 212). Each miner had at least one boy and sometimes two or three to assist him. The boys were virtual slaves and were handed over by

⁸¹ An English journalist, Jessie White Mario, who was closely associated with Garibaldi's campaign; investigated working conditions in the sulphur mines and issued an extensive report in 1894 entitled *Le Miniere di Zolfo in Sicilia*. (Ipsen, 2006)

large families at the age of six or seven (some as young as five), in return for loans that were never likely to be repaid. In her speech, Montessori described their conditions as heartrending:

The long hours, cramped positions, continual climbing up and down steps, the heavy weights they have to carry, the want of proper light and air; and the wretched pay all tend to crush all joy and healthfulness out of their young lives. (1899, pp. 81-82)

Montessori made an appeal to her Congress audience, to lend their support and experience to the campaign to introduce legislation to prevent the employment of children under the age of fifteen. A further four years passed, however, before this law was enacted (Catarsi, 1995; Ipsen, 2006; Kramer, 1988).

Philosophy Student

In 1901, when Montessori made the decision to move on from the Orthophrenic School, her father was 71 and her mother 63, and Montessori was unmarried. She required a fulltime position to support herself and her parents and it was clear that this was not possible in the field of medicine. She gained some work at the *Magistrale Femminile* but, realising that the low academic standing of the training college would not help in her deep desire to progress her discoveries, she explains that: "...wishing to undertake the study of normal pedagogy and of the principles upon which it is based, I registered as student of philosophy at the University" (*MM*, 1912, p. 33).

Here she came into contact with a celebrated Marxist philosopher, Antonio Labriola. Labriola's key message to educators was "to put knowledge at the service of the proletariat" (Labriola, 1966 cited in Partington, 1993, p. 97)

His influence is evident in the following passage from *The Montessori Method*:

...the tendency will be to change the tenement houses, which have been places of vice and peril, into centres of education, of refinement, of comfort. This will be helped if, besides the schools for children, there may grow up also clubs and reading rooms for the inhabitants, especially for the men...where the tenants may find newspapers and books, and where they may hear simple and helpful lectures” (1912, p. 68).

This seemingly patronising comment must be understood in the context of low but steadily improving literacy rates.

It is likely that it was in the philosophy department that Montessori first came into contact with the work of contemporary German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche [1844-1900]. Nietzsche a prolific but tortured writer, introduced the idea ‘God is dead’ in the philosophical novel: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, first published in 1909. The central character, Zarathustra, comes to earth to present the idea and teachings of the ‘overman’ (Übermensch - also known as ‘superman’) who, in turn, represents the idea of a journey towards self-mastery.⁸² Montessori must have read this book soon after publication as she wrote the Italian version of her book in the same year. Continuing on the following page, she utilises Nietzsche’s idea to

⁸² Montessori, later introduced her own idea of humankind’s creation of ‘supra natura’ which was linked to Stoppani’s recognition of the Anthropocene era. She sought to convey to children, a sense of the great responsibility they have in recognising and advancing this new world whilst honouring the foundation of its creation, in the natural world (see *To Educate the Human Potential and Education for a New World*).

Babini and Lama (2000) make reference to her speech to the Women’s Congress in 1908 in which she talks about the construction of a new man [human being] – a ‘superman’ with reference to Nietzsche; “suggesting a new understanding of what in religion is called eternal life – but can now be understood as ‘our posterity...Rather than hope for a future after death, eternal life must be understood as belief in ‘posterity’ [future generations] and the building of a better man” (p241, author translation).

expound on the:

New woman....a free human being...she shall wish a love free from every form of servile labour. The goal of human love is not the egotistical end of assuring its own satisfaction – it is the sublime goal of multiplying the forces of the free spirit...this ideal love is made incarnate by Frederick Nietzsche, in the woman of Zarathustra. (*MM*, 1912, p. 69)

Montessori did not just speak with the rhetoric of the utopian socialist; she knew the misery of the people from firsthand experience. She recognises that the “task of the social crusader” must take into account the reality of ‘life’ for children in the overcrowded circumstance of Italian cities, what she terms the “isolation of the masses of the poor” (p. 53):

In speaking of the children born in these places, even the conventional expressions must be changed, for they do not “first see the light of day”; they come into a world of gloom. They grow among the poisonous shadows which envelope over-crowded humanity. These children cannot be other than filthy in body, since the water supply in an apartment originally intended to be occupied by three or four persons, when distributed among twenty or thirty is scarcely enough for drinking purposes. (p. 52)

The new generation goes forward to meet the new era, the time when misery shall no longer be deplored but destroyed. They go to meet the time when the dark dens of vice and wretchedness shall have become things of the past, and when no trace of them shall be found among the living. (p. 48)

Radice (1920) records that she studied philosophy for four years and Montessori makes subsequent reference to philosophers throughout her books such as Bergson (*AM*, 1949), James (*MM*, 1912, *AMM*, 1917), Pascal (*AM*, 1949), as well as the Socratic philosophers and the more recent theories of Marx and Engels. Her interest in philosophy was ongoing and in the book outlining curriculum for 6-12 year old children, *To Educate the*

Human Potential, she adds a chapter including many of the great philosophers from Eastern traditions, including the Buddha, Lao Tze, Sri Krishna, Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya and the Mogul Emperor, Akbar (Montessori, 1948/1989).

Anti clerical ideas, Freemasonry and Theosophy

Babini (2000) suggests that Montessori's links with those who were involved in what was known as social medicine and those connected to the feminist movement in the 1890s and 1900s provided the starting point for her new pedagogy. It is her view that Montessori became "a militant supporter of social medicine and women's emancipation. Her work was informed by a profound secularism and freemasonry was to prove a significant factor in the cultural diffusion of her method" (p. 46). Her association with figures of liberal and socialist persuasion, her writing and political action, contribute to "the strong and long term opposition she faced in Italy from both Catholic and idealist culture" (ibid).

Foschi (2008) explains that although Montessori gained her secular outlook from her father, the link to the Masons was primarily through her colleagues: the Head of the Medical School, Guido Baccelli, was professor of clinical medicine, Member of the Chamber of Deputies (the Italian parliament) and was later responsible for reform of the Italian education system (Kramer, 1988); Desire-Magloire Bourneville (1840-1909) whom she met in Paris when she was investigating new approaches to working with children with mental disabilities; her professors: Jacob Moleschott and Giuseppe Sergi; and later when she started the Children's Houses; she gained the particular assistance of the Mayor of Rome, Ernesto Nathan who

was the Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Italy.⁸³ Foschi suggests that Montessori gained a “network of support that encompassed several scholars who drew their inspiration from the liberal progressivism of was later linked with the Theosophists. Stanton (1895) notes Maria Deraismes was president of the Paris anti-clerical congress of 1881 and one of the few women who breached the masculine bounds of Freemasonry. She was the founder of the chapter which became known as Co-Masonry, accepting both men and women as members. Francesca Arundale was the first English woman to join and she introduced Annie Besant into the lodge and in 1902, the first Co-Masonic lodge was opened in London. This lodge became linked to the Theosophical society which was conceived by a Ukrainian, Madame Blavatsky in 1895, who claimed a mystic connection with Tibetan ‘Masters’. Despite its occult origins, it attracted into its ranks, both feminists in search of a spiritual home and a number of progressive teachers (Dixon, 2001). Under the later leadership of Englishwoman, Annie Besant, radical feminist and activist in battles for both men and women workers,⁸⁴ the primary appeal of the society was its non-discriminatory nature and the encouragement given to study comparative religions, philosophy and science.

Montessori, met Annie Besant in 1908 and commented that she felt very honoured that Besant knew of her work. Besant and later, the editor of the society’s journal: *New Era*, Beatrice Ensor, supported the Montessori approach to education and some of their experimental schools (for example,

⁸³ Nathan followed an illustrious tradition as former Grand Masters were Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi.

⁸⁴ Besant was an advocate for birth control and lost custody of both her children as a consequence. She was a Fabian socialist and among her many actions, instigated the Match-girls strike of 1888 and the Bloody Sunday riot of unemployed workers in 1887. Dixon (2001) maintains that once she was elected President of the Theosophical Society she ‘withdrew from active occult and psychic investigation in order to devote her energies to political and other activities’ (p. 85).

St Christophers, Harpenden, and the Brackenhill Theosophical Home – run by suffragists, Charlotte Despard and Kate Harvey) in England, adopted Montessori practices.

Maccheroni (1947), however, records that Montessori began to make an annual retreat with the Catholic sisters at Bologna after the birth of her son Mario in 1898, so although Montessori maintained tolerance for all religions and retained links with the society throughout her life,⁸⁵ membership of the Theosophical Society seems unlikely. She did, however, hold radical attitudes towards social action and this, at times, brought her into conflict with the traditionalism of the Catholic Church.

Montessori – slavery, women, and abandoned children

On one level, Montessori, a woman who had discreet experience of the societal condemnation of unmarried mothers, kept silent about her personal situation, but when it came to advocacy on behalf of other women, she maintained a keen public profile. The correspondence unearthed by Foschi (2008) reveals that the Jesuits took issue with the freedom accorded to the Montessori children and perhaps to writing such as this record of one of her lectures to her anthropology students:

Sexual immorality which is the stigma of the barbarity of our times, entails the most ignominious form of slavery, the slavery of women though prostitution. And emanating from this form of barbarity, the slavery has expanded and spread to all women, more or less oppressive, more or less conscious. The wife is a slave, for she has married in ignorance and has neither the knowledge nor the power to avoid being made the instrument for the birth of weakly, diseased

⁸⁵ Montessori went to India in 1939 as a result of an invitation from George Arundale (nephew of Francesca Arundale). Arundale was President of the Theosophical Society and lived in Adyar with his wife, Rukmini Devi.

or degenerate children...We are all silently engaged in an enormous crime against the species and against humanity; and like accomplices we have made a tacit agreement not to speak of it. Indeed, the mysterious silence regarding sexual life is absolute...this sort of terror goes by the name of shame and modesty...It would seem that a race so modest as to blush at the mere mention of sexual life ought to be eminently chaste, and far removed from the age of founding asylums and houses of ill fame; the age in which infanticide exists as proof of absolute impunity in regard to sexual crimes. (*PA*, 1913, pp. 473-4)

In this passage we see a part of Montessori that is not usually highlighted but one that drew on her own experience as she advocated for both women and children affected by the social and political reality of the time. This was a singular move since the “concept of maternity as a choice was virtually absent from Italian political debates and from feminism; so much so that it was expressed by a minority even within the anarchist party, which was the only party to address the question” (Babini, 2000, p. 56). Montessori, veils her advocacy in terms of the common rhetoric of the time⁸⁶ which was concerned with the ‘degeneration’ of the Italian race and ways to ‘regenerate’ it as part of the eugenics movement⁸⁷. Although she does not identify her personal interest, the fact that she had refused to become a

⁸⁶ Allen (2006) notes that prior to 1914, the eugenics movement: “found most of its support among left-wing and progressive groups, among which feminists were prominent” (p. 108). For example, “in Britain, eugenic theories found support in all feminist circles, from the liberal National Union of Woman Suffrage Societies (N.U.W.S.S.) to the more radical Women’s Freedom League and Women’s Social and Political Union. Across the spectrum, British feminists argued that the empowerment of women and of mothers was the most important way of building population quality, and with it the strength and vitality of the nation and the “race” (a term that referred in this context more to nationality than to skin color) (ibid). Allen points out that many feminists were involved in work to improve the social conditions of poor families and notes also how they “called attention to the injustice suffered by the children of unmarried mothers-children whose high mortality rate they attributed to legal discrimination, economic disadvantage, and social marginalization” (p. 109).

⁸⁷ Montessori discussed the eugenics movement when she was in America. She points out that “although eugenics may seem like the salvation of humanity, I think it is a great delusion to think so....Study the condition in order to understand this humanity, individually and personally” (*CL* 1915, 1997, pp. 106-107). Amongst other points she discusses the impact of socio-economic conditions on children and also notes that her educational approach easily accommodates individual differences because of its use of multi age grouping.

‘slave-wife’ makes the discussion on sexuality which she delivered to her anthropology students at Rome University, and later, included in the final chapter in *Pedagogical Anthropology*, doubly intriguing for its time and place. We can, however, read in her words, a particular challenge to the opposite sex (and to her former partner, Giuseppe Montesano, in particular) when her lecture continues: “instead of betraying them and shattering their lives by seduction and the desertion of their offspring, the man of the future will choose to *become chaste*” (*PA*, 1913, p. 475).

It is interesting that Babini and Lama (2000) record that she kept silent on the matter of the campaign on behalf of illegitimate children when it was raised at the 1908 Italian Congress of Women. They point out that while it was likely to be too close to her own experience, she also left others to explain the technicalities of the law in which she did not have expertise. She did, however, chair the session on ‘Hygiene and Anthropology’, and once again focused her contribution on ‘Moral Sexual Education’.

This stirred up the expected controversy from the Jesuits. She was labelled a *banditrice* – an outlaw ...with a “perverse fanaticism” characteristic of a certain “female mind” (Babini & Lama, 2000, p. 242). However, as Babini and Lama (2000) point out, she approached the question of sex education strategically, ‘with her usual intellectual courage’ ‘playing down the novelty of the subject’ by explaining the experiences already underway in Europe and recalling her own introduction of the subject of ‘hygiene’ (in which she had ensured the female student teachers had a comprehensive introduction to human biology) in educational institutes.

Offen (2000) refers to a more public campaign run by Christabel Pankhurst in England, aimed at placing responsibility for venereal disease squarely in the male camp, (at a similar time to Montessori’s comment) with the slogan:

“Votes for Women and Chastity for Men.” She pointed out, “If men were conscious of their paternal duty prostitution would be at an end.” (p. 247).⁸⁸

A similar campaign was run in many parts of the United States of America. Moran (1996) has researched the early history of the social hygiene movement in Chicago. Once again the solution to the results of male vice; prostitution and venereal disease; was “to prescribe the same standard of morality for man as for woman...Men must be as chaste as women” (p 494). The National Education Association, the body that brought Montessori to the United States in 1915, began to consider the role of sex education in schools in the early part of the 20th century. In 1913, the first female superintendent of the Chicago school system, Ella Flagg Young, who had “pioneered field trips, teachers’ councils, vocational education, and Montessori instruction for young pupils” instituted a series of three lectures to be given by physicians at “each of Chicago’s twenty-one high schools” as a way of “safeguarding the health and morals of Chicago’s young from the temptations of the city” (Moran, p. 503). Young’s pioneering measure aroused significant opposition from Catholic and other groups and it would be another 50 years before her experiment was repeated.

A turn from ‘new woman’ to ‘new child’

In 1906, Montessori, once again, became involved in political action for women when a petition seeking the vote for women was circulating throughout Italy and she was called upon to use her influence to draw attention to the cause. When this campaign failed, Babini (2000) suggests that she then turned her “undiminished utopian spirit...towards pedagogy

⁸⁸ Summers (2006), reminds us that Josephine Butler had been campaigning on the cause of ‘contagious [venereal] diseases’ for a generation before Pankhurst took up the cause. She notes that “Italy was the home of Butler’s sister, Harriet Meurifoffre, and of other English women who had married ‘Risorgimento families’ such as Jessie White Mario, Georgina Crawford Saffi and Emily Ashurst Venturi. These helped her to enlist Italian feminists such as Gualberta Beccari, Sarah Nathan [wife of Ernesto Nathan, noted above] and Anna Maria Mozzoni in the abolitionist cause” (p. 219).

as a source of a more radical transformation of society” (p.63) and it is here that we find her acceptance of the San Lorenzo project and the beginning of the next phase of her life’s work.

Montessori did not abandon political action entirely, and Foschi (2008) notes that Montessori was “one of the founders of the female association, *Pensiero e Azione* [Thought and Action], an organization principally aimed at promoting women’s voting rights. Strongly committed to this aim, Montessori endorsed the society’s programs and proclamations and signed its posters, which were then displayed on the streets of Rome. One of the most significant steps taken by the association was to give support to Francisco Ferrer (1859-1909), a freemason and an anarchist, who, in 1906, had been arrested for the first time for the organization of a pedagogical movement – *Escuela Moderna*. This movement had spread in Europe and in the United States with a message promoting secular and libertarian education so when the persecution of the conservative Spanish government led to Ferrer’s execution in 1909 there were protests from libertarians all around the world. Babini (2000) also notes:

In the meantime, the Roman committee published a *Petizione delle donne italiane al Parlamento* signed by about thirty women who were well known professionally or because they were aristocrats, including Montessori, ‘doctor in medicine and surgery’. The organizer, [was] Anna Maria Mozzoni. (p. 67)

When the petition failed, Babini records that Montessori wrote a disconsolate article in *La Vita*, entitled, *Femminismo* [Feminism], in which she expressed her sadness and regret over the failure of the feminist cause.

When Montessori attended the 1908 Women’s conference in Rome, she abstained from supporting further action on suffrage but by then her life had taken a new turn. Following the rejection of the petition for the vote, Mario Montessori (1965) tells us that Montessori decided that change would

have to come through other means. When the engineer, socialist and philanthropist, Eduardo Talamo from the Roman Real Estate Institute (L'Istituto Romani dei Beni Stabili), approached her for assistance with a project that involved small children who were under school age, it seems she had something of a premonition that this might be the avenue she had been seeking. Most teachers have heard of the 1907 experiment at San Lorenzo in Rome; the so-called *Casa dei Bambini* or Children's House. It was part of a much larger, social experiment. Montessori, who was well known for her educational, social and political work, seemed the ideal candidate to assist with the project.

The Casa dei Bambini

The San Lorenzo district was a poor area, a suburb that was situated just outside the city walls. From 1884 to 1888, in order to aid construction of housing, developers were given building subsidies measured by the square metre. This policy was short-lived and when government officials realised the subsidy was being exploited, they stopped the practice and the settlement thus became one for poor people with many of the apartments, sublet.

The Institute had set itself the task of renovating some of the buildings in the district – because “given its miserable conditions, it would, more than any other area – demonstrate in the financial and moral results achievable, the safest index of the goodness of the new methods to be adopted” (Talamo, 1910, cited in Dompe, Tabasso & Trabalzini, 2006, p.44). By 1910 the Institute had transformed 12 buildings and had taken on the care of 196 pre-school children in four children's houses. It was a restoration project that aimed to create a comfortable, spacious, modern building to support more intimate family relations. There were 73 apartments; of one to three

rooms plus kitchens and some bathrooms per floor. Rent was set at a maximum of 11 lira per room and 5 lira for kitchens.

Talamo hoped that the project would support the new residents to become 'fully fledged citizens'. Various incentives were introduced to encourage the tenants to demonstrate care and pride in their new apartments. When the new tenants were installed, the pre-school children were left to their own devices as their parents took on the task of obtaining employment on a day to day basis. The children found amusement in whatever they could find, drawing on the walls and causing other damage to the buildings. Talamo decided that if his vision of a bold new public housing programme was to continue, the children would need to be contained. A room was set aside, a caregiver employed and Dr Montessori, as a prominent advocate of women and children, was approached to direct the programme. Since she had been prevented from pursuing her ideas for education with normal children in the elementary schools, Montessori decided to take on the project as an experiment in the development of 'scientific pedagogy'. She recognised that she had been called to the task; primarily in her medical capacity, as many of the children were suffering from malnutrition, rickets and other diseases of poverty. When she asked if she might introduce an educational note to the venture, Talamo agreed that she could, if she felt "so inclined" (Montessori, 1933, 1961, p.8). Montessori subsequently went ahead with her bid to develop a 'scientific pedagogy' but in her book *The Montessori Method* (1912), which records and explains the development of the children's houses; we can hear an echo of the themes that Montessori had previously worked through: social medicine; the emancipation of women and social maternity; and indeed, the reconstruction of society itself.

Initially, she set up the environment to fit her belief that children need the opportunity to move in order to learn. She installed small tables and chairs

and provided mats for those children who wished to work on the floor. She prevailed upon wealthy friends to provide toys and books; introduced some of the sensory material that she had used at the Orthophrenic School; and gave instructions for the daily care of the children with particular emphasis on nutrition and hygiene.⁸⁹ A reading of this advice, today, sounds overbearing, but in an era of poverty and limited literacy, it was accepted as a matter of guidance in new ideas. A key element in the programme was that the children should be encouraged to do as much for themselves as possible.

The results seemed astonishing to any who came in contact with the children at the Casa; they rejected the toys and books and instead found the sensory material filled their desire for stimulation by repeating their explorations and problem solving over and over; and when they were shown practical skills related to self-care they became independent yet socially aware and considerate of their fellows. Adults were continually surprised by the initiatives taken by the three, four, five and six year olds who were unafraid of their elders but confident and keen to share their learning with them.

Freedom and literacy

Montessori was not sure how the children, who were aged from three to seven, would react to the freedom she advocated. She spent time in observation; offering both toys and the sensory based materials that she had used in the Orthophrenic School. She was surprised when they showed their preference for the latter and so she sought to show the children how to play

⁸⁹ Similar advice was dispensed by Margaret McMillan as part of her nursery school project in England and we find an example closer to home in the *Home Cookery Book*, issued by The New Zealand Women's Institutes in 1941 in which Dr Elizabeth Gunn, Director of School Hygiene, outlines the foods to be consumed daily for children from two to seven years of age.

with the toys. Perhaps the dolls' house and train set provided by her wealthy friends had no meaning for these children but no matter what the reason, they continued to turn towards the sensory materials and the practical activities that enabled them to take care of themselves, their friends and their 'house' and garden.

Later in the year, when the children requested the opportunity to learn to read and write, Montessori hesitated, believing that the children were too young, and it was not until their mothers petitioned her, noting the success she had had so far, that she decided to provide the means for the children to learn the alphabet. She determined that she would schedule this intervention to begin at the same time as the children in elementary schools were beginning to learn their letters, that is, after the summer holiday. The sandpaper letters, a multi-sensory material that she devised hurriedly when her original order (for wooden letters with a metal groove enabling the children to trace the shape of the letter) did not arrive, proved to be just the innovation required. Using these letters, the children quickly learnt the Italian alphabet and shortly after, when one child discovered that he could synthesise the letters into words, the rest followed in a flurry of writing that echoed the exuberance of their original mark making on the walls and floors.

Montessori recounts that the children:

With a species of frenzied joy, continued to write everywhere...In these first days, we walked upon a carpet of written signs. Daily accounts showed us that the same thing was going on at home, and some of the mothers, in order to save their pavements, and even the crust of their loaves upon which they found words written, made their children presents of paper and pencil. One of these children brought to me one day a little notebook entirely filled with writing, and the mother told me that the child had written all day long and all evening, and had gone to sleep in his bed with the paper and pencil in his hand. (Montessori, 1912, p. 289)

Some months later, reading followed in a similarly organic fashion when one of the children appeared with a scrap of paper and announced that it contained a story.⁹⁰

A new paradigm for pedagogy

When Montessori later reflected on her work as a continuation of the forty years work of Seguin and Itard and added ten years of her own, she claimed that this successive work:

Show[s] in a greater or less degree the first steps along the path of psychiatry...[the children's houses] have, in fact, solved so many of the social and pedagogic problems in ways which have seemed to be Utopian, that they are a part of that modern transformation of the home [an answer to] the social question that....deals with the intimate or home life of the people. (*AM*, 1949/1988, p. 50)

At the stage of her work with Talamo, Montessori was still a feminist but as she became more involved with the young children in the children's houses, her focus turned from the new woman towards gaining freedom for the new child.

Discontinuity leads to expansion

Montessori was, by this time, a confident, middle aged woman. She had a strong network of female associates whom she drew into the project,

⁹⁰ The difference between Italian which has a transparent or shallow orthography i.e. consistent or reliable mapping between phonemes (sounds of the language) and graphemes (the letter or letters used to write the phoneme) and English which has what is known as a deep or opaque orthography (where the mapping of phonemes to letters is much less reliable) is shown in the rate of learning to read. Children in Italy generally master reading in the first year of school whereas English speaking children are likely to be twice as slow in learning and are more likely to experience reading difficulties (Seymour, Aro, & Erskine, 2003). Subsequent use of the Montessori system in English speaking countries required additional materials to address the exigencies of the language (Dwyer, 2004; Lawrence, 1998).

including several upper class and royal women. She enjoyed the patronage of Queen Margherita who enjoyed coming to visit. Eduardo Talamo, perhaps understandably, became tetchy and pointed out that the publicity Montessori was drawing to her Casa dei Bambini, detracted from the wider aims of his community building work. He wrote her a polite but firm letter, explaining his position. Montessori must have reacted angrily and the result was her departure/dismissal from Talamo's employ.

She was able to continue her work, however, in the casa that had been opened at Via Giusti by the Franciscan sisters and also with another that she had sent her friend, Anna Maccheroni, to open at the *La Società Umanitaria* (a Jewish, socialist project), in Milan.

Challenging freedom – the role of the Catholic Church

Alongside her new focus on young children came a development in Montessori's relationship with the Catholic Church which Kramer (1988) briefly alludes to: a plan to found a religious order "dedicated to the service of the child" (p. 149). She records, however, that it did not come to pass. Recently, Renato Foschi (2008) has written about a search carried out into the archives of the Franciscan order and remarks that the "end of Montessori's collaboration with the IBRS [the Istituto Romani Beni Stabili – The Roman Real Estate Institute] marked the beginning of a new stage in her life and career" (p. 247).

In 1908, a large earthquake in Sicily and Calabria resulted in the death of 80,000 people (Ipsen, 2006) and left many children without families to care for them. The Franciscan sisters of the Convent at Via Giusti in Rome, took in more than 100 of these orphans and used the Montessori method to care for 50 of the youngest children. As Montessori had been locked out of the Children's Houses at the Talamo project, this became the laboratory school

where she continued to experiment and reflect upon the learning of the children.

Montessori became close to the Mother Superior at the convent; and together with a small number of her closest associates, took instruction from her and developed the prototype of a set of rules for a religious community. Montessori, however, seemed to be unaware of the behind the scenes surveillance of the Jesuit and Franciscan religious societies. One of the letters in a dossier that was assembled on the group by the provincial vicar for the Franciscan order, states:

Dear Mother Superior, last time I forgot to tell you that Montessori...at her residence...is having a chapel built with a secret entrance so that a priest can go there to celebrate mass; this presence has to remain a secret, even from the servants. Montessori's father opposes religion, her mother has become a religious person only after her daughter has done. (Foschi, 2008, p.249)

Concern was soon raised with regard to the freedom that was given to the children and when one of her Catholic supporters was moved to investigate her writing further, he wrote:

I have been persuaded that [her] works, and in particular the pedagogical anthropology, are scientifically inadequate and, moreover, harmful to the people of faith...if Miss Montessori will not acknowledge spontaneously her mistakes - I will have to talk about it, in order to prevent them from doing harm. (Gemelli, 1912, cited in Foschi, 2008, p.249)

The criticism continued and in 1915, the Children's House at Via Giusti was closed. Montessori wrote:

Reverend Mother...when we knew about the closing of the children's House in Giusti Street, we felt mortally wounded! It was our place of support and the only public sign of public love and open approval of the Church...Dear Mother, I do not understand what happened-but still allow me to remember all the good I get from You! (Montessori, 1915 cited in Foschi, p. 250)

Binda Goldsbrough⁹¹ (Chisnall, 2002) noted that Montessori had, at one time, spoken of how she had been hurt by the church, and until Foschi's investigation, it was assumed that this was to do with the birth of her son. Perhaps it was more to do with the rejection she felt, due to the Franciscan experience although Maccheroni (see below) sheds further light on this part of her life. Despite this, she continued her journey within the Catholic Church.⁹² Her son believed that the encounter with the children at the first Casa was the cause of her enduring faith (Mario Montessori, 1984, cited in Miller, 2002). In 1918, when she was nearly fifty, she received the blessing of Pope Benedict XV and in addition to her secular work she went on to develop ideas that would enable children to experience Christianity in the same child-centred way that her schools operated (Cavalletti, 1979/1992; Montessori, 1929).

Anna Maccheroni [1876-1965], who was one of Montessori's closest friends, and part of the group who made the commitment to the child; records a remembrance of this period (written on 6 January, 1957, the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Casa dei Bambini) that is worth

⁹¹ Binda Goldsbrough [1912-2008] was an Englishwoman who was associated with the Montessori movement from birth when her mother was given a copy of the newly published *Montessori Method*. She subsequently trained as a Montessori teacher and came to know the Montessori family when she acted as demonstrator at two of Montessori's International courses in London. She became the mentor for the Montessori revival in New Zealand in the 1970s and served as the first President of the Montessori Association of New Zealand when it was formed in 1982.

⁹² Miller (2002), however, suggests that her faith was not sectarian but 'touched upon core religious teachings at the root of nearly all world traditions...For her the practice of Catholicism was an opening to a direct experience of divine presence, as it was for Meister Eckhart, Hildegard of Bingen, or her fellow Italian, St Francis of Assisi' (p. 4).

repeating in detail as it helps to draw together the rationale for the next stage of her life. Maccheroni first encountered Montessori as a university student and explained that she was drawn to her because “I sensed in her the secret of a mission...she did not speak like other lecturers: one felt that she was not so much lecturing as **giving**” (1958, p. 8). Maccheroni goes on to say, “With many others I felt that perhaps there was a secret in her life, a painful secret [and although she resisted the temptation to investigate]...Yet one could feel that in her soul there was a drama” When she spoke to a priest regarding her ‘doubts’ she records that he replied: “If this were so, she has, for the love of one child, done good to all the children of the world” (p. 9). Later, when Mario ‘came home’ Maccheroni was one of those entrusted with information on his background. She goes on to recall the subsequent events of the San Lorenzo project and the public response to it:

So, it happened that while the world, unconscious of the inner drama of her soul, was moved and touched by the tale of those first children of the Quartiere of S. Lorenzo; while her first book with the title of “Scientific Pedagogy” was printed in 1909, and immediately translated into about 12 languages, Maria Montessori endeavoured to create an enclosed Religious Order. But she had for spiritual directors and advisers wise people who made her see where the will of God lay. “go, they told her, “go into the world and take your message, take the Good news without fettering yourself with self imposed restrictions”. In Bologna, the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart, at whose Convent she went to do her spiritual exercises, called her “Ancilla Mundi”, the Servant of the World, dedicated to the protection of the little ones. (p. 9).

As Foschi (2008) reiterates this coincided with the time when Montessori became the subject of intense international interest. In response, Montessori began to run courses for teachers and to travel the world to explain her ideas. Teachers quickly took up the ideas of freedom for children and it seems that her message struck a particular chord with feminists and activists around the world.

The final section of this chapter summarises some of the early projects that exemplify the social response to Montessori's message including progressive teachers in London; a doctor in Ireland; socialists in Vienna and suffragists in the East End of London. These serve as a prelude to Chapter 6 in which contemporary teachers in New Zealand, outline their response to the Montessori message.

Sylvia Pankhurst – some parallels with Maria Montessori

The link between the Montessori movement and the English suffrage militants, initially led by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel, is especially strong. Emmeline Pankhurst, set up a Montessori school/home in Campden Hill for illegitimate children arising from the war.

It is, however, daughter, Sylvia Pankhurst who has the most interesting history. Sylvia eventually broke with the family because of her desire to ground the suffrage struggle with working class women and because of disaffection with the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) during their increasingly radical attacks in the campaign, 'Burn to Vote'. During the First World War, Sylvia established an interesting association with the Montessori movement. When her mother and elder sister, Christabel forced Sylvia to cut links with their group in 1913, she focused her efforts on a group which was named the East London Federation of Suffragettes, and championed collective workers' action.

Sylvia Pankhurst's life has some parallels with that of Maria Montessori and she was, perhaps, the young woman Montessori might have been had she been born in a different place and time. Pankhurst trained as an artist and won a scholarship to study abroad, choosing to go to Italy; she was a socialist and was drawn to political action for women's suffrage early on but

stepped into the realm of early education through a desire for practical action on behalf of working people; she recognised their practical needs and was able to put into action Montessori's dream of establishing communal kitchens and low-cost restaurants selling wholesome food for workers; she ran health clinics and enlisted the voluntary services of doctors and nurses; she was a meticulous social science researcher publishing a book-length report in 1930 called *Save the Mothers*, aimed at highlighting measures to reduce the mortality statistics of both mothers in child birth and babies in early infancy; she had an illegitimate son as a 47 year old – although, unlike Montessori, she acknowledged him publically and lived openly with both her partner and her child [this caused a scandal and was said to have hastened her mother's death]; she was a pacifist during the First World War although she campaigned actively against Fascism during the Second World War; she met and associated with famous people of the day such as Keir Hardie, Annie Besant, Lenin, and Haile Selassie. She was, however, much more radical than Montessori and spent time in prison for her causes both for the women's movement and because of her political beliefs (she was tried for sedition and sentenced to a six month term of imprisonment in 1920).

