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**DISCOURSES OF TEACHING
IN SELECTED CHILDCARE SETTINGS**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

**at Massey University,
Palmerston North, New Zealand.**

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2007

Abstract

Teachers who work fulltime in community-based childcare settings are responsible for the care and education of children who range in age from babies to children aged 5 years of age. Teachers working in this capacity commonly care for children for extended periods of time, acting ‘in loco parentis’ as they respond to children throughout the day. Teachers who work in such settings experience their work within a particular working reality. They tend to have shorter holidays, staggered breaks and longer face to face hours with children than others who work with young children in early childhood education. Furthermore, recent moves to professionalize the sector have created increased accountability for all teachers in early childhood education, including those who work in childcare.

The present study interviewed 6 teachers who work in community-based settings. Teachers were asked to talk at length about their work. They were encouraged to communicate what their work was like and how they experienced it. They were asked to describe in detail an actual day in their work and to recount particular stories that epitomized their views and their experiences.

The interview transcripts were then analysed to make explicit how teachers understood and made meaning in their work. In-depth analysis of the interviews revealed eight discourses that were significant in the teachers’ work. These were: a normative mother care discourse, a child-centred discourse, a professional discourse, a team-player discourse, a manager of the day, people and environment discourse, a child-in-context discourse and a forum for care discourse. The particular nature of the discourses that were identified threw light on the work of teachers and the experiences that the teachers consequently had.

The discourses were analysed in relation to the current literature and in relation to the material realities of the teachers’ work. Certain world-views were seen to be opened up to the teachers from their positions within discourses. The positions that teachers took up in the various discourses were explored in regard to the kinds of relationships that

teachers made with children and with parents/whānau and in regard to care of their own self.

The study concludes by advocating for increased awareness of the discourses that constitute the work. It is important that teachers understand how certain subject positions are available to them in particular discourses and how these subject positions offer a particular view of the world. Also, as teachers take up positions, certain ways of being with children and with parents open up, and other ways of being with children and parents/whānau close down.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my warmest thanks to Judith Loveridge and John O’Neill for guiding me through the preparation and completion of this thesis. Their astute feedback helped me to find a critical path through the project. Their support was especially appreciated as the project was done at distance and took considerably longer than anticipated.

I would also like to acknowledge Gillian Perkins who was my work colleague for ten years when we worked together in a community-based childcare centre. Our work together, including our many fruitful discussions, greatly contributed to my thinking around teaching in childcare settings. Gillian was very interested in and supportive of my project but unexpectedly died before it was completed.

Lastly, I would like to thank my partner Matthew Leniston who was a great sounding board on the home-front. When I needed someone to toss ideas around with, he was always willing to listen attentively and respond thoughtfully.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

The focus and impetus of this study lie in my own experience of teaching for ten years in a community childcare setting. This working experience that began in the late nineteen eighties proved to be intensely rewarding as well as intensely challenging. Once it was over, I felt the need to look back on it and understand it. My own memories consist of leaving home early in the dark and arriving home in the dark after evening meetings. I recall long days away from home. I recall untold fleeting and lasting interactions with babies, toddlers, young children and adults, a rich and emotional hurly-burley of relationships. Most of all I remember the familiar wave of profound physical exhaustion that frequently swept over me in the last hour or two of each day. In a way, I hoped through this research to gain some insights and a sense of closure on these experiences.

My own work experience was located in a time of significant change for the early childhood field, for all those who were working in the early childhood sector in the late eighties (Jesson, 2001; Hamer, 2002). A key trend during this period was the increasing professionalization of the field. A myriad of reforms contributed to the strengthening of the profession, particularly in regard to the articulation of a specific body of knowledge and the clarification of standards of practice. These reforms included the establishment of the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki*, by the Ministry of Education in 1996 and the introduction by the government of the Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPS) in 1990 and 1996 and the Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations in 1998. These were then followed by the introduction of *Quality in Action: Te Mahi Whai Hua* (Ministry of Education, 1998), which supported teachers to implement the DOPS. Furthermore, in 2004 the Ministry of Education launched the document *Kei Tua o te Pae: Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars*. This widely disseminated document, encouraged teachers to adopt a sociocultural model of assessment, namely Learning Stories. This raft of changes heralded improved status and funding for early childhood education, in particular for parts of the sector such as

child-care and home-based care (which have had low-status historically) as all areas of the sector began to be seen under the same umbrella.

Concomitant with professionalization has been the trend of accountability. There have been increasing responsibilities and tasks for teachers to account for the resourcing and funding that they have received. The Regulations have required teachers to set up a specific and comprehensive set of systems, procedures and policies; the recordkeeping required of teachers is significantly increased because of this. Furthermore, DOP 10a requires teachers to implement practices that reflect ‘current theories of learning and development’ (Ministry of Education, 1998, p. 64). Specifically DOP 3 requires teachers to ‘identify learning goals for individual children’ and to use these as ‘a basis for planning, evaluating and improving curriculum programmes’ (Ministry of Education, 1998, p. 30). DOP 8b requires teachers to discuss with parents and whānau formally and informally their child’s progress, ‘sharing specific observation-based evidence (Ministry of Education, 1998, p. 56).

Teachers are also required to “reflect the unique place of Māori as tangata whenua” and the “principle of partnership inherent in Te Tiriti o Waitangi” (Ministry of Education, 1998, p. 63). These tenets direct teachers to develop knowledge of te reo and an understanding of tikanga. In terms of review, teachers are required to participate and document their on-going self-review processes as well as being required to demonstrate that all these requirements are being met when the Education Review Office reviews their centres.

All of these changes raise questions about teachers in child-care and the work that they do. What is it to teach in such settings? Teachers in child-care typically work longer days than in other areas of teaching and typically have fewer holidays. In addition, the distinctive nature of the work is that teachers spend significant amounts of time in caring for children. How have the changes in recent years affected them and how do these changes intersect with the particular nature of teaching in child-care settings? Importantly, how do these teachers see their work and how do they experience it? Where are the tensions? And how do teachers negotiate the tensions? What is it like to be on the inside of what Acker (1999, p. 104) calls this ‘self-contained vortex of intense relationships’? Surely it is time to examine the day-to-day reality of teaching in these

settings. As O'Neill (2003, p. 2) highlights the "dirty uncertain realities negotiated hour after hour, day by day" of schoolteachers, so do I wish to illuminate the actual, everyday experiences of teachers in child-care. Duncan's (2001) study into the work of kindergarten teachers has a similar intention. She too argues that it is time to gain an understanding of the lived reality of those who "are expected to implement the changes, make things better, who daily have to deal with the realities of the children and families" (Duncan, 2001, p. 3).

Teachers who are employed on a full-time basis in child-care settings typically work a seven and a half to eight and a half hour day and the majority of this time is spent face to face with children. Many centres, though not all, now provide staff with non-child contact hours. The amount of non-child contact varies from as little as an hour a week to an hour a day. A lunch-break of half an hour is common and there is usually a short tea break mid morning and mid afternoon. In order to maintain required ratios on the floor, tea breaks and lunch-breaks are staggered and flow one after the other. Teachers set out resources and prepare the environment before children arrive and frequently continue to do this after children have arrived and whilst they are caring for children. Similarly, teachers tidy up and clean resources and the environment whilst there are children still in the centre at the end of the day and for a period of time after children have left. Most childcare settings are not sessional which means that the number of hours that children attend varies from as little as three hours a week to 50 hours per week. This means that teachers may be settling and farewelling children and conversing with parents/whānau throughout the day out the day as well as at the beginning and end of the day. Teachers are required to attend regular staff meetings (usually weekly or fortnightly), professional development sessions, events with parents/whānau, working bees and fundraising events etc over and above the hours worked with children in the centre. As many events are held in the evenings, this may mean that staff can be working at the centre from 7.30 or 8.00 a.m. in the morning until 9.00 or 10.00 p.m. in the evening.

There is a tendency to view teaching as a calling and this can cloud the fact that teaching is work. It is particularly important in the case of child-care then to consider the setting as a work place as the traditional images of women naturally caring for young children can tend to obscure that caring for children is actually work (Acker, 1999).

The experiences of teachers must be contextualized within their working realities as the material conditions are powerful shapers of teachers' work and to ignore these would render an incomplete picture. The work is formed within the context of certain structures. When the work is contextualized within its structural framework, opportunities are opened up for it to be seen as embedded in a social, cultural and political framework and this provides for a fuller picture and a more critical analysis. For these reasons, this study will endeavour to keep in mind the everyday, working realities of teachers.

Post-structuralism is the theory chosen to frame this study. This academic theory makes no claims to provide all-embracing truths or answers but, rather, in the context of this research, provides a fresh way of viewing the work of teachers. A key tenet of post-structuralism is its cynicism about the 'grandes narratives' of modernity such as Marxism, Christianity, science, feminism and developmental psychology as ways of structuring the world (Sawicki, 1991; Cannella, 2002). The critiques of these 'grandes narratives' have opened up and facilitated new analyses of how relations of power are enacted. For this study, importantly, they enabled discussion and interrogation of the fundamental assumptions of early childhood education.

It is the critique of the latter, of developmental psychology, that is of particular relevance to this study. Developmental psychology has tended to posit the individual as having an essential and stable identity whereas post-structuralism views the individual as having multiple identities and as always in a state of flux. Accordingly, the post-structural term 'subjectivity' replaces the term 'identity' to describe the individual's sense of self and captures these new understandings. Grieshaber and Cannella (2001, p. 66) refute the modernist notion of a fixed identity stating that instead "the subjectivity of individuals is constructed and produced in the political, social and economic circumstances (discourses) currently operating in society". In post-structuralism theory, people may have different subjectivities or subject positions within discourses. Hence subjectivities are viewed as multiple as individuals take up positions within a number of discourses. Teachers in childcare settings can be seen as having a subjectivity that is multi-faceted and complex as teachers take up particular subject positions within a range of discourses.

Moreover, language has a central and pivotal place in post-structural theory. Whilst Enlightenment thinking would view language as being a neutral tool used to convey an objective reality, post-structural theory would view language as always an interpretation of the world and not able to deliver or represent a single real world. Furthermore, according to post-structural theory, it is not possible to step outside language and experience the real world as the individual's sense of reality is actually a reflection of his/her own language. Language discourses shape the individual's understanding and help them to make sense of the world (Danaher, Shirato & Webb, 2000).

There are a myriad of discourses circulating at any time that teachers may appropriate as teachers build their subjectivity. Miller Marsh (2003) attests to the large number of discourses such as those of morality, race, religion, science and gender that circulate in general society and that influence teachers; as well as those that specifically circumscribe teacher education such as developmentally appropriate practice and a child-centred approach. Importantly, discourses fashion the way teachers see themselves, the children and their work. In the words of Miller Marsh (2003) "discourses operate in and through individuals to structure experiences, interactions, social relations, daily practices, and ways of being in the world" (p. 9). This post-structural theory of the individual as having a subjectivity that is socially constructed, dynamic and multiple, is enabling as it opens up new ways of looking at teachers and teaching (Acker, 1999; Coffey & Delamont, 2000; Willinsky, 1989).

Post-structuralism offers opportunities for incorporating the local and individual as well as the societal and structural features in the analysis. Research on teachers has tended to take two lines of inquiry; it has either foregrounded the individual at the micro level or it has foregrounded social formations and institutions at the macro level. The work that has explored the individual has wanted to counter positivist traditions and position teachers as actively creating their own meaning. The work that has explored structure has focused primarily on the way in which teachers and teaching are shaped by society and culture. Willinsky (1989, p. 259) critiques the former work as isolating teachers and not addressing the social and political realities; societal structures "have been left to loom just beyond the portraits and narratives they carefully construct". On the other hand Acker (1999) critiques the latter work as being too deterministic and not acknowledging the agency that teachers can exert.

Links can be made between the everyday experiences of teachers and the ways that these experiences are constituted through societal institutions and formations. The concept of discourse is the key post-structural concept that enables such an analysis. Just as electrical cables can be followed back to an electrical box to reveal the source of the power so too can the lived experiences be explored and traced back to explicate the dominant discourses that constitute them. The concept of discourse is central to this study and as such will be revisited in chapter three as part of an explanation of the theoretical tools used in the study.

In this study, then, the questions that I chose to focus on are: **What are the discourses that construct the work and how do the teachers experience the different discourses?** I decided to interview a small number of teachers and then analyse their talk for evidence of discourse. The key discourses that construct the work were identified. I explored the positions that teachers take up within the dominant discourses and what this meant for the way in which teachers worked with children and other adults (colleagues and parents/whānau). I also wanted to illuminate the dynamics between the dominant discourses and how teachers experienced this. Throughout the study, I kept the everyday working context of the teachers to the fore so that the material reality of the teachers would provide a meaningful framework for the research.

This thesis consists of six chapters. This first chapter explains my own interest in how teachers view and understand their work. It also provides a rationale for the research and explains the stance I took, including the theoretical paradigm that I situated the study within. The second chapter provides a review of a range of literature that informs teaching in childcare settings as well as consideration of specific research studies that illuminate the actual discourses that teachers draw on when constructing their work. Chapter three gives a brief outline of the theoretical understandings that inform the study and this chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section outlines the key understandings and concepts of post-structuralism and how they are pertinent to this study. The concepts of discourse, positioning and subjectivity are posited as key theoretical tools. The second section provides the theoretical understandings that support the consideration of the teachers' everyday work context. The third and final section is an account of the methodology of the study. This final section is divided into two parts. The first part of this section, presents the rationale for the research design and

my understandings about the process of data analysis. The latter part of this final section gives a step by step explanation of the process that I followed throughout the project. The fourth chapter consists of the key findings of the study. The discourses that were found to make up the discursive space around the work of the teachers are identified and explained. The fifth chapter provides an analysis of the identified discourses. First, the discourses are analysed in relation to the key areas in the literature review. Second, the identified discourses are considered in relation to a body of social constructionist literature and a body of critical psychology literature. Third, a synthesis of the analysis is provided that draws together the key themes from the analyses. The final chapter presents the key findings, reflections on the methodology used in the study, suggestions for further research and implications for policy and practice.

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature, both theoretical and empirical, that surrounds teaching in childcare settings. The review is clustered around four key areas. The first section of the review takes a broad sweep and presents what is known about the working conditions of teachers (including teachers' perspectives of the conditions) both overseas and here in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The second section of the review examines what is written about the distinctive nature of the work, namely the large amount of caring that is carried out by teachers in childcare settings. This section presents more theoretical than empirical literature as the experience of caring (from the teacher's perspective) has as yet been little researched. The third section of the review provides a brief overview of some of the recent trends that are shaping the work in childcare settings thus providing some context for the analysis of teachers' work in this study. The final section reviews the small body of research that has explicitly explored the discourses that shape teachers' work. These studies were carried out in a range of early childhood settings both here in Aotearoa/New Zealand as well as in Iceland and Finland. This small cluster of studies is useful in two ways. First, the area of interest of each study is closely related to the area of interest of this research, namely the discourses that surround the work and the positions that teachers take up within discourses. Second, the theoretical framework of post-structuralism and elements of the research design used in these are useful in informing this present study.

What does research into the working conditions tell us about the experience of teaching in childcare?

Several studies have thrown light on the experience of those who teach in childcare services. There is a body of work from the nineteen nineties to the present time that has explored childcare as an adult work environment. These studies have tended to be on a medium to large scale and have focused on areas such as working conditions, training

status, training routes, retention/turnover, job satisfaction and burn-out. Some of these studies have collected data of a quantitative nature such as level of pay and level of qualification. Others have collected data that is both quantitative and qualitative; the latter might be in regard for example to staff views about their work, their likes and dislikes and what they would like to change about their job. Overall these studies have tended to use questionnaires, surveys, scales, structured interviews, document analysis, reviews of research studies, database search; some of these methods obviously suiting the large numbers of participants that were often involved.

The studies that are referred to below have been carried out in a range of childcare settings across a number of countries. This review will not provide a detailed matching of conditions between settings overseas and those in Aotearoa/New Zealand as information is not available on all dimensions across the studies and, as Cameron (1997) attests the situational elements in each study are diverse and complex. These studies instead provide a backcloth for the present study where the key themes in the national and international literature about teaching in childcare settings are identified.

As the structural elements in services across countries vary so too does the definition of what it is to be a qualified teacher vary across different countries. Some countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States have a plethora of training routes whilst others such as Denmark and Aotearoa/New Zealand have a generic training base. The United Kingdom and the United States have a tiered qualification structure that means nursery nurses work in the same centre alongside nursery teachers on inferior pay with inferior working conditions. Furthermore, countries such as the United Kingdom still have a clear demarcation between services that provide care and those that provide education whilst in Aotearoa/New Zealand there has been a growing recognition of the interconnectedness of care and education. Notwithstanding the diverse situations across countries, there remain some common themes in the literature for those that teach in childcare settings.

A recurrent theme in the national and international literature is poor working conditions. In a major study carried out in 227 centres in the United States, Phillips, Howes and Whitebook (1991) assessed the working conditions of staff and linked this to the quality of care in the centres. This study concluded from interviews with 1309 staff that “they

earned on average poverty level wages” (Phillips et al., 1991, p. 49) and that whilst staff tended to have sick leave and reduced childcare fees they did not tend to enjoy annual salary increases, healthcare coverage and life and retirement insurance. These findings on childcare centres in the United States seem to have features in common with centres in Australia around the same time. Bennett (1991, p. 20) in her analysis of industrial and political factors in what she viewed as the “exploitation of child-care workers” attested to similar poor working conditions in Australia. Bennett (1991, p. 39) concluded her detailed analysis of the awards of childcare staff in different settings and in different states by advocating for “wider public knowledge about the appalling conditions of child-care workers and the effects of this on children”.

The few studies carried out in Aotearoa/New Zealand were consistent with those carried out overseas. Nuttall (1992) researched the working conditions of teachers in five childcare centres in Christchurch. Nuttall was interested to compare the conditions of teachers in non-profit centres with those of teachers in private centres. Whilst Nuttall found that working conditions in private centres were slightly better than those in non-profit centres, she did state that “it must be noted that *overall*, pay and working conditions for childcare workers are still poor in relation to similar jobs, such as kindergarten teaching” (1992, p. 88). The Combined Early Childhood Union of Aotearoa, (the union of the sector at the time) carried out a staffing survey on 589 staff who were members of the Union in 1993. The Union noted a trend for staff to work with bigger groups and to have poorer staff to child ratios. The results were seen as showing deterioration in the financial viability of centres, creating extreme pressure for centres. Anecdotal accounts from staff of holding staff meetings while children were sleeping contributed to “a very bleak picture” (Combined Early Childhood Union of Aotearoa, 1993, p. 9). Smith, Hubbard, Haggerty, Ford and White (1994) carried out a large scale study into working conditions in infant childcare settings. Supervisors and staff in 100 centres were interviewed about their working conditions. Staff did not receive some benefits that were provided to staff in the United States and the UK such as retirement pensions, life and health insurance. Staff in Aotearoa/New Zealand received less preparation time than those in the United States and fewer staff had written contracts than those in the United States. Smith et al. (1994) concluded their research stating that “these results do not present an optimistic picture of job conditions in NZ childcare centres” (p. 7).

This theme of poor pay and working conditions seems to have continued through to the late nineties. Cameron (1997) analysed a number of major studies that had been carried out on childcare services across six countries and produced a review of the key characteristics of these childcare services. The countries that she reviewed were Denmark, Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Britain. She concluded from this cross-national comparison that “childcare is frequently a service that is low-paid, with few staff benefits, and one that is carried out in poor conditions” (Cameron, 1997, p. 56). Interestingly, Denmark, with more government and public support of childcare was found to be in a slightly better position.

In light of these findings on working conditions, it is not surprising to find turnover and retention too as recurrent themes in this body of literature. The Phillips et al. (1991) study found high intended and actual turnover rates. Cameron (1997) found an overall turnover rate of 30% in her cross-national review and stated “the rate at which staff leave childcare work is alarming” (p. 61). She found that the two main reasons for leaving are first, personal and family reasons and second, stress and burn out. High attrition rates have also been a pressing issue in childcare services in Australia and according to Sumsion (2002) are continuing to rise. Lyons (1997) conducted an empirical study in Australia that researched the attitudes of staff working in non-profit making ‘long daycare’ (LDC) centres to their work. The past and intended turnover rate was also found to be about 30% and only 16% found that the work was not stressful. A recent large scale study carried out by Rolfe, Metcalf, Anderson and Meadows (2003) in the UK with staff from eight local authorities found a turnover rate that was actually higher than that found by Cameron (1997) in her cross country comparison.

While staff were generally dissatisfied with pay and aspects of the working conditions, they tended to be satisfied with the work itself. The studies by Phillips et al. (1991), Cameron (1997), and Smith et al. (1994), all found high levels of intrinsic satisfaction despite the low levels of extrinsic rewards. This was in also line with Nuttall’s (1992) findings; she commented that even though the working conditions were poor, “the satisfaction of working with young children is an enormous reward” (p. 89).

A study carried out for the New Zealand Council of Educational Research (NZCER, 1995) backs up the view that work in childcare has tended to have inferior pay and poor

working conditions. This study was related to the, then, newly introduced three year integrated training programme for teaching in early childhood education. It sought to find out students' views about their intentions in regard to employment. Of all the student teachers, across the colleges in the first year of training, 75% said that kindergarten was where they intended to teach after training. This compared with 14% of this same group who intended to teach in childcare. Although training did encourage more students to consider working in childcare settings, two-thirds of all the third year students still had a preference to work in kindergarten. When first year students were asked to give reasons for not wanting to work in childcare, "by far the most common reason was poor pay and working conditions, including long hours and short holidays" (NZCER, 1995, p. 20). Moreover, most of the negative comments were in relation to low pay, long hours and stress.

More recently, it seems there has been significant improvements in pay for some of those teach in community-based centres in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The Union of the sector, NZEI, has negotiated a series of steps so that community-based centres (which are members of the Consenting Parties Agreement) can achieve pay parity with teachers over a period of time. Union members are already benefiting from this agreement, however the level of pay across centres is still extremely variable. In terms of working conditions, again there has as yet been no large scale research into this (although the Ministry of Education has commissioned a study which will be published in 2007). Anecdotally, working conditions are variable and many staff continue to work within less than favourable conditions in terms of annual leave, sick leave and non-child contact time.

What is known about the caring aspects of the work?

Work carried out in childcare settings has a great emphasis on the actual care of children. Teachers acting 'in loco parentis' are responsible for children for extended periods of time; sometimes this means that children are in settings for eight to nine hours in a day, which inevitably means that teachers are responsible for the physical and emotional care of children. This includes care practices and routines of welcoming, farewelling, dressing, eating, sleeping, hygiene, toileting and nappy changing. The inclusion of babies and toddlers in childcare centres also means that teachers spend

significant amounts of time responding on a one to one basis to the physical and emotional needs of children. Although overseas and national studies (Cameron, 1997; Smith et al., 1994) have highlighted the stresses and demands of the work as well as the intrinsic pleasure of working with children, there does not appear to be a clear picture of how teachers in group settings actually experience the caring part of their work. What is it like for those teachers whose work contains a significant amount of care? The large scale of many of these studies to date has meant that the scope of the data collection has been wide rather than narrow and in-depth.

One study that attempted to explicitly explore the experience of working in a childcare setting was a piece of ethnographic research carried out by Wolf and Walsh (1998) in Illinois, in the United States. The researchers spent 12-16 hours in one childcare centre over a period of four months using observations, interviews and participation to collect data about the everyday experience of the teachers. They wanted to “capture the flesh and blood of the daily struggles and joys” and to do this “in respectful but not patronizing ways” (Wolf & Walsh, 1998, p. 43). Contentious events such as putting Tabasco sauce on the tongue of a child who was biting were analysed and explained by a full account of the context, including the structural and regulatory constraints within which teachers worked. Wolf and Walsh (1998) report on “the complex and intensely face to face nature of ‘doing child-care’” and the “myriad, constant and often conflicting demands” (p. 30). Their findings led them to conclude that the adults who work in childcare need to be valued, that there is not enough understanding about what it is like to do the work and in the words of one of the teachers “if you haven’t been there you don’t know what its like” (Wolf & Walsh, 1998, p. 1).

The historical development of childcare services has of course been powerfully shaped by discourses of care. The early services both in Europe and in Aotearoa/New Zealand have their beginnings in welfare and protection. This discourse positioned teachers as women who loved and cared for children, who were available for the needs of others and who possessed the necessary virtues of self-sacrifice and altruism. Steedman (as cited in Acker, 1995, p. 23) identifies the conflation of mothering and teaching as having its seeds in “a mixture of prescriptions for middle-class mothers in the nineteenth century and theorizing by Froebel and other reformers about what is natural

mothering and how it can be ‘made conscious’ in the classroom”. Acker (1995, p. 23) explains that the teacher thereby became a “kind of reflective practitioner mother”.

Acker (1995-1996) has conducted a major review of research on gender and teaching. Although much of this review considers teachers within the compulsory sector it is certainly useful in informing our understanding of teachers’ care activities in early childhood education. Acker (1995-1996) identifies a body of writing that sees teachers’ caring activities as being shaped through a discourse of mothering. This work identifies themes such as altruism, nurture, high levels of commitment, repetitive labour and self-sacrifice and sees these as common to mothering and teaching (Griffin & Smith, 1991; Grumet, as cited in Acker, 1995-1996). According to Acker (1995, p. 22) the British literature has tended to explain the close link between women teachers and caring as being “part of the reproduction of social and sexual divisions in the family and labour market within capitalist society”. This gender analysis differs from the analysis put forward by other British writers who explain teacher caring activities as emanating from the nature of the work. According to this view, the teacher’s sense of self is shaped by being responsible for children for extended periods, by working often in isolation and by the formation of close attachments to children (Nias, as cited in Acker, 1995-1996).

Discussion in the United States has called for a foregrounding of care in education. This work, which has been led by Noddings (2003; 2005) and Gilligan (1982), is interested in redressing what is seen as the privileging of men’s experience and values in education. It seeks to highlight what are seen as ‘women’s ways’ and women’s ways of being in the world. The quality of caring is seen as a traditional, female quality and one that places importance on sensitivity, relationships, trust and flexibility (Goldstein & Lake, 2000). This stance though has been critiqued as leaning towards an essentialist viewpoint and is problematic in that it sees the quality of care as being a natural attribute of women (Acker, 1995-1996). Such an essentialist viewpoint is seen as inadequate in explaining the diversity amongst women and men and in accounting for differing work and educational contexts (Britzman, 1993; Acker, 1995-1996; Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, 2006). Writers such as Moss (2003) in Britain and Sumsion (2002) in Australia are contributing to a re-conceptualization of care in early childhood education as one that moves away from mother care as normative and the notion that

care is apolitical but, rather, sees care as always situated within a particular context and as socially and culturally constructed.