During the First World War, in addition to campaigning for women's suffrage, the East London Federation set up a toy factory, a chain of low cost restaurants, a free clinic and a nursery for the children of the workers at the factory. Taylor (1993) records that women were able to obtain fulltime care for their children for threepence a day, including food and as the women's wages were set at 5d an hour (above the standard rate, at Pankhurst's insistence), this was a very attractive option and "the crèche was soon full to capacity, and applicants had to be turned away" (p. 17). It became obvious that larger premises were necessary and in April 1915, Pankhurst found a disused pub, *The Gunmaker's Arms*, at 438 Old Ford

Road, in Poplar, which she obtained for their work. She and her supporters re-established the day nursery in the sun-filled upstairs rooms and named the facility, *The Mother's Arms*. It was not completely idyllic, however, and in *The Home Front* (1932), her memoir of the period, Pankhurst noted her concern for the project:

I was worried about the toddlers...they grew chubby and rosy – acquired cleanly habits, voluntary workers came to pet and play with them...toys poured in...but as soon as they came, they were broken and thrown away. [She relates the particular destruction of a rocking horse, donated by Lady Sybil Smith, who worked four days a week at the nursery cf Taylor, 1993)]...To me this meant more than the wrecking of a costly toy. It impressed on me that the toddlers had learnt only one sort of game; to pound and break, to tear and destroy. That must be altered. (p. 425)

Pankhurst chanced upon a brief newspaper article relating to a Miss Muriel Matters⁹³ who had just returned from Barcelona where she had completed a course under Dr Maria Montessori. She tracked her down:

She responded with zealous understanding. She had herself experienced the same kind of need when she helped Larkin and Connolly in the Dublin lock-out in 1912. She had tried to procure a Montessori teacher then, and having discovered such teachers unobtainable, she had gone to Barcelona to fit herself to supply the lack. Of course, I would have it that she must come to the Mothers Arms to initiate the Montessori Method. (p. 425)

⁹³ Muriel Matters was an Australian concert pianist and sometime journalist who was already a colourful member of the Suffrage movement. She had joined the Women's Freedom League (a group, established in response to the autocratic leadership of the WSPU, and which had a more democratic approach) and on the day of the opening of Parliament, in February 1909, she hired a dirigible air balloon, intending to drop suffrage pamphlets on the King and the Houses of Parliament. Wind conditions steered her off-course and took her over Wormwood Scrubs, Kensington and Tooting where, undeterred, she scattered some 56 pounds of pamphlets, eventually landing in Coulsdon, after being aloft for an hour and a half.

Muriel Matters persevered with the children despite misgivings from the other nursery workers and was soon to see the results of her confidence in the Montessori approach. A student of Margaret McMillan, from the Deptford Camp School, asked if she might join them. She had become disillusioned with the attitude of McMillan, who was 'for the war' and sought out Sylvia Pankhurst who was known for her pacifist views. Funding to help her continue her studies was found from Mrs Bernard Shaw and Muriel Matters gave lectures on the Montessori method to the student and several others.

Sylvia Pankhurst retained her link to Montessori education and when her own son, Richard, was of an age, she set up a little Montessori class "in order to give Richard friends to play with. Vera Brittain was one of the sponsors" (Harrison, 2004). Later, she stayed for two months with Richard at the progressive boarding school run by Bertrand and Dora Russell at Beacon Hill but although it had limited links to Montessori (Tait, 1987) she did not continue with the placement and in 1933, sent him to a small, private, local school within walking distance of their London home.

In 1959, not long before she died, Sylvia Pankhurst (2008) wrote a proposal for a Women's College of Education in Ethiopia which drew extensively on her experience of Montessori education. She suggests practice in teaching young children is an essential part of learning to be a teacher and her proposal is based on a facility to enable that process. This proposal was eventually realised in 1972, when Muriel Dwyer was asked by Haile Selassie's grand-daughter, to establish Montessori training in Ethiopia.

Other links include the Kenney sisters who were of great significance in the suffrage movement. Annie Kenney was fifth of eleven children and was sent to work half-time in a cotton mill at the age of ten. She attended school in

the other half of her day but considered herself 'a dunce' and did not pursue her studies beyond primary school. "I went to the village school when I was five. My younger sister [Jane] took me, as she was much older in wisdom and common sense than I. She must have been four years of age" (Kenney, 1924, p. 5). At the age of 26 she joined the Oldham Trades Council and heard Christabel Pankhurst speak along with three of her sisters. She was subsequently invited to the Pankhurst home and quickly became an indispensable part of their campaign. Her two younger sisters, Jane and Caroline, became Montessori teachers and they went to the United States and established a school in New York. Initially, however, Jane Kenney was in charge of the Montessori demonstration school in Washington in the home of Mrs Alexander Graham Bell and when Dr. Montessori came to Washington, she requested that she act as demonstrator for her courses in the United States.

Red Vienna

The most extensive Montessori socialist experiment involved was carried out in Vienna, Austria. In 1921 a young woman came from Prague to study with Montessori in London. Her name was Lili Roubiczek (later Peller) and she came from a wealthy family in Prague. When Lili refused to become involved in the expected social round, her mother lost interest in her although her father continued to give her financial support, enabling her to go to Vienna to study psychology and later, Montessori education.

Roubiczek attended the second International Montessori course, held in London in 1921. She became inspired by the ideas and promise of the Montessori approach and resolved to travel back to Vienna to establish a children's house. Roubiczek gained the support of Dr Montessori and raised funds to enable the project to begin. She gathered a group of like minded

young women around her, some as young as sixteen, and also had the support of a fellow student from the London course, a young Australian architect by the name of Lawrence Benjamin. The group set up in one of the poorest areas of the city, and worked enthusiastically, often long into the night, to prepare the children's house. They lived on site for the first year; sleeping at night on the children's beds and living on rations of cabbage and potatoes. When the *Haus der kinder* opened in the summer of 1922, they worked from 6am to 6pm to care for 25 children from two to four years of age. The unkempt and malnourished children responded to the environment and assistance provided by Roubiczek's community in a similar manner to the San Lorenzo project. The women did not draw any salary that year but worked in the hope that they would be able to prepare themselves for further Montessori training (Kramer, 1988).

The following year, Montessori was persuaded to come and visit and she began to use this school as one of her laboratory centres. It was here that the musical aspect of the pedagogy was worked out. *The Child in the Family*, (Montessori, 1936/1970) arose from the lectures that Montessori delivered in Vienna for both teachers and parents. The book is centred on communicating the possible response to the child as a 'love' teacher and advises that: "We must free the child's oppressed spirit!" (p. 52). Montessori gives many practical ideas and examples of her theories; including a recommendation to swap the cot for a low bed so children may decide for themselves when to go to bed and when to rise; advice on how to take long walks with toddlers by following their lead; and general guidance on setting up the home so that it is sympathetic to the needs of young children.

The Viennese group was associated with the psychoanalytic community and included Erik Erikson who trained as a Montessori teacher and Anna Freud,

who set up an infant community alongside the children's house (Young-Bruehl, 2008). A similar group in Berlin had connections to the Bauhaus design group and a stunning indoor-outdoor children's house was the result of one of their designs (Kahn & Leonard, 2007).

Ireland

Kathleen Lynn was another suffragist who had links with Montessori, this time in Ireland. Lynn graduated as a medical doctor in 1899 and although she was appointed as a house surgeon at Adelaide Hospital in Dublin, the male medics refused to work with her. She was taken on at another hospital and came to understand the desperate living conditions of her patients, housed in the overcrowded Dublin tenements which contributed to an infant mortality of 164 per 1000. She made a particular study of tuberculosis in children.

As a result of her experiences, she became a Nationalist as well as a suffragist and ran a soup kitchen during the 1913 worker's lock-out.⁹⁴ At the invitation of James Connolly, she joined the Irish Citizens Army and served as their Chief Medical Officer during the Easter uprising of 1916.⁹⁵ She was imprisoned for her efforts but was given an early release to assist with the care of patients during the 1917/18 influenza epidemic (Henry, 2005).

Like others in the women's movement, she was concerned with the issue of venereal disease, which, at that time, infected thousands of men. She saw first-hand, the effect that it had on newborn babies, some of whom were

⁹⁴ Their common involvement in this action plus their mutual interest in Montessori, suggests that Muriel Matters and Kathleen Lynn may well have met.

⁹⁵ The earliest mention of Montessori education "is in the writing of Patrick Pearse, a progressive educator and leader of the 1916 Easter Rising" (Kahn & Leonard, 2007, p. 78).

born with syphilis following the First World War. With her close friend, Madeleine French-Mullen, she founded a hospital in 1919, to care for infants under the age of one year, named after the Irish saint, Ultan. This time, she had the upper hand and only women doctors were ever employed at St. Ultan's. The committee that ran the hospital set up a holiday home for mothers and also offered health lectures at the hospital and to the series of baby clubs that were launched in 1921. Eventually, in the 1930s, in a move reminiscent of the project in San Lorenzo, they were able to establish model tenement homes, "in a bid to break the cycle of poverty and ill health" (O'Hogartaigh, 2005, p. 4).

Kahn and Leonard (2007) state that in 1919,⁹⁶ a Montessori ward was set up in the hospital by Dr Lynn, "who had corresponded with Dr Montessori" (p.78). Although Lynn offered child-centred medicine; in 1934, when Montessori came to visit St Ultan's, it is said that her child-centred views "did not meet with the approval of Dr Timothy Corcoran, Professor of Education at UCD, who devoted several articles in Irish Monthly to Montessori education, describing it as 'braggart blasphemy'" (O'Hogartaigh, 2005, p. 3). Henry (2005) also notes that "there were those in authority who did not approve of promoting children's civil and human rights" and it was to be almost sixty years before children were recognised in their own right with the passing of the Children's Act of 2001.

Progressive education

Montessori appealed to both suffragists and progressive and socialist educators in many countries. When the United States suffragists

⁹⁶ Eleonora Gibbon, who attended the first International Montessori course in London, in 1919, records that the first Irish, Montessori class was set up at one of the Mercy convent schools, the following year (Gibbon, 1924).

(represented by the National Women's Party) set up a booth at the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco [also the site of the famous 'glass classroom' featuring a Montessori children's house], Alice Paul, "went to extraordinary lengths to create a spectacular event that was certain to attract nationwide attention" (Lunardini, 1984, p. 79). As a result, Montessori was asked to be keynote speaker at a Women Voters convention held in San Francisco on 14th and 15th September of 1915. She was one of five high profile speakers, including Helen Keller with Annie Sullivan, former President Theodore Roosevelt, silent screen actress Mabel Talliaferro, and Billy Sunday (a hugely popular evangelist who nevertheless supported women's suffrage and child labour reform).

It was in the United Kingdom, however, that Montessori became best known with progressive teachers. Hilda Kean's (1989) research on the work and beliefs of the unions and other professional bodies for teachers in Britain records both the interest and the opposition she provoked. She selects a passage from the journal of the National Union of Teachers to illustrate the negative reaction of the male teachers:

The Schoolmaster denounced [Montessori] for her audacity in suggesting how children should be taught; castigated her because she was not a teacher; and vilified her for not being English [various citations from 1912-1920]. Such a rejection was not shared by the NFWT [National Federation of Women Teachers] who often expressed the view that it was difficult summoning up any interest in the work of the progressives among the (male) members of the NUT and organised their own meetings on these topics and welcomed Montessori's work as epitomising the "spirit of freedom" that underpinned their own campaigns for equality. (p. 147)

Phipps (1928) notes that "members of the Union [the National Union of Women Teachers] were among the first to put into practice the principles of

Dr. Montessori, and later to advocate the method of individual teaching” (p. 62).

The nursery schools conceived by Margaret McMillan paved the way for a more universal call for early childhood education but Kean (1990) maintains that they were largely middle class in their staffing policies. Although they were run by trained teachers, Margaret McMillan supplemented them with students who worked without pay. Those of wealthier backgrounds were required to pay £30 to £50 for the privilege. The nursery schools were described in a Labour Party circular of 1929:

Open-air Nursery Schools where infants are tended, washed, fed and taught have passed the test of experiment. They are a comparatively inexpensive and entirely effective means of securing a fair start in life for infants whose home life is most depressed. (Rose, 1989, p. 186)

But Kean noted that the:

Feminists had a different view – Agnes Dawson, an infant teacher, felt they should be opened where they were needed – not as compensatory education but for *all* children who needed it. By 1920 the feminists were demanding the compulsory establishment of nursery schools. (p. 49)

Women teachers – feminists and non feminists alike – prided themselves on their attendance at courses, conferences, and meetings on educational theory and pedagogy [but] of the hundreds of teachers who attended classes on the work of Dr. Maria Montessori at the St Bride’s Institute in London, only a handful were men (*The Schoolmistress*, 1911, p. 430, cited in Kean, 1990, p. 47).

The feminists organised special education conferences on progressive education and issued pamphlets on individualised learning. Muriel Matters

of the WFL lectured on Montessori ideas to the East London Federation of Suffragettes and the Women's Suffrage Federation. A series of explanatory articles also appeared in the WSF press. The WSF organised Montessori demonstration classes as part of its women's exhibition (Kean, 1990, p. 51).

In addition, the WFL organised discussions on Montessori's work, including a debate on whether Montessori preached a 'new gospel' in education. The NFWT recognised in Montessori 'the leading exponent of that spirit of freedom which also inspires the activities of this organisation' The NUT, in contrast, derided Montessori's emphasis on learning by doing and on the child's discovery of concepts through active engagement with practical tasks.' (p. 51). One LCC inspector, in 1913, described the discussion between the two factions as either 'Montessorimania' or 'Montessoriphobia'

Certainly, many NFWT teachers enthusiastically welcomed Montessori's philosophy into their classroom. Agnes Dawson addressed the NFWT's conference and summed up the difference thus: "While children were taught en masse they were brought up more or less like machines; they stood together and sat together, and read and wrote, and recited together, irrespective of individual ability or taste." Such 'education', she said, might have been good for discipline, but this was only the case if military discipline was sought. The feminist alternative was a development of the individual person and preparation for civic life: "They should aim at getting an intelligent interest amongst their boys and girls in the problems of literature, nature, and municipal citizenship" (p. 52). She introduced Montessori principles and discovery learning into the Crawford Street Infants classroom and in 1917 ran summer open-air classes in nearby John Ruskin Park.

The infant schools in the Borough of Acton in Middlesex, London, were at the centre of Montessori experimentation in England and from 1914 to 1970 – but in particular in the 1920s and 1930s their schools were known for this orientation. There were ten schools or departments that catered for children from 3-8 plus a special education unit. The classes were staffed:

...entirely by women teachers. Public opinion and the marriage bar of the 1920s meant that these were nearly all single women who remained so because of the death of so many young men in the war. They were women of great determination, taking official positions in the local League of Nations, running a branch of the National Union of Women Teachers, campaigning for women's rights not only in the matter of pay but also on issues of children's rights. (A&T Harper Smith, 1989, p. 2)

It should be remembered that at that time there were very few ways in which the infants' teacher could improve her qualifications – there was no B.Ed – after initial teacher training. It is not surprising, therefore, that so many flocked to Dr Montessori's courses.

Peace projects and advocacy of the 'forgotten citizen'

In her bid to 'follow the child' Montessori tried to be apolitical but in her collaboration with the Italian fascist regime, she was naive. She did not understand that for her system to deliver the peace and social justice that she dreamed of, her teachers would have to be given more responsibility and that widespread opposition rather than co-operation with the authorities would be necessary. In Germany and Austria, where socialist Montessori teachers created successful projects amongst working class communities, some, including Anna Freud, Lili Peller, Elise Braun, and Erik Erikson, managed to flee after the Nazi government came to power but others, such as Clara Grunwald, together with the children in her care, were transported to Auschwitz (Kahn & Leonard, 2007). In Britain and America, progressive teachers and doctors, such as Sylvia Pankhurst, Muriel Matters,

Kathleen Lynn and Ella Flagg Young, used her methods successfully to advocate and advance their radical community causes.

The space limitations of this thesis mean only selected aspects of Montessori's life and influence have been examined. In Chapter Seven I will return to Montessori's recognition of the child's spirit but in the next chapter, I turn to see how newly qualified teachers who have had a limited introduction to Montessori's ideas, respond to her pedagogy and philosophical beliefs.

Chapter Six: The lived experience of newly qualified Montessori teachers

Introduction

This chapter represents the stories of newly qualified Montessori teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand, who bring with them experience and aspirations from both study and former life. These narratives of practice in the field, some complete and others in extract, document the convergence and divergence of opinion that participants experienced with colleagues and management. Participants played different roles, some leading their class community and some in the position of novice teacher. The research provided an avenue for newly qualified teachers to register their voice on Montessori philosophy and pedagogical practice. The result is a multi faceted collage of reflections on experience.

As the reader will soon discover, this thesis comprises two distinct parts. The earlier chapters arose from my fascination with history and a desire, ultimately, to provide my students with a wider social context for their study of Montessori. The second, empirical section grew out of a wish to continue exploring Montessori's ideas and at the same time checking to see if these ideas had survived both a century in time and the pedagogic processes of the university. Would they still be apparent and alive in the work and minds of newly graduated students? This section continues the record begun in an earlier thesis which told the story of the development of Montessori education in New Zealand from 1975-2000 (Chisnall, 2002). It left the story at the point where the AUT Montessori degree specialty began.

The previous, historical chapters have outlined the fallible, more human side of Montessori. In these I aimed to provide a rich, social, economic, political

and spiritual context for Maria Montessori that went beyond that provided by previous biographers. This context situated Montessori and those she provoked, within the progressive education sphere. I utilised women's history literature to discover more about the emancipation movement in Italy and I was also intrigued by the stories of the women who engaged with Montessori's educational ideas.

I have positioned this thesis as a genealogical study in the sense of Foucault's essay on Nietzsche, *Genealogy and History* (1971). Foucault critiqued those who try to confine history to linear, unitary, eternal truths and instead put forward a model which sees history in terms of energies and failings thus situating knowledge as a perspective rather than an absolutely true story. His model excavates down to the particular or 'nitty gritty' and that was what I have tried to do with Montessori and, subsequently, with contemporary teachers. The previous chapters have established Montessori as a complex being, with both failings and extraordinary energy. She developed her ideas in a range of particular historical moments within especially dynamic times: of national formation, war, depression, fascism, emancipation, deprivation, sickness, unemployment, mass migration, widespread child abandonment (including personal implications for Montessori), growth of education, civil war and the struggle of indigenous peoples for independence, changing technology and hope for a better world.

The empirical data presents its own difficulties. A Foucauldian analysis of the literature concerning Montessori reveals a somewhat messy rupture between the early Montessori history and a more recent revival of interest. The early period is a story of a charismatic leader, of feminist teachers reaching out for professional development, new ideas, new images of the child; new ways of relating to young children; new expectations of the potential capability of children; of understanding the horror of war and the

desire for peace. The intervening period (post WWII), saw a return to domesticity with the ideal mother at home with her children and early childhood support (in New Zealand, primarily, Plunket, Kindergarten and Playcentre) focused on health and play as preparation for school. During this period, Montessori was largely forgotten. In the 1970s a new group of feminists and sympathetic men rekindled progressive desires in their own way and for their own time. They established alternative schools and centres and eventually curriculum (Te Whāriki) for teaching and caring for young children. At the same time, a small portion of the early childhood field in New Zealand, aligned with a worldwide renewal of interest in Montessori and became part of that renewed thinking. The impetus for Montessori education began with academic concerns but more recently, has featured a return to her message of social justice, sustainability and peace.

The genealogical approach applies to the graduates as well as to Montessori herself. They each arise from different and often multiple contexts and confront educational ideas from different perspectives. If we see Montessori education as a system and progression of materials applied to a vision of the ideal child – it is unobtainable. However, if we go back to Foucault's ideas of effective history and knowledge as perspective, then we may be able to recapture Montessori's objective which was simply to try to be a help to life – one person to one person or creature – a relational notion of justice.

Today's multi-cultural early childhood students have little sense of that history of education and sometimes even less of the ideals of democracy. We routinely discuss the meaning of democratic society but because many of my students come from highly regulated and even totalitarian states they relate to the concept of freedom but not necessarily to that of participatory democracy. I was interested to discover if the ideas that we discuss in class would, in fact, translate to the early childhood setting.

As I explained in Chapter 2 (see p. 42), in researching the notion of justice and jurisprudence I came upon the Anaximander fragment and this helped me to understand the difference between distributive and relational justice. Within the degree, students and lecturers discuss the importance of child rights, a cause on which Montessori spent a good deal of her energy. For example, her idea for a Social Party of the Child was an intriguing part of Montessori's story. As Anaximander points out, however, once we have hurt another, (Montessori would say, placed an obstacle in their way), we cannot undo that action. It is only through care and our attempts to create a positive relationship that we can try to redress our action. Montessori, therefore, was focused on her efforts to help adults create a new and more just relationship with children.

I developed my methodology over a period of time. It would have been helpful if the graduates had been part of my journey in constructing the genealogical framework. However, shifting perspectives are part of the complexity. When the graduates went into the field, they were trailblazers and pioneers who had their own ideas of what constituted a socio-cultural understanding of education within the constraints of a new right political framework (Codd & Sullivan, 2005; Kelsey, 1993; Nuttall, 2003). They had not only completed the Montessori papers but had completed a paper in socio-political perspectives which introduced the idea of neo-liberalism and the concept of critical pedagogy through a study of Freire. I was intrigued to find out if Montessori's original ideas about the transformation of the adult (*AM*, 1949) would similarly lead to 'critically engaged' practice as the graduates moved to deepen their understanding of Montessori's scientific pedagogy (see Chapter 8). Without the focus on adult transformation, Montessori's pedagogy is likely to become a very controlled 'paint-by-numbers approach' and this is an inherent trap within the Montessori

system (Cuevas, 1997). In Chapter 7, the case studies demonstrate how the teachers' expression of their understanding, through preparation of the environment (temporal, physical, social, and spiritual) and the subsequent interaction of children, worked to enable the foundation of the just or relational community.

The data I gathered challenges some perspectives of contemporary Montessori understanding and it was to the Montessori community that this part of the thesis is primarily addressed. I did, however, also want to provide a window into the Montessori world of a particular group of early childhood teachers: What could they offer? What limitations did their education have? What questions do they raise? I did not want to over analyse the data but rather to present it as a resource for those seeking to understand the struggles and creativity of new teachers. For example, Zhu's story, the first of the participant's stories, provided a central representation of the barriers that existing teachers may place in the way of a new teacher but was also a story of the type of resilience and creativity that can be gained through university study.

I decided it was premature to apply in-depth theoretical analysis to the situation of the early graduates. The situation of these graduates may be related to the development of a multi age Montessori class which takes five years to reach fruition. The initial year contains three year olds, the next three and four year olds, the third three, four and five year olds. In the fourth year, the new three year old children have the benefit of four year olds who have been mentored by children who have been through the complete cycle, and in the fifth year, all children have experienced help from older, mentored peers. Similarly, the graduates entered a profession that consisted of a mixture of qualifications and experience. Supervisors and mentors sometimes sought to undermine the new graduates through

resistance and control. In the future, graduates will come into a field of fully qualified Montessori teachers and the following stories will then provide the basis for comparative analysis.

The main contributions in the empirical section are to do with the transformation of the Montessori adult and, in Chapter 7, examples of the just community. The demand from some sections of the New Zealand Montessori community was for fully formed teachers. In the concluding chapter, I revisit the professional Montessori literature which confirms the requirement for an ongoing pattern of mentoring and growth for newly qualified teachers, similar to that in the mainstream literature. The final discussion gives a range of options and opens the field for further discussion on how to support new teachers.

Chapter guide

Interviews were carried out with 24 teachers. Information was mostly gathered in a single interview but I was able to capture the views of some participants from the first cohort over the course of three years of practice. The majority held positions in Montessori centres but some worked in other early education centres or had experience of such along the way to their present position. The government requirement for a qualified staff member to be the 'person responsible' led some to be placed in authority over teachers or managers with more than 20 years experience. Most handled this with grace and humility but the irony of their situation was not lost on either side.

Each comment is identified by the participant number, followed by the number of the interview (1st, 2nd, or 3rd) and then the page number of the interview transcript. All participants either selected or were assigned a

pseudonym in order to maintain confidentiality and these names were used to personalise the data as I recorded and discussed their contributions.

Themes tended to overlap but the interview material is loosely arranged to provide comment on: (1) *rationale for choosing Montessori*, including discussion on Government policy changes, the contrast between mainstream and Montessori and comment on the opportunities and challenges presented by the AUT degree; (2) *relationships with centre management and other staff*, both positive and negative; (3) *aspects of Montessori philosophy* (including comments on justice, freedom, respect, relationship and independence); (4) *the process of teacher transformation* (Montessori concepts) *and teacher registration, induction and mentoring* (Governmental and professional requirements and support); and (5) *professional growth* including examples of resilience and the future hopes and aspirations of participants.

A list of the participants follows with interview date(s) and a record of the number of centres they worked in from the time of graduation to the point of interview. See Appendix (11) for interview question guide.

Participants

(Note: those marked with an asterisk also feature in the case-studies):

2003, 2004 cohorts

#1 – Robyn*, (two interviews – 7.12.2005, 13.3.2007, two Montessori centres, 3-6 year olds)

#2 – Georgie = (3 interviews – 12.6.2005, 29.2.2007, 26.6.2007, one Montessori full day centre, under 3s)

#3 – Joy* = (two interviews – 7.8.2005, 24.5.2007, one Montessori centre, 3-6)

#4 – Beatrice = (one interview, 23.11.2005 plus e-mail update, Christian kindergarten)

#5 – Malena (one interview, 23.5.2005 plus e-mail update, 0-3 AMI diploma and Parents as First Teachers)

#6 – Naomi (two interviews, 2.6.2005, 29.1.2007, one Montessori centre, 3-5).

#7 – Stella (two interviews, 1.6.2005, 28.1.2007 one Montessori centre, 3-6)

#8 – Madeline (one interview, 23.5.2005, hospital centre, 0-5s)

#9 – Yasu (one interview, 23.5.2005, part-time in two Montessori centres, 3-6)

#10 – Sheela (three interviews, 3.5.2005, 17.4.2007, 5.2.2008, one Montessori centre, 3-6)

#11 – John (three interviews, 18.5.2005, 27.9.2005, 24.11.2006, one Reggio centre, one Montessori 3-6 centre, kindergarten)

#12 – Bella (two interviews, 27.9.2005, 18.12.2007, two Montessori centres, 3-6, one childcare)

Mid year 2004 group – finished mid 2005.

(the following were all single interviews)

#13 – Méi (interview 10.1.2008, Montessori centre, 3-6)

#14 – Penny (interview, 28.2.2008, childcare centre, Montessori centre, 3-6)

#15 – Sun Hi (interview, 22.6.2007, Montessori centre, 3-6)

#16 - Zhū – (Interview, 27.4.08, two Montessori centres, 3-6 and one childcare centre)

2005/2006 group

#17 – Qingzhao* – (Interview 18.6.2008, one Montessori centre, 3-6)

2006 Feb intake – finished November 2006

#18 – Eleanor - (Interview, 24.1.2008, one Montessori centre, 3-6)

#19 – Shelley* – (Interview 3.1. 2008, one Montessori centre, 3-6)

#20 – Yuán - (Interview, 3.1.2008, childcare centre, Montessori centre, 3-5)

#21 – Jiao - (Interview, 11.1.2008, childcare centre)

#22 – Margaret (Interview, 23.1.2008, Montessori centre, 3-6)

#23 – Sam - (Interview, 27.2.2008, Montessori, 3-5)

#24 – Francine* – (Interview, 8.7.2008, one Montessori centre, 3-6)

Research questions:

The research questions addressed in this chapter were:

How do we best prepare and support teachers in a form of education that is consistent with a contemporary understanding of Montessori's life, work, and teachings?

Question two: How do graduates of a course founded in these ideas report on their teaching experience?

Prologue

The chapter begins with an account from one of the participants. I could have chosen any one of the teachers I interviewed, but Zhū's story

eloquently describes the courage she drew from her background and her Montessori studies in order to follow her teaching path. Zhū's creative response to the children, as she prepared a contemporary environment, based on her passion for Montessori, exemplifies the philosophy in action.

Zhū's Teaching Story

Zhū was 26 years old when she told me her story. Originally from Malaysia, she was a teenager when she came to New Zealand with her family.

My first interest in Montessori was in seventh form. Our teacher asked us what we wanted to do – I told my teacher I was interested in teaching and he suggested I go and look at some centres for experience which is how I went to my first Montessori centre at [name]. I did 3 days work experience. I also went to a centre, a normal mainstream⁹⁷ and I really didn't enjoy that – found it really boring. I wanted to learn more about Montessori (p. 1).

Zhū went to work in her father's bakery when she left school. When he sold it, she found another job:

I worked there for a year as a supervisor at X-foods. Then I talked to my boss and said, "I really want to do something with my life," and I said that I was really interested in teaching. He said, "Why don't you apply at Unitec?" ...and then I enrolled at AUT. I finished in 2005 and graduated in 2006. I began with the Certificate course. I enrolled in the Montessori option from the first (p.1).

⁹⁷ 'Mainstream' is a term that was originally derived from the special needs education field. It has subsequently been adopted as a term to differentiate between specialised and 'other' forms of education when, for example, Montessori, Maori or Steiner education is contrasted to traditional or conventional education.

I loved the whole part about the degree – I wished that we could do more on the Montessori. The class was smaller and there was a lot of interaction. It was really good, nice and small. I found that when I was in a really big class I felt really shy and withdrawn because the class was so big. I didn't want to ask questions because the class was so big. But when I was doing the Montessori class it was easy to just go up to you and ask you because the class was so small (p.1).

Zhū explained that she had a hard upbringing:

We were really poor and my dad was stressed. ...It is just recently that we have got on well. I can see that my dad works really, really hard to keep the family. He wanted a better education for us – because in Malaysia, the Malay people get first choice – but all the Chinese people get the last choice. We often miss out. We came here in 1988. It was really hard for us – such a bad time. My brother was born here and my dad had to work really long hours to support us – sometimes we didn't have food (p.1).

Now we all work and we all chip in to pay the rent. Even if my mum and dad don't work they know that we will provide for them. And I love looking after my parents. They have done so much for us (p. 2).

After Zhū's first unhappy experience in a Montessori centre, she went to work with a fellow AUT graduate at a corporate childcare centre.

My colleague allowed me to bring in the Montessori curriculum to the centre. I was the transition to school room teacher. There used to be a teacher in there and she wasn't qualified and it was really bare and the children in there were allowed to do whatever they wanted – and I asked [the supervisor] if there was a chance, I would really love to go into that room. So the opportunity came and I worked really, really hard and I brought in

what I know about Montessori. I took in all the Montessori materials that I had – I did that every day. I used cards and counters – games with numbers – and the children began writing. And some practical life – I had a line of children waiting to do these activities (p. 4).

Zhū showed me a photo album with an initial photograph showing a bare classroom with just a few shelves. However, in the next photograph she showed a girl working on a map of the world with the walls beginning to show signs of the children's work.

We did a project on the seasons. I put learning stories⁹⁸ up on the wall to show the parents what they did. We did a lot of art. We went to the museum. The children did all the painting themselves. It all came from their ideas – ‘follow the child’ – to see what they wanted to do. We also had plants to brighten up the room. I read a story to them and then they asked, “Could we do a river reef of our own?” I said, “Sure” (p.4).

The parents were always welcome to come into the room to see what they were doing. This is how we started the mural – they said they wanted to make an octopus – they made up a story – they called her Sally. When we finished it – she was so scary! This is our octopus – it took us at least 3 months to make – they made all the fishes and octopus and stuff. Here they are doing the story. We wrote a list of what we needed to make the octopus. I put all the materials on the floor so they could choose what they wanted. It was so big! (p.4)

⁹⁸ Learning stories are a formative assessment tool used to document learning within early education settings (Carr, 2001). Teachers respond to questions triggered by the strands of Te Whāriki (wellbeing, belonging, exploration, communication and contribution) to assess a child's interest, involvement, engagement, expression and contribution. They are used to assist with future planning, and to support communication and the building of relationships with family/whānau.

Our classroom was always tidy...it wasn't messy. They learned to put their plates down. I had two children to put out the bowls and serve lunch and then they would take their bowls to the kitchen (p. 4)..

...I am passionate about Montessori. It doesn't matter if you are mainstream or in any other centre. You can still bring what you have learnt and put it into your practice. And that's what I did and the children, the transformation of the children was amazing. I had teachers from other [corporate name] centres come and take photos because they were struggling with what to do with their older children (pp. 4-5).

Did you have someone to help you?

No, I did it by myself. I said, "I want to show Nicky!" I was always the first at the centre, I would work at the centre – from 7.30 to 5.30 – I often stayed behind so I could finish their portfolios so I could put all the things that the children had done into their portfolios so the parents could see. I thought that was so important. I made lots of things at home. And everything was real – I didn't want anything to be a fantasy (p. 5).

Eventually Zhū felt compelled to leave due to pressure from other staff.

They didn't like it. They would question me and they would say, "I didn't like Montessori." A lot of them were young – they were judging it (p. 6).

Do you think it showed them up?

Yes. The parents were all interested and I even had a principal come round – he was one of the parents but he was a principal at [local primary school] and he commented on the

changes that I had made in the classroom and on how far the children had moved on (p. 6).

Before Zhū left, however, her manager gave her a reference that noted her “outstanding knowledge and understanding of the curriculum both in mainstream and Montessori...” (p. 1).

I had a really good time there – I loved that room and the children ...and they wrote about how they loved to write. They used to choose what they wanted to do. They took control of their own learning. We did cooking as well, we made pizza and ANZAC biscuits and I told them the story. I always stand back and watch them –if they need help, yes but most of the time I just watched them. When the other children went outside, I said, “We can go out to play,” but they said, “Oh, we are having so much fun” so they stayed inside! (p. 5).

I went to the Teachers Resource Centre – and I got all the resources for the seasons. I tried to make it real for them. When they were doing art, I would put a lily on the table – the painting they did – was so beautiful (pp. 5-6).

Did you ever have any behaviour issues?

At first, it was really hard but when I brought in the Montessori – respecting and you wait for your turn when you want to use the equipment. Being calm, worked. They were bored – they didn’t have anything to do. They used to just play up. I spent a lot of time explaining, “This is what we do in this room – you tell me what you want to do and I will prepare it.” I have a painting a little girl did – “We do lots of reading in the [Yellow] room” (p. 6).

I used to model and I said, "In the Yellow Room, we put our work away." And she did! And I thought, "That was easy!" I had a plan B but I didn't have to use it! Every time before we went out, I used to say, "Can you please tidy up the Yellow room?" And they did (p. 6).

I used to do a role play and I would leave my work on the floor and I would say "Oh I left my work on the floor!" From that day on, if ever I left my work behind, they would tell me. And they would do it in the rest of the centre (p. 6).