Although there are differing analyses of teacher caring activities there does seem to be consensus on the intense demands that are placed on teachers. In the body of research that has considered the working conditions of teachers, stress and burnout are identified as key reasons for staff turnover (Cameron, 1997; Smith et al., 1994). In reference to these demands on teachers, Leavitt (as cited in Goldstein & Lake, 2000, p. 3) identifies the “inherently unequal nature” of the teacher/child relationship that can lead to exhaustion. Goldstein and Lake state that the intense demands of this kind of caring relationship can lead teachers to experience “emotional strain, anger and alienation” (2000, p. 3). There has been sparse, qualitative, in-depth research carried out on teachers who work in childcare. However, it is possible that the care responsibilities of staff do contribute to levels of stress and burnout.

Sumsion (2002) raises an important question for teachers when she asks whether or not the profession is itself placing excessive demands on teachers. “Are we complicit as a profession, I wonder in reproducing gendered expectations of women’s work? Do we conflate a commitment to caring for young children with an unspoken expectation of exploitation of, and sacrifice by, those who are engaged in caring?” (Sumsion, 2002, p. 9).

Recent trends in the experience of teaching in childcare

There seems to be a consensus that the role of the teacher is becoming more complex as society places greater value on working with parents/whānau and families and young learners (Moss, 2004). Expectations of parents/whānau are becoming stronger and more clearly articulated. Liu, Yeung and Farmer (2001, p. 391) surveyed 100 parents/whānau from child-care centres in Sydney, Australia and found that “parents today look for education in addition to the traditional expectations of child-minding”. As Moss states, “the divide between care and education is breaking down” (2004, p. 2). This is certainly impacting on childcare as the service is generally seen as needing to place more emphasis on education. In many countries, too, teachers are being encouraged to work across agencies and take a more family and community-based approach (Oberhaumer &

Colberg-Schrader, 1999; Hayden & MacDonald, 2001). This role moves childcare with its child-centred and employment-centred discourses to “redefine child-care as a service to the community” (Hayden & Macdonald, 2001, p. 35). These changes and calls to reconceptualize the role of the teacher are exerting influence on those who work in childcare.

There are clear philosophical and curriculum trends impacting on the work of teachers in childcare settings. The child-centred approach was the dominant approach to early childhood curriculum for most of the twentieth century. This approach has its conceptual and theoretical roots in history with key figures such as Dewey, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori, Isaacs, Lowenfeld and Gesell (Burman, 1994; Cannella, 2002; MacNaughton, 2003). It became particularly dominant in Western educational thinking during the latter half of the twentieth century, as there was a move away from behaviourism and teacher-directed approaches to an approach that was seen as more liberal and progressive and viewed the child as an active learner. Miller Marsh (2003) states; “teachers through facilitation rather than direct instruction worked to unlock the inner potential of each child” (p. 24). Within this approach there is an emphasis on the individual child’s freedom to choose as this is seen as supporting the child to be self-governing and self-regulating. In turn, these liberal ideas about children were seen as contributing to the development of a more democratic and just society after World War II. As Cannella (2002) states, “child-centredness evolved as synonymous with the creation of a democratic, free society” (p. 118).

The ‘scientific’ approach to children’s development that had emerged in the early part of the twentieth century was enhanced and strengthened by Piaget’s theories about the ‘natural’ development of children. In essence, Piaget’s theories contributed to the construction of the ‘natural, universal and normal child’ whose development followed a linear and sequential path and who, through exploration and play, discovered the knowledge base that is fixed and universal (Walkerdine, 1998). As a result of the coalescence of these ideas, development came to be seen as a natural process and as rooted in the individual (Miller Marsh, 2003). Importantly the pedagogical approach that emerged out of these ideas orientated teachers to be primarily concerned with the interests, needs and developmental growth of children. Burman (1994, p. 165) sums this up saying “education was conceptualized as the external realization of an inner

potential, with the emphasis on the uniqueness of each child giving rise to a demand that learning should be “relevant to her needs and interests”.

In recent years, the field has been mounting a strong academic critique of a child-centred approach with its theoretical base of developmental psychology. There has been a growing momentum towards a sociocultural perspective that focuses on groups of learners and ‘communities of learners’ (Fleer & Richardson, 2004). This means that there is a move away from the idea of a ‘universal child’ to a more contextual view of the child that foregrounds the child’s context and his/her relationships with people, places and things within the context. The central concern of this approach is how the child participates in their local contexts and communities and how they can be supported to become a competent member of the communities that they are located within.

These philosophical and curriculum trends are supported by the government and realized in policy documents and texts. Key documents and texts that are urging teachers to adopt a sociocultural approach are *Te Whāriki*, (Ministry of Education, 1996), *Quality in Action: Te Mahi Whai Hua* (Ministry of Education, 1998) and *Kei Tua o te Pae: Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2004). *Te Whāriki* is the Ministry of Education’s policy statement of curriculum. Whilst there has been debate on the theoretical tensions of a curriculum that incorporates both a developmental and a sociocultural approach, it continues to be viewed and acknowledged in the main as a sociocultural document. One of the four key principles that reflect this sociocultural stance is “that the wider world of family and community is an integral part of the early childhood curriculum” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 14). The Desirable Objectives and Practices statement, as stated in *Quality in Action: Te Mahi Whai Hua*, whilst maintaining a focus on “learning goals for individual children” (Ministry of Education, 1998, p. 30) could also be said to be fostering a sociocultural approach. Many of the ‘objectives and practices’ are taken directly from the curriculum statement including for example, “to involve parents/guardians and where appropriate, whānau” (Ministry of Education, 1998, p. 34) and “connecting links with the family are affirmed and extended” (Ministry of Education, 1998, p. 43). The most recent document *Kei Tua o te Pae: Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2004) is powerfully

propelling teachers to shift their practices from a child-centred discourse, with its reliance on traditional ‘objective’ assessment, to a sociocultural model of assessment with its use of narrative assessment. The government’s commitment to shift teachers’ pedagogy in relation to this is reflected in the significant levels of funding of professional development contracts in this area.

What do we know explicitly about how teachers understand their work?

Lastly, there is a small but growing body of research from overseas and from here in Aotearoa/New Zealand that is exploring explicitly how teachers take up positions within particular discourses and how this shapes their work. This work has, in the main, been carried out during the last five years. The body of work that I am referring to consists of research carried out by Puriola (2002) in Finland, by Einarsdottir (2003) in Iceland and by Waayer (2002), Dalli (2002), and Henderson (2004), here in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The research foci and the methodological approaches taken by this recent body of research are particularly pertinent to the present study into teaching in community child-care settings and have therefore been used to significantly inform the focus and the methodology of this study.

First, the research foci of the above studies are concerned with the identification of discourses that inform the work of teachers, as is the focus of this study. Second, the methodological approach taken by this contemporary research, located within a post-modern paradigm and post-structural theory, frames and informs the work; this approach also informs this study.

The studies deal in depth with a small number of participants (ranging from four to nine). Participants are not selected randomly but rather purposive sampling has been used thus ensuring that participants have what is seen as relevant information and experience. The methods of data collection that researchers have chosen in these studies are ones that align theoretically with a post-modern paradigm. These tend to be ones that are conducive to collecting the stories and understandings of participants, namely, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. All of the researchers used individual interviews apart from Einarsdottir (2003, p. 107) who steered a “carefully planned discussion” with the group of teachers.

In Puriola's (2002) case, observations were carried out as well as the individual interviews. Waayer (2002) carried out document analysis of services documents as well as individual interviews and Henderson (2004) took a life-history approach in her interviews as well as carrying out document analysis of the service's documents. These approaches to data collection inform this study on community-based teachers. In this study it was decided to use in-depth, qualitative, individual interviews rather than group discussion or focus groups as this method is seen as being conducive to eliciting teachers' personal experiences and stories in terms of supporting intimacy and giving time and space for extended accounts. Semi-structured interviews were used as the sole method of data collection as this accommodated the stories that teachers felt were significant. Document analysis was carried out, as there is no relevant umbrella organization that provides overall administration as there was in the case of Family Day Care in Waayer's (2002) study.

There are strong similarities in the way in which the five researchers discussed above have analysed their interview transcripts. The 'talk' in the teachers' transcripts represent the teachers' perspectives on their every day reality - their lived reality. These accounts are analysed for patterns in ways of talking about the work and consequently, discourses are identified that help shape these ways of thinking about and constructing the work. Dalli (2002), for example, has analysed what she calls the teachers' theories of practice from the interviews and informal conversations and then identified the dominant discourses that specifically shape teachers' pedagogy around settling new children into childcare. Einarsdottir (2003) has relied heavily on Dahlberg, Moss and Pence's (1999) framework of ideas around modernity and post-modernity to analyse the key themes that emanated from the discussion in the focus group. Puriola (2002) Waayer (2002) and Henderson (2004) have taken a similar approach to the analysis in that a set of discourses have been identified in each that is seen as defining the discursive space around the teachers' work.

The research foci of these studies are pertinent to my own study in that they all explore how teachers construct their work. However the studies carried out by Waayer (2002) Henderson (2004) and Puriola (2002) are particularly pertinent. Dalli's (2002) work has a narrow focus in that it explored the construction of teachers' work around the settling in of children. Einarsdottir's (2003) specific interest was in how early preschool

teachers in Iceland construct their pedagogy. The remaining three researchers took a more comprehensive approach and were concerned with how teachers constructed their work as a whole. Waayer's (2002, p. 1) research into family daycare in Aotearoa/New Zealand focused on identifying the "patterns of understanding-or discourses influential in giving meaning to the caregivers activities". Henderson (2004) similarly investigated the way in which nanny educators construct their work so as to help clarify the unique characteristics of home-based early education here in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Puriola (2002) interestingly uses the theoretical tool of frames and frame analysis rather than discourse and discourse analysis to conceptualize the identities of teachers in Finland. Nevertheless this tool has significant similarities with discourse analysis. Puriola (2002) herself states that frame analysis "illuminates how the professional practices are constructed" (p. 36) and so, accordingly, for the purposes of this discussion the theoretical tool of frames was viewed as congruent with the theoretical tool of discourse.

As the foci of the studies by Dalli (2002) and Einarsdottir (2003) are not pertinent to the focus of this study the findings are not reported here. On the other hand, the findings of the studies by Waayer (2002), Henderson (2004), and Puriola (2002) relate directly to the focus of this study and so will be outlined below.

Puriola (2002) found that teachers' practice comprised five orientations or frames. These were: educational, caring, managing, practical, and personal. According to Puriola, (2002, p. 37) "the frames constitute the repertoire within which the educators interpret their work situations and shape their practices". These were the basic levels of meaning that constituted the teachers' practice. The educational frame positioned the teacher as a facilitator of children's learning and development. There was no consensus on practices such as child-directed versus adult-directed. The caring frame focused on physical growth as well as emotional and social aspects. Puriola (2002) found that teachers demonstrated a range of behaviours, from care at a minimum level to care with heightened sensitivity. When teachers were orientated in a managing frame, they were concerned with discipline, controlling, observing and intervening. Issues around power were felt by Puriola to be a central part of the work. However, she noted that this has not as yet warranted much attention in early childhood research. The practical frame was also seen to be a significant part of the work of teachers; Puriola saw the practical

aspects of the work as coming under the categories of people, physical environment and time. She commented that the practical dimensions of the work have not been discussed very much hitherto in the literature; these dimensions appear to be overlooked. The personal frame relates to when teachers shared their personal lives and experiences and this may include sharing their strengths and interests. Interestingly, this was more likely to happen with other staff than with children and parents/whānau although teachers did tend to share their own mothering experiences on occasions with parents/whānau. The researcher concluded that the work is multi-faceted and teachers have different roles and identities within different frames. Furthermore Puriola (2002) argued that it is important to expand our understandings of the work from being solely about caring and educating; more attention needs to be given to the managing, practical and personal orientations of the work.

Henderson (2004) similarly identified four main discourses that construct the work of nanny educators. First, the discourse of home, family life and an idyllic childhood is seen as contributing to positioning nanny educators as substitute mothers and home managers. Second, the discourse of doing social good is seen as positioning nanny educators as supporting and helping families. Third, the discourse of business positions nanny educators as employees who have job descriptions and staff appraisals and lastly, the discourse of professional early childhood education positions nanny educators as teachers and as such nanny educators are involved in education. Moreover Henderson (2004) found tensions and conflicts between the various discourses. For example, nanny educators are positioned both as helpers and as employees of the families. Henderson (2004) concludes that the four discourses each explain a facet of the work and that they are complementary, conflicting and overlapping but as a whole they articulate the unique nature of the work.

Henderson (2004) points out that the four discourses above align closely to the five discourses identified by Waayer (2002) in her study on caregivers in Family Day Care. Waayer identifies a political and economic discourse as positioning caregivers as technicians “executing tasks prescribed by ‘experts’ rather than as professionals making choices based on specialized knowledge and experience” (2002, p. 158). A mothering discourse, as with Henderson, positions caregivers as mothers and promotes traditional ideas about children and families. A welfare discourse is similar to Henderson’s social

good discourse, and is seen by Waayer as positioning caregivers as helpers to those who are disadvantaged. A professional discourse positions caregivers as skilled and paid; this has links with Henderson's discourse of business. Despite the obvious lack of basic working conditions for caregivers such as sick leave or holiday leave caregivers see the work as 'real work'. Lastly, an educational discourse is seen as positioning caregivers as doing more than caring for children. Education is constructed as something that caregivers consciously introduce and "that made a caregiver more of a 'teacher' than a 'mother'...care of children occurs naturally, but education is an add-on that must be introduced" (Waayer, 2002, p. 162). Waayer concludes that the identification of these discourses throws light on how Family Day Care is understood and practised; it signals some of the tensions in Family Day care and also illuminates "why there are many different ways of doing FDC" (2002, p. 165).

Summary of literature

The literature that has been reviewed in relation to teaching in childcare settings has illuminated different aspects of the work. First, the national and international literature on working conditions indicates that there are areas for improvement in the working conditions of those that work in childcare settings. Sparse, current, empirical research in Aotearoa/New Zealand means that it is difficult to make categorical statements about how staff experience their working conditions in this country. However, the literature (national and international) suggests that the working conditions of teachers in childcare settings tend to be poor and in need of improvement. Some of the contentious issues are: working with untrained staff, lack of or limited child-contact time, limited holidays, long days and rostered shifts. It seems likely that childcare settings here do face issues of turnover, stress and burnout and that working conditions play a role in this.

Second, in relation to the caring that teachers do in childcare settings and how teachers experience this, there is as yet only a small body of literature to illuminate this.

Historically caring has tended to be seen as a woman's attribute and associated with mothering. Whilst some writers would want to foreground care as being a natural attribute of women, other writers want to move away from care as normative and, rather, re-conceptualize care as contextual and socially and culturally constructed.

Moreover, the literature does indicate that when intense caring demands are placed on

teachers this can lead to emotional stress, burnout and alienation. This raises questions about whether excessive demands are placed on teachers in caring roles in childcare settings.

Third, teachers in childcare settings are subject to a myriad of changes in relation to their work. As society encourages more women into the workplace, increasing emphasis is placed on settings that offer full day care. The work is becoming more complex as teachers are forced to respond to the expectations of parents/whānau and as increased emphasis is placed on education. Furthermore, philosophical and curriculum trends are urging teachers to change the way that they have traditionally worked with children and families. In particular, the academic field is promoting a significant theoretical shift away from a child-centred way of working to a sociocultural way of working with children and families; this theoretical shift has major implications for practice. These social, philosophical and curriculum changes are evident in the regulatory framework and in the key curriculum texts with which teachers work.

Lastly, some recent empirical studies have used post-structural theory and discourse to explore the work of teachers, they directly contribute to and inform this study of teachers in community-based childcare settings. The foci of these studies, in particular those by Waayer (2002), Henderson (2004) and Puriola (2002), are extremely close to the focus of this study. The discourses that these studies identified contributed to the identification of discourses and positioning of teachers in this study. There were some clear links between the discourses that were identified across these three studies. They were: a care/mothering/home discourse: a professional/educator discourse: a welfare/social good discourse and a practical/management discourse. Also, the methodological and theoretical approach taken in the three studies is similar to the approach taken in this study.

My own study took a similar approach to these latter three studies in exploring how teachers construct their work and make meaning. Consequently, these studies were also used in the analysis phase. In summing up, then, my own study was intent on exploring the discourses that shape the work of teachers in community-based settings and the extent to which positions that teachers take up within these discourses explained how the work is understood and practised.

Chapter Three

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This chapter presents a succinct description of the theoretical framework and the theoretical tools that are used in this study. First, the theory that underpins this study is post-structural theory. Accordingly a brief description of the theory and of the key post-structural concepts of discourse, subjectivity and positioning and how they are pertinent to this study is provided. Second, the decision to take a contextual approach within the study is explained and supported theoretically. Third, the methodological approach is outlined in two sections. The first section explains the theoretical understandings and assumptions that underpin the methodology and the second section details the method, giving the more technical and operational aspects of the research.

Post-structuralism

In simple terms, post-structuralism refers to a mode of analysis that followed structuralism, which was a dominant mode of analysis in the social sciences of the 20th century. Similarly, post-modernity refers to the era that followed on from the period of modernity that lasted from the 18th century to the mid to late 20th century.

Anyon (1994) points out that whilst post-modern and post-structural theories have much in common and overlap in many ways, the latter tends to have a more specific application whilst the former tends to be applied to a wide range of disciplines and artistic endeavours. Hughes (2001) also acknowledges the close association between the terms however states that post-structuralism tends to focus on individuals whereas post-modernity tends to be concerned with society as a whole. Lather (1991) clarifies the relationship between the two terms saying that post-structural theory “is the working out of academic theory within the culture of post-modernism” (p. 90). Notwithstanding the differing definitions and interpretations, it is widely acknowledged that Foucault the

French theorist has been a key, influential figure in the development of the body of post-structural writing (Sarup, 1993).

A distinguishing feature of post-structuralism is its epistemological position. According to this theory, knowledge is problematic in that it is uncertain and can never be definitively captured. Unlike the modernist view of knowledge that held that knowledge was objective and reflected the world, post-modernity posits knowledge as value-laden and as not reflecting the world but representing it (Moss & Petrie, 2002). Meaning is always tentative and closure is resisted (Anyon, 1994). According to Moss and Petrie “there can be no absolute knowledge, no absolute knowledge waiting out there to be discovered” (2002, p. 26).

The universal truths as expounded in the ‘grandes narratives’ of modernity are challenged and critiqued (Cannella & Grieshaber, 2001). There is a distrust of universal theories as they are seen as totalizing, deterministic and reductionist. Hence structuralist perspectives such as Marxism, feminism, Christianity and developmental psychology are critiqued in terms of their assumptions of universal applicability. Instead, there is an emphasis in post-structural theory on local settings and contextual knowledge as this is seen as more able to capture the contradictions and the complexity of particular situations (Anyon, 1994). Post-structuralism views everything and everyone as in a state of flux and according to Hughes (2001)) the “task of the researcher is to explain the constant instability without attempting to “capture or stabilize it” (p. 45).

Post-structuralism challenges the traditional and modernist view that sees power as residing with one group of people, who then use it over another group of people. Power is not essentialized (Venn, 1984). Rather, power is seen as operating at a local and everyday level in a myriad of local sites. Knowledge is inextricably bound up with power as meanings are contested and fought over. MacNaughton (2005, p. 27) says that power is concerned with a “battle to authorize the truth, because truths don’t just happen, they are produced in our struggle to decide the meanings of our actions, thoughts and feelings”. The individual as human subject, is constituted as particular bodies of knowledge are accepted and legitimated. Furthermore, as individuals invest in particular, legitimated ways of knowing and being, power is exercised “to the point that each person is his or her own overseer” (Sarup, 1993, p. 67). This point is reinforced by

Walkerdine (1998 p. 196) when she explains that power is not necessarily exercised through overt repression but rather “through the covert reproduction of ourselves”, that is, people regulate their own behaviour and take up positions within discourses. Thus power is seen as operating in the contestation of meaning, in local contexts, in everyday settings and individuals.

Such a theoretical paradigm is appropriate for this study as it facilitates an analysis that acknowledges the complexity and the changing nature of teaching in particular childcare settings. Teaching is complex work and it is not easily reduced and explained by reference to one of the ‘grandes narratives’ such as feminism or developmental psychology. This paradigm enables new analyses that focus on how teachers make meaning and how this is associated with teachers’ social and material context (Hughes, 2001). A post-structural position is also helpful in this study as it can explain how power is contested and mediated in teachers’ everyday settings teachers and how teachers are implicated in these dynamics of power.

Discourse

The concept of discourse is central to post-structural theory and in particular to the constructions of power and knowledge. Miller Marsh (2003) explains a discourse as “a pattern of thinking, speaking, behaving and interacting that is socially, culturally and historically constructed and sanctioned by a specific group or groups of people” (p. 9). According to Venn (1998, p. 115) “power is invested in discourse”. This is so as, at any time, there are a number of discourses that are in circulation and available to the individual. Individuals construct their subjectivity through investing in particular discourses. Some discourses are more legitimated and hence more persuasive and seductive than others and indeed are able to evaluate and legitimate other discourses as they are seen to be privileged and normative (Anyon, 1994).

Davies and Harré (1990) outline how anything that any individual knows is discourse and Bettis and Gregson (2001) explain that discourses “construct how we may think and not think about something” (p.13). Danaher et al. (2000) add to this saying that “our thoughts and actions are influenced, regulated and to some extent controlled by these different discourses” (p. 31). Furthermore, as individuals are constituted through

discourse it is difficult to think and make sense of the world outside the discourses that are available in any one time. “We can only ever speak ourselves or be spoken into existence within the terms of available discourses” (Davies, 1991, p. 42).

The concept of discourse is apt for this study as it highlights how teaching is shaped by the wider discursive context of society and how this is always in a state of flux. This concept also allows for a critical analysis of teaching in childcare settings, as the forces that shape and fashion the work are made explicit.

Subjectivity and positioning

Within post-structuralism, the individual is referred to as the subject and the individual’s sense of self as one’s subjectivity. Modernist thinking tends to see the individual as having a coherent and stable identity and human beings as having an innate and essential quality (Cannella & Grieshaber, 2001). The post-structural view of the individual and his or her identity is more fluid and dynamic than that of modernity. The identity of an individual is constituted as the individual takes up positions in a variety of discourses. The discourses are varied; ever changing and contextual hence subjectivity is perceived as multiple not unitary and as always in process, not fixed. (Cannella & Grieshaber, 2001; Davies, 1991).

As individuals invest in particular discourses, they are said to take up positions within discourses. When a position is taken up, a particular vantage point and a world-view is opened up to the individual (Davies & Harré, 1990). Importantly, positions are always relational and as an individual takes up a particular position with its accompanying world-view in a discourse, certain constraints and possibilities are also opened up for those with whom the individual is in relationship (Miller Marsh, 2003).

The subjectivity of the individual, which includes the dimensions of mind, body and emotions, is then seen as socially and culturally constructed. There is no essential being as in modernist thinking. Instead, post-structural thinking posits subjectivity as being continuously constructed and re-constructed within the prevalent discourses of the time. Acker (1992) distils this fluid and dynamic stance saying, “currently post-structural

approaches teach us to be suspicious of arguments that give any concept...an essential core” (p. 160).

A key debate arising out of the notions of discourse and subjectivity is in respect to whether the subjectivity of the individual is determined exclusively by discourse or whether the individual or subject can exert agency. Is the individual positioned or does the individual position herself/himself? On the one hand, agency can be said to be illusory as discourses operate in such ways that individuals desire and want to invest in them (Davies, 1991). On the other hand some writers perceive that individuals can actively resist dominant discourses and actively negotiate new positions (Davies & Harré, 1991). Sawicki (as cited in Cannella, 1999, p. 42) combines both views saying, “Foucault theorizes us as neither entirely autonomous nor entirely enslaved. We are not individual (or preplanned group) originators of a discourse nor are we solely constituted or determined by the discourse”. This study then is informed by the view that sees teachers as being partly determined by discourse and partly being able to exercise agency.

The concept of subjectivity is useful as it can explain why teachers in childcare carry out their work in particular ways and also why other ways of enacting the work are not open to them. As teachers in childcare can be seen then as both being positioned and positioning themselves within discourses this can illuminate how teachers can in some situations may be determined by discourse and at other times are able to exercise agency within discourse.

A contextual approach

A deliberate and conscious decision was made in this study, to foreground the context of the teachers’ work. This approach is congruent with post-structural theory. As previously explained post-structural theory tends to focus on the local and contextual. However, there is another body of writing into teachers’ work that also supports an emphasis on the contexts of teachers’ work.

This body of writing, some of which takes a post-structural approach focuses on teaching as work and as educational institutions as workplaces. According to Willinsky

(1989) it is important to view teaching as embedded in social and political forces. Teaching must be situated within the social formations that give it meaning. He attests that failing to incorporate the social and institutional elements can result in teachers being conceptually isolated. Goodson (1997, p. 117) too supports the contextualizing of teachers' stories:

Teachers' individual and practical stories certainly provide a breathing space, however, at one and the same time they reduce the oxygen of broader understandings. The breathing space comes to look awfully like a vacuum, where history and social construction are somehow suspended.

In this study I have viewed context as Acker (1999) does in her research of teaching in schools, as a broad and inclusive term. First, this means that I situated this study of teaching in childcare settings within a historical context; I have done this by providing this information in the literature review. As Willinsky (1989) states "it is the privilege and duty of the researcher ...to describe the history of the script and set within which the teacher is busily improvising and performing" (p. 252). Second, the discourses that teachers drew on formed the units of analyses in this study and as such linked teachers work directly to societal patterns and formations. Third, I used the material conditions of the teachers work as a constant frame for the study and incorporated these into the analysis. Teachers work within structural and material constraints and it is essential to consider these in any analysis of the work. In sum, consideration of what Willinsky (1989, p. 257) calls the "enriching context" was necessary to yield an in-depth understanding of teachers' work.

Methodology

Feminist, qualitative research

It was appropriate to take a qualitative approach in this piece of research as it is concerned with the ways in which the participants understand and make sense of their world. The feelings, views and thoughts of the participants were collected and explored and there was the intention to explicate the meaning and significance that participants attached to events and phenomena in their daily work. As the participants' view of reality was sought in this study, a qualitative approach was pertinent as it subscribes to a view of reality as being subjective and multiple (Bettis & Gregson, 2001). An in-depth and rich description of their lived reality can be captured through a qualitative approach

as it supports collection of data that is complex and speaks of the human experience. Bettis and Gregson (2001) attest that a central feature of qualitative research is that it is interested in “process, meaning and understanding gained through words and pictures” (p. 2). In addition, Purcell-Gates (2000) points out that the issues that teachers face are deeply embedded in dynamics of race, culture, class and gender and a positivist, quantitative approach is constrained in delivering the kind of data or insights that might inform these issues.