We did a lot of grace and courtesy – 'we like to help our friends' – and after a while, the [Yellow group] were helping the younger children with their shoes and clothes and it was amazing. A lot of the parents left the centre to go to a Montessori centre. They could see the results and they were interested. Just like Cheryl [AMI teacher trainer] was saying, "Why should we be ashamed of it?" (p. 6)

I just wanted to show you. It is not just a job. A lot of women see it that way – but it's not! I did what I wanted to do. I feel that I achieved because you see the photos. This is not my work but the children have shown me their world and how they think. I just provided them with the materials – it is not mine – the children do, they own it (p. 7).

You started in 2006 and left in August 2007, after you left there, where did you go?

I went to work at [centre]. I am struggling there. She calls herself a Montessori but there is no Montessori there. ...she expects me to extend the children's knowledge and when I ask her for resources she does not want to get them. I have two other teachers who are not Montessori trained – she is not there at all. Just one hour in the morning and that is it (p. 7).

The practical life area is one that makes me very sad. Even though I did not have very much money – I went in and changed them – but [the manager] said, “You do know that we have two year olds – you can leave it out for a few hours and then put it away” (p. 7).

Zhū explained how various traditional Montessori activities were introduced in an organic way:

Now we have a problem with washing hands – there are a lot of behaviour problems – so we do a lot of grace and courtesy. There is a lot of running and one child ran in and smacked his head – so I now have a line and they walk on the line (p. 7).

And where the children used to throw their mats in a pile...

Now they line them up against a masking tape line which I put down (p. 7).

I asked for [the manager’s] support – but she never came. Basically that centre is free play. The only time we have Montessori – is when we sit them all together and I do Montessori. She likes them to have free play – so I do Montessori outside. I have created a garden outside – we planted seeds –with all kinds of vegetables: lettuce, beans, peas, coriander, beetroot (p. 7).

I got the parents to come and help....I have changed to incorporate my teaching in the natural environment outside. I have found ways to incorporate Montessori outside. I got one parent, [name], he’s a chef – I got all the children to take vegetables from the garden and we made vegetable pasta. Slowly we got all the children. By ‘following the child’, to see what they are into – their ideas and their imagination. A lot of the children before we did the garden were digging a lot....it was such a nice summer and I thought, “Why not?” We

made smoothies and we link that to healthy eating. I started to experiment with growing my garden at home. I tried capsicums, - all in containers and then they went home and tried it too. I wrote it up. I have changed the portfolios and so it all goes in their portfolio (p. 7).

Postscript: Zhū continued for some time in this low decile centre, but eventually decided it was time to move. This time, she found a manager who was prepared to give her the support she needed to become a fully registered teacher. She now works alongside another Montessori teacher from AUT with whom she is able to implement her ideas.

The participants' voice

In 2005 and 2006, Sola Freeman interviewed a number of New Zealand Montessori teachers and centre managers as well as key informants (including myself) in her study of the 'unintended' consequences of policy changes to qualification requirements (Freeman, 2008). She identified concern in the field about the AUT degree and concluded that the lack of "curriculum knowledge and skills in presenting materials meant that they were not up to the expectations of the sector" (p. 129). She reported that there was particular concern that graduates would step straight into positions of responsibility.

This statement may explain the reception that some of the participants received in the field. It would certainly have been my preference to enable students to learn each and every presentation for the Montessori didactic materials but due to the academic orientation and time frame of the degree, I opted to place emphasis on philosophy over and above exactitude with *all* materials. Taking this stance was risky but I wanted students to understand the socio-cultural context for the development of Montessori, in both the

person and the pedagogy. It was my hope and objective that students would then be able to realise the visionary and, therefore, still contemporary nature of Montessori's philosophy and pedagogical approach towards the child.

Would the newly qualified teachers grasp that vision of peace and social justice; have the resilience to cope with challenges from traditional teachers; and have sufficient fundamental knowledge to find out what else they needed in order to refine their teaching practice? This chapter provides the missing voice from Freeman's study: the graduates' perspective. They share their love of the philosophy and explain how they were received into the sector. Chapter seven subsequently provides examples of practice.

The 24 participants

Seven of the 24 participants were employed in Montessori centres during their studies, including Joy (#1), Naomi (#6), Stella (#7), Méi (#13), Francine (#24), Bella (#12) and Margaret (#22). Joy, Naomi and Stella were part of the upgrade group mentioned in chapter one⁹⁹ Out of this group, Naomi, Stella, Méi and Francine already had a Montessori diploma as did Sun Hi (#15).

Upon completing the degree, the rest of the participants found their qualification in demand and stepped into work easily: eleven went straight into Montessori positions: Robyn (#1), Georgie (#2), Yasu (#9); Sheela (#10), Sun Hi (#15), Zhū (#16), Qingzhao (#17), Eleanor (#18), Shelley (#19), Yuán (#20) and Sam (#23). Others found different positions: Beatrice (#4) returned to her (Christian) centre as a supervisor; Madeline (#8) followed an intentional pathway to become a hospital play specialist; John (#11) and Penny (#14) went into education and care centres, then

⁹⁹ The upgrade group were a small cohort of students who worked in Montessori centres throughout the country and who met for lectures in Wellington and Auckland. This arrangement was part of the initial agreement, between MANZ and AUT, to support the Montessori movement to improve their qualification rates

Montessori and then back to childcare or kindergarten; Malena (#5) undertook an Assistants to Infancy diploma with AMI ; and Jiao (#21) who had a young baby, found a part-time position in a centre near her home.

Rationale for choosing Montessori and the BEd (MECT)

The participants expressed a range of reasons for choosing the Montessori specialty. Some required the qualification to stay employed but others were intrigued by the philosophy or knowledge of its international application; whilst others took courage from friends to try something different.

Stella was a fulltime teacher and supervisor in a central city 3-6 (years) Montessori centre. Like Naomi (#4), she took the Montessori Philosophy and Curriculum paper as an elective rather than the full specialty. Stella had credit from a primary teaching diploma in addition to other university study and required ten papers to complete the upgrade to the ECE degree. As she reflected on the reason for choosing a Montessori early childhood position over primary, Stella said:

7.1.3 - The reason that I came to Montessori was to a place that treated children as capable ...the children make their choices and they are responsible for their own movements and all the things that I was trying to achieve in a primary classroom and I wasn't managing - the talk was all there in primary school but it was very hard to actually make things happen. Montessori...backs up this freedom and respect and all the things I was looking for...

Madeline had high ideals for her hospital position and related it to Montessori philosophy:

8.1.1 - I find that there is no idea about respect for the children. I hold the idea of peace very strongly. I feel that is very important in the hospital...I just feel that Montessori

believed that we could change the world through the child. The only way it will change is to have respect for the child.

Madeline then noted how this impacted on her practice:

8.1.2 - *Especially...so many things are done to children. A lot of things are done without choice in the hospital situation. So our job is about giving back autonomy to the child.*

The influence of friends and desire for a new perspective

Some, like Méi, were drawn to Montessori through the recommendation of friends. Initially, she chose this option for her son:

13.1.1 – *So I got more and more into it. And I saw all the results that came from having a child in the Montessori environment compared with other children that I have seen.*

She then completed a diploma by distance study through the London based, St Nicholas Montessori College and spoke of being *enthralled with the Montessori philosophy*.

Shelley came from Central America but had worked in early childhood in the United States. She heard about Montessori from friends and noted that Montessori always seemed to be behind *huge gates and the ones that I've seen – it's like nobody is allowed to see*. When she went to visit a centre in New Zealand she was still unimpressed – *the environment was shocking. They had all these leaf things set out and there's hardly any toys and I'm thinking, "What is this? Is this what Montessori is?"* However, when it came time to choose a specialty, a friend encouraged her:

19.1.3 – *She said, "Come on, Shelley, we've got mainstream, why not learn a different philosophy and a different approach to teaching?" So I think that was our main goal. And it was certainly different and an amazing difference.*

Jiao was a secondary school English teacher from China. Her perception of Montessori in China was that it was only for the elite:

21.1.3 – It is like America – a very high class school for the rich...it is very expensive. So that is why I heard about it but I had no idea what it is like.

When it came time to choose a specialty, she decided, *it is so famous, I need to know*. She had a Malaysian friend who was familiar with Montessori and she encouraged Jiao:

21.1.4 – I just wanted to have more options so did Montessori rather than mainstream. When I grow older, I think differently. I would like to learn more things.

When she graduated, Jiao was unable to find a Montessori position close to her home (she had a young baby):

21.1.5 – But I would like to be in a Montessori centre. I would like to see how it works. I have tried to do some here but you just don't mention the Montessori word. I don't use it.

Margaret worked as a support worker in both kindergarten and primary school and realised qualifications were necessary to obtain a permanent job. Sam (#23) persuaded her to take the specialty:

22.1.5 – She was just so passionate on Montessori and the bits and pieces that she was telling us – I thought – “I like the sounds of this.” It made sense to me, how I as a teacher aide always worked with the children who were struggling with their work, struggling with their maths and their reading and their writing and then hearing about Montessori and doing a bit of research into it – I thought, “That makes so much sense.”

Margaret explained that the degree and the specialty had made *a difference to her whole life* and had also had an influence on her own children and the way they approached tertiary study. She reflected that:

22.1.6 - It opened doors to a different way of thinking. A different way of reaching children.

Following a visit and then a practicum at what would become her workplace, the manager asked her view on Montessori and she replied, “Well, actually, it’s really made me think about the role of the teacher.” She contrasted it to her former position in a conventional centre:

22.1.9 – You are so hands on and you set the stage and you’re encouraging the children to participate...I thought that was the role of the teacher. And what brought me up short was this one little boy who I had known at [the centre] but was now going to Montessori. And he always asked for help with his jigsaw puzzles and this one day, I was observing and he had got this really hard jigsaw puzzle out on his mat; looked up at me; smiled; tipped it out and proceeded to put it back together again, so confidently. And I thought, “You are so capable...Just how far can these children take themselves?” It was the moment that really cemented that I wanted to do the Montessori degree.

Although, as a teenager, Francine had vowed never to work in early childhood, she later worked overseas as a nanny and decided to *make that work for me as a qualification*. Like Méi, she completed the St Nicholas Montessori diploma in London. When she returned in 1999, she came for an interview at a Montessori centre:

24.1.2 - ...and was just blown over by the professionalism of [X and Y] and the centre ...because what I had found at some of the other interviews, they were expecting you to come in and run the centre and at that stage I had not had a lot of experience.

Policy Changes

Méi became very disillusioned when she discovered the requirement to upgrade her qualification and was frustrated with the small amount of credit

that she gained for her Montessori diploma when she applied for the degree. She did, however, note:

13.1.4 – Having to go through the mainstream – I gained a lot of insight into what other practices or philosophies are. It really helped to determine my mind, where my beliefs...In some ways it has consolidated, strengthened my inkling towards Montessori.

When she chose the third year Montessori specialty she contrasted it to her previous diploma:

13.1.4 – When I was doing the Montessori diploma, I found it hard to understand the Montessori philosophy and the play aspects – what Montessori believed in the imagination and play aspects. The degree helped me – it's more the intellectual aspect of the philosophy rather than the practical so it really helps to tie the two together.

Francine's experience was similar to Méi's when, about a year after gaining 100 points which enabled her to work as the 'person responsible', she had that qualification nullified by a Government policy change:

24.1.3 – I was quite cross and bitter – when the law changed...I had no qualification under the new law. I never objected to training. I do think it is important to keep up with what is happening in the industry...I just felt the way the government did it was unfair. There should have been a pathway.

Professional pathways and the degree

Most other Montessori teachers are likely to concur with Francine's view. When the two year (kindergarten) diploma was changed to the benchmark three year diploma for all early childhood teachers in 1989, those with existing qualifications were given a 'grand-parenting' pathway. This pathway recognised the two year diploma as equivalent to the three year diploma and also offered an assessment and upgrade process for other teachers, including

those with a one year Montessori diploma. However, the New Zealand State Services Commission quickly realised that increasing the qualifications of some 5000 early education staff would have major financial implications. Following a change to a National Government in 1990 “The Cabinet Committee agreed that several benchmarks would allow for different attainment levels and encourage diversity in the sector” (Butterworth and Butterworth, 1998, p. 153). The upgrade process subsequently involved a complicated and changing system of ‘points’ awarded by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority to enable those with relevant qualifications and experience to continue (or attain) positions of responsibility in the field (initially 80 points and then 100). The points system was instituted as an interim measure but in the event it lasted for the entire decade. The points programme was unpopular within the sector which was seeking to establish early childhood education as a fully qualified profession and subsequent to another change of government; they managed to resume their original intentions through implementation of the ECE strategic plan, *Nga Huarahi Arataki: Pathway to the Future* (Ministry of Education, 2002). This plan urged practitioners to complete a diploma or degree in preparation for a deadline set for 2012 when all staff would be required to be fully qualified (Chisnall, 2002; May, 2001, Ministry of Education, 2002). The AUT Bachelor of Education (Montessori Early Childhood Teaching) or BEd (MECT) was developed in response to the pressure for this requirement.

In New Zealand, the AUT degree is unique in providing an in-depth introduction to Montessori studies within a qualification that is accepted for teachers’ registration by the New Zealand Teachers Council. Initially, the structure of the specialty and its theoretical orientation was poorly understood by the Montessori community. Students *are* given demonstrations of all the didactic materials with their various extensions and

are expected to create the reference books that all Montessori teachers use to guide their practice. As the specialty is situated at level seven¹⁰⁰ in the final year, the students have a heavy assignment load and are expected to engage in critical thinking in order to complete the equivalent of two 3000 word essays for each of their eight papers. This equates to almost 50,000 words during 20 weeks of on-campus time and was in addition to the expectations for practical competency in Montessori students.

During the first years of the degree specialty, access to practice with the materials was limited¹⁰¹ and it was not until 2010 that AUT provided a dedicated, open access, practice room for the Montessori students. This was a lack that most participants recognised with hindsight, but was the subject of ongoing meetings between MANZ and the School of Education. These meetings were set within the School's broader struggle with the University, for improved facilities for curriculum delivery.

In the generic degree, the practice base for the final year is principally found in the nine weeks of 'practicum'¹⁰² and guidance provided by associate teachers is seen as an essential part of the degree structure. In Montessori, because of the importance of 'presenting' (demonstrating) the specialised didactic materials in a way that meets the individual needs of each child; associate teachers anticipated that students would come with full

¹⁰⁰ The New Zealand Qualifications Authority began the process of establishing a national qualifications framework in the early 1990s. In 2001 this was extended to 10 levels, beginning with the first three levels for qualifications in senior secondary school and reaching through to postgraduate level in tertiary studies. Level 7 equates to a Bachelor's degree (<http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/studying-in-new-zealand/nzqa/history-of-nzqa>).

¹⁰¹ Students were given three hours supervised practice time each week in addition to limited time during the three hour lecture sessions. Many lived some distance from the university and most had to work to survive. For these students, practice with the materials was not given priority until it was time for their practical examinations. Often they would be required to retake the exam.

¹⁰² There is a total of 24 weeks student teaching practice throughout the AUT degree. In 2012 students will have 20 on-campus weeks and 10 fulltime practicum weeks in the field during their final year. During the period of the research the practicum base was nine weeks.

knowledge of the materials. The fact that some did not meet this expectation remains an unresolved tension.

When participants gave feedback on this issue Georgie said:

2.1.4 – I like how we were prepared. Because it did prepare me well. But I would have loved to have had more opportunity with the materials...Like I felt I had good opportunities but I didn't use them as much as I should...I wish I had now. I really wish I had.

Bella had some specific recommendations:

12.2.11 – The theorists should be touched on in the first year and then in the second year, if you are doing the Montessori papers, everything needs to relate to Montessori. I found that coming in to a classroom, the reality of what you find coming into a classroom and the theory that you learn, is very, very different. Which is why I think that the practice needs to go hand in hand with the theory. I think those optional classes [for practice] need to be made compulsory. Have a classroom set up at AUT and make resources together. So this is really important.

Méi had a similar view:

13.1.4 - Montessori should be filtered through the whole degree – all levels....it is almost like drip feeding. If you drip-feed them with just the beginning part of the philosophy and then the practice and then the next year you get deeper and deeper and then you get to the third year, you are able to talk about what you have done in the three years in which you have slowly been growing to.

Eleanor and I discussed the desirability of having a prepared environment on campus:

18.1.3 – Because you go out on section and it's not always fantastic either.

Malena expressed the view that there was insufficient emphasis in the degree specialty on spiritual (inner) awareness for the teacher.¹⁰³ She compared the mainstream offering [from a lecturer, completing a doctorate on spirituality] and said:

5.1.13 – I could have done with the human development spirituality aspect that they were covering – it was so far reaching. And I think that comes, part and parcel, that soul searching of you as a person – the prepared adult. I think that needs to come into our lectures.

Others such as Shelley reflected on the positives:

19.1.21 - It has helped me tremendously. It is the best thing I've done in my life, actually. It's the best way – and I'm pleased I've chosen Montessori over mainstream because I could not go back to mainstream.

Once out in the field, Robyn went back to the one of the reference books she had prepared and noted how it stood up to those from the one year diploma:

1.2.7 - I actually went through my entire maths album last year during one of my non-contact times, with Holly's alongside. And they are really similar. It was a really good exercise because the maths area is something I needed to brush up so I just went through

¹⁰³ I took this critique seriously. It was an important part of my own philosophical understanding and I was surprised that I was perceived as not effectively conveying this to students. Subsequent to this, I adjusted the human development paper content and first assignment in order to lay the foundation for deeper self-reflection.

to see that mine were all in the right order and it was great because they were really similar.

Francine, who already had a Montessori diploma, gave her perspective on the specialty and reiterated the desire for a fully prepared environment:¹⁰⁴

24.1.3 - Well I certainly took it as an easy option but I don't know whether I got it as an easy option! No, I thought, going through it at the time – I felt a bit swamped with all the theory and the academic side of the course. But I really appreciated it afterwards because it really did expand my knowledge of Montessori. It did, it really did. I may not have appreciated it at the time but since....The practical side was good, to revisit it....but it would have been nice in a more Montessori setting.

When Naomi (who also had a Montessori diploma) took the Montessori Philosophy and Curriculum paper from the specialty at the end of her degree she noted: *I actually learnt heaps from doing that.* The paper was a prompt to buy and read Montessori's books and helped her realise she had the confidence to make up her own mind:

6.1.6-7...checking what she'd actually said...It may be okay to do stuff that I thought really wasn't okay. (Laughs) And another thing that I have learnt from the degree is that I can actually think for myself! I used to think that if someone said something to me: that was right, especially with teaching strategies...

¹⁰⁴ At the time of the research, the Montessori classes were held in an old prefabricated building, painted grey inside. Materials had to be packed away in cupboards after each session. The set up and display of materials in their proper sequence is an important part of Montessori pedagogical practice. Lack of room and appropriate shelving meant that this constant reinforcement of the teacher's knowledge was missing. A new facility has since been provided.

Ongoing guidance, experience and professional development is required as graduates begin to implement the theoretical knowledge gained in the degree. Expressing a common desire, Eleanor sought out a centre that would give her the ‘next stage’ of her education as a teacher:

18.1.4 - I’m understanding of that as a first year teacher. I am in a position of learning – a tremendous amount of learning to do. The next stage of my training. So I’m with an experienced Montessori teacher. I wouldn’t step into my own classroom environment, I wouldn’t have wanted to.

Sun Hi explained how she discovered Montessori in Korea. She was a primary teacher at the time and found the ideas exciting although she pointed out that compared to New Zealand, *Korea’s Montessori education is...not broad enough*. When reflecting on the degree, she was critical of the graduates who had not taken time to practice with the materials and then expressed what she had gained from the experience:

15.1.3 – Montessori education comes from European countries and now I’m a New Zealander and my head moves in a New Zealand way, I find it very scientific and very respectful of human nature. It is almost perfect in dealing with the children in how to present the activities and respect their interests and their different manner and way of learning and their abilities. And then, I like the individual approach and the child can make their needs [felt] and what they want – whereas mainstream is not focused on individual needs. Sometimes children they just play. When I was on practicum in a childcare centre I was quite bored. Whereas [in] Montessori [it] is exciting to meet each child and give them presentations.

Further reasons for choosing Montessori

Qingzhao (#17) heard about Montessori in China but knew little else. When she made the choice to study early childhood education, based on employment prospects and an interest in education, she said:

17.1.1 – I got a book and went to read it and thought this one was nice. Montessori is a little bit similar to our Eastern education. Just a little bit like...more structured. People told me that mainstream is for free play so I think that Montessori is good.

Important aspects that resonated with Qingzhao included freedom for children to choose what they wanted to learn as well as the respect shown by teachers for the child.

Yuán (#20) was another who chose Montessori because *I wanted to learn something different rather than carry on the mainstream*. She too had heard about Montessori in China:

20.1.3 – Yes, and in terms of global influence, say Steiner or Reggio Emilia, I had never heard of them in China so far. So that's why I never even thought I wanted to do them.

At first, Yuán could not find a job in Montessori and she found both the philosophy and practice of working in childcare was very hard. Two months later, when a Montessori position came up, she changed *straight away*.

20.1.2 – In day-care centres everything is plastic toys and the children just making a mess; moving around with no teacher's appropriate guidance. And the parents undervalue teachers as well. So in that two months it made me feel, I've spent three years, worked so hard on my degree and now I work as a nanny. People treat me as a nanny. My job was like a nanny. So it's very bad for my self esteem as well so I thought, it's time for a change.

20.1.3 – I believe in human potential and if you really want to do something then you definitely can and it's really up to you and how you see things.

Like Qingzhao, Yuán saw the similarity between Chinese education and Montessori but:

20.1.4 – The big difference is, in China the education system is teacher directed. The education system is very, very highly structured. The teacher tells you what to do and you do it! But the big difference in Montessori is [the] teacher is guiding children about what they want to do. We never force children or tell them what to do. But I do like the structure. I mean in this way it's not a negative word because I do believe that children need boundaries, structure to be able to learn, especially at this young age group. I don't like to see children running wild and you know how they pull out the toys, spend about five seconds, tip it inside out and then go on to the next one. And it's just no purpose.

Sam (#23) began her career as a beauty therapist in England but gained extensive expertise in retail when she was asked to assist at the outset of a successful business venture. Sam subsequently became responsible for opening a chain of stores in London and elsewhere. This experience later contributed to her journey in Montessori, however, when she first came to New Zealand, the management skills she had learnt were in demand in the retail sector:

23.1.1 – My specialty was failing shops and getting them sorted out. Then [the English company] head hunted me and asked me to open shops here....And then I got pregnant...and once I had my babies I didn't want to go back.

Sam enrolled at AUT in 2004 when her second child was just 6 months old. When it came to choosing a final year specialty, she persuaded two close friends to come with her into Montessori:

23.1.2 – When we reflected back on it, they were so glad that they did it because it really gave a much broader and wider understanding of different things that are out there – there isn't just that one route – there's other things that are out there.

Centre management

Issues regarding centre management impacted on many of the participants. When I began interviews in 2005, the pattern of centre ownership was changing. Many of the teachers, who had pioneered the second wave of Montessori 25 to 30 years ago (Chisnall, 2002) were now retiring. New, sometimes corporate owners, were beginning to acquire their centres as 'business units' with little knowledge of the philosophy. As the tide of university graduates entered the field, they faced critique from experienced Montessori teachers (Freeman, 2008) and often had managers who failed to offer appropriate induction and mentorship. Government funding provided for the registration process, was poorly monitored and some centres simply absorbed the extra money or were slow to apply it to its intended purpose.

Sheela (#10) experienced this situation. As a mature graduate, she took a position as a lead teacher in one of the oldest centres in her city and in the process, felt the effects of a strong personality letting go, and the struggle of new owners who came without any Montessori experience or understanding. She discussed what it was like to jump in at the deep end.

Jumping in...

10.1.3 – Partly, in the first term when I was actually relieving, I just jumped into a kind of swimming pool without really knowing because a teacher had gone on leave and another teacher was leaving. So I really worked with very little to go on...and just spent one half a day with one teacher and another half day with another teacher and whatever they could tell me, was what I was supposed to go on...It was not the most ideal way of dealing with it.

When I interviewed Sheela in the following year, two more teachers had departed and she made a comment about the new owners:

10.2.2: They had taken a lot on themselves. I felt sorry for them at times, that they had taken too much on themselves without the necessary sort of support....but while they were settling in, Sheela noted: I think I picked up a lot of confidence in that year. We had a new teacher who was full day, just like me so that made a lot of difference.

Sheela also noted the role of the auditing body, the Education Review Office, as an instigator for change in the centre. Comment in their report led the owner to purchase a laptop and digital camera to enable the development of documentation for the children:

10.2.2 – [It] was a very big issue for the owner because ERO had been tough on them and she pushed for it. I think we two were more committed to it and I think we had a little bit more idea [than colleagues in the other centre owned by the managers]. And I think our owner is quite happy with the progress that we have made in learning stories and now we can, of course, work towards perfecting that....it was a very good development to my mind. We kept talking about it in meetings and not doing it.

As the two teachers both had recent qualifications, they were very familiar with Ministry requirements and worked hard to involve parents in their new processes:

10.2.3 – We have had regular consultations with the parents. We invite them to see the portfolios¹⁰⁵; we invite them to participate in contributing to the portfolios. I think a whole lot is happening in that area. ...We have given so much feedback to the parents...verbally also.

¹⁰⁵ Portfolios are used widely in New Zealand centres to document a child's learning over time. A portfolio generally consists of learning stories, artefacts and photographs and is shared with family.

Bella (#12) experienced change of ownership in a partnership arrangement: when one partner wanted to move on – both had to sell. The first new owner was another without Montessori understanding but Bella noted that changes were generally positive and allowed for increased creativity:

12.1.1 We are really lucky that the new owner kept it as a Montessori centre. There would have been a few staff changes had it not. She is very understanding....very supportive...She doesn't know anything about education really, or about Montessori specially. She's just guided by us really. She's changed a few things...we all have to agree on it. Like the school holiday programme, for example, and things like that.

Resistance

A year later, after an operation led to an extended period of absence, Bella returned to find her job had been given to another employee. She was offered work in an alternate classroom but was upset that her role had been superseded. She moved to another Montessori centre where she was appointed as the person responsible. She was shocked by the resistance of the manager:

12.2.1 She had no teaching or early childhood experience, no Montessori experience. There were lots of issues about things that happened outside. Regulations outside that weren't being met. I pointed them out in a meeting and she said, "Well basically as it is my centre, I have the choice to do it or not do it, and I'm not going to do it."

A little later:

12.2.2 One day she left one child crying on the deck...her well-being wasn't being cared for. It just went right against my grain and I said, "You can't leave [a] child out there crying." And she said, "You're not going near her, I won't allow you to."

The parent placed a complaint about the manager with the Ministry and Bella left shortly after, returning to her original Montessori centre [and another new manager] after a short stint in childcare, to which:

12.2.2...I should never have gone because it was typical day-care – the nappies and the shouting, the running, the hitting. It was old, it was run-down, it was dirty; there were mice in the kitchen, mould upstairs.

Zhū was another who reported resistance from the manager in her first Montessori centre:

16.1.2 ... I was scared of her. She wouldn't let me do mat time – she said I couldn't sing, and I couldn't read to the childrenso for eight months I was doing toilets and she said I could only work in the practical life area. I wasn't allowed to take mat time. I was very depressed because I thought I was a good teacher and the parents really loved what I did for their children. My self esteem was really low...What I had learnt at AUT – that teachers support each other and that we would be there for the children and to guide them. All the stuff I learnt from you but when I went to work for (the manager) it was totally different – it wasn't what I expected.

Zhū was apprehensive that her manager would use her power to block her eventual application for teacher's registration so when she finally plucked up courage to confront her employer she took her up on an offer to break her contract without penalty. She picked herself up and found a post in a conventional centre (see Zhū's story).

Recognising complexity

Some of the next wave of centre owner-teachers had families or illness with which to contend, together with the increasing complexity of running a growing 'business'. As a result, when their centres were sold, Georgie and Stella became part of a corporate childcare group. Georgie decided to join

the teacher's union (NZEI) and commented just after she had heard the news:

2.2.2 – I am concerned about the philosophy of the centre - where will that sit in the new management system?

Georgie left the centre shortly afterwards. Stella, who worked in the associated 3-6 centre, met the news with more equanimity. She felt her plans to start a family in the near future might be better served by a larger structure where she could see options for part-time work:

7.2.1- I'm not really worried. I've got other options. It is better than other corporations such as [-]. [Our manager] was trying to protect the future of the school.

The situations faced by the new teachers were complex. Eleanor reflected upon *all kinds of power levels and things that you come up against*, but made a pragmatic choice to accept this in her first year:

18.1.5-6 – It is an interesting thing for the Government to understand that they have created all these requirements, and they may look at their piece of paper and say that it has been met but in actuality there's a whole lot of people out there, supporting people [newly qualified staff], whom they are going to get rid of down the track....it's not something that you can do in a course, it takes a certain level of maturity, I think.

Eleanor noted *the difficulty of coming up against someone in the position I'm in, with someone who has been teaching for 22 years...*she understood the frustration of her manager but also commented that *in teaching, I think you have to be constantly open and growing and changing and [implementing] new things and new ways – because children are changing and that's the nature of the job. [In the meantime] - I accept the way things are...I mean, I will do what I'm doing by degrees and then I'll do my own things. It's more realistic is how I see it (18.1.6).*

Robyn sought out an AMI mentor (co-teacher) and for the first year learnt a great deal from her. She felt her manager was different:

1.2.4 – She was pedantic about the materials to the point of detriment to everyone, basically. I really felt like I had chosen the wrong career...so [after 5 terms] I made a decision to leave...I don't think that there are that many great schools around and I would actually rather not work in a school than work in one that compromises the philosophy or isn't really Montessori. Because I just find it frustrating.

Premature promotion

Despite the fears expressed in Freeman's thesis (2008), the new teachers were wary of taking on responsibility before they had gained sufficient experience. Yuán and Sheela were exceptions and they both became the lead teacher of their class during their first three months of practice. Although strong and resilient, in both cases this made for heightened stress. As newly qualified teachers they also had to work with new staff who did not have relevant experience or qualifications. Yuán's supervisor worked primarily in the office and with sixty children going through the centre each day, there was little chance for consultation. Yuán thus became the lead teacher by default. She said:

20.1.12 - I almost ran away...I almost quit my job. But I thought this is my first year, just carry on and see how it goes. It is not as bad now, but back then, it was very, very hard. I did think it in a different way, have to be positive. At least what I can gain from this is a kind of a leadership role.

Yuán realised that she had children, teachers and parents relying on her but then laughingly commented:

20.1.12 - I bet one day when I work in a centre full of trained teachers there will be more problems! It will be complex...different ideas and [whereas before] I used to supervise other teachers; now I have to be supervised.

Jiao (#21) was more typical of the group and when asked to take on a leadership role she rejected this opportunity, recognising:

21.1.2 – First I am not full-time and second I am still working on my registration.

Sam was thrust into reluctant leadership. She had a young family and with the stress of study behind her, she relates how:

23.1.3 – My idea last year was to work a minimum amount of hours; to have a balance between family and work. My idea was that I would just go in a couple of hours, do lunchtime relief, or maybe do a couple of days, smile, learn from others and just take a back seat. That didn't quite work!

Feeling overwhelmed

When Sam commenced work at her local Montessori centre, her more experienced colleague was on holiday and she discovered that she would be working with another new teacher who had an AMI diploma from India.

23.1.4 – And I remember me and Anita getting to the point, because we both didn't know what to do, we ushered all the children out into the playground and we sat just looking at each other. And I said, "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" And she said, "I think I am!" I said, "I have absolutely no idea what I'm doing!" And she said, "Neither do I, what the heck are we going to do?" And it was then that I contemplated leaving. I was in bits because I expected to go in – I wanted a situation where I was going to go in and learn from more experienced teachers but there is such a lack of experienced Montessori teachers out there.

Sam explained that her manager would come into the office but as she had two other centres, seldom spent time on the floor. When her other colleague returned, she fell back on *very old fashioned ways from the teachers that were here previously*.

23.1.4 – And so I thought, shall I just leave? I want to learn from an experienced person. I’m supposed to be doing registration, and I’ve got no mentor, I’ve got no one to look up to. I was so used to having you at Uni and the other girls, we could talk it through...there was just nobody to talk to.

Seeking guidance, Sam rang her friend, Margaret (#22) and was able to speak to her manager who gave her some common-sense advice:

23.1.4 - She said, “You’ve got to do three things. To make it work you’ve got to stop taking two year olds”....because we had young children who were piddling all over the place. While we were consoling one child over here, we had another piddling over there and then we had behaviour problems from the others. “You have to go full day” because we were still sessional. “You must have three teachers in the classroom” – because we were running on two teachers when X was away. “You need to have an indoor-outdoor flow and you need to have that [outdoor] activity alongside the Montessori activity. And if [your manager] is not going to listen to you, leave!”

Sam and her colleagues began to implement some of these measures but the leadership question was still unresolved:

23.1.5 – X didn’t want to be head teacher, [the manager] wanted me to be head teacher but really when it came to seniority, X had been there longer, she had early childhood experience, and she was older than me...and she needed to be head teacher but she didn’t

want to and I kind of really backed out of it so that she had to take it. And then things went pear shaped. She ended up leaving.

Sam reluctantly accepted the position of head teacher. The promise of ‘20 hours free’¹⁰⁶ for three and four year olds in all teacher-led early education settings made the change to a full-day arrangement possible and this was implemented in September of her first year:

23.1.9 – Which meant that we were running on a lot less children, which brought down the hassle, the stress of having to document so many children. And trying to document so many children, it was huge, huge, huge!