A central focus of this study was the experiences and understandings of a teacher workforce who have been and still are predominantly female. In addition, the work that these teachers do is widely acknowledged as shaped and fashioned by discourses of gender (Acker, 1992; Miller Marsh, 2003; Sumsion, 2005). Feminist research takes diverse forms and there does not appear to be one coherent feminist research methodology. Reinharz (1992) maintains however that a common tenet of feminist research is that the lives of women are seen as important and worthy of study. Importantly, researchers that adopt a feminist stance place emphasis on the gendered nature of women’s experiences and on gender as an organizing principle. Lather (1991, p. 71) asserts that to do feminist research is to uphold “the centrality of gender in the shaping of our consciousness, skills and institutions” and to locate it “at the centre of one’s inquiry”. For these reasons a methodology that is informed by feminist notions is particularly appropriate and advisable for this study, but applied to the local and particular context in which the research was conducted.

Issues of power

As feminism has historically challenged the power of patriarchy, it has become focused on and conversant with issues of power and agency (Lather, 1991). This desire to render power relations explicit then is a quality that feminism brings to research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Accordingly, feminist research prompts researchers to form relationships with participants that are supportive and empowering and avoid their objectification. The kind of relationship that the researcher builds with participants reflects the power dynamics of the relationship. Finch (1984) recommends a personal and informal approach that avoids a sense of hierarchy and Lather (1991) favours self-disclosure on the part of the researcher in order to promote a sense of collaboration and

intimacy. Oakley's (as cited in Finch, 1984, p. 49) iconic statement of "no intimacy without reciprocity" encapsulates this view. However, whilst there may be common ground with the participants, a researcher may need to be sensitive in assuming an 'insider' position as this may overlook the power differences that exist between the researcher and participant, causing discomfort for participants (Wetherall, Taylor & Yates, 2001). It is important then as a researcher, to respect the participants as 'real women' with 'real lives' and to interact with participants in ways that are sensitive and respectful so that exploitation is avoided and a sense of reciprocity prevails.

Conducting interviews

There is a body of writing on how to conduct interviews; some of the literature is generic and pertains to the qualitative aspects of the data collection method whilst other literature is specifically from a feminist standpoint and foregrounds issues of gender. Both kinds of literature inform the interviewing of participants in this study. First, the comfort and convenience of the participants in respect to the interview need to be addressed. This may mean consideration of timing, frequency, length and location of the interview (Finch, 1984). The teachers in this study worked in a full time capacity so personal time was limited and as a researcher, I needed to be mindful of this. On the other hand, a participant may wish to talk at length and time may need to be open-ended. If a second interview is required then there needs to be a clear justification for this. I was mindful that whilst some participants may be more comfortable participating in the interview in their own home, others may prefer a more neutral ground. Physical comforts such as refreshments may need to be considered especially when interviews last for extended periods.

Second, it is recommended that researchers adopt an attitude of acceptance to whatever participants wish to share. Participants were reassured that that there is no right or wrong response but rather that everything is acceptable and welcome (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). This strategy was congruent with the goal of the research that was to ascertain participants' perspectives and not 'truth'. The researcher needs to be aware of their own response to participants' utterances so that participant feels encouraged to talk and to share. In some cases, this may mean that researchers position themselves as "learners and listeners rather than 'researchers'" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 29). This kind of

relationship can support a sense of connectedness between researcher and participant and build trust thus paving the way for meaningful dialogue.

Third, the ability to listen attentively to participants is seen as important. As the goal of the qualitative interview is to gain entry into the participant's world then attentive listening followed by sensitive cues and prompts can support the process by which the perspective of the participant unfolds during the interview (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). An understanding and appreciation of the participant's world-view and the language that they use to talk about it is crucial as this will facilitate shared understandings, which in turn will facilitate sharing. Devault (1990, p. 97) argues that as language frequently does not fit women's experience, when women talk about their experiences they can be compelled to "'translate' either saying things that are not quite right or work at using the language in non-standard ways". A researcher then can minimize this discrepancy between experience and language by accepting, listening and responding to the language used by participants. In this way, participants will likely feel that they are really being listened to and that the way that they talk about their work is appropriate and acceptable. Familiarity with the terms, idioms and expressions that teachers use when talking about their work is clearly helpful as this can support the researcher to really 'listen' to participants.

The semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview is a particular kind of interview. According to Mutch (2005, p. 255) the semi-structured interview is "where a set of guiding questions is used but where the interview is open to changes along the way" and according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) whilst a schedule is predetermined, it is also flexible so that digressions and expansions can be made during the interview process. The interview is usually in-depth and informal and more conversational than inquisitorial (Kable, 2001; Finch, 1984). In this way, this qualitative method of data collection is particularly suited to this research study's central goal of understanding the teachers' work as it provides access to the participant's ideas and thoughts and allows the researcher entry into the participant's world (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). This method can elicit large amounts of rich information in a relatively short time and this data is

then conducive to analysis using an inductive approach and the development of grounded theory (Reinharz, 1992).

The semi-structured interview is a favoured method of data collection by feminist researchers and is seen as particularly suited to the interviewing of women. Feminists perceive that the voices of women have been silenced and women's experience has not been validated; this method is seen as providing opportunities for women to talk about their experiences, supporting them to feel knowledgeable and to be able to exercise some control in the interview process (Kable, 2001; Reinharz, 1992). Feminists claim that whilst research has tended to ignore experiences that are meaningful for women that this method not only provides opportunities for women to speak of experiences that are meaningful but also to use language in ways that is comfortable for them and is congruent with these experiences (Devault, 1990, Reinharz, 1992). The flexibility and latitude then that this method offers to researcher and participant supports the development of intersubjectivity and meaning-making hence it is likely to provide data that speaks of the teachers' work experiences and understandings.

Initially the researcher can cut up the field of interest into topics and categories and prepare a schedule of questions that reflect particular lines of inquiry and these are then arranged in an orderly sequence. Thought needs to be given to the clarity of the questions, the actual wording used and to the extent to which they are open-ended. Weiss (1994) reminds researchers that better data is gained when the participant can talk about what she wants to. Oppenheim (1992) adds to this saying that open questions can lead to participants expressing themselves more freely and spontaneously. Questions can be followed up with gentle prompts that avoid leading or directing the participant overly. Suitable prompts might be "now, what about the...?" or "could you say a bit more about...?" (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 113).

Kitwood (as cited in Cohen & Manion, 1989) describes a particular kind of questioning that renders significant choice to a participant in how she responds. The participant is asked to select and talk about a particular kind of experience such as a particular time when she felt extremely pleased, extremely disappointed or felt she had made a mistake. This requires the participant to select an experience from a set of experiences and to retell it in her own way. Accordingly, the event that is chosen, the reasons for its choice

as well as the way in which the story is told can reveal much about the participant's views, attitudes and feelings. In addition, Weiss (1994) recommends eliciting accounts of concrete incidents such as "tell me about what happened at work – start at your arrival". These accounts of actual events may be less likely to incur the kinds of aspirational responses that participants are prone to provide and more likely to provide insights into the participant's internal experiences. Moreover, both these strategies produce large amounts of data that tends to be less organized than that produced in a tightly, structured interview but can be immensely rich and in-depth.

Analysis of data

Marshall and Rossman (1995) describe the process of data analysis in qualitative research as "engaging in the interpretive act, lending shape and form-meaning-to massive amounts of data" (p. 117). This emphasis on the emergence of categories and the interpretation of data leads to an inductive approach as the researcher develops a set of statements about the nature of the phenomena being studied. Silverman (2005) notes however that the researcher inevitably comes to the field with particular concepts and orientations and that it is naïve or spurious to claim otherwise. Rather, the qualitative researcher uses cumulated bodies of knowledge as a springboard for their own study and that analysis involves a "subtle interplay between theory, concepts and data" (Silverman, 2005, p. 80). Hence, in this research I utilized the cumulated knowledge and understandings as a starting point for the study but also made use of theoretical understandings to shape and give meaning to the data during the analysis stage. Moreover, this kind of approach lends itself to a dynamic use of the literature with the data (Nasser, 2001).

As each qualitative study is unique and distinctive, there is no singular path for analysis. Janesick (2003) explains the process as a creative and imaginative one and she likens the various stages of doing research, including the analysis stage to choreographing a dance. The researcher, as does the dancer, makes a series of decisions, adapting and changing as the analysis unfolds.

Whilst there is no one designated path to follow, writers frequently posit a multi-layered process of acting and thinking. Initially, the data is organized and categories of meaning

are established. As the coding is tentative at this stage, it is important to include all borderline instances (Potter & Wetherall, 1987). This preliminary analysis then makes way for a more intensive analytical stage where the researcher searches for patterns and themes in the data. At this stage, it is important to read and re-read the data. In addition Moustakis (as cited in Janesick, 2003) highlights the importance of devoting periods of time to thinking and expanding one's awareness in order to deepen understanding and capture insights. The analysis is then able to move into a more resolved stage whereby the researcher can explicate the findings, through description and explanation. Lastly, the analysis is brought together and a sense of synthesis is achieved (Moustakis, as cited in Janesick, 2003).

Self-reflexivity

Being reflexive about one's own influence as a researcher on the research is one key way in which feminist research renders the relations of power explicit. As a researcher in this study, I positioned myself as a woman, as a mother of five children, as an early childhood professional who is presently a lecturer in early childhood education and who has previously taught in a similar capacity to that of the participants for a period of ten years. It is likely then that I bring to the position of researcher as Lather (1991) says "some strong attachments to particular ways of looking at the world" (p. 81). By signalling my own position, I am refuting the notion that educational research is objective and value-free but inevitably influenced by me as the researcher. Separation between the researcher and the research is impossible and there is inevitable reactivity (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001). Hauser (1998, p. 140) refers to the slant that researchers bring as bias saying that it is neither good or bad and that "our biases frame a valid way of looking at whatever question we have decided to investigate". Whilst the understandings and experiences that I have about the work of the participants may position me favourably for creating intersubjectivity and intimacy with participants, it may also lead me to hold 'a priori' beliefs and to influence the participants in particular ways. I kept these considerations in mind throughout the study and endeavoured to maximize the benefits of my position whilst keeping to a minimum the potential negative effects.

Hauser (1998) makes an additional point in relation to bias; just as the researcher constructs meaning so too does the reader. Even if we could control our own subjectivity as researchers and writers that we cannot necessarily control it in our readers. Notwithstanding the efforts researchers make to reduce bias and to be explicit about their own role, readers will bring to any text their own contributions and will agree or resist. Barthes (as cited in Hauser, 1998, p. 141) attests that “the meaning of a text lies less in its origins than in its destination”.

Validity

Whilst the validity in quantitative research has been focused around “appropriate sampling, appropriate instrumentation and appropriate statistical treatment of the data” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 105) the validity in qualitative research tends to be related to the extent to which the distinctive features of the field are captured (Hughes, 2001). In this way, the authenticity of the meanings of the participants is a key concern. Hughes (2001) explains that as the local and contextual nature of knowledge is emphasized in a post-structural paradigm, the validity of the knowledge is linked to the degree to which it embodies the discourse that produces it. The theoretical links and statements that are made need to be plausible and persuasive.

It is important then that in order for the reader to make judgments concerning the validity that the process from collection of data to analysis and conclusion is transparent and the reader can clearly follow the researcher’s lines of reasoning. In the case of discourse analysis this means that a detailed interpretation needs to be provided that clearly demonstrates the link between the data and the analytic claims; in this way the analytic section will tend to be more detailed and longer than in traditional research (Potter & Wetherall, 1987).

Method

Ethical considerations

There are standard ethical principles pertaining to research that involves human subjects, that as researcher I was required to abide by. These principles relate to: participants giving informed consent: maintenance of the participants’ confidentiality:

the minimizing of harm: clear and truthful communication with participants and being sensitive to the social position of participants (<http://www.massey.ac.nz/~muhec/index.htm>).

Firstly, in this study, I was mindful that as I was known to most of the participants that participants may have felt pressured to consent to participate. To address this, I implemented a process whereby participants were able to self-select into a pool of interested participants; in this way participants hopefully did not feel coerced to participate. Secondly, the early childhood community is small and teachers commonly know other teachers across the region in which they work. There was therefore a clear risk that teachers would be able to identify teachers in the study. I minimized this risk by refraining from the use of portraits in the analysis stage and by the deliberate omission of distinctive features of the centres in which teachers work. Thirdly, in order to minimize harm to participants, I was mindful of the potential negative effects of the study's results on them. I minimized this by maintaining a sensitive respect and regard for the work that the teachers did. I also situated the teachers' work within a social and political context and highlighted the socially constructed nature of the work; in this way any censure or incrimination of individuals was minimized. Lastly, I was heedful of the location and standing of child-care services within the education. I kept in mind that teachers in child-care have not historically been recognized as teachers and ensure that I related to the participants as teachers and professionals.

I submitted a screening questionnaire and low risk notification to Massey University, for approval. The project was judged to be low risk, and consent was given by my supervisors to proceed with my project on August, 25th 2004.

Sampling

A small number of participants was sought, as in-depth data was required; in this case depth was consciously foregrounded over breadth. As I wanted to exercise some control in the selection of participants, I used purposive sampling method thus ensuring that the participants met my needs as a researcher (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Consent was gained from all community-based centres in the Nelson, Marlborough region to approach their staff and accordingly Participant Information Sheets (see Appendix A)

and Participant Consent Forms (see Appendix B) were issued to each teacher in all of the centres.

The Participant Consent Form (see Appendix B) contained three questions for the teachers who were interested to participate and these were concerning their level of qualification, number of hours worked on the floor and length of service in community child-care. I then was able to use this information to select six participants from five centres. I intended to use one of the two teachers who were at one centre for a pilot interview. I wanted to draw participants from a range of centres. I wanted to select participants who worked in a full time capacity, as I was interested in teaching as an occupation and felt the experience of those working fulltime to be an important consideration. I wanted to interview qualified and experienced teachers who I felt would be informed about the work and able to articulate their thoughts and feelings. Five out of six of the participants were known to me. I thus selected participants on their deemed suitability and on their location across a set of centres, throughout the region.

The participants

Brief details are provided about each participant and pseudonyms are used instead of the teachers' actual names:

Mary Mary is a Pākehā teacher in her late fifties. Mary worked as a primary school teacher early in her working career and has worked in early childhood education for thirty years. She currently works in an under two area of a mixed age childcare setting however her early involvement in early childhood education was in Playcentre. She holds a Bachelor of Teaching and Learning Degree and is a registered teacher.

Olivia Olivia is a Pākehā teacher in her mid twenties. She has five years teaching experience in community-based settings and currently works in an under two area of a mixed age centre. She has a Diploma of Teaching (early childhood education) and is provisionally registered.

- Rose Rose is a Pākehā teacher in her early twenties. She has four years experience working in community-based settings and currently works in the over two area of a mixed age centre. She has a Diploma of Teaching (early childhood education), is a registered teacher and is taking papers as part of an upgrade to a degree.
- Jane Jane is a Pākehā teacher in her mid forties and she has ten years work experience in community-based settings. She holds a Diploma of Teaching (early childhood education) and is a registered teacher. Jane currently works in the over two area of a mixed age setting.
- Lorna Lorna is a Pākehā teacher in her mid forties. She has worked for fifteen years in early childhood, beginning in Playcentre and currently works in the over two area of a mixed age setting. She holds a Bachelor of Teaching and Learning Degree and is a registered teacher.
- Lisa Lisa is a Pākehā teacher in her mid twenties. She has two years working experience in early childhood education and currently works with under twos. She holds a Bachelor of Teaching and Learning Degree and is a registered teacher.

Arranging and conducting the interviews

I was ready to contact the participants once the interview schedule (see Appendix C) and the interview questions (see Appendix D) had been drawn up. I made initial contact by mail to the six teachers that I selected from the returned positive responses. I thanked them for their interest, invited them to be a participant and informed them I would be in touch by phone to organize at their convenience, the interview time and place. Four teachers chose to have the interviews in their own home. I arranged to carry one out of town interview in a rented church room and one teacher chose to be interviewed in my workplace, which is located in the city centre. All these interviews took place at weekends and they ranged in length from two to three hours. I used an Olympus mini-recorder to record each interview, usually positioning it on a table in front of the participant and myself and only stopping the tape when the tape needed replacing.

I did initially plan to interview each participant twice. I anticipated doing a preliminary analysis after the first interview and then in a second interview collecting more data and filling any identified gaps. A second interview can be utilized to increase the depth of the data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). However, I decided to change these plans and do one interview only for the following reasons. Firstly, the interviews that I did carry out were longer than I had planned (one interview transcript was 70 pages long) and the data that I collected proved more extensive than I had anticipated and I felt it did reflect a good depth. Secondly, the analysis proved so time-consuming that had a second set of interviews been done there would not have been the time to analyse them. According to Potter and Wetherall (1987), discourse analysis differs from traditional research in that the size of the sample is not a crucial factor. Discursive patterns can be as easily identified in a small number of interviews as they can in a large number. In fact, they maintain that as the analysis is so intensive that “more interviews can often simply add to the labour involved without adding anything to the analysis” (Potter & Wetherall, 1987, p. 161). In addition, the number of respondents that fitted my criteria was limited as a significant number of teachers work on a part-time basis. I decided to incorporate the pilot interview with the data with the other five interviews thus resulting in the sample consisting of six teachers. The six participants were drawn from five centres, as two worked at the same centre.

I began each interview by stating that I wanted to know what their work was like and how it was for them. I also stated that I was interested in all aspects of the work, including any particular aspects that they themselves wanted to talk about. My first question to the participants was in relation to their last day of work. I asked them to talk me through the day beginning at their arrival at work in the morning. As they talked through events of the day, I prompted them to elaborate on specific events and at various points asked “and how is that for you?” I kept in mind Weiss’s (1994) comments about the importance of using actual, concrete events as the basis for conversing. I allowed as much time as possible thus encouraging the participants to talk in detail about the work. I then proceeded to ask open questions about various aspects of the work such as partnership with parents/whānau; “what is it like for you working with parents/whānau?” Wherever possible I asked participants to relate a particular incident from their practice that best illustrated their thinking on the topic: “can you think of an

incident that illustrates that?” I then wound up each interview by asking was there anything that participants would like others to know about the work that they may not already know.

Transcription of tapes

I contacted a local, qualified dictaphonist who, after signing a confidentiality agreement, proceeded to transcribe the tapes. The conversations were typed in such a way that all sounds, utterances, repetitions and incomplete phrases were included. At the final stages of writing up, utterances like ‘um’ and ‘ah’ were removed as these were not seen as contributing to the intentions of the participants.

Preliminary analysis: Identifying the discourses

I began by reading and re-reading the transcripts in order to get a sense of the teachers’ talk. I looked for instances of participants talking routinely and assumptively about their work. I hoped that these statements spoke of and reflected the way that they constructed their work on an unconscious level. I was interested in how participants seemed to position themselves. Potter and Wetherall (1987, p. 167) state that the researcher should cut up the data into categories that are “crucially related to the research questions of interest”. Accordingly, I began tentatively to write labels for the kinds of discourse that participants seem to be drawing on at any time and began to line these up in the left-hand column. I began to build up words to represent the various discourses such as caregiver, educator, professional and so on. For example, I wrote care whenever I felt participants were either talking about what it meant to be a caregiver or I felt they were describing practices that indicated this discourse. I kept in mind the need to be as inclusive as possible as at this stage the boundaries between the categories were unclear.

In the right-hand column, I made detailed notes of each participant’s understandings and experiences. In addition, I noted where participants appeared to be experiencing tensions and/or stress. Around the same time, I attempted to represent these initial categories in an alternative form on a grid on a large sheet of paper. I placed participants’ names along one axis and started to compile a list of what I thought may be emerging discourses along the other axis. I also built up columns of what seemed to be recurring themes even though they did not immediately signal a particular discourse.

I gave these themes headings such as ‘juggling balls’, ‘comings and goings’ and ‘not enough time’. Patton (as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 1995) warns against a total reliance on a matrix for analysis, as the researcher can tend to coerce the data into the matrix. The matrix can be used rather to “generate sensitizing topics to guide further explorations” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 115). Accordingly, the matrix was not used exclusively but it did prove to be useful in identifying themes and recurrent tensions, which illuminated later analysis of the discourses and the ways in which they intersected.

Over a period of time I was able to identify six key discourses emanating from the teachers’ talk. These discourses were in part suggested by the empirical literature that had been reviewed and in part were evident in the data. On this basis, I then built up a series of documents from the data whereby I collected all the references that signalled each particular discourse and pasted them into one document. These documents were labelled ‘building up the care discourse’, ‘building up the team-player discourse’ and so on. Each ‘discourse’ document contained talk from all the teachers pertaining to that particular discourse. In effect, they consisted of an extended string of utterances reflecting how the teachers constituted an aspect of their professional identity. It was necessary to do some exploratory reading on the key topics such as care, education and being a professional as this helped me to sift and sort and to make decisions about which discourse the various utterances best represented. Furthermore, by reading and re-reading the ‘building up the discourse’ documents and by continuing to revisit the literature, I was able to start to identify the distinctive nature of each discourse.

In this way, at the end of this preliminary phase of analysis I had developed a set of six documents. Each ‘building up the discourse’ document consisted of an accumulation of all the utterances that spoke of each particular discourse, from all six teachers.

Second stage of analysis: Description of the discourses

At this point, I reviewed the discourse documents (the six ‘building up the discourse’ documents). I looked for ways in which the discourses were internally consistent and this meant that close attention was given to the common ways in which teachers positioned themselves when drawing on each discourse. This involved the identification

of the particular discursive strands of each discourse. Potter and Wetherall (1987) also state that when searching for pattern in data it is important to look for features that are divergent as well as similar hence I was sensitive and alert to differences in the ways that teachers positioned themselves.

I returned to the literature in the literature review and to a wider body of social constructionist literature. This literature is pertinent to the analysis of discourse in early childhood as it is critical and importantly it subscribes to a view that the world is socially and culturally constructed. Nasser (2001) explains that it is appropriate when undertaking qualitative research, to utilize literature wider than the literature review as the researcher may not identify the topics and themes that emerge during the inductive process at the onset. According to Strauss and Corbin (as cited in Nasser, 2001, p. 94) literature wider than that in the literature review can be used in qualitative research, to interplay with the data analysis thus “contributing to its forward thrust”. In this way, by moving repeatedly between the data and the literature I was able to select extracts from the interviews and develop a set of examples that represent each discourse.

During this phase of the analysis, two more discourses were identified from the data. The broad domains of ‘educator’ and ‘carer’ were found to have two differing positions for teachers. The ‘building up the educator’ document was found to contain two discourses, namely the child-centred discourse and the child-in-context discourse. Similarly, the building up the care discourse document was found to include two discourses, namely the normative care discourse and the forum for care discourse. Accordingly at the end of this phase of analysis, I had developed another set of documents (eight in all) that significantly drew on the data to demonstrate each discourse and the various discursive strands of each discourse. These documents were titled the ‘normative mother discourse’, the ‘child-centred discourse’, the ‘professional discourse’ and so on. As these documents explain how the teacher is positioned, the experiences of the teachers began to be illuminated.

Third level of analysis: critical analysis of the discourses

At this stage of the analysis, I sought to consider the discourses and the positioning of teachers to a wider body of understandings and literature. Firstly, I wanted to consider

the findings in relation to the other similar empirical studies in the literature review. How did the study's findings about the discourses identified and the positioning of teachers compare with those of the similar studies carried out in New Zealand, Iceland and Finland? Secondly, I sought to consider the findings in relation to the material conditions of teachers. How did the material conditions impact and intersect with each of the identified discourses? Thirdly, I attempted to provide some critique of each discourse by considering the implications of the teachers' positioning. In order to this, it was necessary to return once again to the body of social constructionist literature and consider the discourse documents in the light of this literature.

Accordingly, at the end of this phase, I had developed another set of eight documents which were titled 'analysis of child-centred discourse, 'analysis of normative mother discourse' and so on.

Fourth and final stage of analysis: Overview of discourses

In this final summary of the findings, I sought to distil and interweave some key features of the analysis. In particular, I created a critical discussion of the ways in which the dominant discourses both compete with and are congruent with each other. This final document then consisted of a distillation of the previous three layers of analysis and was titled 'the totality of teachers' work in childcare settings'.

Presentation format of findings

I presented the findings of the study in various sets of documents as mentioned above. I chose to express the findings and my interpretations of the findings under the headings of the discourses and I maintained the use of these discourse categories throughout the analysis. Some researchers choose to develop and utilize 'portraits' of individual participants, however, I chose to refrain from the use of portraits in the analytical stages. First, the subjectivity of individuals within a post-structural paradigm is perceived as complex and fluid. It does not seem congruent to pin down and depict teachers' subjectivities as fixed and coherent. Second, I wanted to keep the mode of analysis at a conceptual rather than an individual level. I feel that this study sits on the notion of teaching as a collective endeavour and I feel that the use of personal portraits would distract from the conceptual ideas. Third and last, I was mindful of the potential distress

that could be caused by ‘fixing’ and labelling the practice of individuals and I wanted to avoid this.

This chapter has outlined and justified the theoretical frameworks and tools used in this study and explained how they are appropriate for this piece of research. Post-structural theory has been chosen as the theoretical paradigm for this study. This theory is seen as appropriate as it highlights the fluid and complex nature of knowledge and meaning. The theory posits a close association between power and knowledge and it provides a way of looking at how power operates in childcare settings that is illuminating. The concepts of discourse, subjectivity and positioning are seen as pivotal concepts and accordingly have been explained and their use in this study justified. Importantly, the theory enables a view whereby teachers are seen in some situations as exercising agency and positioning themselves and in other situations as being determined by discourse and as being positioned. A rationale is also provided for considering the everyday working reality of teachers through out the study.

The research design has been explained in the preliminary section on methodology. The discussion here supports a feminist, qualitative approach and the use of semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection. The process of analysis is explained as unique and distinctive. Understandings about the multi-layered nature of the analytical process and the need to make the process transparent have been explained. The second and final section of the methodology section outlines the actual steps that I took in carrying out the research. The various stages of the research have been described including the consideration of ethical issues, the arranging and conducting of interviews and the steps followed during the various stages of analysis. This final section that describes the analytical process is detailed and explicit so that the reader can clearly see the links between the data and the analytical claims that are made (Potter & Wetherall, 1987).

Chapter Four

FINDINGS

Introduction

The preceding chapter explains the thinking behind the research design and the actual steps that were followed in carrying out the research. This chapter is organized around the main findings of the study. The presentation of these findings consists of the identification and explanation of the dominant discourses that constitute the work. Eight discourses are presented and excerpts from the interviews are provided to demonstrate the strands of each discourse.