Group Size and Transience

The question of group size was one that was mentioned by several other participants. Joy, for example, noted the impact of an increase in the roll from 20 to 25, following a move to larger premises:

3.2.9 - Looking back, just more time and because the average age has dropped substantially, a lot of time is gobbled up with getting children to the toilet, cleaning up the flood; and the little ones with the tissues. Yeab...was it the flood this week? ...lots of those things that aren't directly surrounding learning and development for children. Housekeeping, which is part of working with that age group?

¹⁰⁶ The policy of ‘20 hours free’ was implemented by the Labour Government in July 2007, providing teacher led services with the option of 20 hours funding for all three and four year olds. The policy was implemented amidst controversy as centres with higher costs were unsure if they could afford to accept the funding (Bushouse, 2009). In the following year, the National Government extended the policy to include five year olds; a concession to Montessori and Steiner centres who catered for this age group.

Margaret noted that in their class they were following 75 children over one week.¹⁰⁷ Yuán similarly had 30 in the morning and 40 in the afternoon, taking into account children who came on different days. Her comment was:

20.1.10 - I still keep in touch with the teacher [previous employee] who had the proper Montessori background. We disagree with this, this is definitely making money out of children rather than teaching them properly. Because the teachers get really exhausted and tired and so do the children. We don't observe them enough and when the programme we planned for them because they don't attend often enough, it can't be implemented as well. And also we have this [summer, school] holiday as well...breaks, breaks...so it's really hard.

When I asked if the holidays caused the lack of flow, Yuán replied:

20.1.10 - Yes but that's not the most important reason. The most important reason is that most of our children are part time and teachers are really struggling to get time with them and we have three teachers and thirty children and there is no time or at least not much time for teachers to spend quality...long time with individuals. Some children....miss out.

Jiao (#21) worked in mainstream with mostly untrained staff. She had a particularly difficult task and when she tried Montessori ideas:

21.1.5 – Sometimes, it doesn't really work the way I expect. You know we don't have the environment and the habits. I like [Montessori] for the peaceful environment. Our

¹⁰⁷ In this centre, the enrolment policy took account of the needs of rural families. Children came a minimum of two full days, the equivalent of four sessions.

environment is terrible – no-one wants to clean up, nobody wants to put things back. They play with it and walk away. Too many children. We have 38 at a time.

A little later in the interview she elaborated on her situation:

21.1.7 – I would like to have beauty and peace in the environment. We clean the furniture every week and we have cleaners and a cook to do the dining room but still it is not pleasant. Teachers yell, children yell, everybody yell, and there's shouting...it hurts my ears. I hate it! I don't have a strong voice to overcome it. I hate that. I try to encourage them to speak softly and nicely.

The question of worth

Graduates who came out of the programme with heavy student debt, were generally keen to be well recompensed by their employers. Montessori centres tended to be less aware of the 'going rates' perhaps due to the fact that they were mostly small, isolated operations. In order to teach within the philosophy, participants were prepared to make compromises:

Shelley comments:

19.1.13 - It is better to stay there for the moment and just work with what we've got. It is a lovely environment. It is a nice centre. [Our manager] is quite tough, you have to give her a good reason...She comes from a business side. It's not easy to make changes...we always say, "Let's work with what we've got." We have to be inventive. We have to work with what we've got. It can be quite difficult at times. It's okay.

Some teachers put in very long hours but Stella, towards the end of her time, began to experience less of the reciprocity she had previously expected. She began to cut back on the time she invested in the centre and whereas:

17.2.3 - I used to go in on both Saturday and Sunday which was okay as I used to see my sisters and my nephew but now I still start at 7am and 'finish when I finish' but do not go in on weekends. However, I have been there for the past two weeks! [Preparation during the summer break].

Montessori Philosophy and Pedagogy

In this section, participants comment on aspects of philosophy and pedagogy. I had anticipated that aspects of teacher control might figure prominently and this proved to be the case. Georgie, however, encapsulated the meaning of Montessori for many of the participants. It was, simply:

2.1.5 - A way of learning and a way of life.

Stella came to Montessori because it offered freedom and respect and a perspective of the child as capable and she pondered whether:

7.1.6 - Your philosophy of teaching comes from learning about Montessori or if you come to Montessori with a philosophy of teaching that marries it. She concluded: I think that I am attracted to Montessori because of the type of teacher I want to be and that has given me all the knowledge to back it up and more strategies to learn for it...I think you go to it for a reason.

Respect or 'the will to power'

Several participants lamented that the philosophy of respect towards the child was missing in the practice they encountered in Montessori centres. One participant¹⁰⁸ gives an account of 'line time'¹⁰⁹ to illustrate her point:

That is one of the things that I would like to change. We sit on the line for thirty minutes and our children are little and cannot tolerate it. They just can't and that's one of the

¹⁰⁸ The participant in this example is not identified to protect the privacy of her colleagues.

¹⁰⁹ Circle or mat time is referred to as 'line time' in some Montessori centres when children sit around the ellipse shaped line that is used for balancing activities.

things that I would like to bring up. She comments that her colleagues: Love line time...and love to sing. [One traditional Montessori teacher] loves to lecture right through the whole line time. And they are sitting like little soldiers, like this, and they can't move. "Okay, if you're not ready, I'll just sit here..." Oh, it is so difficult, it is the hardest thing. The different teaching approach is so difficult and that is the reality when you get out into the classroom.

Penny had a short-term contract in a Montessori centre but although she saw the benefit of the materials, she sensed rigidity in the centre which caused her to return to conventional education:

14.1.1 - I really like the materials, the equipment that she has at that centre with the children but I sort of sense...I felt, personally, I felt that the curriculum is not open. I feel that there has to be more exploration of the materials rather than the rigid structure of 'this is the way we present' and things like that. I find it very confining.

Freedom to choose - a creative solution

Not all centres were like Penny's one and Stella gave an example of how she, as a reflective practitioner, worked out a positive solution when faced with the resistance of two five and a half year old boys:

7.2.2 - We have a group time where we do singing, dancing and stories but they were always [disruptive]. We had all tried different strategies – sending them away or 'a look'. Then I thought about it – well do they really need to come? I wrote a social story of what it means to be a five year old and talked about the possibility of them being five year old role models. I gave them a choice, they could decide to come to circle time or they could have a special circle-time box. They would use the box in an [adjacent] room by themselves and they would be given freedom to read, draw or write. It came to be that at around 10.45 they would be asking: "Can we do our circle-time box now?" So they do screeds of

drawing and writing and reading. Sometimes we have art exhibitions of their work. We are no longer battling with them. I could see they were embarrassed – being a ‘bear in a box’ was no longer [appropriate]. One came and asked, “Who will do my five year old box with me when [x] leaves?” So we discussed that and decided he would be able to choose a friend to go with him. It is their choice and they are totally not disruptive. At the beginning of last term – we had a copy of [obscured] to take home and so the families were aware and they were talking a lot at home about what they were doing.

Eleanor reflected on freedom in a different way. Looking ahead to the possibility of opening her own centre she noted that she would draw from a range of philosophies. She pointed out that freedom is not the sole prerogative of Montessori:

18.1.7 – I would gather things from all my life. I’m also very influenced by the Reggio philosophy and Te Whāriki and Steiner so I would draw on all of those things...this whole idea of freedom, to me, is the fascinating thing and does require having an environment and the structure that promotes freedom but also having people around who can facilitate and allow – and not get into the way. And to not get into the way you have to be able to actually observe and self-reflect.

Relationships

The participants highlighted the importance of relationship in Montessori. Georgie, who was working in a Montessori centre for under-threes, placed this in the context of the principles related to following the child; the sense of order; and the unhurried curriculum:

2.1.9 – I like [Montessori] because it should be the way you teach. Like following the child should be an essential philosophy for all teachers...And I love the whole sense of order because it helps the child within the environment. [Regarding relationships] ...even

though you encourage them to work by themselves – you also encourage them to work with each other because another child could help [for example] a child who has just started within the environment....And not rushing them....allowing a child to take their time...like seeing a bee on the pavement...because they love seeing things like that. But if you had rushed them they might not have seen it and you might not have followed on with an activity the next day...about bees.

Beatrice commented on the centrality of the child to society and then went on to discuss her own background, working alongside her mother in Papua New Guinea which she saw as a 'lack' she could share with the children:

4.1.8 - What I like about the idea was that Montessori saw the child is the centre of our society. And when I think about that, I think, whoa – I am responsible for these children, you know what society is going to be like. And we may think, this is our centre but we are building our society....and having the Christian philosophy woven into it as well, you know the values, the character of the child is very, very important. Knowing that they are special to God.

Some days I look back and think I am working on my lacks...you know what I did not have...it makes me feel very grateful for what I can give to the child. Even what I did not have, I know, I can give to the children. ...you know, people suffer, and they bring certain things into it - a richness into it - and my lack has taught me to say well you are in a situation where you can give more to the children around you. And I enable them...you know Vygotsky says you work alongside the child, [that] is a very strong part of me.

Naomi was another who connected her past experience (in a Christian family where fostering children was part of her parents' outreach) to the importance of relationships. She noted that as a result, she tends to be:

6.1.3 - mindful of the quieter children. We have got a few very quiet children who don't speak very much so it's always fun to try and get a conversation going with them.

John (#11) talked about the importance of connecting children to the community. In his first position, he noticed how the children loved to look through the fence so he began to help them to create relationships when truck drivers and delivery people came by and he set out to do the same kind of connecting when he came to the Montessori centre. He made links with the local senior community and organised to take a group of children to a nearby rest-home where the plan was not to perform but *just to go and talk to the people and have a conversation.*

Malena was in the midst of a 250 hour observation assignment for an AMI 0-3 diploma when I interviewed her and was highly sensitive to the degree of attention and respect that Montessori advocates for infants and toddlers. She was distressed by the practice she saw in both Montessori and mainstream:

5.1.3 – They are keeping these infants trapped inside. Especially the mixed age group centres – they aren't getting outside and sensorially exploring...it's survival of the fittest – because they are scrambling for toys, they're scrambling for space, for attention and they are longing for something we can't give them in a child care environment. Later in the interview, Malena commented on her experience in Sweden *5.1.7 – I know the Swedish have the children outside a lot more and that to me says that we can do that too. We can have them outside working, not in a classroom – and this is a Montessori thing that I would like to change – because we are kiwi kids here, we are robust and I'm a kiwi kid and I want to be outside as well. I want to be picking up the leaves. I want to be feeling the bark – I've seen the pleasure of young infants with their feet in the sand, kicking the sand and digging them in deeper.*

Malena, like Georgie, picked up on the under-three year olds' need for the gift of time, expressing the role of emotional attentiveness in meeting that need. In a different infant and toddler centre she observed:

5.1.4 – I saw so many things of neglect and that was – they run a ship-shape place there – spick and span, not an ounce of dust – and they just pride themselves on multi-tasking – and this is my conflict because as a Montessori teacher we have to undo that skill in order to be available for the children by doing one thing at a time, that is, being there for them.

5.1.13 – I think about attentiveness – being emotionally available. Connecting and letting that child know that their feelings and emotions matter...if we negate those feelings, brush them off...they never learn to acknowledge those feelings. [They learn] it's not okay for them to feel. Because otherwise we have a lack of empathy for other human beings.

Justice

When I asked the specific question of what 'justice' meant to participants, answers were varied:

I guess in terms of justice it is not the rights and wrongs of things but more the human rights. Am I getting everything that I need as a child? We have tended to squash children in the past and with Te Whāriki...we have a much more holistic framework than in the past. It is not just the mind and the body...it is the spirit as well.

Another participant set out her beliefs on peace and social justice, in an e-mail. Her comments arose, in part, from frustration in her workplace. She subtitled this *hopes and aspirations* and an extract follows:

1.1.2-3 – 1) To uphold (re-establish the underpinning principle of) respect for the child (and general respect) as this often appears to go by the wayside in times of teacher stress. Model respect - I was reading the children the story of Christmas and they wanted me to explain why King Herod wanted to do 'harm' to baby Jesus and I explained how sometimes people felt jealous rather than supportive of others if the other person was perhaps more popular or better at something for example, and S- aged four said "Kind of like [manager] and you"!!!!

2) To extend children to the fullest of each of their potentials – I have found it appears that too many group lessons get given as a lazy way out for teachers. Also I don't like seeing teachers choosing for children that aren't choosing for themselves. I try to guide and spark interest...forcing a child to do the 8 chain [a counting activity] isn't going to be beneficial for ANYONE!!!

Eleanor raised the key issue of teacher control as a barrier to justice:

18.1.10 - There is no way that we are going to get anywhere in society with social justice and peace if we can't bring these things into our day to day dealing with the children. I mean it's everywhere, if we can't have everyone controlled and then tell them to....and then when you release that control....the children will not say 'boo', they are so controlled. And yes, it looks beautiful; they all sit in the circle. As a relief teacher, I would never meet that teacher, but I could tell what that person was like by the way the classroom I walked into and how the children responded.

Joy decided that part of the change she wanted to see at her centre was for the children to be given more ownership. She explains this:

3.1.3 – Lots of little things have been taken away – for example, doing the dishes. So I am trying to give the classroom back to them. I have had success with one example:

introducing a fish tank to the classroom. I tried to involve the children in every aspect and I knew I had been successful when I hear three children say: "Come and look at my fish."

Georgie gave a similar example with her two year olds.

2.1.6 – There was one thing...preparing morning tea. The teacher always used to do that. That used to bug me so much...why can't the children do that? So we have started doing that as well which is really exciting because the children are like, "Let's go early so we can make morning tea," because we do it just before nine in the morning...the children get really involved in what they are doing and then they can go at morning tea, "I made this."

Children, boys and fathers

One particular theme to do with the aspect of relational justice was the place of men in Montessori and the support of this relationship for children. This began with interviews of John (#11), a male graduate teacher who worked for a relatively short time at a Montessori centre. He instituted outside activities as part of his understanding of freedom and justice for children. He emphasised carpentry, physical activity and the use of recycled waste materials to make practical life¹¹⁰ activities. He then implemented a plan to encourage the participation of fathers and grandfathers in the centre; programme and their children's part in it.

Eleanor recognised the question of socialisation in the context of her psychology degree and she spoke of her desire to study and observe, particularly with regard to boys:

18.1.7 – Yes, in a female environment and all the types of play...in the way they play...the way they play together is very different to girls. And we are so orientated to what

¹¹⁰ Practical Life is the skill base of the Montessori approach and consists of activities designed to help children care for self, others and the environment. Activities for both indoors and outdoors are varied according to the needs of the community.

the girls are doing. It is very interesting, it is something I must do before I go back [from holiday], because we have a big group of boys, five to six year old boys.

The case study centres also highlighted the inclusion of men and boys in their programme (see next chapter). Joy's centre incorporated fathers and grandfathers into their visiting activities and Robyn's centre, had a particular focus which culminated in the children hosting their fathers to a special morning tea. This created many special moments in terms of fostering relationships between men and children in the centre. Shelley made comment on the 'challenging boys' and her solutions for them:

19.1.13 - You don't push the children – follow the sensitive period, follow their absorbent time and you will see the children shine at the end of their time. That's all I ask, that's what I would like.

Shelley recognised that the boys who were perceived as *difficult* were actually bored with the practical life activities. She decided to challenge them with the African puzzle map which they had to figure out together and subsequently discovered that their persistence led them on to literacy activities:

19.1.13-14...they can't do [that] one, they have to do it all together. And you know it has the control....it looks like a diagram. So I sit there with the boys and say, "Look at this piece and let's go over on the map and see if it fits there...and there, it fits." And I put that out for the boys, it is a huge challenge. The next day, this one boy, he got out the puzzle, "Look Shelley I am doing it all by myself!" And another child, I did the same thing, we have the same thing with the New Zealand map, the control chart and I say, "Let's look on the map and see where it goes." And he could find the direct spot. It's just a challenge for them to actually think about something instead of being stuck in Practical Life. Boys don't want Practical Life. They are over it.

The process of teacher transformation

Montessori placed emphasis on the transformation that teachers go through as they learn how to guide children. In her view, the ‘new’ teacher must constantly reflect and “if she is to be a safe and sure guide, a teacher needs a great deal of practice” (*DofC*, 1949, p. 161). Montessori refers to the gentle, “tranquillity lessons” which are to typify the manner of teaching (*CinF*, 1936, p. 64) and notes that the ‘new’ teacher “has a whole new orientation...no longer the powerful adult but the adult made humble, serving new life” When children are no longer ‘repressed’ by the adult the result is the “liberated child...[who] is permitted to manifest his creative capacities” (*CinF*, 1936, p. 71). Montessori takes pains to distinguish her approach from that of psychoanalysis – the observation that she encourages is to be “observation of the child in his social existence” (*SoC*, 1936, p. 7).

Qingzhao described, from her perspective, the process of transformation that Montessori desired of her teachers:

17.1.6 – For myself, I just want to be more experienced. I can observe other staff...I also ask [my Manager] for her feedback for me. In the first one or two years, for the new graduate, it is time for us to settle and know what you are going to do as a Montessori teacher in a centre and then get that experience. And then in the following two years, practice more and more and become more and more confident...deepen your knowledge and experience.

Joy described the process in this way:

3.2.6 – Well, yes, the first year it is so wobbly and uncertain and the second year, yes, starting to feel okay...and now, starting in to my third year, I certainly feel more confident but I still feel that there is so much room for growth.

One first year participant, who felt she was receiving excellent mentoring, also recognised the role of her manager as a philosophical leader: Margaret saw how this contributed to growth:

22.1.9 – It stretches you. You’ve got to be thinking all the time and you’ve got to be stretching yourself to grow as a teacher. And what she comes up with, actually, it’s quite a challenge to implement but we do it and we get a lot out of it.

The Reggio/research based orientation of Margaret’s centre led to project work with the children, teachers and parents and encouraged teachers to experiment with both philosophy and documentation. Margaret found this attractive but reflected in her interview how she wanted to remind her colleagues that with new people on board, there could be a need to revisit roads already travelled:

22.1.16- What I’ll need to do, is say, “That’s what you guys have done. You’ve got three team members here that did not participate in that, whose own work level and style is further down the spiral than where you are. Yes, we can get there and we will work alongside you, but there’s things, unless you let us, we won’t have the opportunity to have a look at in depth.

Registration and mentoring – I want to learn from the mentor, not my mentor from me.

The New Zealand government provides a formal process for teacher formation and after qualification teachers are guided by the New Zealand Teachers Council to meet the criteria for full teacher registration. Most

participants took time to get started on the registration¹¹¹ pathway. This was a new process for many in Montessori and other early childhood education services (Aitken, Ferguson, McGrath, Piggot-Irvine, & Ritchie, 2008). Centre managers were generally quick to ensure teachers were provisionally registered as this had a consequence for funding but the subsequent release and expenditure of the Government support grant paid to centres for each provisionally registered teacher (PRT), took time. At the time of the research, this amounted to \$3500 per annum for each newly qualified teacher and was designed to enable centres to pay mentors, give newly qualified teachers non-contact time, pay for supporting technology and resources and provide professional development opportunities. When I asked participants what they had been able to do with this support, many commented that they had no idea where the money had gone even though the Ministry Funding Handbook set out a clear expectation that managers involve their staff in decisions over the grant expenditure.

Georgie noted *the owner is looking after* [the organisation of provisional registration] but she was unaware of the support grant that had become available just prior to her first interview. The research process was a catalyst for her to access this money. By the time we met again, 20 months later, she said: *I have had a very helpful mentor. She has asked some good questions for me to reflect on.*

Joy, who had a mentor from the start, recorded in her first interview, *We have had one initial meeting and one more...in which we are beginning to focus. It feels good.* By the time of the case-study, she was preparing to send her information in to Teachers Council. She reflected on the process which they had followed as a group within the centre:

¹¹¹ See footnote on page 66.

3.2.3 – Probably the first year it felt like...it took us a while to get started because the expectations of what we were to do were not clear. There was a lot of, oh my goodness, are we doing enough? How much evidence is needed? And going round and round that. So that probably took two or three visits before we reached the point of, okay so this is what we need to do. I have gone through each of the competencies and put examples of how I am meeting them. And where it has been applicable I have collected learning stories, minutes of meetings, copies of newsletters and community meetings. Just anything...photos...as well as doing a reflective journal.

It was not so easy for Robyn who delayed her registration until the supervisor in her second centre was registered and able to act as her mentor:

1.2.6 – And I really wanted to finish my teacher registration which I haven't done yet because I didn't get a mentor last year.

Sheela noted a slow start as well:

11.2.1 – In 2005, I was mainly struggling with the new management, what they wanted to do with the school, what is their level of commitment, where is the school going, what do I need, am I being heard, are my needs being met and things like that. They didn't give us contracts for a long time, you will remember...And even at that time, my registration was kind of hanging in my mind, is it going to happen?

11.2.9 – I just grabbed that opportunity of going to the [MANZ] conference, last year on my own. But she paid for it later, until then she had been saying: 'There's no money, there's no money.' Then I went to Wellington in September and this one, the workshops in Auckland and I said, 'This is an absolute must.'

From then on, Sheela seemed to have ignited a desire for professional development within her centre and the other teachers and even her manager started to become involved. In 2007, they won a place on the Education Leadership Project. Others were not as lucky as this poignant comment from Jiao reveals:

21.1.9 – I want to learn from a mentor not the mentor from me. There is a gap between registered staff. After the planning person left, I was in charge. They rely on me. I can do it but I didn't have time to learn for myself.

The tendency to over-document in ECE, compared to the compulsory sectors, was noted by Aitken et al. (2008) and arose from the inexperience of some mentors. Méi noted the burden of covering forty one different competencies within the NZTC process:

13.1.10 – I'm writing forty one essays when I have already written so many essays to get the qualification and now I have to re-justify my qualification. [This is because] my mentor is a 'write down what you think' kind of person rather than 'I'll just observe you and then we'll talk about it and we'll agree' kind of a person.

Qingzhao (#17), however, worked in a collaborative environment with very experienced colleagues:

17.1.6 – We are always asked. When (the manager) has some ideas, she seeks our ideas and feedback. She will encourage us to advise and we have a staff meeting on Monday morning and every other week we sit down and talk about the children's progress and we make the programme plan for the following two weeks. And then we evaluate what we have done in the two weeks and then what we are going to do. Always we have the chance for putting our ideas in.

Due to a change in ownership in the centre, Qingzhao had experienced a delay in getting a mentor but once this was organised she appreciated having someone who was external to the centre. This enabled her to ask questions without losing face:

17.1.7 – Yes, so you feel secure to ask questions. If you ask lots of questions of your colleagues, people from Eastern countries – too many – other people will think me silly that is what I think. Maybe Western people do not think like that but Eastern people always feel like that. Maybe better not to ask.

Sam gives a final example of the issues related to registration and centre administration. She quickly realised that she was in need of as much professional support as possible.

23.1.12 - I applied for every Ministry PD thing that I could and we got accepted for all of them!

She went to an AMI workshop on the ‘practical life’ part of the curriculum and sought out her local cluster group and began to encourage others to join in. Her experience of mentoring, however, was not positive:

23.1.7 – I’ve got this lady mentoring me who, to be honest, is totally useless.

Sam soon found other means of support, including a colleague who came to work with them for a short time:

23.1.7-8 – *She was amazing and in the very short time she was there, she showed us that it was okay to think outside the box. ...Because we had come into an environment that was so controlled – I probably didn't have enough confidence to come in and go, 'Let's try this...[Previously] we had the handbrake on.*

Given this permission and once Sam was appointed as the centre manager she quickly began to instigate changes:

23.1.9 – *so the portfolios came into the classroom. We bought a printer and we did a lot of setting up systems...I have collected 'ticky boxes' ¹¹² from everywhere – most Montessori schools that would let me have them and I'm coagulating them into one guiding document so that when you are looking at the child, we have a written history of what that child has done. For me, working in management and retail, there have to be systems for the whole thing to work. You can't just do it off the cuff. I run the centre. I deal with parents. I deal with new enrolments. We were spending every Friday afternoon in a meeting with [the manager]...and we were just going round in circles. I said, "You are spending too much time faffing around with the little bits...I will have meetings with the team and I will report back to you what is going on."*

Sam explained that each teacher now takes a different role: presenter of new material, floater and 'chef' responsible for practical life and care functions; and the consequences this had for the subsequent development of the class:

¹¹² Sam is referring to the tick charts that are often used in Montessori centres to plan and record a child's progression through the didactic material. Usually, notes are made when an activity or material is first presented; then if it is explored; and finally when knowledge gained is mastered or applied by the child. For example: a dressing frame may be presented to demonstrate the technique of tying a bow; then a note is made if the child returns to the material to work on this skill; followed by a further note when it is applied in tying the child's own or another's shoes. Links are often made to the achievement of Te Whāriki goals. Centres now augment this type of assessment and evaluation with more holistic measures such as portfolios and learning stories.

23.1.14- In the morning we could literally stand back – all three teachers. They don't need us. A few times when I have been the presenter, I have had to wait for a child to be free because it would have been pulling them away from their work. It's been a lovely experience because when we first went there, the children were so needy. But because the classroom has got so much in it, and because the class is smaller, they all know each other very well so they are working together. They enjoy their days and we are getting feedback from the parents that their children like it at school and they want to come. They have made friends and they enjoy coming. It's a nice feeling.

Professional growth – resilience – personal aspirations

Montessori writes often about the obstacles that adults place in the way of children's growth but there is a similar issue in regard to the blocks that are set to undermine the confidence and self efficacy of beginning teachers.

When teaching teams are divided and have little understanding of philosophy and democratic ways of operating, newly qualified teachers have the potential to become frustrated and demoralised. Whether this happens or not, depends partly on degrees of personal resilience and also on the choices that are available to new teachers. During the period of my research, qualified teachers were highly sought after and the option to change jobs was readily available. Montessori positions, however, were not so easily obtained and 'good' Montessori positions were even harder to come by.

In her first Montessori job, Robyn deliberately positioned herself with experienced teachers in order to support her professional growth but when they left during her first year she had to face a manager who resented the requirement to retain a qualified staff member and regarded her as *a non-Montessorian*. When asked about her aspirations for Montessori teaching Robyn cited the importance of respect for the child as an underpinning principle but it was clear that respect for the adult was a further necessary

condition. In her second year of teaching, Robyn moved to another Montessori centre where she was able to realise the hope she expressed during her first interview, to find:

2.1.2 – A less hierarchical/ tyrannical teaching team that is more open to discussion, experimentation and change.

Robyn commented how she enjoyed:

2.2.5 – Having voice at the new school – lots of opportunity to discuss things in the morning before school, after school...as we are setting up the environment...and at the meetings on Fridays.

At her first centre, she expressed the desire to be able to:

1.1.2 - Extend children to the fullest of each of their individual potentials – by guiding and sparking interest rather than forcing children to complete activities. She also wanted a more integrated curriculum and to advocate for children and protect them from (or at least counteract) the harm that bad and stressed out teachers inflict.

Once Robyn moved she commented:

2.2.12 - Confidence? Oh much, much, much better and much higher. I still have lots of areas of the materials that I don't feel confident in. There's lots that don't get used. Like the later groups of maths....there's often not that many children that stay on through 'til six, I think that is part of it.

Georgie experienced a hard time during her second year following a dispute with a fellow worker which, however, eventually led to a positive outcome. Part of her aspiration was to be able to contribute at a higher level:

2.2.3 - I nearly gave it in. I would like to go back to university to study politics. In the future, I would like to work in government, in education. There are so many things that are not right.

When Beatrice became supervisor, she made changes from the very beginning although she first thought she would:

4.1.3 - ...go back to being a teacher and enjoy it...but then I thought, what a waste. Well not a waste but you have read so much, you have written so much, you have heard so much and you have got so much out of the college it would be nice to contribute a little more in a leadership role.

Beatrice went to the parents and asked how they would feel if *I brought in Montessori...and they said, "That would be great."* She subsequently worked with staff to prepare the environment so that there is a practical area, a sensorial area, a cultural area and so on with each teacher researching and taking responsibility for one area for a whole year. Her idea is to *weave Montessori in with others...weaving in the strands to make a strong place for the child.*

Contrasting with Beatrice was Malena who expressed that she *didn't want to commit to anybody because I have only just started to really listen to myself.* She recognised that her new course of study was helping her *aspire for the ideal...to have that and not accept anything else...and most of it is about being available and doing things with the children.* Malena spoke about *attentiveness* as being *emotionally available. Connecting and letting that child know that their feelings and emotions matter and not just brushing over things (5.1.13).*

During her first interview, Joy noted that her aim was to:

3.1.2. ...*Become solid and confident in my own Montessori practices.* She explained that her support came from a colleague who had recently completed a BEd rather than from her supervisor because *our philosophy is more on the same line.*

3.2.6 - Two years later, and into her third year, Joy is concentrating on getting the *whole bigger picture*...she is also *very comfortable in making my own viewpoint* – *and generally feel like it is absorbed into the policies.* She noted some remaining tension with management but feels that a daily reflective staff meeting was making a difference. She is beginning to look for a change in focus with regard to the various professional development courses she had been on, *a day here, half a day there...you catch a glimpse and might pull one thread out ...and I often feel that there is nothing in depth where you are digging deep, on a longer term where it really affects change in practice*...and has therefore enrolled in an immersion course to focus on te reo Māori with a commitment of three days a week for twenty weeks. Joy is also thinking ahead to the possibility of some Parent-Infant classes with an older friend who has compatible philosophical connections.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the voices of the newly qualified teachers have been represented as they set out their experience at various stages in their practice. The participants entered the field when the demand for qualified staff was rising to a peak. These teachers came with strong philosophical and theoretical intentions and were quick to identify shortcomings in the practice of others. Some also recognised, with hindsight, that they had missed opportunities for practice with the tools of their profession.

The literature suggests that preparation with a strong orientation towards social justice aids new teacher retention and this appeared to be the case. The teachers persisted in their search to realise their philosophical beliefs. This involved the teachers in drawing on their creative resources and in

seeking out suitable professional support and development even if this eventually meant a change of centre.

The lived experience of the newly qualified teachers indicates that the degree supports the three-fold transformation of the teacher, a finding that will be discussed further in chapter eight.

Chapter Seven: The Development of the Teacher in the Just Community: a Work of Love

Theoretical framework

This chapter presents information gathered from observations of teachers in four different children's house settings. Building on the stories provided in Chapter six, the case studies enabled me to see newly qualified teachers in the context of their learning community, working with children, colleagues and parents as they play out a contemporary interpretation of Montessori's ideas.

The chapter heading refers to the development of teachers within the just community. In Chapter two I explored the common definitions of justice as either distributive or relational. The idea of critical pedagogy was related to Montessori's advocacy of children and the consequent importance of distributive justice to her political agenda. Likewise, in Chapter five I outlined how Montessori's contemporaries grasped her ideas and utilised them to advance their own emancipatory projects in education and medicine.

When I researched the relational notion of justice, concerning care and 'the gift', I discovered that it was situated within the earliest account of Western philosophy in the fragment of Anaximander (Oppermann, 2003). In the more intimate environment of the children's house, Montessori became aware that this understanding of justice would form a greater part of her focus. The role of the teacher as caring and attentive but critically aware of the child's need for freedom are elements to which Montessori returns throughout her writing.

In an explanation of the teacher's calling, Montessori explains the possibilities offered by the "new field of psychology" but also notes that 'those with an interest in spiritual values...will recognise in our schools a work of love' (1924, p.12). This standpoint resulted in derision from the scientific community although a century later her insights are more easily accommodated through the influence of other feminist writers (Cannella, 1997; Crawford, 2005; Darder, 2002; Gilligan, 1982; Hekman, 1995; Held, 2006; Martin, 1992; Noddings, 2003; and many others). Montessori expands her ideas in the final chapter of *The Absorbent Mind*, in which she writes of love as a gift "lent to living beings by the cosmic consciousness. It must be treasured, developed and enlarged to the fullest possible extent" (1988, p. 269). The child, she points out, comes into the world with a mind that is ready to absorb whatever his or her circumstance provides: a mind that, she says:

Welcomes everything, puts its hope in everything, accepts poverty equally with wealth, adopts any religion and the prejudices and habits of its countrymen, incarnating all in itself... The Absorbent Mind forms the basis of the society created by man, and we see it in the guise of the gentle and tiny child who solves by the virtue of his love the mysterious difficulties of human destiny. (pp. 266-267)

For Montessori, the energy of love is the source of connection for the creation of human hands and minds. "Without it, all he creates will turn (as so often it has) to the bringing of disorder and destruction...All that men can do with their discoveries depends on the conscience of him who uses them" (p. 269). Writing in the wake of the devastation of World War II, Montessori places her hope for the future unity of humanity upon the study of the child; the help we offer to children; and the environment we prepare for them. Given that Montessori believes that the source of love lies within the child, she also believes that justice lies in ensuring that every child is given the help they need to realise that spiritual potential. I suggest that by

revealing the special nature of the Montessori teacher, we may better understand how to both set the foundation and begin to realise the potential of the just community.

The threefold development of the teacher

Montessori theory provides for the lifelong development of the teacher but the initial stages are often likened to the ‘three period lesson’, a device which is frequently used to impart new ideas in Montessori pedagogy.¹¹³ Initially, the traditional Montessori qualification is designed to give both impression and structure for further investigation of Montessori’s ideas. Following graduation and once in the field, the teacher’s own experimentation; reflection and continual seeking for greater understanding lie at the heart of the transformative process. In this second stage, the new teacher should be fully, professionally and critically engaged in preparing the environment of the children’s house and learning to provide just the right amount of assistance as children enter the conscious stage of the absorbent mind. The challenge lies in reaching the third period which involves articulation of what has been discovered and outreach to share this knowledge. The third stage is a spiritual one and Montessori links it to a new understanding of justice: “justice, here, is to give every human being the help he needs to bring about his fullest spiritual stature, and service of the spirit at every age means helping those energies that are at work to bring this about” (*AM*, 1988, p. 260).