Identification of the discourses

Discourse of child-centredness

This discourse has been a powerful discourse in Western early childhood education since the Second World War. In essence, the child-centred approach places emphasis on the teacher, informed by child development knowledge, orientating her/his teaching towards the interests, needs and development of children in her/his care. Emphasis is placed on the individual child moving through and achieving a series of standards and norms and at the same time developing a sense of autonomy and independence. This is achieved by the provision of an environment and resources from which children, with minimal intervention, can freely choose and play (Burman, 1994). As educators, the teachers in this study drew significantly on a child-centred discourse. Whilst all teachers seemed to appropriate this discourse, for some it was clearly a stronger feature of how their work is constructed than it was for others. The teachers in this study were positioned in particular ways within this discourse.

There is a strong sense when teachers talked about their work, of the importance of meeting children's needs, finding out where they are at and then planning for children so that they can move onto the next stage. It is paramount that teachers respond to children's needs and teachers can feel stressed when children's needs are not being seen

to be met. As well as meetings children's needs teachers are to ascertain children's interests and then use them to extend children's development. "That is your job...it's not good enough as far as I'm concerned to say that he is bored, because you need to be looking at what he's learning and where to go with this".¹

Teachers in this study certainly felt the responsibility and burden to meet the needs and extend the development of each child in their care. As one teacher put it – "we have to do, as well as like doing individual programmes for the children as well as implementing the programme plan, as well as meeting the children's needs and extending the children with such a wide age range and to try and extend each child's stage of development". Teachers can feel stressed when they feel they are not able to meet children's needs; "and you find that you're always feeling a little bit stressed because you know you're not quite meeting this child's needs as well as the other child's".

Teachers were conscious of the need to respond to children in developmentally appropriate ways. The selecting and implementation of experiences that are age-appropriate are seen as of core importance. Teachers talked about children in terms of the age and stage that children are seen to be at and indeed teachers structured their work in relation to these ages and stages. Comments in this vein were: "you're going to work with this group of children because they are all at this stage", "you kind of expect a four year old to clean up but you're not going to expect a two year old because basically they don't want to hear", "we split the group into the two the younger and the older children so that they can do different projects" and "we have to set out activities for the older children as well".

In order to support children's development teachers must have knowledge and skills around theories of development. Development is a central concern of this approach to teaching so teachers needed to know how to support it, according to current thinking. This leads to value being placed on theory – "I just notice that if someone comes in that's trained they've got all that theory in their head so that they know what the

¹ Excerpts from the teachers' interviews have been used to illustrate the strands of the discourses. I have not identified the teachers as individuals or highlighted their personal stories as I am primarily interested in the discourses of teaching.

thinking is behind it”, “you have to have an idea of theories of learning so you can extend the children” and “they need to have knowledge about each different ages and stages”. Knowledge about the early childhood curriculum is also deemed as important- “we use Te Whāriki in our profile books, I know cause I’m trained and I know quite lot about Te Whāriki and I found it quite easy to implement”.

Children are seen as unique and different and teachers see that responding to the individual’s needs and interests of children as important. Teachers made efforts to respond to and support the individual, physical needs of children in relation to sleep, food and health. Teachers were also orientated to view each child as individual and unique as learners and some teachers commented on how teachers need to be aware of and knowledgeable of children’s differences – “your practice has to be flexible with individual children really”, “and yeah, working on those individual needs with children, they’re all really different” and “because they all react in different ways and different things are important to one child”.

In terms of assessment and planning, there is a dominant focus on individual children. Usually teachers collected learning stories and photos on a number of children and compile these into a child’s portfolio. The centre’s children are usually apportioned out to each member of the team and this can be as many as 13 children. Although teachers mentioned group learning stories it is not clear whether these group learning stories are concerned with the group dynamic or the individual who happens to be in a group setting. It is however the individual stories that appears to be the mainstay of assessment practices. It appears that the learning story framework is used in a variety of ways to inform planning, namely to identify individual and group interests of children, to record milestones and in some cases to document and respond to a perceived need.

The view of children as individual learners is also evident in the way in which teachers perceived choices as being important for children’s development. Setting up the environment so that children can make individual choices is seen as an important part of their role. In this way, individual children are seen as instigating and constructing their own knowledge by actively choosing what they would like to do. Comments that indicated the importance teachers placed on this freedom to choose are: “everything’s available to them and it’s a choosing time...they initiate what they would like to do

really”, “different materials all set up for them”, “I set up an activity in the sandpit, put out the water...and I set up a water trough as well and the painting as well”, “you’re just offering them lots of different things to do, you know”. Interestingly, one teacher’s comment illustrated the pressure she feels to set up these experiences for children; “I’ve usually thought on the way to work about what we can do today and what activities we can do today and what I think they would like to do today...you’re always talking to them all the time and you are thinking of new activities”.

Child-in-context discourse

This discourse is considerably less evident in the teachers’ talk than the child-centred discourse. I have named the discourse the child-in-context course as it places emphasis on the relationships that children have with others in their lives as opposed to seeing the child primarily as an individual who is moving through universal norms and stages.

This discourse presents to teachers another way of working and being with the children to that of the child-centred discourse. It positions the teachers as being responsive to the child-in-context as opposed to the child as an individual as in the child-centred discourse.

When teachers drew on this ‘contextual discourse’, the everyday playing out of relationships in the centre context including the children’s peer relationships are foregrounded. One teacher explained how she likes to take two children who do not usually play together to have their nappies changed together. “I will take two at a time and while one’s on the table, one’s sitting on the step cause we have a step going up and so that’s quite good because then you get a small group and quite often you get children who don’t often play together you know...to initiate friendships”. Teachers placed importance on the child’s relationships within the centre and see that children learn from each other. Another teacher identified a child’s difficulty in sustaining friendships as being stressful and she explained her own belief that “because to me that is what a lot of life is about – being able to generate relationships and friendship”. Peer relationships are seen and validated as important in their own right and the teacher is positioned as facilitating and supporting them. In the case of one teacher specific periods of time are devoted to supporting the children to resolve conflicts that emerge and happen in the moment.

There is a sense that children can participate in whatever way they are comfortable to and at whatever level that suits them. One teacher said “I don’t try and hone in I just say hello to the children and just kind of acknowledge the parents by smiling or something cause it’s a busy time and just invite the children if they want to come and join an activity while their parents are standing or putting lunchboxes away”. The same teacher when talking about a group gardening project compared a teacher – directed approach with an approach where children come with different knowledge bases and different experiences and that they can participate at a level that is comfortable. Some children may participate on the periphery and then move away and this is acceptable; “you know and usually they just hold a pumpkin and that’s all they want to do...that’s fine so they’re not part of it anymore...at least I’ve facilitated an opportunity to see a pumpkin or hold a pumpkin”.

Teachers that drew on this discourse seemed to value being in the moment and working with whatever is happening in the context. Whatever is happening in the context for the children is seen as valid and legitimate curriculum. It is not always necessary to set up learning experiences, as there is the potential for learning in the every day playing out of children and adults being together. Teachers readily spent time attending the sort of interpersonal issues that arise in groups of people. In terms of interests there is a sense of going with the emergent interests of the group as in the case of a group of two year olds who are interested in cicada shells in the outdoor environment. “We started with a cicada search and a shell search and ended up with James noticing there was a spider web latched to a bush and we searched for some more spider webs and he’s very keen on Spiderman as well, he had a Spiderman hat on and so we ended up with a ball of string creating a web amongst the trees”.

Teachers experienced satisfaction when they were able to facilitate children’s participation within the centre, particularly when there were issues and challenges for children such as having a language other than English or recently migrated from a different country. One teacher described her pleasure in seeing such a child, “she’d be crying and all you could do was sit with her and rub her back and you couldn’t get her to bed because it was too big a drama and watching her grow and develop into a really confident little girl was amazing with skills to negotiate and play with others, lots of friendships...that’s been really, really rewarding”. Teachers commented on the

fulfilment that they experienced when they were able to reach shared understandings with children and this can happen when teachers respond to and support a child's participation in the centre and it can happen when teachers experience an attunement with children during some part of their day. "The most fulfilling aspects of the day, that would have to be the time that you can spend with children and its really quality time, the best way I've got of describing it is a sort of like an exchange of good feelings and it's based around what it is the children are really actively involved in and if you're with the children and you're supporting them, or you're talking to them, or maybe you are just part of the game and that would have to be the best part of the day".

Discourse of normative mother care

The most dominant discourse in which teachers constructed the caring part of their work is the normative mother discourse. This discourse positions women as 'natural' mothers who are critically and exclusively responsible for the development of children. Women and in particular mothers are seen as having the most powerful influence on children and their relationships with children are shaped by this discourse (Moss & Petrie, 2002). The women teachers in this study then were positioned as substitute mothers in similar ways to 'good mothers' in their own homes.

Teachers commonly talked about meeting the individual needs of children when talking about their care of them. Teachers talked about how important it is for teachers to tune into children's needs and to meet them. "You need to be there willing to help them otherwise you're not fulfilling their needs". Conversely teachers experienced stress when they feel unable to do this; "you're always feeling a little bit stressed because you know you are not meeting this child's needs" and one teacher comments that "one thing I notice about untrained staff is they tend to forget about the needs of other children".

In relation to teachers' care of children, of paramount concern for teachers are the physical and emotional needs of children. The physical needs include the basic human needs of food, drink, sleep and rest and protection from ill-health or danger which could be in the form of an accident, a bite from another child or being burnt by the sun. In the case of under twos this resolve to monitor and meet the needs of children was particularly strong. Teachers were concerned to ensure that children can reach their

food, that all children have a drink, the food is safe to eat, that they are able to sleep when tired and that they are supervised when they are asleep. The caregiving routines are one of the ways in which teachers ensured that the needs of children are met. “I think there needs to be some sort of some routine especially with children that are there all day, you know because you have to ensure that they are cared for as well as the programmes but those sort of routines work well and the children learn those routines and they, in fact they’ll come when they think it’s morning tea or something”. Teachers were strongly orientated to attend to these aspects and they formed the foundation of the teachers’ work in the area of care.

Also teachers see that responding to and meeting the emotional needs of children as an important part of their role. They see that they should be warm to children and that “you have to be so nurturing towards them”. Giving emotional support to children when they are upset or hurt or just woken up is something that teachers seemed to want to do and felt comfortable doing. One over two teacher said “it was quite nice just supporting them through that and it was a lot of emotional stuff” and an under two teacher said “and then there’s quite a lot of tears and things at parting from parents and little tears will come on you know, during the morning and that sort of thing so lots of cuddles and lots of comforting things finding something that they’ve bought that comforts them”. Giving children emotional support including helping children that are unsettled feel more comfortable is an ongoing concern for teachers; “well it’s just that you’ve got- you’re constantly giving out, emotionally and physically you know”.

Teachers seemed to see themselves as a substitute parent for children whilst they are at the centre in the sense that they build close, affectionate and intimate relationships with the children. This close emotional attachment seems to be a priority for teachers. This is particularly evident with teachers of under twos but is also evident with teachers of over twos. One over two teacher said that “you’re responsible for the whole day...I think it’s quite stressful really...its probably like being a parent for the whole day like very much” and another over two teacher talks about the satisfaction of this close attachment, “once you have that sense of trust and they know that every time you’re going to be there, you’re the person they’re going to see and say hello to”. An under two teacher commented on the anxiety she experiences when toddlers move on to the over two area; “and when they actually go over and they don’t want to come back anymore like that’s

really horrible cause sometimes they just go and they don't look back and they're like 'see you later' and you're like ooh cause you've been there since they're three months old".

Discourse of forum for care

In this discourse teachers are orientated to care for children and to care for themselves and similarly children are positioned as care-receivers and caregivers. I have named this discourse the 'forum for care' discourse as the early childhood centre is viewed as a place where everyone within the early childhood centre can care for themselves and for others. Teachers are positioned differently within this discourse, than in the normative mother care discourse. They appear to see themselves less as a mother/parent figure who meets all the needs of each child but more as a guide who gives support at opportune times. There is a sense that all caring activities and caring experiences do not hinge on themselves but rather that the responsibility for the happenings in the centre are spread over adults and children.

Children are seen as individuals that they care for and as individuals who can care for themselves and for others. As adults, they care for the children, but there is an understanding that the children themselves are having care experiences, outside those that the adults are providing. Children are not seen as passive recipients of care but able to instigate and take a responsible role in care experiences. There is a sense that children can deal with and can manage their interpersonal relations with support and that indeed adults do not always have to take a central and directive role in care experiences. In one instance of conflict between one child and a group, the teacher asked, "did you have a bit of trouble Jackson? So he told me a little bit about it, so I think he felt a wee bit better and the girls that were involved came over as well so that was interesting and they've had a bit of a chat about it and we ended up doing a bit of delayed conflict resolution ...and I said to them what do you think we could do?".

Care is seen as more than the teacher's own care of the children but includes the teachers' care of themselves. There is a sense that the care of oneself is a priority; looking after oneself is an integral part of caregiving and teaching. When teachers drew on this discursive strand, they talked in self-reflexive ways about their own well-being.

There is awareness of the importance of caring for ones-self and this includes some boundaries between one's own psychic life and that of the children; there is a sense of a breathing space between themselves and the children. One teacher talked about how she likes to start the day; saying "so generally by the time people arrive I like to be settled myself" and another teacher said "it's about reclaiming space and time and things for me cause I think if you're a caregiver and then you give out lots and you have to replenish that...I've got to replenish my garden". Teachers are aware of their own limits for giving out to others and this is influential in the way teachers interact with children.