¹¹³ ‘The three period lesson’ provides the child with three simple guidelines – first it names the concept. For example, if we are differentiating colour the teacher would say, “This is red, this is blue, this is yellow” and indicate three, different, silk bound tablets. During the second period, the child is asked a variety of questions to aid comprehension and memory: “Show me the red, put the blue at the top, pass me the yellow, place the red on the box, put the blue beside the red, set the yellow one beside the box.” The third and final period checks to see if the child remembers the name and can distinguish between the colours: “What is this, what is this, what is this?” The teacher knows that the child has truly understood when she begins to apply her new knowledge in the environment.

The prepared environment – the gift paradigm

In Montessori philosophy, teachers recognise that the loving attention they give to the preparation of a beautiful environment is crucial for the young child who is absorbing concepts, attitudes, values and aesthetics through the actions and objects surrounding them. Teachers assemble the objects of the curriculum in a fashion that will aid the child who is on a quest to find the relationship between people and things. The connections they provide through the ‘presentations’ they give to children on how to use materials or carry out activities, are indeed, gifts through which they impart motives for the development of skills and a spark for conceptual understanding. The child’s response is often seen in a desire to share their knowledge. The completion of this part of the cycle is enabled by the range of children in the casa; ideally large classes of mixed ages and abilities. It is also revealed through the children’s relationship with family and whānau. This is the nature of the gift paradigm (Vaughan & Estola, 2008).

The Case Studies

Four case studies were carried out with a view to understanding the nature of the teacher within the Montessori children’s community. I sought to provide examples of first, second and third year teachers who might show differences in their reflection and practice and in their relationship to the children and to more experienced colleagues. I felt by telling the stories of their practice, I would give a further context for the interview material in chapter six. In this chapter, I have deliberately included a number of extended passages to give the reader an impression of the sustained respect, care, imagination and subtle pedagogy of the daily interactions in a successful Montessori children’s house.

The analysis of the case-studies was undertaken inductively without any expectation that I would be able to generalise between the differing experiences of each teacher and centre. In the children, I was looking out for elements of joy, serenity, and profound interest which I knew would be grounded in the minutiae of everyday centre life. As to the teachers, I was seeking insight into how they consciously engage to ‘set the scene’ and guide children to take their place in a social or ‘just’ community. The elements that support the development of this community were first identified by Montessori. In 1981, Krogh (1981), building on Montessori, asserted that, in the Montessori children’s house, the just community might be realised much earlier than anticipated in Kohlberg’s moral development theory. These elements are summarised as follows and the numbers and abbreviated headings will be used from time to time throughout the chapter to highlight the intent of the teachers:

1. ***Dignity and respect:*** *Children are accorded dignity and respect - in the knowledge that each individual child must ultimately construct him or herself in order to successfully live in and carry on the construction of community and society (1: D&R) .*

2. ***Carefully resourced environment:*** *Children learn in an environment of limited resources – leading to the possibility of negotiation, sharing and, an awareness of the need to care, for those that follow (2: CRE).*

3. ***Mixed social grouping:*** *Children learn in a social group of mixed age and ability – giving all children opportunities to both share and aspire to gain knowledge and skills across the spectrum of development (3: MSG).*

4. ***Authentic learning opportunities:*** *Children are offered authentic opportunities to learn practical and social skills - enabling them to care for self, others and the environment (4: ALO).*
5. ***Freedom to discover:*** *Children are given freedom to independently discover relationships between such qualities as shape, colour, size, sound, taste, smell, and sequence through the properties of materials that strengthen perception – leading to absorption, understanding, and expression of key aspects of cultural¹¹⁴ knowledge (5: FtoD).*
6. ***Time to concentrate:*** *Children are given time to concentrate and problem-solve with materials that offer them feedback - thus strengthening both inner motivation and independence and enabling the completion of a cycle of investigation or activity that ultimately leads to self regulation and self efficacy (6: TtoC).*

These ideas, founded as they are on Montessori's thinking, provide an analytic framework for the discussion. In each case study, I was interested to see how the holistic environment, created and supported by the individual teachers, was impacting on the children. Each teacher also became a special focus – as I sought to discover how their practice was changing and developing with time, reflection and experience. I begin my account with Shelley at the Pukatea centre.

¹¹⁴ It is recognised that different cultural groups will interpret such qualities according to their specific understanding.

Case Study One –Pukatea centre - first year experience.

The Pukatea centre is owned by an early childhood qualified, Montessori teacher who works on-site in a primarily administrative role. Shelley comes from Central America but has been in New Zealand for a number of years. She was initially worried about her acceptance in this upper-middle class area but soon found that this was not an issue. Kokako is one of two 3-6 year classes in the centre and caters for 20 children with a varying ratio of two to three teachers. The class has a predominance of younger children but there are a small number of four and five year olds who help to set the tone of the class community. Two afternoons a week, the older children spend time in the other class for 'extension' activities.

Shelley works alongside Sita, an AMI Montessori teacher with an early childhood teaching diploma who has many years of experience in New Zealand Montessori centres and another AUT Montessori graduate, Aimi, originally from Japan. Aimi has recently joined the team and is the only fulltime teacher in the class. There were a number of Japanese children in the class and Aimi supported both these children and the others in a calm and gentle fashion.

Shelley's presence in the classroom is magnetic and the children flock to her when she enters the room. As a first year Montessori teacher, but one with a long history of childcare teaching, Shelley's experience was different to the other participants. She recognised that, for her, the process of transformation as a Montessori teacher was just beginning.

Binda Goldsbrough [1912-2008], a long-time mentor to the Montessori movement in New Zealand, once responded to a question about the rigidity of the Montessori method, by saying: *"I think many Montessori teachers are too*

rigid. I would accept this [but] I think to a certain extent the first year teachers need to be, to get that established in themselves” (Chisnall, 2002, p. 66). Shelley’s practice exemplifies the single minded, conscious effort of one still learning her craft, but as Goldsbrough observed, this is to be expected in a first year Montessori teacher. There was, however, more to this. Shelley was also responding to pressure from the local Montessori school regarding expectations for the children entering their classes. As a result, Shelley focused a good deal of her time on language and literacy activities.

Respect, inclusion and exclusion

In this class, constant modelling by the teachers helped to create a climate of respect. I noted a Pakeha father politely bowing to one of the Japanese mothers and greeting her with the customary, ‘Konichiwa’ and a mother who responded to her child’s desire to continue to play by settling herself on a chair to wait.

Shelley’s respect for children is demonstrated as she gently encourages two year old Molly (2:9) to join the “I spy” game they are playing. Molly takes an elephant from the collection and hesitantly offers and then retracts it. She holds out her hand and Shelley, noticing, passes her a pig for the letter ‘p’ that is beside her. Molly then independently places the elephant beside the letter ‘e’.

Although the Kokako class reportedly had a “more gentle approach” (19.1.4) Pukatea seemed to have set rules on social conduct, mechanisms of social control that emanated from some staff more than others. At times, Shelley tried to resist these rules as she advocated for children but stronger forces tended to win over as in this example, when on warm autumn day, one child removes his shoes to go in the sandpit. Shelley explains the child’s intention to the supervisor but a minute later another teacher notices and says loudly,

“No! You need to get your boots! Come, you can borrow a pair of boots. Did your Mummy forget your boots today? Let’s see ...what kind of boots....how about you go to our class and find some boots.” When Shelley remonstrates: *“He wants to go in the sandpit,”* the other teacher overrules her.

More experienced children are expected to remember the rules that lubricate relationships. The following brief interchange could be read as one of exclusion, but in this setting, Daniel had learnt that his rejection was part of the centre culture which had particular rules on groupings for activities:

Miriam (5:3) and another girl work together to construct the Roman Arch puzzle and chat about birthday parties as they work. When three year old Daniel came over, he says:

“I’m just watching.”

The girls reply, *“You can watch but not help us.”*

“Okay,” says Daniel. *“You don’t need help anyways.”*

In another example, Daniel is once again reminded of the social limits after Esther carefully creates a maze to walk through with a set of graduated red rods. Shelley is seated beside the activity and gives an encouraging smile. She straightens the rods as Esther takes off her shoes ready to walk through.

Ana joins in and then another:

“Can I help?” says Ana.

“Yes,” says Shelley. *“Put your shoes on the side.”*

When Daniel comes to join in, however, Shelley explains: *“There are too many people now. There are four. Yes, you can sit and watch and then when someone leaves, you can have a turn. Have you put away your lunch?”* (2: CRE). Daniel runs back and

Shelley follows him as he wipes his mat and pushes in his chair. She compliments him as he finishes.

Shelley makes sure that her next activity is with Daniel (1: *DeR*) and shortly afterwards, they work together with one of the Montessori block sets. She withdraws and Daniel adds the set of cubes (pink tower) to the graduated prism blocks (broad stair) (5: *FtoD*).

Individual concentration is another highly valued attribute in the children's house and when Sally (3:0) sits beside Esther (4:10) who is writing, Shelley approaches her and says, "*Sally, I'm sorry this work is not for you yet but I'd like to show you the colour box*" (6: *TtoC*). They work together for some time, sorting out colour tablets and their corresponding names. When Sally's concentration fades, Shelley notices that Molly is waiting to use the box of colours so reinforcing both awareness of others and her sense of orderliness, she says, "*If you put it back on the shelf, Molly can get it out. You have done your work now*" (2: *CRE*).

Shelley remained aware of Daniel's activity and in the middle of her time with Sally, she looked across to him and said, "*You made a horizontal stair....let's see if you can make a vertical stair.*" Daniel responds quickly to her suggestion.

Afternoon observation – respect and authentic learning opportunities

During an afternoon session when the older children join the other class, there are 13 children present and most are three years old. More than half of the children have either Chinese or Japanese as their first language and Shelley spends time encouraging and conversing with them. The practical life materials prove attractive and some children crumb crackers, peel

mandarins, transfer dry goods with spoons and whisk soapy water, whilst others settle at the art table.

When Jordan draws on William's face, William goes to Shelley for help. She says, *"Tell him, you don't draw on my face."* William repeats this firmly as he stands beside Shelley, looking over to Jordan. Shelley suggests, *"Go over to him, gently and tell him."* William follows her suggestion and Shelley joins the pair to discuss the use of materials.

A little later, Shelley notices that William and Jordan are cooperating on a geography puzzle and she steps over to encourage them. William and Jordan have each taken a large map piece out. *"Mine's big!" "I'm bigger than you,"* says William and stands up with his piece. *"I'm big,"* says Jordan, *"Nearly as big!"* They continue, *"I'm four..." "I'm four seconds!"* says William.

Although children are encouraged to complete individual activities, they are not isolated and remain very aware of each other, often glancing up to see the activity of others as they work. At one stage Shelley accompanies Helen to offer a bowl of mandarin segments to her friends, prompting the children to ensure a polite exchange. During other sessions when the older children are present, Shelley encourages them to supervise games and to take responsibility for younger children.

Learning in a mixed age group

In one example, Shelley encourages an older child to exercise patience in order to accommodate the needs of a younger one: Edward (4:3) asks Shelley, *"Can I ring the bell?"* Shelley explains, *"Tamiko has been really upset and ringing the bell will make her feel really good. You could ring it at 3pm."* He nods and

as he puts away his fishing game, he smiles at Tamiko, who is sitting on Aimi's knee; showing her a fish from his container (3: MSG; 4: ALO).

On a different morning, one of the literacy games that Shelley often plays with the children is repeated independently when two of the older girls take a lead. Shelley's influence is clearly evident. In the first instance, Bella (3:10) decides to help Daniel and Michael, another younger three year old, with a game that differentiates pictures denoting hot and cold objects:

"Michael's turn and then yours. Would you like to find something cold? Michael points to a 'hot' picture. Bella quickly incorporates his choice, saying, "Oh, it's a hot picture....where should we put it? On this side where it is hot or on this side where it is cold?" He puts it on the hot side. They continue for a short time and then Bella wanders off to draw pictures.

Shelley notices Bella's departure and settles Esther (4:10) to supervise the game. Esther is even more skilful in her guidance:

"Can you find something hot?" she says to Daniel. He finds a picture of a tap. "No, that's cold, see," she says as she points to the dot. Kazu comes to back her up. Daniel picks up another card. "Michael, can you find me something hot? Something in your hand is hot," she says, as he takes a picture of a pot. He looks intently. "Grab it and give it to me." She looks at it [I wonder, is it ambiguous?] and says, "This one we'll keep for last." "Okay, Daniel, can you find me something cold..." then quickly changes her words so that he will be successful, "I mean hot," as Daniel picks up a 'hot' picture. Then she says to Michael, "Can you find me something hot – the one in your hand is hot." "Michael, can you find me something cold?" He picks up a card and she places it. "Michael, something hot; Daniel, something hot." He passes over the picture of the pot. "Michael,

something cold: grab it and give it to me!” She nods as he picks up a picture of an iron and places it in the hot section. *“Great, put them in here...”* she says as they begin to pack up. *“Do you want to do another one after this?”* She goes to Daniel to check if he is putting them back the right way. The cards have dots on them, either red or blue which she checks as they go back into different sections of the folder (1: *D&R*; 3: *MSG*; 4: *ALO*).

Daniel chooses the next sorting game and has it ready as Hannah finishes tidying up. She takes time to put the cards in carefully, one by one and Daniel watches.



Figure 1: Esther directs a language game

I was intrigued at Esther’s patience with the younger children but eventually her own needs intruded and part way through the second game she arbitrarily announced, *“We can’t play that,”* and got up to get her morning tea. Daniel rolled up the mat. Michael returned the game to the shelf and went over to the sink to watch Bella washing up her dishes.

Reflection

At this early stage of her Montessori journey, Shelley recognised how easily teachers could *crush* the spirit of the child and although she was focused on curriculum achievement she expressed a desire to help children in a relaxed way. *“It is not so much about teaching, it’s about facilitating and relaxing with the children and enjoying the material together”* (19.1.10). The older children have also taken this on board, as Esther and Bella demonstrated.

During the interview prior to the observations, Shelley explained to me that she had spent time in both classrooms in the centre and although she was still finding her way with the total programme, she felt strongly about what she observed. In her current class she recognised that *“there’s a lot of skip”* (19.1.10) because it was not equipped with the full range of Montessori materials. She felt colleagues had become used to the situation but with eyes fresh from her studies, she noted: *“For me it’s like they are rushing the children and rushing the programme”* (19.1.10). As we discussed her observations, she commented that she was returning to the Montessori reference books she had compiled at university and that *“I’m matching things up and things are making sense and I say, “Yes, I’m understanding now.” I see it coming out and I can say, “Oh this is what Nicky meant’...matching up the little bits”* (19.1.15)

As Shelley began to gain a broader perspective on the curriculum through both reading and observing others she recognised the different approaches taken in the centre but felt concerned that other colleagues were holding children back: *“We have four and a half year old boys that haven’t even started on their language – no sounds, no I spy, sandpaper letters...nothing”* (19.1.8). When she first began, Sita advised her to focus on the practical life and sensorial materials. Shelley took this advice but felt strongly about the need to set a foundation for literacy. Early language games subsequently became a feature of her practice with the children and on the first day of observation, it

seemed that her teaching colleagues were beginning to appreciate her work. Sita shared with Shelley that one of the older girls had jumped ahead with the reading materials but was 'just guessing'. They both agree that she needed a lot more practice in phonemic awareness.

Shelley, who held strong and positive views on children as confident and competent, was trying to make her way in an institution that held differing interpretations of Montessori philosophy. Trying to keep an open mind, she recognised that the challenges she faced were primarily about “...*differences in teaching style - and it's our philosophy, it's our old customs and beliefs and what we had as a child and our experiences through life*” (19.1.21). When I observed at Pukatea centre, it was evident that Shelley was trying to forge a path that was true to her principles: “*It's not about the Montessori programme...follow the programme – it will work. And I firmly believe that. I'm not going to compromise my own beliefs and my own teaching style. And certain things [a colleague] said to me and I said, “I can't do that. That's not who I am and I can't do that. ...because I have such strong beliefs and I hold my beliefs so strongly in my philosophy that I am not going to let anybody change that so easily, unless I know that it's totally wrong, it's the wrong approach and then, Yes”* (19.1.6-8).

Discussion

The examples I selected from this case study were representative of events observed over several weeks. They demonstrate Shelley's close attention to the routines of the class as she worked on mastering the techniques of Montessori practice. Shelley provided guidance and many beginning presentations as she helped the younger children gain independence through the practical life and sensorial activities. It is also evident that the class environment was assisting the children to learn patience, care and responsibility. The results of Shelley's strong emphasis on language games

was reflected in the way Bella and Esther took responsibility to run similar games with the younger children.

Shelley, however, noted that constraints in this particular environment meant that Montessori philosophy could not be fully realised. Some of the limiting factors she identified related to differing interpretations by teachers; afternoon sessions run without the older children and the lack of a full complement of Montessori materials. Although Shelley was critically engaged in reflection on her centre experience, unlike Joy, who features in the next case study, she missed having a colleague or a mentor with whom she felt she could debate her ideas and share reflections on her own practice. Shelley felt the weekly staff meeting was too short to debate the details of programme planning or for the philosophical discussions that she felt were essential. These factors are discussed in the final chapter.

Case Study Two – Rata Centre – A third year experience

Joy works at Rata, situated in a provincial centre. She began her Montessori degree whilst working as an assistant at the centre, joining a nationwide cohort of students who travelled on a monthly basis, to meet in Wellington for their lectures (see Chapter One). Most of this group had prior Montessori qualifications but Joy did not so in her final year, she joined a smaller group within this cohort, who opted to complete the Montessori specialty. Now in her third year, post-qualification, Joy is a confident, reflective practitioner who has strong ideas on empowering children, based on her view of Montessori philosophy. She engages in Montessori pedagogy through such techniques as conscious and purposeful conversation to extend children's thinking.

Joy is a co-teacher and her class is situated in an old hall which is part of an attractive complex containing other colonial buildings. The director (head teacher) of the Kakariki classroom, Rania, is also the owner of the centre and due to her administrative duties; Joy is often left to take the lead. A second class is directed by Jennifer. Joy and Jennifer teach an amalgamated class in the afternoon to cater for the children who stay all day. An extensive play area (including grass, garden, hard surface) is shared by the two classes and children are able to go in and out to be with an outdoor teacher.

Kakariki class is comprised of up to 25 children but on the first morning, there were 23. Both classes had been impacted by the exit of a number of older children leaving for school and a consequent intake of six or seven two year olds in each class.

Policy particulars

The norm is for a casa class to be made up of three to six year old children although Montessori's first class catered for children aged from two and a half to seven. Towards the end of her life, Montessori began to suggest that

there was a division between the unconscious (c. 0-3 years) and conscious absorbent mind which, she observed, begins to appear at around the age of three (*DofC*, 1948; *AM*, 1949). New Zealand's early childhood policy, however, separates children into under two year olds and over two year olds with different regulations and care ratios required for younger children. Individual Montessori centres sometimes take younger children to make up numbers, and the class may comprise of two to five year olds,¹¹⁵ especially when there is no possibility of progression to a Montessori primary school. This was the case at the Rata centre and both Jennifer and Joy were concerned about the impact the sudden influx of two year olds was having on their classes.

Handing back to the children

A unique aspect of Rata centre is the daily lunch programme and a group of children are engaged in preparing a part of the menu each morning. The children, parents, teachers and a dietician all had input into decisions on a set of simple menus which rotate on a monthly basis. The local District Health Board assisted with a grant which was used to add fruit trees to their vegetable garden and to purchase a bread-maker and food processor.

The lunch programme provides the children with the opportunity to become competent in a wide range of skills. Facilities in the Kakariki kitchen are similar to a normal home so the meals were simple but varied in content. The philosophy behind the programme went beyond the attainment of culinary skills. In New Zealand, most centres that provide food employ a cook but this centre had made a deliberate move to recognise and empower children to take on part of this task (1:*D&R*; 3:*MSG*; 4:*ALO*). The democratic process involved in setting up the programme was unique

¹¹⁵ In New Zealand, children normally begin school at the age of five although they are not legally required to attend until they are six.

within the four case studies and provided strong evidence of the 'just' community in action.

Another example related to the move to their current premises. Jennifer and Joy explained how they had involved the children. When the time came to carry out the physical move, the children each chose one item to symbolically carry from the old centre to the new in order to complete a move which the teachers had carried out overnight. Once again significant thought was given to ensuring the children were respectfully involved in creating their own sense of belonging and ownership of the centre.

A spiritual grounding

Teacher preparation at this centre is thorough and professional but also grounded with a particular spiritual orientation. Each morning, all staff gathered to reflect prior to the children's arrival. Christian and Muslim staff shared their perspectives. On the first morning they focused on virtues including kindness, peacefulness and respect. Joy later explained that, in addition to the reflective start to the day, the meeting had been developed to ensure that staff members from both classes were kept informed of daily decisions. Recently, they had experienced less time to talk so she and her colleague, Jennifer, had pressed for an arrangement that ensured positive, daily communication between teachers and management.

Joy and Jennifer reported that they both felt they had introduced a more reflective focus in the centre. They attributed this to their respective degree studies at AUT and Canterbury. They have also been able to effect a change in assessment, moving the centre from 'tick boxes' to learning stories with an emphasis on narrating the 'bigger picture' for individual children and also including parent voice in their records. Since then, expectations from the Ministry of Education have helped in continuing the impetus to gain change

and in the staff meeting, later on the first day; Rania shared her experience of learning about ‘centre’ stories and invited others to think about their use.

Interviews with Joy started during her first year as a newly qualified teacher and when she looked back, she reflected that her employer, who had an AMI diploma and equivalency to a New Zealand teaching diploma, had gradually given her more space to make decisions in the classroom. At first, she had been very strict and Joy felt she doubted her AUT training but two years after qualifying she reported a much greater degree of trust. As noted in the previous chapter, Joy described her first year of practice (after qualification) as being ‘*so wobbly*’; her second year as ‘*starting to feel okay*’ and her third year as ‘*more confident*’ whilst still expressing the feeling that there is ‘*so much room for growth*’ (3.2.6). At the time of observation, Joy reported a feeling of much greater competence in her practice.

Trips and visits – the nature of the centre

As the week went by, the specific culture of the centre became evident. This involved a varied programme of interaction with the community, made possible by support gained from parents and wider whānau. Visits included one to contributing schools – in which each class travelled by bus to a different school – one which a classmate had recently gone to – or to which a five year old was about to enter.

Another trip occurred later in the week, during the afternoon when parents assisted in walking with the children to the local library. This was a regular event and in the following example, the older children prompted younger ones to meet expectations and shared the workings of the available technology. The subtle presence of the teacher is embodied and magnified in the voices of the older children:

Alan became upset when others run about, *“Hey, don’t run in the library.”* He reminds two younger ones, *“Stop jumping on there [the tape deck seat]. You won’t be allowed back if you do that!”*

Shortly after, things have quietened down. Two groups are having a story – one with Jennifer and one with Joy. Others settle at a table to play games and Wiremu helps to sort out two younger ones (3: MSG). Brian sits listening to tapes and helps to orientate a friend in the ways of the library: *“A dragon. You have to press this for a special turn! Can you see that?”* [They peer through the window into the librarian’s work space.] His friend says, *“We will be in trouble!”* Brian replies, *“No, we won’t. Trust me!”*

In the classroom – a typical morning

Back at the centre, Joy fostered a relaxed routine through her constant, engaged attention to the children. In one twenty five minute observation, I noted how she moved smoothly through the classroom making 14 separate connections to children. She presented a numeracy activity to one child, gave a suggestion to enable a child to solve a dispute, helped another child find resources, checked on two children, did a visual check on another, set up lunch preparation, returned to see her original child and suggested a couple of adjustments to enable success, reassured another, responded to the completion of two different activities, affirmed a new relationship and helped connect a different child, soothed an unhappy child and eased him into activity, and finally, set out a piece of material with a child to enable him to work on it independently

At 10.25 Joy moved from this sequence to work with a group of four children who are helping to prepare lunch: measuring rice to go in the rice cooker; frozen vegetables ready for heating; slicing bananas; shelling hard boiled eggs; pouring pretzels into a bowl and yoghurt into cups (4: ALO).

11.00: lunch preparation is finished and Joy extracts young David as he makes a dive to land on top of two children. She takes him to the book corner, reads a story and then responds to Lucy's request to play a Māori language game, Kei a wai?¹¹⁶

Lunch unfolds calmly

11.45 - It is time for relaxation before lunch. Children are then called quietly to take turns to wash their hands. They settle at tables and Joy brings over the rice. She pauses by each child and asks, "*Can you pass your bowl please?*" The children wait patiently. Rania follows in like manner with the eggs prepared by the children, followed by lunch assistant, Nola, who offers the vegetables. When all are served, a karakia is sung and the meal begins. Children are able to serve themselves a second portion and two or three children do so. Nola offers a second choice of pretzels or yoghurt and fruit, as the children finish.

Staff Meetings

After the children have departed at 3pm, there are two meetings. The first is a staff meeting which deals with various administrative issues such as visits, professional development opportunities, a decision to act on changing the mono-cultural nature of many of their materials, a detailed and perceptive discussion on Matariki (the coming of the Pleiades which signals Māori New Year), ideas for communicating with parents via centre stories or a class profile book, and a discussion on the mechanics of 20 free hours (a new Government policy for three and four year olds). This is followed by a 'reflective' meeting in which the teachers share the learning stories they have written for the children in order to gain feedback and reflection from colleagues. Joy contributes that some children are now beginning to set their own goals, noting what they want to do next as a result of teachers

¹¹⁶ 'Kei a wai?' is a language resource provided by the Ministry of Education to promote knowledge of shapes and prepositions in te reo Māori.

responding ‘Yes, when you have done this and this and this, you will be able to do that.’ Children appear to be setting the activity or material as their aim and working towards it. One teacher shared her first learning story – she described the process of writing it – how at first it was very descriptive and then in the middle of the night she got up and hand wrote a second version that became a story *for* the child. Joy gave her encouragement to keep going and all affirmed her story.

Setting goals

On the second day, Fiona provides an illustration of the goal setting that Joy noted in the meeting when she indicates that she would like to move on to some harder maths. Joy affirms her desire but, not wanting to push her too quickly to the next piece in the sequence (which will require her to recognise and order numbers to which she has just been introduced), she defers and encourages her to *“Practise some of the other work before we move on.”* She suggests that Fiona gets out the spindles and says, *“I’ll come and see how you are doing.”* Fiona selects the spindles (a counting activity) and Joy comments, *“Well done, Fiona.”*

Later in the morning, Fiona provides an example of the sort of active concentration that is a key element in Montessori pedagogy (6: *TtoC*). Fiona finds enjoyment in a seemingly mundane task as she energetically scrubs a table [Fig. 2].



Figure 2: Care of the environment

Fiona squeezes out a little cleaning fluid on the table and a similar amount onto the cloth in the basket. She takes a soapy cloth out of the bowl and squeezes it out onto the table. She appears to enjoy the resulting bubbles. She wipes them up, tips out the soapy water, and then fills up the bowl with rinsing water. She seems very confident and when she is finished, quietly and efficiently puts all the materials back in the basket and returns it to the shelf. She takes a break for morning tea but Joy, remaining aware of her self-initiated activity, notes that she returned to her project, moving on to wash the art table (4: *ALO*).

One interpretation

Australian academics, Glenda MacNaughton and G. Williams (2009), outline a commonly held perspective on the Montessori approach:

Her main educational goals...were to improve the individual child's practical daily living skills and to develop each child's intellectual potential to the full....the role of staff is to select developmentally appropriate self-educating materials [and] verbal interaction between staff and children is kept to a minimum. (pp. 402-403).

From an outsiders' point of view, this is a reasonable interpretation but Joy's practice shows a different and deeper reality. I include extra details in the following passages to enable the reader to see how this New Zealand Montessori practitioner interprets the philosophy.

Just the necessary help

The older children often start their day with familiar, ‘easy’ activities¹¹⁷ and today, Wednesday, John and Mark sit, side by side, with some practical life activities. One chooses pouring and the other, a transfer activity using a spoon. They take the opportunity to socialise while Samuel is away on a school visit.

Meanwhile, Joy works with Edgar, showing him how to use the pasting materials. Jeremy stands close by. Once Edgar takes over, Joy quietly withdraws. She sets a music CD play in the background and all is very calm.

A few minutes later, Joy shows the constant attentiveness required of a Montessori teacher, when she returns and beckons Edgar back to the table to show him the final step of replacing his mat (2: *CRE*). Jeremy sits in Edgar’s space, taking the glue from the shelf. Joy watches quietly as Edgar sets out some clay. “*Play dough?*” he queries and Joy supplies a new word for him.

John has selected a puzzle known as the binomial cube. This puzzle is made up of a set of cubes and prisms that the primary Montessori children use for the discovery of the binomial theorem $(a+b)^3$. In the children’s house, however, the puzzle provides a three-dimensional, sensory experience in colour and pattern matching. Joy turns to talk to me and notes John’s facility with this activity. She is planning to show John the trinomial cube,

¹¹⁷ This is characteristic of the three hour ‘work cycle’ that Montessori observed in children who are settled in the environment. Children begin their day with easy, familiar tasks; sometimes have a brief plateau of rest or distraction; and then commit to an activity that requires deeper and longer concentration or perseverance; they complete the cycle with a return to easier materials or activities. Many centres or schools misread the plateau stage and schedule a group recreation period or snack time to coincide with it. This interrupts the cycle and makes the deeper concentration, characteristic of Montessori settings, less likely. (Montessori, 1917/1965, *AMM-I*, pp. 96-110)

the next piece in the sequence, after she spends a few minutes with Oliver. Meanwhile Rosita asks John for help with her puzzle and he responds briefly but kindly (3: MSG) while the two teachers stop to reflect on the relaxed feeling in the class.

Nicole and Kristina are playing a loud game of fire engines. Joy mildly comments, “*Can you choose a different way to play your game – you are distracting a lot of the children*” (1: D&R). They continue their game, a little more quietly.

9.55 – Rosita calls across to the far side of the room to Celina, “*Celina, Celina!*” Celina waves to her. “*Can you please help me?*” Celina runs from her bead (maths) work to help her with her puzzle. Five minutes later and Celina is still with Rosita. They show Joy that there seems to be a missing piece. She comments, “*That is a tricky puzzle.*”

Children continue to move confidently around the room, choosing activities. Nicole and Kristina have transferred to a Practical Life table and are now working alongside Carl and Edgar. Joy kneels down to talk to Fiona; a gesture of respect and then turns to Rosita again and reaffirms that she has a very difficult puzzle. With this acknowledgement, Rosita continues to persevere (6: TtoC).

When Ned comes to Joy to ask if he can help with lunch preparation, she says, “*Yes, but I just have a couple of things to do first.*” He skips away saying, “*I am so hungry.*” Joy is trying to contact two more parents to help with the library trip, scheduled for that afternoon. Personal life intrudes when she gets a call from her son with the news that the local secondary college is flooded as is a neighbouring primary school. The sun is out, however, and

the storm seems to have abated and Joy will soon use this information as a topic of conversation with the children.

If you just watch one time, you can do it

10.15 - Joy settles with John to show him the Trinomial cube. He says, “*My mum says, if you just watch one time, you can do it.*” They discuss the storm and how it kept them both awake. Joy begins to set out the cubes and prisms according to the expanded formula $(a+b+c)^3$ so that each piece relating to red cube ‘ a^3 ’, the blue cube ‘ b^3 ’, or yellow cube ‘ c^3 ’ is in a separate column with the black abc prisms in a column of their own. John starts the cube but Joy indicates that she will take over. “*Just watch.*” John chats as she places the pieces. It is interesting to see the cube coming together.

Joy’s action might seem strange to other teachers but it is part of the Montessori pedagogical approach to provide children with a strong and complete impression of each piece of material when it is first presented. Feez (2007) has written on the role that these sensorial pieces play as semiotic markers and organisers for later cognitive development. Her work suggests that through “recontextualisation of everyday knowledge in Montessori pedagogy [the child is provided with] the origin of educational knowledge, or scientific concepts in Vygotsky’s terms” (p. 312).

Once the presentation is completed, the material is passed to the child as a gift to explore. Joy’s subsequent, respectful comments demonstrate how she reinforces this sense of temporary ownership.



Figure 3: The trinomial cube

John gives a little nod as the final yellow cube goes in. Joy closes the box and then says, *"Your turn."* John undoes the box and sets the yellow based pieces in two lines and then moves them to make them fit in one long column. He sorts all the pieces into columns more or less as Joy showed him. When Oliver comes by....John says, *"No, no, no!"* and his voice sounds as if he is about to cry. John's anxiety relates to a negative experience in another centre. He is a recent arrival in the Kakariki classroom and is still learning to trust the other children. He closes the sides of the box as if to protect his work and attempts to place some of the prisms inside the box. This action makes his task much more difficult as he cannot easily see the matching faces of the prisms. He has mixed the pieces up somewhat and he scratches his head and takes some out. Joy comes back to reassure him, *"It's a tricky one."* She provides some scaffolding, saying, *"Can I just take these ones out? See, if you turn it around....Can I go?"*

"Yes," says John and starts over. He experiments with placement and at 10.30 he is still persevering (6: *TtoC*). He looks around, and shows his trust in his teacher as he calls, *"Joy, Joy, can you help me?"*

"Yes, I can," she says as she appears at his side. *"What do you think? What do you want me to do? Shall we take these pieces out? Is it okay for me to do this?"*

John says, "Yes."

"Hmmm," says Joy, *"I see. See what you can do now."*

A minute or two later, Joy returns to give John a helpful hint (in Montessori pedagogical terms, 'a point of interest'), suggesting, *"Try matching the blue to the blue."* Joy moves away and John resumes his problem-solving. He experiments for a little while but the cube comes out uneven and once more he appeals for help. This time, Rania says, *"I will be there in a minute."* She comes and removes a few pieces slowly, once again setting John up for success. Alan joins them and he also lends a hand. John quickly picks up the yellow cube to ensure that he will be the one to complete the puzzle. Very soon the puzzle is finished. The sides go up, box lid is on, mat folded and John carries it back to the shelf. All is complete by 10.36.

There is a lull and Joy takes time to sweep up some crumbs. She does so slowly and deliberately providing yet another quiet example for the children to absorb.

Respectful conversations

Common perception of Montessori centres sees them as silent, strict and individually focussed as people often mistake the quietness of the presentation with a general lack of conversation. Providing children with opportunities for conversation, however, has been important in Montessori pedagogy since the opening of the first children's house in San Lorenzo. The following excerpts demonstrate how Joy fosters this art to extend children's thinking as they work together on the lunch preparation.

Four children are helping to make sandwiches. Joy chats about the flood at the local secondary college, telling them about her son's experience. Alistair

has a large knife and begins to cut a pear. He cuts the top off and then says, *"I can't cut it."* Joy cuts it in half. Then he asks, referring to Joy's son, *"Why was he going through the puddles up to his knees?"*

Joy answers with a question, *"What happened last night?"*

"Rain."

"Yes." She goes on to talk about the blocked drains and how the flood came with so much rain. *"You know how there is a little gap under the door, I think the flood just got through that. You could check our door after lunch and see if there is a little gap."*

Discussion continues on the flood. *"X. School is on the flat, I wonder if that was flooded. Why is Oliver's house on the hill?"* The children ponder about rain water running down the hill.

Alistair slices the pear thinly. He has manipulated the knife very confidently and is keeping his fingers carefully out of the way. Once finished he goes over to check the door and on his return, announces, *"There isn't any water coming in to our school!"*

A second example of deliberately fostered conversation involved a different group of children, once again involved in lunch preparation. Here the children's contributions are welcomed, relationships are fostered, and a literacy moment is highlighted. Kristina, Fiona and Celina come first and then Sean and Kay join in. Sean offers, *"Spaghetti would be nice."*

Joy suggests that he get some writing paper and a pencil so they can write his idea down on their shopping list (4: ALO). Joy asks, *"What is the first letter in spaghetti?"* They have some initial guesses and then Fiona provides a clue by writing a large 'S' in the air. Joy says in a genuine tone, *"Thank you for the suggestion, Sean."*

Susie is transferring beans, spoon by spoon from cans into a large bowl.

"Lots and lots of baked beans!" she says.

"Yes!" laughs Joy. It takes quite a while to spoon them all in. *"So, Fiona, are you going to Grandma's this weekend?"*

"No," replies Fiona, *"they've got jobs to do."*

Samantha says, *"Excuse me, I'm going to do this last apple."*

Joy asks, *"Do you need help?"*

Joy asks the children, *"Are you finished? What do you think you need to do, Fiona? Another plate? Great idea!"* They re-arrange the plate.

Reflection and discussion

Joy's experience was not without conflict and challenge but as she began to gain in confidence as a professional it was evident that she was effecting change and was constantly aware of her role as a reflective practitioner. Joy's main focus, however, was on ensuring that children could experience control in their own environment. This, for her, was a question of justice. In her first year, she described helping the children to take ownership in caring for a new fish tank and the delight she felt when "I heard three children say: "Come and look at *my* fish" (3.1.3). I was able to observe this during the case study when a couple of children took complete charge of cleaning the fish tank. Different children were assisted to gain practical skills throughout the study, for example, David was given a quiet lesson in sweeping on the first morning and Fiona showed her energetic competence in cleaning tables. Many other children cared for both each other and the environment as they went about their day.



Figure 4: Cleaning the fish tank



Figure 5: Lunch preparation

The lunch programme was a particular example of belief in the competence of children. Within this process, there was quiet follow through to help children see their tasks through to completion but Joy also used this time for purposeful conversation, deliberately and supportively extending the children's thinking.

It was, however, in their day to day attitudes that the teachers demonstrated how their holistic approach ensured that children could experience a balance of play alongside academic, sensorial and practical activity. The dynamic arrangement of the Montessori classroom, described by Krogh (1981), was clearly evident. Children show both caring attitudes and joy in their relationships with each other and their teachers in the pictures below.



Figure 6: Helping others



Figure 7: Sharing the joy

Professional balance was another area which we discussed. The emphasis in Montessori on creating a beautiful environment is deeply satisfying but can impinge on commitments to family and community life. Both Joy and Jennifer spoke about how they were setting limits on their time in the centre and expressed resistance to some of the demands placed upon them by management.

Joy also revealed the next step in her journey as a reflective practitioner when she discussed her plans to take a term out to study Te Reo Māori in an intensive course. As a single mother of four children, she would do this at considerable sacrifice to herself and her family, but saw it as a matter of key importance in capturing the ‘spirit’ of *Te Whāriki*:

And taking it from a bicultural perspective, that the spirit of a culture is often held within the language and just by continuing to follow that pathway andI'm a New Zealander and I know 'diddly squat' te reo Māori. I use next to none, and both as a New Zealander and even more so as an early childhood educator, I feel morally obligated to do it. It has been very interesting to have Rania's response to me doing it but I am very excited about it and I hope that I can be really instrumental in bringing more here and bringing more to the children so they see it as a living language. (3.2.13)

When we met again, Joy reported that this experience had marked a highly significant point in her journey as a teacher.

Capturing those things of the spirit

When I sat down to interview Joy, towards the end of the case study, I commented that the New Zealand curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), offered a more holistic framework than in the past, including body, mind and spirit. Joy replied with a touching example:

...And being able to capture those little moments – to capture those things of spirit. To be able to sit while a child is playing with your fingers and not know what is going on and just to be.

I was watching a child, can't remember who it was, and they were sitting at that desk – near where you are sitting. Just staring out and I was wondering, "I wonder what you are thinking?" And I looked up about five minutes later and he was still there and I went and stood directly behind him and just watched and eventually I could see that he was watching this bird away on the far side of the green. It was just quietly, underneath the tree. And he must have sensed me behind him and he turned round and said, [whispering] "Isn't it beautiful..."

Those little things, for me, that is spirit. (3.2.16)



Figure 8: Time for reflection

Joy's image was the one that stayed with me from this centre. Despite the bustle created by the community visits, there was still time for children to experience silence, nature and reflection. The attentive love of the teacher was clearly in evidence.

Case Study Three – Kahikatea centre - variety of experience

Kahikatea is a small centre, licensed for 20 children and situated in a suburban house which has been opened out to provide two linked spaces – one housing practical, art, and sensorial activities and the other holding literacy, mathematics and geography materials. The children have the option of working on the floor or at small tables in both areas. Outside, the garden provides ample room for physical play. It has a fixed climbing structure with a slide, a sandpit, garden beds, small playhouse and rabbit hutch and the teachers also offer a number of balancing, carpentry and water based activities. The garage placed to one side of the garden has been modified for use as a playroom but when I returned after the summer break, this room had been turned into a reception classroom for the youngest children.

Staff at this centre included three AUT Montessori graduates and one long-term Montessori assistant. The owner, Rachael, finished her AUT qualification the year before the case study, but has been teaching in Montessori for more than 20 years. Qingzhao, originally from China, graduated two years ago, and Francine, another long-term Montessori teacher, completed one year ago. Rachael, Francine and Lyn had all worked together at the centre Rachael had previously set up with another colleague. Qingzhao had been at Kahikatea for a year before Rachael took it over.

I was interested to observe in this centre as it was made up of a strong group, two of whom had interacted with my ideas from the basis of prior knowledge. Observations were carried out close to the end of the year but although there were some preparations going on for the summer and Christmas break, the children mostly carried on as usual.

In an interview with Francine, in the year following the observation, she mentioned that her first impression of the house had been that it was small and pokey. However, subsequent work had opened it out and with Rachael's financial assistance; the team had continued to make changes to the environment. A deck was added which became a favourite space for children to work. Francine noted how they had been inspired by the outdoor programme of another Montessori preschool, involved in the Enviro-schools programme. When they changed their programme to an indoor-outdoor one, the deck became a transition space because outside *“was where they really wanted to be. And those children that were working on the deck are those children that are first to go outside in the morning”* (24.1.8). Even without these changes, the garden was a favourite spot during my observations and the pet rabbit, the vegetable garden beds, visiting monarch butterflies, the fixed play equipment, bikes, balancing game, sand, water, playhouse,



**Figure 9: Tending the garden Figure 10: Feeding the rabbit Figure 11: Watering the garden
Figure 12: Playing with bubbles**

tricycles, blocks, and other activities, toys and tools, afforded many opportunities for the children's discoveries.

Scenarios

The Kahikatea centre offered many examples that related to the development of the 'just community', however, I have selected just two to exemplify the practice of Rachael and Qingzhao and one other to highlight the more contemporary approach of the centre. The centre was utilising the Virtues project and in the week that I attended, the virtue of 'kindness' was reviewed (previous week's focus) and then 'helpfulness' was introduced. Several times during the week, teachers brought the attention of the children to this concept but the most natural experience related to the construction of a new water trough. In this example, we see how Rachael, in her second year after qualification, but a very experienced Montessori practitioner, used every opportunity to create spaces for the children to experience and discover the meaning of the concept.

The new water trough

Rachael says, *"Darren, you look like a man who needs a job."* He leaps off his bike to come and help cut the binding from a big box. Two others gather. *"What is it?"* they ask. Rachael does not reply directly but says, *"Darren, would you like to collect this and we'll put it in the rubbish bin,"* indicating the plastic binding. *"We'll play with them..."* he says, running with the plastic streaming on either side. However, Rachael anticipates potential danger and gets him to collect them up. Soon, they have the materials for the new water trough out of the box. *"It's a seat,"* says one. *"What is it?"* asks another. Rachael returns. *"We need to rip it,"* says one child. *"No,"* she smiles, *"We need to read it."* She shows them the plan which gives directions on how to assemble the trough. *"Who is going to be able to be responsible and hold onto the castors?"* Tim is asked to help. *"What kind of tool do you call this?"* *"A screwdriver,"* suggests someone. Rachael prompts, *"No...a sp__."* *"A spanner,"* says David.

Tim holds the spanner. *"I'm going to show you how it works and then Tim can try,"* says Rachael. *"And then my turn, eh?"* says Kate. David says, *"Excuse me*

Rachael.” In reply to Kate’s query, Rachael replies, *“It’s a water trough.”* The word moves quickly round the group. As the assembly continues, Rachael says, *“It says we have to build the frame together.”* The boys have fun spinning the castors. Rachael helps them to focus by giving information to make their search successful: *“Tim and David, we are looking for one long bolt. Which one is the long one....this is the short one.”*

Rachael gets a chair and David and Tim decide to get one too. They need to connect the two long and short pieces of framing. There is some moving of chairs to get the next long piece ready and then Rachael gives Nathan a turn to put a long piece into the frame for the trough. When Mei-Xing appears she sits down by the frame. She peeps under and holds both sides. Rachael recognises her presence by inviting her to put in the final corner bolt.

Nathan returns, on a pedal car, and inquires, *“How’s it coming on?”*

“It’s coming on well, thanks,” says Rachael.

Bryony stops by and Rachael takes advantage of a teachable moment to ask, *“What shape have we made?”* *“A rectangle,”* replies Mei-Xing.

Rachael tightens the bolts and collects up the rest of the plastic packaging. Nathan says, *“I’m going to help you.”* Rachael notices Bryony and asks if she would like to help, adding *“I can give you a job in just a minute.”* She is helped to tighten one of the bolts and Rachael comments, *“Whoa, you are strong! Do you have Weetbix for breakfast?”*

Nathan is looking at the plan and Rachael gives him something special to look for. Once again, she guides him to success: *“Have a look on the plan and see where the plug goes. The plug goes underneath so if this is the top [she indicates on the plan] where does it need to go?”* They work out that it needs to be turned over and discover the plug hole. *“There it is!”* *“Now I need some helpers to put the*

chairs back in the playroom,” says Rachael. They all pack up chairs as it is nearly lunchtime. The trough is flipped over and placed in the frame and all run over to look. Rachael shows how it can be moved, *“Now, put the brakes on, one, two!”*

Six children were involved in the construction of the new water trough and Rachael integrated practical skills, language, literacy and mathematics into the experience, scaffolding for success by offering the children tips and clues. Rachael created a collaborative and well paced environment by anticipating the children’s desire to be involved and informing individuals when their turn was coming. The children sometimes spontaneously offered their help. As the children collaborated on the task, they gained a practical understanding of the concept of ‘helpfulness’ as well as experiencing all the elements of the just community (1: *D&R*; 2: *CRE*; 3: *MSG*; 4: *ALO*; 5: *FtoD*; and 6: *FtoD*).

Imaginary play

As an already experienced teacher, Rachael brought awareness of other models of education from the degree to the Kahikatea centre. As a result, children at this centre were adept with the Montessori materials but they were also expert in the realm of imaginary play which they often carried out while they were ‘working’. In this extract, the children became immersed in a traditional fairytale theme:

David says, *“The monster is coming!”*

Fiona says, *“You finish your square.”*

“Okay, pin, pin, pin,” David pretends to sew all over his square. He does one stitch. *“I’m not a princess, I’m a boy. Who are you going to be?”*

“We are going to be the dragon. Both of you. She ran away and got in the forest. And then the fire blowed on you and you were never seen again.”

Changing the plot quickly, Fiona says, *“But the prince saved me and cut your head off! And the prince’s father...”*

David says, *“But I blew fire at the prince’s father and then they blew fire at you!”*

“She’s hiding,” says Fiona.

David says, *“Where’s your father, we need to get him.”*

Tim says, *“We need to have a meeting with him.”* [They both blow...]

“They disappeared,” says Fiona. *“They flew away.”*

Fiona brings the play to an end as she says in a deep voice, *“The princess adored him and I married her.”*

Although some staff showed hesitancy towards this kind of play and attempted to redirect the attention of the players back to their ‘work’ (sewing and a numeracy puzzle), Rachael noted that she was comfortable with this exploration. At a later date, I noted that she took Montessori’s advice in using the story approach to inspire a geography project (Montessori, *CSW*, 1989). *Flat Stanley* (a boy who was reduced in size and shape to fit in a letter) helped the children to create links around the world when they created their own ‘Stanley’ letters to send to family and friends.

Outside with Qingzhao

In the third example, Qingzhao, who is in her second year of teaching, shows more tentative practice. It is 11.00 and Qingzhao is outside with seven children.

Leo is keen to have a car or trike but they are all taken. He goes over to the rabbit with Mei-Xing. Nathan has stilts which Qingzhao demonstrates but he gives up quickly. He goes to help Qingzhao bring out the carpentry

equipment and then begins to saw. Bryony rides past on a red car. "*We are going fast!*" she says.

Leo feeds the rabbit some bark pieces. Qingzhao notices and suggests that he could ask for a carrot. She models the wording, "*Can I have a carrot for the bunny?*" and helps him go inside (1: *DeR*). When Leo returns, he casts his words to the wind as he runs across the playground, saying, "*I got a carrot. It's for the bunny, it's for the bunny...*"

Next, Leo finds a hoop and then notices Qingzhao is putting in fresh hay and newspaper in the hutch. The rabbit looks very well cared for and responds easily to Qingzhao's gentle overtures. Qingzhao washes her hands and stops by Nathan to check his construction. There is a problem with a nail that is too long but Nathan solves the problem without help by selecting an extra piece of wood to go under his original crossed pieces. He begins to hammer and Qingzhao withdraws (6: *TtoC*).

Ian is in the little playhouse and Qingzhao comes over to see him and Leo. Ian is claiming the bike but Qingzhao says, "*I'm not sure who got it first.*" Leo says, "*Back up.*" Qingzhao counsels patience, "*Ian, his turn is not finished yet. Wait for a while,*" as he tries to take the trike from Leo. He holds back but then tries a second time. One of the older boys, Tim, stepping in to help, obviates the need for Qingzhao's intervention, saying: "*Come with me, Ian*" and encourages him to run (3: *MSG*). Ian runs around the corner as the other children ride over....and he has another go at getting a bike. Qingzhao comes back to help and Ian gives Leo a hoop to carry when he gives up the bike.

Qingzhao's teaching style in the outdoor environment was one of quiet responsiveness. She anticipated some areas of frustration and clearly had the trust of the children. In this community, however, it is not entirely up to the teachers to take control and five year old, Tim, showed his expertise with younger children when he stepped up to defuse a dispute by offering a distraction.

Reflecting on the teaching team

The teachers at Kahikatea were balanced in terms of experience, interests and abilities. Rachael was democratic in her leadership. She came in and out...spending time in administration as well as working in the centre with the children. Prior to Montessori, Rachael was a physiotherapist, where she had specialised in work with children. She continued to use this knowledge to assist children with autism, movement and speech challenges, incorporating them seamlessly into the centre. Rachael also explained that she drew inspiration from the centres of Reggio Emilia. This factor accounted for the presence of extensive and detailed documentation within the centre.

During my week of observation, Qingzhao, a second year teacher, took the role of guiding children through craft activities and frequent supervision of outdoor play. During circle time at the end of the week, Qingzhao used a formal, questioning approach to elicit responses from the children on their understanding of helpfulness. Qingzhao had a quiet, measured approach to gathering experience, perhaps because of her insecurity with English. She reported in her interview that she valued the collaborative, team approach but also pointed out that she found it helpful to have an outside mentor to whom she could direct questions. This factor is highlighted by Heald (2009)

who, like Qingzhao, noted the importance of outside mentoring for ‘saving face’ for the Chinese early childhood teachers she interviewed for her study.

When I interviewed Qingzhao the following year she had assumed a role as teacher of the afternoon reception class. Here she enjoyed the independence this afforded in developing her skills with this age group. She reflected during the interview:

I am very happy working with the younger ones maybe because English is not my mother tongue....I am very happy to work with them and do presentations in practical life and so on and some maths, simple maths and language. I am confident to do that now (17.1.4).

An interesting feature of this centre was the relaxed approach to children weaving imaginary play into their activities. The children worked with a variety of standard Montessori materials and were involved in writing, reading, simple mathematics, sewing, geography as well as holiday crafts and outdoor activities. Their pace was generally relaxed and the mood was happy and teachers seemed less concerned with the need to constantly ground children in reality; a factor that will be discussed in the following chapter.

Case Study Four - Matai Centre – a third year experience

Robyn works in the Matai centre run by a parent co-operative in a large city suburb. Prior to this she had worked for over a year in another Montessori centre which she had chosen carefully, in anticipation of receiving mentoring from an AMI teacher who was employed there. Robyn commented on the support she gained from both this teacher and another co-teacher. However, both teachers left after she had been in the centre for a year. The owner of the centre (a long-term Montessori teacher without a recognised early childhood qualification), was required to employ Robyn in a 'position of responsibility' in order to keep the centre open. Without the buffering and support of her mentors, Robyn found this position untenable. Robyn had developed strong bonds with both children and families but she decided that for the sake of her professional integrity and growth she needed to move on.

When I asked Robyn if I could observe her in her new environment, she was working at Matai Montessori centre with Holly, another AMI trained teacher. Holly, her new mentor, had also completed an AUT mainstream degree but had had several years of experience prior to this, and she provided the continued support and collegiality Robyn was seeking.

I carried out thirteen observations at the Matai centre, spread over a period of ten weeks. I came in and out for both morning and afternoon sessions as my work situation allowed but was made to feel a part of the centre from the first day. On my second visit, I discovered I had been quietly allocated my own hook and shoe bag, a symbol of belonging gifted to each child on first becoming part of the group.

Leadership and team collaboration

During a staff discussion, I asked a question regarding the staff's cohesiveness and Robyn noted Holly's leadership qualities:

You have those attributes of calmness and patience for Africa (laughter) and not an unspoken expectation even but that it is just the way that it is done here...

Holly replied:

Yes...But I think that everything that we do as a team is pretty amazing – in that we discuss strategies; we discuss everything that we do. Some things and many things just happen spontaneously, but we do discuss a lot, don't we?

Discussion followed on the way they were able to intuit requirements in the classroom and Holly noted:

You sort of know you are needed there instead of there. Even having discussed something, but as the situation comes up I think we sort of read each other.

Sarah, a teacher who had been observing for some days prior to joining the team, noted that there was a 'mindfulness' attached to each of the teachers:

It is who they are as a person that they are all Montessorians. It is not a 9-3 mentality at all. And that comes through very clear. And that is the difference between it being conscious or automatic. This is a part of their personalities, this is the blending and the linking and it has definitely come from guidance. I don't know how you could consciously build that...

Robyn made a point about respect for the children:

I think that one thing that happens as well is that it is about the children here. There are never conversations about children above their heads, it is always, even if we are talking to each other, we are always talking in a way that it is very clear that we are modelling how we are having a discussion, that the children are listening, they are part of it. It is never a bit of a nudge, nudge, wink, wink, what I did last night, how was your weekend? I think that that is a big part of it as well. [Group members, murmur assent] Whenever the children are here, this is the children's house and everything is that they are included in that and that means conversations that we have with each other too. I think that is quite a part of that.

In an interview before I began the case study, Robyn described her first, contrasting experience, in which she learnt some valuable lessons:

I was having difficulties with [the supervisor] when [two colleagues, including mentor teacher] were still there. But I had their support and they had a lot of weight as to how it was run, how the classroom was set up. Every week at the meetings they were constantly, almost fighting for the rights of children to have the environment a certain way and constantly having to....almost fight for and justify why they were doing what they were doing. And that was really valuable for me too because that was all about the breakdown and analysis of absolutely everything you do (1.2.1).

Robyn's observation is supported by Montessori (1924), who says:

Child psychology has yet to explore the defence mechanisms of the child. Defensive characteristics are like the temporary disturbance on the sea's surface brought about by conflicting winds. The problem is to provide an environment freed from obstacles...Then the defensive phenomena – like the many waves of the sea, disappear at the dropping of the wind...allowing the depths of the soul to begin to reveal themselves. (pp. 10-11)

Robyn, as a reflective practitioner, coped with the obstacles presented to her as an adult, but recognised it was impossible to create the sort of environment Montessori envisaged without the support of colleagues. In the second casa she experienced a marked contrast and in the following observations the opportunity to engage in respectful interactions with both colleagues and children is clearly demonstrated.

First day at Matai Centre

Matai Centre is a one room centre, licensed for 30 children and run by a parent committee. It was established in the 1980s and has had fully qualified

Montessori teachers, mainly drawn from overseas, throughout its existence. The centre had four teachers – Robyn and Holly who were fulltime and Jacqui and Leah who were part-time. The pace was leisurely and there was ample non-contact time for both individual teachers and staff meetings. This seemed to be a by-product of the parent co-operative. There was not the same financial pressure in this centre that others had to face, with mortgages to pay and (in some cases) investors to satisfy.

The centre had a relatively small outdoor space but this had been purposely redeveloped with a small enclosed vegetable and flower garden, art table, carpentry bench, sandpit, steps, mounds, native plants and a variety of equipment to meet the need for physical challenge and skill development. The children utilised the space to the full, playing games and using the various materials within it. Outside the fence, there was an adjoining, small, community playground and parents and children often gravitated to this after the session was finished.

My first visit began at lunchtime and I arrived as the children sat down to tables set with flowers and candles. Children and teachers said grace together and the meal began with the teachers who sat to eat and converse with them. Children in this centre brought a packed lunch but there were other opportunities for food preparation. Father's Day was a project that took a good deal of time and effort and included cooking as a major focus. On two afternoon sessions, the children practised making frittatas and cakes...and on one morning they were observed wrapping cake they had baked to give to their fathers. The actual occasion unfolded with grace and attention – with children confidently setting out morning tea and coffee and serving food to their visitors with aplomb.



Figure 13: Preparing for the fathers

Other aspects of this observation that stood out included a project on Aotearoa New Zealand, further geography work, the initiation of new children, and the ongoing care of children with additional needs.

Each morning, Holly focused on giving children first presentations of the many materials and activities in the classroom and Robyn, Jacqui and Leah were engaged in giving follow-up presentations, care and guidance. Robyn, now in her third year of teaching, was responsible for organising the afternoon project work; a role which suited her creative talents.

In this children's house, there was much to reflect on in my chosen focus on relational communities. Children in this setting were part of a longstanding community, so the routine was settled and expectations were clearly understood. During one morning session, a child of two and a half, on her second day at Matai, was shown how to water plants inside and once

outside, of her own volition, she began to apply her new knowledge, watering a variety of plants [Figs. 14 and 15]. When more children came outside, a gardening activity caught her eye [Figs.16 and 17] and then Robyn assisted her to join the group [Fig.18]. At first, she watched [Fig. 19] and then it was her turn to become involved in the planting of seeds with Robyn [Fig.20] and the other children. The final, magical step occurred, after a



Figure 14: Watering plants



Figure 15: Watering continues



Figure 16: The Matai garden



Figure 17: Group gardening



Figure 18: Desire to join in



Figure 19: Watching

picnic on the lawn, when she quietly returned to the garden, by herself, to plant more seeds from her tightly held packet [Fig. 21].



Figure 20: Taking a turn



Figure 21: Quiet return

All this was achieved through the attraction of the casa community plus Robyn's own quiet skill; knowing when to assist and when to step back to allow the newest member to independently take her place (1: *D&R*; 3: *MSG*; 4: *ALO*; 5: *FtoD*; 6: *TtoC*). In the following section we see the influence of Robyn's innovative and creative approach to teaching.

Bi-cultural Curriculum

In Aotearoa, it is considered essential that children become aware of the culture of both partners in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* – the Treaty of Waitangi [1840]: an agreement between *tangata whenua* [Māori, the indigenous people

of the land] and the [British] Crown. Robyn had instigated a project on volcanoes and this was still ongoing when I first came. As part of their evolving investigation the children had examined the geography of Aotearoa New Zealand. They had made a relief model of New Zealand prior to my arrival and on the first afternoon, the children painted this with much discussion and revisiting of knowledge [Fig.22]. On a subsequent afternoon, Robyn told the traditional story of Maui and his brothers fishing up the land of Aotearoa and the children began to write and draw in response [Figs. 23, 25 and 26]. The dynamics of the group created a rich learning environment. Later in the sequence of observation, I saw that preparation for a visit to the museum and the experience of watching a Māori concert party had inspired the teachers and children to extend their knowledge of Maori *waiata* and *poi*. [Fig. 24].



Figure 22: Relief map of Aotearoa

Figure 23: How Maui fished up Aotearoa/NZ



Figure 24: Waiata (song) with poi

Date: 5 September 2007

Our Ma lineing
 They wuz Fau
 but they They rob
 on The Cinoo
 and oh The Cinoo
 they wuz
 Fishing and They
 wuz on h Maui
 was hiving manna
 The Fia and
 the Maui slas
 let Me irka
 oh Kia but hope
 ous and The Maui
 cauf cu Mthing and
 The Maui Pild and
 Pild and Pild and
 The Maui caat land
 Name: Luke

Figure 25: Luke's story

[Maui's Fish]

Oun mounceing they wuz fau bruthes. They rod on the cinoo and on the cinoo they wuz fishing and they wuz oun Maui was hiding undu the flau and the Maui sias let me ivla on kia but honee ous and the Maui caut cumthing and the Maui plld and plld and plld and the Maui caut land.

One morning there was four brothers. They rowed on their canoe and on the canoe they was fishing and there was one Maui was hiding under the floor and then Maui says let me ...[*unsure of meaning*] and then Maui caught something and then Maui pulled and pulled and pulled and then Maui caught land.

Figure 26: Transcript of Luke's story - Maui's fish

World geography is a natural progression and puzzle maps enable children to handle country pieces and gain a sensory picture based on both touch and vision. Robyn's project work helped to augment these experiences; introducing additional artefacts to handle, photographs and books to look at, language and music to hear and reproduce, and cooking to taste.

The relational nature of the Montessori children's house was a strong feature at Matai centre. The children often shared their discoveries and exploration, as seen below [Figs. 27 and 28].



Figure 27: Puzzle map of Asia



Figure 28: Sharing a new atlas

On a different day, Robyn assisted with deeper learning, when an older five year old was observed, creating her own map of Asia. She cut, pasted and labelled in a long period of concentration, with occasional spelling input followed by discussion with Robyn.



Figure 29: Map making



Figure 30: Discussing final product

Cooking in the casa

The following sequence is quite long but has been chosen to emphasise Robyn and Holly's role as guides and also to highlight the competence and confidence of the children and their willingness to share skills with their fellows.

It is Thursday afternoon and the children and teachers are preparing to make carrot cake and frittata in preparation for tomorrow's visit by the

fathers. During a two hour period of engagement the children were given supervised access to sharp knives, graters, scissors and an electric fry-pan. The skills for using these were imparted calmly. Help is asked for graciously and the children confidently remind the adults of their responsibilities. Robyn takes a natural opportunity to incorporate literacy practice and one child spontaneously invites play with language sounds. The children are aware of recycling and happily volunteer to clean up when finished.

Preparation begins

Lunch is finished gradually and when one child begins to sing, *"It's time to pack away..."* Holly picks up his tune and sings a response, *"It's time to do some cooking..."*

There is discussion of sweet and savoury as children sit down at two different tables. Robyn says, *"Did you know, there are two different cooking activities happening this afternoon; at one table, carrot cake and at the other, frittata."*

Four children choose the savoury option: Paola (5), Luke (4), John (4) and Morgan (4). Hands are washed and children collect ingredients that are mostly ready to go and quickly move into action. Two children begin to chop. Oil is tipped, bowls are spun, and packets are shaken (2: CRE; 4: ALO).

Luke says, *"I don't want to cut onion. It makes your eyes all watery."* He picks up a bunch of parsley and says, *"It looks like broccoli, it looks like a tree."*

John asks for help with cutting. As the sequence continues, Robyn explains the difference in the new scissors. She modifies her demonstration and then she offers a change of tool so that John is able to experience success.

Robyn says, *“Are there some more scissors?”* she shows John, *“These new scissors have one hole that is larger and one that is smaller...”* She turns to Morgan and shows him how to slice a tomato and then back to John, *“Can I show you ...how to cut the curly part into quite small pieces, very small, very fine...”* Luke watches and copies her too. Robyn notes, *“It is quite tricky. Would you like to cut it with a knife? Use a board to really push your knife against. Do you ever do cooking at home, John, or does Mummy always do the cooking by herself?”*

John replies, *“Sometimes she does it by herself and sometimes I help her.”*

As the children continue, they remind each other of the things they have learnt and freely express ideas to improve their skills in food preparation. Since they know they are on a learning pathway there is no problem in trialling different ideas.

Paola drops a carrot.

Luke says, *“You might have to wash that.”*

John requests a sharper knife. Robyn offers, *“Try this one.”* She shows him the serrated edge and asks, *“Is that better?”*

John replies, *“I think so, let’s give it a try.”*



Figure 31: Chop, grate, slice, snip...

Teachers are vigilant about safety issues but information is given in a friendly fashion. When Paola holds up the end of the carrot she is grating, “*I think your fingers might be getting a little too close,*” says Robyn (1: D&R; 4: ALO).

As they continue, opportunities for building on different forms of knowledge occur naturally through conversation and sharing of practical skills. A literacy moment occurs when Paola asks, “*How many words...*” Robyn checks her meaning, “*How many syllables..?*” She claps. “*to – ma- to*” The children join in.

John says, “*It’s getting in a mess.*”

Robyn replies, “*Yes, cooking can be messy.*”

Then he says, “*How many in parsley?*”

Robyn says, “*Pars-ley*” (4: ALO).

Luke has finished his parsley snipping but Robyn encourages him to pluck the stalks completely. She shows him how to nip off the remaining pieces with his fingers and he works at it until it is all finished (6: TtoC).

Sustainability and another literacy moment

The children’s awareness of sustainability is followed up by a trip to the centre’s worm farm. This begins as Robyn affirms Morgan’s comment:

“*We’ve got a lot of compost.*”



Figure 32: The worm farm

There is a discussion and trial of some feta cheese and then Robyn points out: *‘I think we need to go and put this [indicating the waste] in the worm farm and then we will have an empty bowl.’*

‘I’ll go,’ says John. *‘I’ll come too,’* says Luke. *‘I don’t need help, thank you,’* says John.

Robyn quickly attends to the possibility of Luke’s hurt feelings by suggesting a literacy activity which fits the context (4: *ALO*). When Luke holds up his parsley stalks, Robyn comments that Jacqui’s guinea pigs would love them (1: *D&R*) and suggests, *‘You could write a note and leave it on her bag.’*

Luke says, *‘I want to write a note. Where’s the paper?’* They find some together.

Paola appears again, and asks, *‘Is there anything else to wash?’*

Luke says, very quietly, *‘These are for the guinea pigs...’* He writes, *‘Thes...’* and then goes to Robyn. *‘Robyn I forgot how to write ‘these’*” He shifts to another table. *‘This is tricky....how do you spell ‘guinea?’*” Robyn helps by providing the phonemes, *‘G...n...e ..g-nee’* Luke asks, *‘Is it a silent ‘e’?’*

Paola is cracking eggs. *"This is my job. Can I crack one?"*

"Would that be helpful?" Robyn produces a rubber band for Luke. She trims the paper Luke has written on and rolls a section back around the parsley. He takes it to put by Jacqui's bag and then Robyn asks, *"Have you got Jacqui's name on there?"*

Luke replies, *"Oh, no."* He sounds out Jacqui's name. *"I wrote Jacqui's name."*
"Excellent. Good thing you have been doing those reading folders," says Robyn.

The emphasis on respect helps the children in their developing conversation skills and they confidently remind their teachers of expectations. The teachers reply in like manner:

"You've got that on the chair," says John, noticing the milk.

"Mmm..." says, Robyn. *"Thank you for noticing. I just got it out from the fridge. So it is cold."*

"But it might fall," says Luke.

Robyn thanks them for their concern and moves it to the table. *"Just a splash..."*

"Perhaps on the kitchen bench," she says to Luke who is still holding the parsley stalks, *"so when Jacqui comes to have a cup of tea she will notice."*

Paola comes to ask for help with opening the herb bottles. She puts a spoonful into her egg mixture, having cracked and whisked six eggs by herself. Robyn asks, *"Do we need some of this....paprika?"* Robyn then turns her attention to Morgan while she stirs onions in the electric fry pan and gives a safety reminder: *"Morgan, you are making me nervous standing in behind here, can you stand in front of me."* Morgan asks if he can put in the mushrooms

he has chopped. *"I'm just going to let the onion cook a bit more and then you may,"* she says.

Taking a tuakana role

The children interact in a thoughtful and considerate manner and Paola takes on the role of *tuakana* or older sibling as she demonstrates what to do. Paola assumes the teacher's voice: *"Shall I show you how to cut the cheese?"* she says to John, who is having trouble. She reports, *"Robyn – he's finished the cheese."* Then, *"Robyn, what shall I do now?"* Luke comes over for a turn and she says to him, *"Mix it like this – try not to spill it."* Luke has a go and then Robyn says, *"May I just have a little turn: Did we use all of that milk? Ah...just enough for a cup of tea!"* Smiles are exchanged.

The children volunteer for washing, sweeping and delivering more scraps to the worms and then Paola stands by to scoop the mixture into pans ready to cook. The end of the session comes quickly.

The cooking scenario offered many and rich opportunities for learning and the teachers skilfully supported the children in their discoveries about each other and the tools of their culture. In the next extract, we see that life is not always idyllic in the Montessori casa but despite this, there are always opportunities for learning.

That looks quite dumb...

On a different afternoon, Robyn reminds the children that Papua New Guinea is part of the Pacific ring of fire that was discussed yesterday. Nicolas looks at the picture Holly is displaying for each child to see, of a person, painted and ready for a 'Sing sing' and says, *"That looks quite dumb."* Holly responds, *"What does dumb mean?"*

Nicolas says, *"Not good."*

Daisy comments on the picture – *"I love her eyes. I love her mouth."*

Nicolas retorts, *"It's not a girl!"*

Daisy ignores Nicolas's comment and says, *"We could draw a picture just like that."*

Holly continues with the discussion and gently explains how much time it would have taken the person in the picture to paint his face ready for the 'Sing sing' performance. The children begin to pay more attention to the detail of the picture and Nicolas runs to find the flag for Papua New Guinea.

This example illustrates Montessori's recommendations regarding the use of fantasy with young children. Montessori saw an issue of justice for children when adult fantasy/humour is presented as children's literature. Nicolas's favourite reading matter, 'Captain Underpants' is a series based on an adult's play on children's humour (Pilkey, 1997). The books are full of derogatory comments which Nicolas has readily absorbed.¹¹⁸ The teachers have worked hard to ensure that Nicolas and other children, who present challenges from time to time, are not isolated in the class and in this example, reacted calmly. As Daisy showed, the children follow their lead using strategies that have been modelled by the teachers.

During the afternoon, Nicolas continued to be provocative. Robyn countered his actions calmly and helped him to reflect not so much on his

¹¹⁸ When Nicolas's mother happened to show Holly the series of books that afternoon, it helped the teachers to realise where he has picked up his 'turn of phrase'. Holly suggests their 'confiscation'. In the United States, they have been the subject of considerable controversy due to their violence and antagonism towards authority and this has resulted in their banishment from some schools.

action but on his state of health. The other children contribute to the appreciative atmosphere.

The children at the art table are now painting their designs with tempera paint and cotton buds. Nicolas dabs paint on Joshua's top. Luke comments to Robyn, checking his understanding of a moral issue, "*Nicolas dabbed Joshua. That's not very nice, is it?*"

Robyn takes the top and sponges the paint off and makes a quiet comment to Nicolas. He returns to get his picture and Robyn helps him to put it down to dry near the easel. He has dropped a small splash of red paint on the floor and goes to get a cloth to wipe it.

Luke says, "*Make it wet, make it wet!*" Nicolas ignores him and laughs a little as the paint fades to pink as he rubs.

Robyn says, "*How did that go?*" She takes the cloth as she asks, "*How's that cough of yours, Nicolas?*"

"*Not good,*" he says and sits down, thinking for a moment. He coughs and gets up to return to the group at the art table where the invisible hand of the teacher¹¹⁹ once again shows itself in spontaneous and generous comments:

"*I'm an artist,*" says one child and Holly agrees.

Edward says to Daisy, "*That's beautiful. Do you want to put your name on it?*"

¹¹⁹ Robyn explained that in one of their projects, they had looked at modern artists including Mondrian, Miro and Kandinsky. After analysing different paintings, the children decided on a favourite artist and created a piece in that style. She reported what happened on a trip to the art gallery where the guide showed them three pieces and asked for responses: "*And one of the girls said, 'Well it reminds me of Mondrian' and the woman's jaw just dropped and I said 'We have been studying that.' And she said, 'Well actually this artist was inspired by Mondrian and he was thinking of that when he painted that.' So that was really rewarding...when you create learning experiences and then you see it coming back and then you know it has really sunk in and has been meaningful somehow*" (1.2.12).

Reflections on fostering community

In later discussion, the teachers recount their beliefs on inclusion. Sarah joined the group as she had been observing all week as preparation for taking over from Holly in the following term. Robyn and Holly reviewed the actions they took when one of the children began to chant 'sauce, sauce'. It was a simple kind of provocation but one which spread and became annoying. They decided to respond calmly although Holly laughingly contributed the idea that she had from another early childhood teacher who suggested making the child eat a tablespoon of sauce for each time they said the word. It was, Holly said, *"Only one step on from washing their mouths out with soap"*

Leah asked, *"Was the teacher joking?"*

Holly – "No!" (laughter). *"So how much do you try and modify their behaviour? For, if you are talking about Montessori as an education for life, unless they are going to live on an island they have to learn to live within a social....so there is some amount of modification within the environment to enable them to have...I can't think of the word."*

Robyn – *"Yes, we are social people. And often the challenges for these children are social challenges. They want social interaction and it is just helping them to do it in a way that will work in society, really, isn't it."*

Sarah comments on the social community provided in the children's house: *"...All those rituals and traditions, I think are a large part of the Montessori strength for those children to then go out and adapt. Not to give them the success but give them the tools to be accepted socially, to be emulated, to have that opportunity to be a role model or a leader; each and every one of them, not because they are particularly good at maths, or drawing, or sports but because they are a genuinely nice person to spend time with."*

Reaping the rewards

On a different day it was evident that constant, respectful and caring interaction creates rewards for everyone in the community but especially, on this occasion, for Nicolas:

Phoebe walks around to the end of the table and trips over Luke's leg. She begins to complain to Robyn and then Luke begins to cry, silently.

Robyn says, *"Oh dear, did you get hurt?"*

He responds, *"No."*

Robyn then intuits, *"Were you worried because you thought you hurt Phoebe?"*

Nicolas calls quietly, *"Luke, are you alright?"* but no-one notices. He then comes over closer and says, *"Are you alright? Are you alright?"*

Robyn checks and Luke nods.

Later Robyn gives Nicolas the responsible task of 'calling the names' as parents arrive to pick up their children. He stands at the door, taking his task very seriously but after each announcement he takes a moment to hop or skip. His appreciative comments continue to show how much he has learnt on this day:

John places his name on a nearly finished map. *"I like your map,"* says Nicolas, crawling over to see it.

Nicolas says, *"I've got my raincoat on."*

Robyn prompts, *"When we call the mums, stay on the inside of the door and call the names in a quiet voice."*

Nicolas calls quietly, *"Chloe."* He does a little twirl and a dance and then goes back, *"Claire, your Mum's here." "Diana, your Mum's here." "Peter, your Mum's here."*

Robyn prompts Peter, *"Thank you Nicolas."*

He responds, *"Bye, bye, Nicolas."*

Nicolas proudly announces to his mother, *"Mum, I'm calling the names."*

"Luke, your Mum's here."

Nicolas appears to crack a joke but Robyn recalls him to his task, *"Nicolas, I like the way you are being so serious about calling the names."*

Nicolas comes inside and gives a little jump as he waits for more parents to arrive. Jacqui kindly remembers that Nicolas needs his 'Chapstick' to take home and brings it over.

Nicolas calls, *"Virginie, your Dad's here."*

Nicolas is very serious. He comes inside to hop again but then it is time to call his own mother inside and he takes her over to see what the children have been doing:

"This is Maui and he was hiding under the boat because he really wanted to go fishing. And then he jumped into the boat. And you have been eating too much kumara!" says Nicolas, explaining to his Mum.

At the end of the year, I was invited to the centre's end of year concert for parents and friends. Here, Nicolas was able to shine in a lead role in the centre's Christmas play. The teachers commented on the difference that time makes in relation to several children that they had worked hard to help in that year.

Reflection

Matai centre operated as a full 3-6 community with a balance throughout the mixed age group. This made a difference to the class as the work of the

five year olds set the tone for the rest of the class. Teachers and children were valued and this enabled Robyn to regain the confidence she had lost during her first position. As the casa was organised on traditional lines with only one teacher presenting new material, Robyn was given ample time to observe and absorb how this was done. She was anticipating taking on a role as first presenter in the following term. In the meantime, she had a strong outlet for her own creativity in organising the afternoon programme and commented that she had received appreciation during a recent appraisal, for the way she had “*upped the ‘anti’ for all of them as far as really exploring each thing...so (Holly) thinks they are all doing that a lot more*” (1.2.12).

Robyn’s experience in this centre was of a collaborative community, where teachers held similar philosophical viewpoints and were constantly and attentively engaged with the children: “*So in any discussion there might be differences in ideas on how to best deal with a situation or how to best do something but when you are all coming from the same place then it’s easy to resolve – everyone has the same idea*” (1.2.9). The implications of this common philosophy are discussed next.

Revealing the work of love in the case study centres

In chapter three I reviewed the extant literature on case study and concluded that there may be some fuzzy generalisations to be drawn at the end of this research into multiple case studies.

The purpose of this chapter was to immerse the reader in the children’s house experience. The focus teachers were at different stages on the journey to ‘security’ in their practice (Baker, 1994) and this became evident through subtle differences in the flow of conversation between children and teachers. In the initial stages of practice as a Montessori teacher it takes time

for all the elements to become ‘automatic’. Shelley, a first year teacher, for example, was very deliberate in the way she planned and set parameters around the children’s activities. Qingzhao, a second year teacher, who had a very quiet demeanour, had had more time in the children’s house environment. She calmly and respectfully responded to the children and moved quietly within the environment ensuring that the children’s needs were met. She noted how she paced her support of the children to fit comfortably with her English language communication. The more experienced teachers, Rachael, Joy, Robyn and Holly demonstrated the smooth practice of a relationally engaged pedagogy. The dynamic nature of the Montessori social community meant that there were always challenges to overcome but all participants drew upon their previous knowledge base or used peers and/or mentors to assist them in critical reflection on their practice.

The concluding chapter looks further at the threefold development of the teacher and discusses the construct of critically engaged pedagogy as a means of support for the development of the ‘just community’.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion: Critically Engaged Pedagogy in the Early Childhood Community

We need one another to be ourselves. This complete and unlimited dependence of each of us upon the others is the central and crucial fact of personal existence....Here is the basic fact of our human condition (MacMurray, 1961, p. 211, cited in Fielding, 2007, p.184).

Introduction

In this chapter, the key themes of the thesis are summarised and discussed: the complexity of Maria Montessori; historical and contemporary responses to Montessori philosophy and practice; the formation of the just community; and mentorship and transformation of new teachers. Although Montessori education has been extensively discussed for more than a century, the literature on her social justice perspective is relatively sparse and in Aotearoa New Zealand remains unexplored. When a teacher education programme is strongly influenced by Montessori's views on social justice, graduate teachers might be expected to turn a critical lens on their practice. This chapter addresses how the philosophical beliefs and teachings of Maria Montessori are exemplified through the experience of newly qualified teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand and concludes with recommendations for future practice and research in the Montessori field.

The discussion begins with a brief overview of perspectives on Montessori education that are pertinent to the thesis.

Perspectives on Montessori

There are multiple views on Montessori philosophy and pedagogical practice. Australian academics, Glenda MacNaughton and Gillian Williams (2009), outline a commonly held perspective on the Montessori approach:

Her main educational goals...were to improve the individual child's practical daily living skills and to develop each child's intellectual potential to the full....the role of staff is to select developmentally appropriate self-educating materials [and] verbal interaction between staff and children is kept to a minimum. (pp. 402-403)

When I was a practitioner, it was this understanding that caused the local college of education to exclude Montessori centres from their student practicum list. Although this view contains elements that may pertain to some Montessori centres, I have sought through this research to convey a reconceptualised understanding of Montessori education by drawing on the social, political and psychological aims of its author. In chapter seven, evidence of engagement in the Montessori centre as a social community is portrayed through a number of examples of sustained conversation. Such conversation occurred frequently between children and children and teachers in each of the case study centres. Teachers safeguard the concentration of children but this is not to the detriment of relationship. The children demonstrated their response to this approach through examples of spontaneous assistance to each other and by simply enjoying each other's company.

Two further perspectives are drawn from within the Montessori community through the websites of two organisations; one in Aotearoa and one in the United States. The website for Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand (MANZ), which represents the majority of Montessori schools and ECE centres in Aotearoa New Zealand, includes a wide range of opinions from teachers about the meaning of Montessori education. The organisation, however, offers no definitive answer to their question: 'What is Montessori?' Their strategic aims are focused on 'quality and excellence' and their stated

mission is “to support our community to deliver excellent Montessori programmes that enable the holistic development of infants, children and adolescents” (<http://montessori.org.nz>). Whilst this organisation is focused on improving both public perception and lived experience for children, families and teachers; it positions itself at some distance from the emancipatory ideals expressed in the Montessori literature. This may account for the resistance experienced by some graduates from the AUT degree when they entered the field.

The Association Montessori Internationale/USA, however, summarises its understanding of the philosophy as follows:

Dr. Maria Montessori believed wholeheartedly that every child could be an agent for change and peace in the world. By nurturing the intellects and spirits of children, the Montessori method continues to positively affect our collective future.

AMI/USA supports the work of Montessori parents, teachers, administrators and schools. We believe that the Montessori method is more than knowledge; it is “education for life.” It provides inspiration and the hope for a better, more peaceful, society. (<http://amiusa.org/>)

I have not addressed these positions in a polemical way, but consciousness of varying interpretations of Montessori philosophy and practice has influenced what I have looked for and written about. The common academic viewpoint sees Montessori through a critical developmental lens. The influence of neo-liberalism is clear in the focus on excellence and quality in the MANZ viewpoint. During the literature search, however, it became evident that Maria Montessori advocated for the child as a “forgotten citizen” whom we ignore at our peril (*AM*, 1949/, p. 155; *Ec&P*, 1949/1972, p. 42). The child’s role as “builder of humanity” (*Ec&P*, p. 42) would only be realised when adults ceased to repress children and instead ensure children are accorded “justice, harmony and love” (p. 42). The

interpretation of Montessori philosophy allied to the third viewpoint noted above is, therefore, the interpretation that underpins this thesis.

Themes of the thesis

The research questions guiding the thesis were concerned with seeking a more critical and contemporary understanding of Montessori's life and work in order to support a developing programme for the education of Montessori teachers:

How do we best prepare and support teachers in a form of education that is consistent with a contemporary understanding of Montessori's life, work, and teachings?

A sub-question formed the initial focus:

1) What does a biographical, philosophical and social investigation reveal of Montessori's life, work and teaching?

The empirical research was therefore juxtaposed with information on the early life and context of Maria Montessori [1870-1952] which was portrayed in chapters two, four and five. As I excavated my way through layers of documentation, I uncovered evidence of social and economic conditions in Italian society during the time of Montessori. In addition, I discovered more about the political action of Montessori and her feminist and scientific colleagues as they attempted to improve the situation of their disenfranchised and impoverished compatriots.

Historical issues: complexity and conjecture

The impossibility of encapsulating the life of any one person, particularly one with the intellect and sometimes feisty character of Montessori, adds to the complexity of the data. There is a linear chain of events but at each point along the time-line we can reach down to find alternative documents and interpretation that clash with the hagiography (literature and traditions maintaining a saintly view of Montessori). Montessori combined an early scientific career with feminist activity espousing equal rights and recompense for working women. Often working as the sole woman in a

scientific community we can only conjecture if she advanced or succumbed to the particular attentions of one of her colleagues. Despite her medical knowledge, a year out of university, she fell victim to an age-old dilemma and thus joined the ranks of a myriad of women in Italy who had children they could not care for. It is through this and other events outlined in chapter four, that we may relate to a more fallible, human, well meaning Montessori, one who leaves room for teachers to find their own path.

Montessori's experience with children, who had special learning needs, at the Scuola Ortofrenica, provided a turning point in terms of her focus on justice for children. She began to realise the power of education and subsequently sought opportunities to implement her ideas with normal children. The invitation to direct the Casa dei Bambini experiment, which began in 1907, marked the beginning of a new phase in her life that took her all over the world and made her a celebrated and sought after speaker and teacher of teachers. Her emancipatory focus changed shortly after this and advocacy and defence of the 'new child' became her primary objective.

Chapter five portrays how Montessori found a ready response amongst female teachers and others of socialist and progressive persuasion who worked in nurseries, schools and health projects in such places as London, Edinburgh, Dublin, 'Red' Vienna, Berlin, and Milan, and in countries beyond Europe including the United States, Australia and New Zealand (Cunningham, 2000; Kean, 1989; Kramer, 1988; Moran, 1996; Miltich-Conway and Openshaw, 1988; O'Hogartaigh, 2005; Shuker, 2005). The courses she ran filled a need for professional development in teachers and a desire for change following the events of World War I. As time went by and it became obvious that the economic situation was breeding new unrest, Montessori used her influence in the education and peace movements to advocate for a Social Party of the Child and to pressure governments to

focus their efforts on establishing a Ministry for Children as an alternative to waging war (Montessori, 1935; 1937). At a European Congress for Peace held in Brussels in 1936, Montessori outlined the task confronting humankind:

Preventing conflicts is the work of politics; establishing peace is the work of education. We must convince the world of the need for a universal, collective effort to build the foundation for peace.

Constructive education for peace must not be limited to the teaching in schools. It is a task that calls for the efforts of all mankind. It must aim to reform humanity so as to permit the inner development of human personality and to develop a more conscious vision of the mission of mankind and the present conditions of social life. (Montessori, *EC&P*, 1949/1972, p. 27)

Although she made some headway under the auspices of AMI and the World Education Fellowship, Montessori's international influence waned when she was detained in India for the duration of World War II. Upon her return to Europe, aged 75, however, she became involved in early meetings to establish the work of UNESCO and her contribution to education was recognised in nominations for the Nobel Peace prize and many other government and academic honours (Kramer, 1988).

The life and times of Maria Montessori remain intriguing but the point of this thesis was to establish her social justice intent. Advocacy for the child was set alongside an understanding of relational justice.

It is at this age also that the concept of justice is born, simultaneously with the understanding of the relationship between one's acts and the needs of others. The sense of justice, so often missing in man, is found during the development of the young child. It is the failure to recognize this fact that engenders a false sense of justice. (Montessori, *FCtoA*, 1948/1976, p. 6)

It is this understanding that brings the thesis to consideration of the social community which has been variously labelled by Aristotle, Kohlberg and

MacMurray: the good, just or relational community. Previous philosophers and psychologists have set this community as the pinnacle of human moral behaviour but it was Montessori's belief that the foundations for this are laid with children in early childhood from the age of three to six years. Investigation to provide evidence of early childhood relational communities in Aotearoa is recorded in chapter seven.

Conclusions on the contemporary research questions

How do we best prepare and support teachers in a form of education that is consistent with a contemporary understanding of Montessori's life, work, and teachings?

2) How do graduates of a course founded in these ideas, report on their teaching experience?

3) How does this form of Montessori education become explicit in practice?

Continuing the archaeological metaphor, the findings of the contemporary phase of the study represent evidence that is much closer to the surface. In Chapters six and seven, I recorded observations and reflections from newly qualified teachers who had taken the Montessori specialty in the final year of the Auckland University of Technology early childhood education degree. At the time of the study, the NQTs were in the unique position of being sought after due to the New Zealand government requirement for qualified staff to run early childhood and care centres, however this did not mean that they were automatically accepted or well supported within their places of employment. The participants revealed significant differences in their employer's interpretation of Montessori philosophy. If managers or colleagues did not understand Montessori's orientation towards both distributive and relational justice for children, participants were likely to encounter conflict and resistance.

As previous studies in the compulsory sector have shown, however, resilience in the face of differing discourses is an important factor in the development of the philosophical and pedagogical identity of newly qualified teachers (Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson & Fry, 2004). Literature on the attributes of resilient adults relates that such individuals “rebound from adversity, strengthened and more resourceful” (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003 cited in Harland, Harrison, Jones & Reiter-Palman, 2005, p. 3). Some of the strategies that teachers use to build resilience include collegial support, professional development and an attitude of flexibility but one of the key aspects raised in research by Patterson, Collins and Abbott (2004) was that resilient teachers operate from a core of personal beliefs and values. They note, “These teachers frequently spoke of the role of social justice in their classrooms e.g. racial and gender equality, democracy, economic opportunity, intellectual freedom and human rights” (p. 7).

Several of the teachers in this research experienced resistance and their stories are told in more detail in Chapters six and seven but, briefly, we can recall the response of Juan: “I almost ran away...but have to be positive” (20.1.12); and Sam who: “contemplated leaving” (23.1.4) but soon sought out support, advice and professional development, and using her previous experience, set strategies in place to successfully reorganise her centre; and Zhu who was repeatedly knocked back but remained focused on the Montessori goal of ‘follow the child’ (16.1.5) and reflected: “It is not just a job...This is not my work but the children have shown me their world and how they think. I just provided them with the materials – it is not mine – the children do, they own it” (16.1.6-7). These teachers, and others highlighted in the research findings, drew on strong, personal beliefs and values such as Eleanor who spoke about “advocacy for the children... That’s important. I won’t bend my values if I feel the children are going to be compromised” (18.1.14-15). Robyn recognised, however, that full realisation

of Montessori philosophy was dependent on all members of the community becoming involved: “Whenever the children are here, this is the children’s house and everything is that they are included in that and that means conversations that we have with each other too” (Group discussion: cited on p. 277).

Induction and Mentoring

Participants entered the field at a time of professional change when all qualified teachers were being called to register with the New Zealand Teachers Council. This had long been a requirement in the compulsory sectors but was a new factor for the early childhood field. The time of provisional registration consists of a two year period of induction and mentoring and is designed to aid teachers in developing and reflecting on their practice in order to integrate their experience with their theoretical knowledge.

The new teachers, therefore, entered the field with the expectation that they would be able to learn from experienced teachers; enlist the support of a mentor; gain confidence in their role; and complete their teachers’ registration. Sam summed up a different reality when she observed: “there is such a lack of experienced teachers out there” (23.1.4).

Despite the resistance arising from their more theoretical and philosophical approach, the newly qualified teachers continued to actively seek out mentoring and collegial support. As Robyn pointed out: “I really wanted to be working with experienced Montessori teachers because I think that is a really important way to learn [but when her mentor colleagues left she decided] I would actually rather not work in a school [centre] than work in one that compromises the philosophy or isn’t really Montessori” (1.2.3). As

a result, she resigned from her first centre and found a new position in a centre where she was able to realise her ideals.

The literature on induction and mentoring is not conclusive on a single best pathway to the support of newly qualified teachers although researchers continue to evaluate a range of options (Aitken et al., 2008; McCormack et al., 2006; Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005; Wang et al., 2008; Wood & Bennett, 2000). Funding to support Teacher's Registration for early childhood teachers, began during the initial stages of the research for this study. Centres received the payment for provisionally registered teachers and had relative freedom in its disbursement; a factor which later led the NZ Teachers Council to recommend increased auditing of the sector to ensure the funding was used for its intended purpose (Aitken et al., 2008). The participants in this study, however, provide evidence that may provide direction for future thinking in the Montessori field. Some participants were able to draw upon their previous experience of teaching but the novice teachers experienced varying types of support, including:

1. Internal mentoring by an experienced Montessori teacher and collaboration and critical reflection with a strong team or peers who have a similar philosophical interpretation of Montessori (Robyn, Margaret).
2. External mentoring by an experienced Montessori teacher together with the opportunity to collaborate and critically reflect with at least one like-minded peer within the centre (Joy).
3. External mentoring by an experienced ECE teacher (non Montessori) with the opportunity to collaborate and critically reflect with at least one like-minded Montessori peer (Qingzhao, Sheela).

4. External mentoring by an experienced ECE teacher (not Montessori) with some internal guidance that is variously sustained, intermittent, or brief, from a highly skilled and experienced Montessori teacher (Bella, John, Juan).
5. Incompetent or no mentoring with occasional or intermittent guidance from an experienced Montessori teacher (Sam, Zhu).

When colleagues or managers held a critical or social justice perspective on Montessori practice, this aided reflection and growth. Both Robyn and Margaret commented on this process:

You've got to be thinking all the time and you've got to be stretching yourself to grow as a teacher. And what she comes up with, actually, it's quite a challenge to implement but we do it and we get a lot out of it. When I started I felt like, I'm dog-paddling to keep my head above water, here...because you guys are all talking about stuff that is still way above my head and I can grasp the odd little bit but I'm still nowhere near thinking at the same level that you are thinking at. I sometimes still feel like that now but I'm more confident about putting forward my ideas and what I think about them. (22.1.9-10)

Learning in context was another important factor:

But there would be little things like they would say, 'I like the way you are presenting that but maybe, why did you do it this way?' And I would explain, and they might explain, 'well we do it another way.' And it might be something about the philosophy that I didn't realise, just small. But that is a great way to learn...also in context, for me. (1.2.2)

Colleagues also demonstrated how to advocate for children:

Every week at the meetings they were constantly, almost fighting for the rights of children to have the environment a certain way and constantly having to....almost fight for and justify why they were doing what they were doing. And that was really valuable for me too

because that was all about the breakdown and analysis of absolutely everything you do. (1.2.1)

The internal mentoring, collegial challenge and reflection experienced by Robyn and Margaret differed from that of many of the participants. As Shelley pointed out, it takes time [to develop a community of practice] and not all centres had this as a priority. Conversely, although Kahikatea centre set aside regular time to discuss, plan and reflect, Qingzhao made the important point that some cultural groups have a need to ‘save face’ when discussing challenges in their own practice. She valued centre meetings with colleagues but also found it was helpful to have an external mentor.

Aitken et al. (2008) advised the NZTC that an external model of support is likely to work best for NQTs in early childhood environments, however, Hellsten et al., (2009) have promoted the idea of “multi-mentor environments” (p. 719); an idea that may be more realistic. Because the ECE sector was just beginning on the pathway of funded induction and mentoring at the time of the research, the participants in this research made ad hoc arrangements and drew from multiple sources to consolidate and reflect upon their experience. This research project raises the need for further consideration of appropriate models of support which I discuss in a following section on the development and transformation of the newly qualified teacher. As the NQTs began to ‘settle’ and feel ‘less wobbly’ in their practice, they began to reveal more examples of practice that support the idea of the social and relational community.

Case Studies - The social community

In Chapter seven, I used criteria identified by Montessori and adapted by Krogh (1981) relating to the formation of just or relational communities as I described the findings from the case studies. The following elements

provided an analytic framework for discussion: emphasis on according children dignity and respect; a carefully prepared environment with resources designed to encourage care and negotiation; groups mixed in age and ability; authentic learning opportunities; freedom to discover key elements of cultural knowledge through sensory exploration; and time to concentrate and problem solve. Each case study provided illustrations of the various criteria and evidence of the kind of social community that Montessori promulgated.

The children provided stories of relationship, care and sensitivity that appeared to arise naturally as a result of these underlying elements. They ranged from the two year old in Matai centre who watched older children and quietly held onto her goal to independently plant her own seeds; to the child who cried silently, not because he was hurt but because he thought he had hurt another and the boy who had often been negative in the past who noticed and showed concern; to the child at Rata who buckled another's shoe; to those who showed concern about flooding in a nearby school; the three and four year old girls at Pukatea who noticed when the younger three year olds they were helping were about to make an error and swiftly changed the rules so they could be successful; the child at Rata who spent half the morning cleaning tables for the sheer pleasure of it; the girl who interrupted her own activity to run and help a friend with a tricky puzzle; the boy who helped out a newcomer with another difficult puzzle; the children at Kahikatea who cared for pets; and another who distracted a younger child to prevent further conflict. These and other observations from the case-studies provided multiple examples of care and connection fostered by the multi-age grouping, the learning environment and the opportunities provided by the teachers.

There were also clear examples of experimentation within the Montessori framework. For example at the Rata centre, Joy sought to provide more opportunities for children to experience autonomy and control during their time in the centre. A case in point was the way she collaborated with her community to give children agency in both selection and preparation of their midday meal. She and her colleague, Jennifer, also lobbied for a greater emphasis on reflective practice and this was evidenced in daily and weekly meetings within the centre.

Both Shelley at Pukatea and Robyn at Matai centre discussed the importance they attached to the development of language and communication. Shelley placed strong emphasis on socio-linguistic awareness and used games to encourage children to engage with this aspect of language learning. Her strong presence as a teacher was demonstrated in the way the older children absorbed her modelling and expertly replayed their experience with younger children. Robyn used her creativity to guide the children through gardening, cooking, geography, music, art, dance and science; weaving language through conversation and fostering literacy opportunities as and when they arose.

The Kahikatea staff members formed a close but relaxed team. There was a daily routine but there was more freedom to this than in the other centres. This enabled the children to extend their exploration with the sensorial materials, to spend long periods outside with Qingzhao and to engage in dramatic play. In fostering this, the centre crossed unspoken boundaries as Montessori is often portrayed as being in opposition to fantasy and imaginary play in young children. Her grandson, Mario, however, tells us that Montessori was a great story teller and “when we were small she even told us fairy tales. She has fulminated against them in her writings, but that was because people at that time believed that children were too small, too

stupid or too immature to understand reality” (Montessori, 1976, p. 108). As a consequence, Montessori centres have always emphasised the importance of grounding children in reality as a means of enabling and demonstrating children’s social competence. When she relates research in Montessori centres in the United States, Soundy (2009) suggests that “a shift in thinking may be occurring” (p. 381) and the Kahikatea children demonstrated the social, emotional and intellectual benefits of this change through their lively interchange when constructing a new water trough with their teacher .

Pedagogic and policy implications

The process of teacher transformation is a recurring theme in the Montessori literature and a further theme in this thesis. My decision to interview and observe teachers at varying stages during the early years of their practice was based on a concern that teachers were being expected by the Montessori community to emerge from the degree as ‘trained’ technicians without the need for induction or further guidance. A review of the Montessori literature, however, confirms that the transformation required of the adult who wishes to teach is likely to be an active and ongoing process (Leonard, 2002; Schaeffer, 1993; Yonka, 1999). Kay Baker (1994) outlines a commonly accepted pattern of pre-training (she suggests a liberal arts degree), followed by a Montessori diploma course which she sees as an “immersion-type training...of an academic nature [but] the most important preparation is a deepening understanding of the nature of the child” (p. 3). The third phase is the period of “application of knowledge and skills” (p. 3) when the novice teacher enters the field. Baker notes that the first year will always be challenging because “the beginning teacher comes with knowledge and unpractised skills” (p. 4). She suggests a range of ideas to enhance professional development but emphasises that “what needs to be avoided is isolation from a network of support” (p. 4).

Eduardo Cuevas (2000) another AMI teacher educator, cites Montessori with regard to the teacher's role: "we must develop both a science and an art to respect the liberty of the child" (2000, p. 1, Montessori source not cited). The relationship between science and art may be related to Eisner's discussion which traces the links "*From episteme to phronesis to artistry...*" (2002). Eisner reminds us that *episteme* is a Greek term meaning "true and certain knowledge" (p. 375). Today, few would regard any knowledge as true and certain. *Phronesis*, on the other hand, is derived from practical, everyday life. The result is practical wisdom that arises from commonsense observation and experience. Although Montessori developed a 'scientific pedagogy' she did this based on her experience in the classroom and she urged her teachers to see this pedagogy as an ongoing work of observation and research.

Eisner makes the point that research, particularly the sort of narratives collected through case study research, "make possible meanings that can expand our understanding of what we seek to apprehend" (p. 380). Furthermore, he says, "not even phronesis is adequate for achieving excellence in teaching. The missing ingredient pertains to the *crafting* of action...to the skill displayed in guiding interactions...In short, what is missing is artistry" (p. 382). He likens this type of artistry to that of a jazz quartet in which the players come in and out, improvising new rhythms and patterns according to the ebb and flow of the music.

Cossentino (2009) similarly refers to the process of the developing craft of the Montessori teacher as being "like the musician mastering scales ...it create[s] a stable pathway for the acquisition of a pedagogical repertoire that is both large and flexible (p. 524). The repertoire, once mastered, gives the

teacher freedom to improvise in the relational community of both children's house and school. As Baker (1994) observes in her discussion of the development of the Montessori teacher, however, it takes three or more years of experience to reach a point of 'security' in this journey.

The teachers that I observed included first year teacher Shelley who was consciously steering her way through the technical, practical aspects of the Montessori pedagogy while also trying to integrate a strongly held set of beliefs and values from her studies and her previous practice in ECE. Second year teacher Qingzhao was pacing her practice to match her confidence in English. Rachael, although in her second year after gaining the degree qualification, had many years of Montessori teaching to draw upon and like Holly from the Matai centre, her guidance of the children was sensitive, relaxed and creative. Third year teachers Joy and Robyn had reached a stage of greater confidence and their practice also demonstrated a creative response when they engaged with both individuals and groups of children. This stage of teaching seemed to be the time when teachers felt confident with the materials and were able to engage attentively as guides to the children but equally to step aside to give each individual space and freedom to explore. They seemed to have reached the state of 'intellectual calm' described by Montessori (*SoC*, 1936); the 'decentering' of Hedeén (2005); and the 'unselfing' described by Crawford (2005) which enables the practitioner to "truly see the Other" (p. 113). If we extend Eisner's jazz players' metaphor, these more experienced teachers, had the ability to decentre; constantly listening, appreciating and appraising the creativity of individual children, and then seamlessly responding to the dynamic patterns, they created with their own innovative replies.

Critically engaged pedagogy

I suggest that the artistry of the Montessori teacher is founded in what I have termed a mode of ‘critical engagement’. This has not previously been articulated as a learning outcome for experienced teachers in the Montessori community, however, it is now a requirement for a registered teacher to “use critical inquiry and problem-solving effectively in their professional practice” (NZTC, 2010, p. 14). The concept of critical engagement that I propose, is, however, a little different as it is underpinned by the dual understanding of social justice advocated by Montessori. Likewise, appreciation of the concept may be found in the origin of the term ‘critical’ which comes from the Greek - *krites* - one who judges or discerns.

One of the results of reading and reflection on Montessori’s work was recognition that the degree should convey the need for students to reflect on self. Montessori reiterates that the adult is often the barrier to the development of the child and in seeking causes, ongoing interior reflection is necessary for all teachers. Conway and Clark (2003) join Montessori in highlighting the ‘journey inward and outward’ which should be undertaken by teachers. They discuss Fuller’s seminal model of new teacher development (1969; Fuller & Bown, 1975) which sees teacher concerns moving from ‘self to tasks to impact on students’ or as they alternatively frame this: from “I” to “It” to “Thou” (citing Hawkins, 1967/1974, on p. 467). However, they critique a constant focus on the negative and make a case for teachers to also express ‘hopes and aspirations’ as part of their creative task.

Montessori’s focus on resolving the negative influence of teachers on children arose from multiple observations of harsh teaching practices. Her own professional expertise meant that she had little sympathy for new

teachers who misread her teachings. It is necessary to look carefully, therefore, to find the creative link.

Montessori and the feminist writers who were her contemporaries, such as Simone Weil, Iris Murdoch and Iris Young, focussed particularly on the notion of attentive love and Crawford (2005) introduces the idea of 'spiritually engaged love'. Montessori talks of a 'refinement of the heart so that it becomes full of charity' (1973, *La Maestra*, p. 6). She then links the 'energy of love' to the principle of justice. "Justice," Montessori says, "is born specifically of interior development. The principle of distributive justice and individual right, purely external, destroys the inborn, natural sense of true justice" (1948/1976, *FCtoA*, p. 6). Montessori notes that social adaptation becomes problematic or 'thorny' "unless the child has been helped during this sensitive period" (i.e. early childhood) (p. 6). As discussed in Chapter seven, love is seen to be the connecting link in the work of relational justice.

With ever ready guidance...

In this context, the teacher, although tasked with learning a craft, is much more than a technician. The result was a philosophy of attentive, respectful response to child initiative, a type of *phronesis* which Montessori spelt out in a lecture to her Indian students:

The teacher is however not eliminated; only her task is changed. In our concept of self-education the teacher's activity becomes prudent, delicate and multiform. Her words, her energy, her severity are no longer necessary; they are replaced by a watchful wisdom and by spreading her attention to the whole of the community. (1973, *La Maestra*, p. 7).

However, because Montessori was so focussed on achieving social justice for children and in creating a 'scientific pedagogy' to help them reach their potential, commentators can easily overlook the artistry required of the

teacher implementing this model. This comes about through the teacher's preparation of the environment: "if we prepare a social environment for our children and we leave them to act freely in this prepared environment where they find motives of activity answering to their inner needs, they show us how a society is started" (1940, p. 3) but later, as she outlines instances of "social life, collaboration and mutual help" that she observed in her school in Laren, Holland; she inserts a handwritten note to remind her readers of the constant role and presence of the teacher: "with the ever ready guidance of the teacher at the background" (p. 4).

The teacher in this model must look inwards to discern readiness to engage. She or he employs artistry in the preparation of a physical and social environment that will provide motives to meet the inner needs of the child. She draws on her repertoire of theoretical knowledge to present (gift) materials, ideas, and possibilities for social relationship to the child. Although the teacher may then step back to give the child freedom to explore, she does not break her connection to the child but, instead, remains critically engaged in discerning (through 'watchful wisdom') her next necessary action.

My notion of critically engaged pedagogy continues the experimental model of Maria Montessori. Montessori education is not a technical package and moves away from a non-interventionist interpretation which sees the model as static and one to be learned by rote. Although it relies significantly upon the knowledge of the teacher it will also be enhanced by a similar orientation in peers and mentors as they challenge and support each other in their reflections on practice.

Theoretical implications: child, teacher and community.

The contribution that this thesis makes to the wider body of knowledge may be seen in several parts of the thesis. The historical chapters of the thesis have synthesised information from a wide range of sources to highlight the social and political role played by Maria Montessori in the emancipatory movement (chapters two, four and five). Initially she took an active role in the feminist struggle but as her goal shifted to focus upon advocacy for children, she continued to provide inspiration and professional development that supported women teachers and other progressive workers involved in their own emancipatory work. I have demonstrated that Montessori's philosophy and pedagogy is still a useful basis for those wishing to teach from a social justice perspective.

The empirical chapters (six and seven) provide evidence to strengthen the case made by Krogh (1981) that Montessori early childhood education serves as a foundation for the just, social or relational community and provide unique information on the approach within New Zealand. This interpretation may challenge the current focus on quality and cognitive maximisation which tends to overshadow the broader implications of Montessori's philosophy.

The process of induction and mentoring is accepted in the wider Montessori field. This research established that while the New Zealand Montessori field regrouped after the loss of some longstanding and experienced teachers, the newly qualified teachers sought out a varied range of support including internal and external mentors, some Montessori and some from the conventional ECE field. I discerned that the multi-mentorship model developed by Hellsten et al. (2009) was the reality for these practitioners. The collegial network outlined in Hellsten's research outlines, however, was

often not provided and this has implications for further research and development.

As teachers developed in experience, they also grew in confidence. NQTs began to provide effective support to children with learning and behavioural needs; they felt able to give guidance to colleagues and established initiatives for professional development and reflective practice. I contend that because of the focus on critical reflection in the degree, teachers brought this element to their practice. I have suggested that the connection and discernment that the teachers demonstrated with the children and other members of their communities of practice should be termed ‘critical engagement’. Despite mitigating factors such as class size, imperfect grouping, interrupted schedules and management issues these teachers developed the ‘intellectual calm’ required by Montessori as they crafted and refined their practice, but retained their spiritual engagement with the children and used their theoretical knowledge to continually think of ways to give children further autonomy and agency.

Recommendations and implications for further research

The process of mentorship for early childhood practitioners has begun to settle. Future studies should include the particular contribution of the Montessori arm of the early childhood sphere. My research did not include interviews with mentors, as originally planned as the pioneering status of the period made this too difficult a proposition; a difficulty that Aitken’s (2008) research group also faced. A small study of Montessori NQTs and mentors, in the manner of Norman and Feiman-Nemser (2005), would shed light on the development of this field.

Case-studies continue to add depth to the description of Montessori practice in Aotearoa. Multiple studies could be done on the varied facets of Montessori education to provide further evidence on the efficacy of Montessori pedagogy in Aotearoa. The increasing number of graduates offers opportunities for further meaningful research. The recent completion of a modular AMI teacher education diploma provides another possibility for comparative research.

The nature of the just community has been outlined as it is currently practiced in selected Montessori settings in Aotearoa New Zealand. Further research into aspects of the development of a just community in Montessori and general settings would add depth to the knowledge base. For example, the contribution of multi-age groupings to learning and development in both general and Montessori settings is an underdeveloped field. Likewise the nature of development of respectful relationships has a particular meaning in the Montessori pedagogical setting. Concurrent research by Ulloa, Evans and Parkes (2010) from Massey University has begun to demonstrate the special nature of respect in Montessori settings and a Masters study by Paul Scanlan, also on this topic, will be awaited with interest.

Conclusion

Maria Montessori developed her 'scientific' pedagogy over many years with a philosophical orientation towards social justice. She encouraged her teachers to continue experimenting once they had grasped and trialled the fundamentals of the approach. A commentator in the Times Educational Supplement summed up Montessori, near the end of her life, as a scientist but an 'artist in teaching at heart' (cited in Kramer, 1988, p. 366). At the

time, this was levelled as a criticism but today, we can see this artistry as a strength.

This thesis explored the complex nature of the founder of Montessori philosophy and practice and by taking a social justice perspective, highlighted the advocacy role that is of particular importance in this pedagogical approach. The special nature of attentive-engaged love as the basis of justice was explored and I have proposed the idea of critically engaged pedagogy as a construct for examining the developing practice of teachers. Whilst, traditionally, the age of justice has belonged to the primary (elementary) child, this thesis utilised Montessori's own criteria to demonstrate the possibility and practice of founding the just, relational community in early childhood. The ongoing establishment of such a social and moral community requires practitioners to have sound theoretical, practical and spiritual knowledge, ability in pedagogical application and collaborative assistance from colleagues and mentors for its successful implementation.

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Appendix 1: Letter to first cohort interview participants

28 April 2005

Dear

I trust all is going well for you in 2005.

I am enclosing a formal letter/information sheet, which is the 'official' invitation for you to participate in my PhD research. It has been a long time in the organising!

I value and appreciate your consideration of this project. I am hopeful that in creating a collaborative approach participants in the project will be able to reflect and disseminate to the education community, the new stage we have reached in the development of Montessori ideas in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

If you have any queries you would like answered before you reply, please feel free to email or call me.

I look forward to your response.

Kind regards

Nicky Chisnall

09 917 9999 x 7233

**Appendix 2: Newly Qualified Teacher Letter and Participant
Information Form**

Participant Information Sheet

Letter to Early Childhood Teacher (B.Ed (MECT) or B.Ed (ECT))

Date _____

Dear _____

I seek your participation in a research project on the development of Montessori education in New Zealand in the 21st century.

I am undertaking this project as part of a thesis on Montessori education entitled *Montessori in Aotearoa/New Zealand: A Framework for peace and social justice* in fulfilment of requirements for a doctor of philosophy degree at Auckland University of Technology (AUT).

I am interested in examining professional perceptions of the Montessori approach to education in early childhood education. In prior research I examined how the approach came to be revived in New Zealand and how it was perceived in the community from 1975-2000. In this project, I plan to look further at the philosophy of Maria Montessori, calling particularly on the work she carried out regarding the vision of the child. I am interested to see what implications teachers feel this vision has for our time and place. As a recent graduate of the Bachelor of Education (Montessori Early Childhood Teaching) or Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Teaching) (*Montessori upgrade programme*), I am especially interested in your thoughts and experiences in the early childhood profession.

The research project will be a collaborative one. I anticipate that it will involve opportunities for us to discuss, react and reflect as you share your work with children in the field and I share my thoughts and questions as I continue to research past and contemporary views on Montessori and related thinkers and practitioners. We may do this over the email, through telephone calls, by letter, or sharing of professional journals as well as occasionally meeting face to face. I am aware of the pressures faced when you are busy teaching so the amount and time given to your contribution will be entirely your decision. The data-gathering phase will run from April/May 2005 until December 2006.

I would like to invite you to participate in an initial interview to further discuss the nature of the project and to find out your initial thoughts on Montessori philosophy as you see it. In the process of sharing our thoughts, your feedback

will be of particular assistance in evaluating the direction of the Montessori teacher preparation degree at AUT. I will also be interested in finding out your vision for the development of Montessori in the future.

If you would be willing to participate in an initial interview with a view to further participation in the project please respond on the form below and return in the stamped addressed envelope enclosed. I will send you further information about the project and a consent form for you and your school/centre to sign.

If you or your centre/school require any further information about the project my supervisor, Professor Colin Gibbs may be contacted at Auckland University of Technology on Ph: (09) 917-9999 x 7227.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz, 917 9999 ext 8044.

Yours faithfully,

Nicola Chisnall
School of Education/Te Kura Mātauranga
Auckland University of Technology
Private Bag 92006
Auckland 1020
Ph: 09 917 9999 x 7233

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics
Committee on 27 April 2005 AUTEK Reference number 05/38**

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Please return this portion in the enclosed envelope.

I would be interested in being interviewed with a view to finding out further information on the project: *Montessori in Aotearoa/New Zealand: A Framework for peace and social justice*

Yes/No

Participant's signature:

.....

Participant's name:

.....
.....

Participant's Contact Details:

Address.....

Telephone.....
...

Email.....

Date:

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics
Committee on 27 April 2005 AUTEC Reference number 05/38**

Appendix 3: Newly Qualified Teacher Consent form
(with AUT letterhead)

If you agree to participate in the research project: *Montessori in Aotearoa/New Zealand: A Framework for peace and social justice*, please read the following, sign the form and note any further issues you wish to discuss.

Consent to Participation in Research

[Early Childhood Teacher (B.Ed (MECT) or B.Ed (ECT) - Individual Consent]

I understand:

- the purpose and nature of this research and give consent to my participation in it,
- participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time during the data collection process,
- if I withdraw, that all relevant tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed,
- information given may be withdrawn or corrected and an opportunity to do this will be given once transcription of interview/s is/are complete,
- that discussions may be taped (always with my consent) and that tapes, e-mails, notes, transcripts and any other documents provided by me for the purposes of this research, will be held in a

secure place for the duration of the project (anticipated completion is December 2007),

- following the completion of the project it is planned to store data securely in a locked cabinet in the School of Education/Te Kura Mātauranga, Auckland University of Technology for six years, after which time it will be destroyed,
- the computer disk with the edited interview transcript will be stored only if consent is given on the form below, and
- that my name will remain confidential in the research report and any subsequent publication of the data. The pseudonym by which I would prefer to identified is:

- that the results of this research may be presented at conferences or published at some future date.

I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research: tick one: Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

.....
.....

Participant's name:

.....
.....

Participant's Contact Details:

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.....
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.....
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.....

Date:

Please return this form by _____ in the attached envelope.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 27 April 2005 AUTEC Reference number 38/05

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Please note any other issues that you would like to raise during the discussion:

Appendix 4: 2007-2008 Case Study Focus Teacher Information Form

Participant Information Sheet

Case Study Participant

Date Information Sheet Produced:

01 March 2007

Project Title

Montessori Education in Aotearoa-New Zealand: a framework for peace and social justice.

An Invitation

My name is Nicola Chisnall. I am a doctoral student at AUT University and I would like to invite you to further participation in the research project noted above.

As you know, I am interested in examining professional perceptions of the Montessori approach to education in early childhood education. I have valued your contributions so far to the project and I would like to invite you to take the project a step further by becoming involved in a case study in which I observe you at your centre.

What is the purpose of this research?

I have found the feedback and reflections of teacher participants to be very valuable but in order to add another layer of depth to the study I would like to observe and record examples of practice in the field. I would like to carry out four case studies: two involving participants who are in their third year of teaching and in the second semester, one of a first year teacher and one of a second year teacher.

I am undertaking this project as part of a thesis on Montessori education entitled *Montessori in Aotearoa/New Zealand: A Framework for peace and social justice* in fulfilment of requirements for a doctor of philosophy degree at AUT University. I am also likely to use the information arising from the thesis in publications and conferences. I hope this will help people understand more about the Montessori approach.

How was I chosen for this invitation?

You were chosen as a current participant in the project who is working in a Montessori setting.

What will happen in this research?

I will ask you to an initial meeting (we could talk on the telephone if this suits you better) to discuss the nature of the project. If you decide that you would be willing to be the focus of the case study, I will send a letter to your

centre [owner, or governing body] for permission to come to a staff meeting to discuss the project.

If you, your colleagues and employers agree and give their consent, I will come to observe you in the centre, once a week for up to ten sessions. *[If the participant is out of Auckland, this may occur over a period of one or two full weeks].*

I will seek the consent of parents (and the assent of children) to observe and photograph you with children. At times, it may be useful to audio-tape your interactions with children but mostly I will rely on field notes that I will discuss and verify with you after the session.

As your colleagues are likely to be involved in the observation, I will provide an opportunity, during and/or after the completion of the observation period, to discuss the study.

Your feedback will be of assistance in setting the direction of the Montessori teacher preparation degree at AUT. I will also be interested in continuing our discussions on your vision for the development of Montessori in the future.

What are the discomforts and risks?

I recognise that being observed for a constant period may be uncomfortable at times and so we will work out a mutually agreed signal to enable you to stop the observation record at any time.

You will be asked to choose a pseudonym for yourself and your centre, during our first meeting and we will discuss how the project will be kept confidential to protect your identity and that of your colleagues and your centre.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

You can contact me to withdraw from the project at any time. I am planning that the data-gathering phase of the project will run from March 2007 until January 2008. I expect to complete the first case studies in Semester One (June) and the second case studies in Semester 2 (October).

What are the benefits?

The benefits of the research will primarily relate to an opportunity to contribute to the collection, formation and dissemination of information on:

- New Zealand Montessori education and how it supports Dr Montessori's vision of peace and social justice for children.

- Ways in which Montessori teachers perceive they are best prepared and supported in the early years of their teaching.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The costs of participating in the research will primarily be your time and contribution during the sessions. I would also like to spend 20-30 minutes after each session (or at a time we agree) to clarify any aspects that may need your further input or feedback, from either the current session or the previous one. In addition, I anticipate that we may need to get together following the observations to discuss in more depth particular scenarios, themes or issues that will contribute to the final report of the case study.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Please think about this invitation carefully and then contact me within the next two weeks...*[date to be specified]*. If I have not heard from you, I will call you at the end of the two week period to check your decision.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you would be willing to participate in an initial discussion with a view to further participation in the project please respond on the form below and return in the stamped addressed envelope enclosed (you may call or email me, if you prefer). I will contact you to arrange a time to meet.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes. I will write a summary of the research to give to you and you will also be able to access a copy of the final thesis from the MANZ library or from the AUT library.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Professor Colin Gibbs, colin.gibbs@aut.ac.nz, Ph: (09) 921 9999 x 7227.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTECH, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 8044.

Whom do I contact for further information about this
research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Nicola Chisnall, nicola.chisnall@aut.ac.nz Ph: (09) 921 9999 x 7233.

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

If you or your centre/school require any further information about the project my supervisor, Professor Colin Gibbs may be contacted at AUT University on Ph: (09) 917-9999 x 7227.

Approved by the AUT University Ethics Committee on 16 April, 2007. AUTECH

Reference number 05/38

Appendix 5: Case study focus teacher consent form



Consent Form

Case Study Teacher Participant

Project title: ***Montessori education in Aotearoa-New Zealand: a framework for peace and social justice***

Project Supervisor: ***Professor Colin Gibbs***

Researcher: ***Nicola Chisnall***

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 1 August 2007.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that the case study observations, may, at times, be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand my work with children may, at times, be photographed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including photographs, tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

.....

Participant's name:

.....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

Date:

Approved by the AUT University Ethics Committee on 16 April 2007
AUTEC Reference number 05/38

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix 6: Case study Governing Body Participant Information Form
(Including AUT logo)

Participant Information Sheet

Case Study Governing Body

Date Information Sheet Produced:

01 March 2007

Project Title

Montessori Education in Aotearoa-New Zealand: a framework for peace and social justice.

An Invitation

My name is Nicola Chisnall. I am a doctoral student at AUT University. You may be aware that one of your teachers has been involved in a research project I am undertaking as part of a thesis on Montessori education entitled *Montessori in Aotearoa/New Zealand: A Framework for peace and social justice* in fulfilment of requirements for a doctor of philosophy degree at AUT University. I have been looking at the experiences of teachers as they enter or re-enter the field after gaining the Montessori early childhood degree qualification from AUT.

In the process of gathering feedback from individuals who have come through the AUT Montessori degree specialty, it has become clear that the collection of further information based in the actual teaching environment would be of benefit to the project. I would therefore like to establish a small

number of case-studies observing these teachers in their work places in order to collect evidence of Montessori early childhood teaching and learning as it is currently experienced in New Zealand.

[Participant name] has suggested that you may be willing to consider [centre name] becoming one of the case study sites.

What is the purpose of this research?

I have been collecting the feedback and reflections of teachers in their first, second and third year of practice in the field but the case studies will add another layer of depth to the study. I plan to carry out four case studies: two involving participants who are in their third year of teaching and in the second semester, one of a first year teacher and one of a second year teacher.

I am undertaking this project as part of a thesis on Montessori education entitled *Montessori in Aotearoa/New Zealand: A Framework for peace and social justice* in fulfilment of requirements for a doctor of philosophy degree at AUT University. I am also likely to use the information arising from the thesis in publications and conferences. I hope this will help people understand more about the Montessori approach.

How was I chosen for this invitation?

You were chosen because a current participant in the project is working in your Montessori centre.

What will happen in this research?

If you give permission for the staff to consider participation in the case study, I would like to come to a staff meeting to spend 20-30 minutes explaining the research and to give people an opportunity to ask questions.

If you and your employees agree and give their consent, I will come to observe [participant] in the centre, once a week for up to ten sessions. [If the participant is out of Auckland, this may occur over a period of one or two full weeks].

I will also seek the consent of parents (and the assent of children) to observe and photograph [the participant] with children. At times, it may be useful to audio-tape [the participant's] interactions with children but mostly I will rely on field notes that I will discuss and verify with her after the session.

As your employees are likely to be involved in the observation, I will provide an opportunity, during and/or after the completion of the observation period, to discuss the study.

What are the discomforts and risks?

The main risk for the centre will be in terms of confidentiality and I will therefore ask all participants in the project to choose a pseudonym and also one for the centre. During our first meeting we will discuss how the project will be kept confidential to protect the identity of participants and that of the centre.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Participants (staff and children) may withdraw from the project at any time. Any material gathered concerning that person will then be destroyed or deleted from the record. You may contact me or my supervisor (details below) at any time if there are any concerns regarding the project.

What are the benefits?

The benefits of the research will primarily relate to an opportunity to contribute to the collection, formation and dissemination of information on:

- New Zealand Montessori education and how it supports Dr Montessori's vision of peace and justice for children.
- Ways in which Montessori teachers perceive they are best prepared and supported in the early years of their teaching.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

I am planning that the data-gathering phase of the project will run from March 2007 until January 2008. I expect to complete the first case studies in Semester One (June) and the second case studies in Semester 2 (October).

I will carry out observations during session time and will negotiate a time with [*focus participant*] to check the material I have gathered. This may be during lunchtime or at the end of the day but I am mindful of the demands of teaching and any such contribution will be purely voluntary. The whole staff [and the governing body] will have the opportunity to meet to discuss the

findings during and/or after the end of the case study but as noted above, attendance at this will be voluntary.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Please think about this invitation carefully and then contact me within the next two weeks....*[date to be specified]*. If I have not heard from you, I will call you at the end of the two week period to check your decision. A form is attached with a self addressed envelope, if you would like to respond by mail. Alternatively, you may call me or send me an email.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes. I will write a summary of the research to give to you and you will also be able to access a copy of the final thesis from the MANZ library or from the AUT library.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Professor Colin Gibbs, colin.gibbs@aut.ac.nz, Ph: (09) 921 9999 x 7227.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 8044.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Nicola Chisnall, nicola.chisnall@aut.ac.nz Ph: (09) 921 9999 x 7233.

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

If you or your centre/school require any further information about the project my supervisor, Professor Colin Gibbs may be contacted at AUT University on Ph: (09) 917-9999 x 7227.

Approved by the AUT University Ethics Committee on 16 April, 2007. AUTECH

Reference number 05/38

Appendix 7: Case study governing body consent form

Consent Form



Licensee/Owner of Montessori Centre

Project title: ***Montessori education in Aotearoa-New Zealand: a framework for peace and social justice***

Project Supervisor: ***Professor Colin Gibbs***

Researcher: ***Nicola Chisnall***

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 1 August 2007.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that the work of the centre staff during the case study will, at times, be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that photographs may be taken of work with children.
- ☐ I understand that staff may withdraw themselves or any information that they have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If participants withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree that staff at this centre may take part in this research.

☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Licensee/Centre-Owner's signature:

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.....

Centre's name:

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Contact Details:

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.....

Date:

Approved by the AUT University Ethics Committee on 16 April, 2007

AUTEC Reference number 05/38

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix 8: Case study colleagues Participant Information Form

(Including AUT logo)

Participant Information Sheet

Case Study Colleagues

Date Information Sheet Produced:

9 May May 2007

Project Title

Montessori Education in Aotearoa-New Zealand: a framework for peace and social justice.

An Invitation

My name is Nicola Chisnall. I am a doctoral student at AUT University and I would like to invite you to participate in the research project detailed below.

You may be aware that one of your colleagues has been involved in my research on the experiences of teachers as they enter or re-enter the field after gaining the Montessori early childhood degree qualification from AUT University.

In the process of gathering feedback from individuals who have come through the AUT Montessori degree specialty, it has become clear that the collection of further information based in the actual teaching environment would be of benefit to the project. I am therefore establishing a small number of case-studies to observe the reality of Montessori early childhood teaching and learning as it is currently experienced in New Zealand.

I am interested in professional perceptions of the Montessori approach to education in early childhood education as well as examples from practice that exemplify this understanding. In this project, I have been examining the philosophy of Maria Montessori, calling particularly on the work she carried out regarding the vision of the child. I am especially interested to see what implications teachers feel this vision has for our time and place.

What is the purpose of this research?

I am in the process of interviewing and gathering reflections from graduates of the AUT Montessori degree, but in order to add another layer of depth to the study I would like to observe and record examples of practice in the field. I am planning to carry out four case studies: two involving participants who are in their third year of teaching and in the second semester, one of a first year teacher and one of a second year teacher.

I am undertaking this project as part of a thesis on Montessori education entitled *Montessori in Aotearoa/New Zealand: A Framework for peace and social justice* in fulfilment of requirements for a doctor of philosophy degree at AUT University. I am also likely to use the information arising from the thesis in publications and conferences. I hope this will help people understand more about the Montessori approach.

How was I chosen for this invitation?

You have been chosen as a colleague of a participant in the project who is working in a Montessori setting.

What will happen in this research?

With your consent, I would like to spend one session a week, for up to ten weeks in the centre/children's house observing the reality of your particular Montessori early childhood community. My particular focus will be on the experience of your colleague Susan as a third year teacher in the field. I will be observing her practice and taking notes. At times I may photograph or audio tape part of the session that this teacher is involved in.

The research project is a collaborative one. I anticipate that it will involve opportunities for us to discuss, react, and reflect as you share your work with children in the field and I share my thoughts and questions.

Obviously, I am aware of the need to confine this discussion to appropriate moments. I will initially seek a time during a staff meeting to explain the project and answer any questions. If requested, I will make a time to meet with you during the observation period and on completion, I will invite you to a group meeting where I will share my reflections and seek your feedback on the information that I have gathered.

I am aware; however, of the pressures faced when you are busy teaching so the time given to any meetings beyond your usual time at the centre will be entirely your decision.

The data-gathering phase will run at a mutually agreed time between March/April 2007 and December 2007. The tentative date is 21-25 May.

What are the discomforts and risks?

I recognise that being observed for a constant period may be uncomfortable at times and so we will work out a mutually agreed signal to enable you to stop the observation record at any time.

You will be asked to choose a pseudonym for yourself and your centre, during our first meeting and we will discuss how the project will be kept confidential to protect your identity and that of your colleagues and your centre.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

You can ask me to withdraw any information I have recorded about you, at any time during the data collection period. You can also contact me to withdraw from the project at any time. I will then delete any references to you or your practice from any of the data I have collected.

I am planning that the data-gathering phase of the project will run from March 2007 until January 2008. I expect to complete the first case studies in Semester One (June) and the second case studies in Semester 2 (October).

What are the benefits?

The benefits of the research will primarily relate to an opportunity to contribute to the collection, formation and dissemination of information on:

- New Zealand Montessori education and how it supports Dr Montessori's vision of peace and social justice for children.
- Ways in which Montessori teachers perceive they are best prepared and supported in the early years of their teaching.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The costs of participating in the research will primarily be your time and contribution during the sessions. There will also be an initial meeting and opportunities to discuss the project as noted above.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Please think about this invitation carefully. As time is short I will call you at this week to check the decision of your centre colleagues.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you would be willing to participate in an initial staff meeting with a view to further participation in the project please respond on the form below and return in the envelope enclosed to your centre supervisor. I will bring a consent form for any further participation in the case study, to the staff meeting.

Please note that you may consent to the case study but can request that I withdraw any references to you as an individual or your practice, in the report.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes. I will write a summary of the research to give to you and you will also be able to access a copy of the final thesis from the MANZ library or from the AUT library.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Professor Colin Gibbs, colin.gibbs@aut.ac.nz, Ph: (09) 921 9999 x 7227.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTECH, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 8044.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Nicola Chisnall, nicola.chisnall@aut.ac.nz Ph: (09) 921 9999 x 7233.

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

If you or your centre/school require any further information about the project my supervisor, Professor Colin Gibbs may be contacted at AUT University on Ph: (09) 917-9999 x 7227.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 16 April 2007, AUTECH

Reference number 05/38

Appendix 9: Case study colleagues consent form



Consent Form

Case Study Teacher Participant

Project title: ***Montessori education in Aotearoa-New Zealand: a framework for peace and social justice***

Project Supervisor: ***Professor Colin Gibbs***

Researcher: ***Nicola Chisnall***

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 1 August 2007.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that the case study observations, may, at times, be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand my work with children may, at times, be photographed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including photographs, tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.

☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

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Participant's name:

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Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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.....

Date:

Approved by the AUT University Ethics Committee on 16 April 2007
AUTEC Reference number 05/38

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix 10: Case Study Parents Consent form

Parent/Guardian Consent Form



Project title: ***Montessori education in Aotearoa-New Zealand: a framework for peace and social justice***

Project Supervisor: ***Professor Colin Gibbs***

Researcher: ***Nicola Chisnall***

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 1 August 2007.
 - ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
 - ☐ I understand that the observation sessions will, at times, be audio-taped and transcribed and that photographs of my child may be taken.
 - ☐ I understand that I may withdraw my child/children and/or myself or any information that we have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
 - ☐ If my child/children and/or I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including photographs, tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
 - ☐ I agree to my child/children taking part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one):
Yes ☐ No ☐

Child/children's name/s :

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Parent/Guardian's signature:

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Parent/Guardian's name:

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Parent/Guardian's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the AUT University Ethics Committee on 16 April 2007

AUTEC Reference number 05/38

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix 11: Case study child assent form

(Note: this was originally printed on a double sided A4 sheet in booklet format)



Title of research

Information Sheet and Assent Form for children

(parent/caregivers please read to children)

This form will be kept for a period of 6 years

Hello – my name is Nicky Chisnall

I would like to spend some time at your Montessori preschool/centre. I will be coming to your centre once a week starting on, for about 10 weeks.

When I am there I will do some writing. You will know that I am not one of your teachers but you can talk to me and we can get to know each other. You can ask me about my work whenever you want to. Sometimes I might use a tape recorder or camera. Let me know how you feel about this by colouring in one of these words -

Happy

Fine

Not Sure

Worried

If you are not sure or worried come and talk to me about it or ask one of your teachers or your parents about this.

I am finding out about how children and teachers work in a Montessori centre so I will be interested in what you are doing on the mornings and afternoons that I come.

I used to be a Montessori teacher but now I work at the University so I am looking forward to being back in a Montessori community.

Please circle **YES** if you would like me to take photographs of what you are doing.

Please circle **NO** if you do not want to do this

Please circle **MAYBE** if you are not sure. If you cannot decide that is fine because you can come along anytime and tell me or one of your teachers or your parents that you want to join in.

This is my photo



I hope we can do this together. It will be great to meet you and you will know who I am because of my photograph. I will also wear a badge with my name on, **Nicky** when I am in your centre.



Thank you for completing this form – will you ask your parent/caregiver to sign here...

(signature)

(Date)

...if they feel that you understand what the project is about and give this form back to your teacher at the centre tomorrow, please.

Researcher Name: Nicky Chisnall

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Professor Colin Gibbs, colin.gibbs@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 x 7227

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTECH, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz 921 9999 ext 8044.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 16 April 2007 AUTECH

Reference number 38/05

Appendix 12: Schedule for Initial Interview of Beginning Teachers

Introduction:

In the first part of the meeting an opportunity to go through the implications of the consent form and to discuss details of the research will be provided. The following questions will then form the basis of a discussion with the participant in order to provide baseline data for the project.

Identifying Documentation

Age:

Sex: Male/Female

Qualifications

Main Questions:

Tell me about how you first came to have an interest in Montessori.

Could you tell me about your experience, if any, in early childhood education prior to beginning the AUT degree?

Do you have other work experience apart from teaching?

Why did you decide to begin study for an early childhood education degree?

In particular, why did you decide to take the Montessori specialty?

What do you feel you have gained from the degree in general and the Montessori speciality in particular?

Do you have any comments on changes (if any) you feel should or could be made in the degree as a whole and in the specialty in particular? (Note: We will continue to explore this question in later discussions).

Tell me about your present work situation. Are you employed in an early childhood centre?

Is it a Montessori or some other type of centre?

What does your position entail?

Are you responsible for other staff?

Are you the designated 'person responsible' and are you carrying out this role in practice or in name only?

Do you have any particular hopes/aspirations for this particular position (probe:..or future aspirations you might hold in the centre or elsewhere?)

What is your understanding/interpretation of Montessori philosophy (probe: in the New Zealand context? Ask if the participant has any material, essays, reflections that they would be willing to share regarding this point).

Montessori had a particular view of the child. Can you explain what that was and in what way you think that might impact on your practice?

Are you using Montessori philosophy and practice in your current position and if so, how is that going with the children?

How have colleagues, parents and/or management responded to the ideas that you have introduced?

Future communication

Ways of communicating will be discussed. Decisions will be made regarding the frequency of contact.