Discourse of parent/whānau support

The discourse of parent support appears to be the predominant discourse through which teachers construct their work with parents/whānau. MacNaughton (2003) links the parent support discourse to a 'reforming' approach to teacher and parent/whānau relations. According to MacNaughton, this reforming approach is one of three dominant approaches that staff can take towards these relationships. In a 'conforming' model, teachers teach parents/whānau how to care for and educate their children and in a transforming model, teachers collaborate with parents/whānau devolving decisions about the curriculum. In the reforming model, which occupies the middle ground between the conforming and transforming models, teachers value and encourage parental/whānau involvement. However parental/whānau involvement tends to take place as evident in this study, on the centre's terms. Within this discourse which has its roots in modernity, teachers and parents/whānau collaborate together to produce the 'self-governing' child that is the product of a child-centred approach. This discourse positions teachers as the 'experts' who hold important knowledge and understandings about children's development and teachers are positioned to be responsive to and to support parents/whānau. Parents/whānau are also viewed as a resource for teachers as they can provide particular knowledge about the child from the home setting.

Teachers feel that an important part of their role with parents/whānau is to give support. This can be offered in a myriad of ways. At one level this maybe to support parents/whānau as they separate from their child when they are leaving them: "time is spent just settling the children into their first activity or separating the mums or dads or whoever's brought them that day, saying goodbye at the window – they like to wave

goodbye”. This could mean giving emotional support and reassurance to parents/whānau when they are anxious about their child. One teacher empathizes with parents/whānau saying “they go away to their office or wherever, they re going to work and they’re thinking, my child was crying, I was leaving my child with these people and do these people understand my child and you know, will they take care of them...well yeah you’ve always got to be kind of reassuring them”. Furthermore, teachers see that they can sometimes offer support to parents/whānau when they may be going through difficult times; “they’re going through a really hard time and you can be that person that they can rely on and just make things so much easier”. In these kinds of situations teachers like to feel that they can make suggestions and support the parent to problem-solve.

Teachers feel a responsibility to be welcoming, open and friendly to parents/whānau and to make efforts to get on well with parents/whānau. Emphasis is placed on greeting and welcoming parents/whānau into the centre so that “they are always welcome and it’s their place as well as our place”. Chatting about how the weekend went is seen an appropriate way to make parents/whānau comfortable as they arrive in the centre. One teacher remarks how she feels good when “when they just talk general chit chat to you in the morning like you know they’ll come and say oh you know how was your weekend and they are quite comfortable in sharing with you”. It is seen that teachers have a key responsibility for making the contacts in the relationship and that they need to be “open and smiling”, “make parents and children feel at home” and that they are “constantly there to greet and farewell them all the time”.

Teachers endeavour to be sensitive to parents/whānau and to meet their needs and in the words of one teacher “you know they’re very happy, if you’ve done a good job for them”. Again this can be done in the greeting process as teachers ‘meet and greet’ each child and whānau on a daily basis. This can also be done by making time for parents/whānau to talk to teachers, this being seen as a priority for teachers; “communicating with them and making them feel that they can always hear everything about what’s going on for them and um, how they feel in the morning and feeling that they can confide in you really”. Teachers see that they are to respond to the expectations of parents/whānau in relation to their child. This may be in regard to aspects of the child’s care such as their sleep time, food intake or nappy changing routine such as

“some parents like their child to be changed you know twice in the morning so I make sure I do them at 9.30 and 11.30”.

Building a trusting relationship is seen as crucial to the relationship that teachers have with parents/whānau. Essentially teachers want parents/whānau to trust teachers to care for their child. Honest communication is seen as a goal to work towards in this regard. One teacher remarks on how parents/whānau come to trust teachers saying “they kind of like trust you enough to sort of say how it really is like oh I had a terrible night...they’re quite honest with you” and another comments on the challenge to be honest with a parent that is seen as overly anxious – “I feel like you don’t trust us with your child and its really important that when you take a child to a centre that you feel comfortable with it cause it had been weeks and weeks and I think by just being honest with her...about how she was and it was like he needs to be changed at blah blah, on the dot and if you didn’t do like that , you know, I didn’t want to lie to her about what I would say if he had his bottle maybe fifteen minutes later than what he usually did”. The level of stress for teachers when they feel they are not trusted reflects the importance teachers place on being trusted.

Giving feedback to parents/whānau is something that all teachers endeavour to do. This ranges from giving specific feedback on the child’s day at the centre as in to reporting back on developmental progress that teachers may have noticed or become aware of. “Sometimes if they suddenly say something you know, two words together or three words together that you haven’t heard them say before...you like to tell the parent these sorts of things as well”.

When asked what were the most fulfilling aspects of teachers’ work with parents/whānau the most common response was that teachers really appreciated being seen as a part of the child’s whānau and having the opportunity to play a positive role in the lives of families/whānau. Teachers expressed their pleasure about being accepted and valued within whānau in different ways. One teacher describes the positive feelings as “a nice feeling, a feeling of yeah, like a feeling of love I suppose, a feeling of calm and thinking of people’s families and feelings of acceptance” and another says “you get quite close to people like that and its just like, what you are with your friends - that

you're being there for them, helping them find solutions to their problems, helping the children, that's probably the most fulfilling”.

Discourse of being a team player

This discourse emerges from the teachers themselves in response to the situation that they find themselves in. Within the discourse teachers are positioned as carrying out specific, assigned tasks to ensure that the centre operates smoothly and in appropriate ways. Teachers are positioned to keep other staff in a communication loop, to continue to work with children (even though they may be exhausted), to pull their weight in terms of the centre operation, to work in synchronistic ways with other team members and to carry out tasks in ways that the team has agreed on.

Teachers see that one of their key tasks is to communicate with other staff. This requirement to communicate is enacted in various ways. This can relate to the sharing of information that staff receive from parents/whānau about children and this can be through the use of a whiteboard or it can be face to face verbally. One teacher comments on the challenges in communicating information to the rest of the team; “and you know there's different people coming in and there's so many different people to tell and yeah so many people that you've got to let know about stuff that its yeah very hard to tell everybody everything”. Teachers are also expected to communicate with other staff about what is happening and what they are doing during the course of the day. When people are not informed about events there is the potential for conflict and misunderstanding. “If you didn't know this was happening or if something's happened you're like well – I don't know anything about it”.

It is accepted that each teacher needs to pull their weight and carry their share of the work. Primarily, doing one's work is seen as working with the children. Teachers express frustration when teachers do not maintain their focus on working with the children. “That's all I could probably say is that they've basically had enough, they don't really want to work with the children- it just comes to the point where they've just had enough...that's stressful and they don't- and they do a lot of talking, not necessarily with the children...that's frustrating for me, cause it feels like I'm doing all the work”. Teachers are expected to stay focused on and complete the tasks that are assigned to

them. This may mean keeping the focus on working on the floor with the children, completing their assessment and programming tasks or getting on with housekeeping tasks at assigned times such as tidying up the indoors whilst the children are outside.

Teachers like to feel that other teachers are carrying out their assigned share of the tasks so that they themselves do not have to be concerned with them. When teachers move out of position or become involved in activities other than what are perceived as their assigned tasks this can cause stress for other teachers and increase their workload. Sometimes teachers can converse with parents/whānau for up to 20 minutes and this is not seen as tenable for the rest of the team. One teacher says “I guess it’s up to you as a staff member to say you know, I’ve got to move on, I’ve got to go and do something ...yes, that’s right and so that’s hard on other staff as well and so you try and keep that down to a minimum”.

Team members are expected to make efforts to get along with other teachers and pull together as a team, even though it is acknowledged that teachers have different personalities and have different backgrounds. “You have to get on with all these different people” ... “I suppose it can be a bit of a challenge at times and possibly a bit frustrating at times”. It is also important to keep a sense of what the others are doing so that the team can work together; “you’ve all got to work together”. There is a strong sense of teachers synchronizing their movements and their teaching with other teachers. This often means keeping an eye open for what other teachers are doing and responding accordingly, dovetailing one’s own movements with those of others. “I just positioned myself so I could come and do both whilst the other teacher cause there were only two of us at that stage -the other teacher was passing the fruit around cause once the child you know, needs to have a sit on my knee, so they can wake up properly, the other teacher took over the sandwiches and fruit –kind of passed it around”.

There is an accepted and agreed way of carrying out aspects of the work such as the routines. Sometimes this accepted way seems to evolve out of practice and other times it evolves out of decisions from staff meetings. Teachers place importance on enacting the team’s accepted way and they feel upset when other teachers refrain from doing “what they are supposed to do” or “just go off on their own tangent” when “we’ve talked

about it as a team”. Being a team member means carrying out their work in particular ways and carrying out what has been agreed by the team.

Discourse of professionalism

The teachers in this study construct their subjectivity as a professional in key ways. Firstly, one of the key ways in which teachers constitute their subjectivity as professionals is in the way that teachers view the particular knowledge, skills and attitudes that they have as being crucial to being a professional. The ability to enact and realize these understandings in practice is also important. Secondly, teachers see that professionals have a certain orientation to their work that is purposeful and educational and that this gives the work a certain importance and status. Thirdly, teachers are positioned to prioritize the building of relationships and to be attentive and responsive to children and parents/whānau.

In terms of professional knowledge, training is given substantive importance by teachers and is seen as the way that teachers gain and develop their professional knowledge. This is the distinguishing factor between trained and untrained staff and it is the reason why teachers feel the need to frequently support untrained relievers/staff; “so therefore I do kind of feel like, my training you know, what I mean I know there’s another way so you know I have to, I have to step in really and suggest that why don’t you do it this way”. Knowledge about child development, caring for children, safety and te reo are seen as important as well as knowledge of the regulatory framework and the early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki. When staff are trained they “have all that theory in their head so they know what the thinking is behind it”.

Documentation of the assessment and planning of children’s learning and development is seen as a core element of being a professional teacher. There is a strong sense that teachers see themselves as having to fulfil their obligations in this area. Teachers have a key responsibility to assess and plan for the children in their group and some teachers have up to 16 children in their primary caregiving group. Learning stories and anecdotes are the most common form of data collection methods and all centres compiled some kind of individual profile books. Teachers talk about this part of their work in the following ways: “I’ve just got my own diary that I just write notes about things that are

happening...try and take photos of them”, “well each child has a profile book and each month they have a picture and then they’ll have some artwork and the teacher has to say they are joining in the sandpit...playing in the sandpit teaches them things...well they are developing their gross motor skills such as bla, bla, bla, and then you link it to their photo again and then that’s what we put in their books” and “some of the children have a profile book...so we can clearly follow a record of their learning”.

Teachers also see that it is important that as teachers they have skills in a range of areas including managing children (particularly when behaviour is seen as challenging), setting up activities, talking to parents/whānau, making ethical decisions and in the assessment and planning of children’s learning and development. Again, when untrained staff/relievers are seen as not having these skills, this is seen as creating issues for staff, in particular a heavier workload for those that are trained. One teacher sums up the impact on staff when untrained staff do not have these skills saying, “well you carry more of the load, don’t you?”

Particular attitudes are seen as reflecting a professional orientation to the work.

Teachers identify that being non-judgmental as an important attitude to have towards parents/whānau. Teachers should separate their own personal feelings from their role as a professional even when they do not agree with the parent’s decisions such as a decision about the amount of time that a child spends in the centre. One teacher says “we are not in a place to judge a parent we are just doing our job” and another says “I don’t think we should be into judging the parent...I think that gets in the way of doing the best for the child”.

Teachers position themselves as having specific knowledge, skills and attitudes and that these result in teachers having a particular orientation to their work that is ‘professional’. This orientation emphasizes the purposeful and educational nature of the work and the particular efforts and strategies that teachers employ in their work. One teacher says “you’ve have got to be really professional about it these days...you’ve got to really put thought into what you’re doing and how its affecting them” and another says “ the programme just doesn’t just happen by you just opening the cupboard and throwing something down on the table, it’s supposed to be purposeful”. Teachers want

the work they do to be appreciated as teaching and to be recognized as more than babysitting.

Lastly, teachers see that ‘being there’ for children and families as a fundamental feature for the work. Teachers have the onus to build relationships with children and parents/whānau and respond to what teachers may perceive as their needs and wishes. There is a tendency for teachers to draw a line between their own personal life and their work. A professional teacher is seen as one who is able to clearly focus on the needs of others. “We should be providing the best for the children and parents”. When teachers are at work the focus is firmly and clearly on children and parents/whānau.

Discourse of management of people, the environment and the day

First, teachers see themselves as responsible for the organization of the children within the centre. This means that teachers are positioned to manage the children during routines and manage their supervision and their movement within the centre. Teachers are also positioned to maintain the environment, including the resources in it. Lastly, teachers are positioned to be responsible for a smooth flow in the day and a settled environment.

Teachers monitor numbers of children and adults in an area at any time and are aware that their own movement is constrained by the requirement to be able to supervise all the children, all of the time. When an under two teacher wants to change a baby’s nappy, she may need to make arrangements such as wheeling a young baby in a pram into the changing room, whilst she changes a child’s nappy. If a teacher is in an area as a sole adult and wants to bring a child inside for a particular reason then she may need to bring the whole group of children inside; “cause you can’t bring someone else inside without bringing all the rest of the children inside”. Sometimes there are particular reasons why children need to be supervised carefully; “you have to watch at the moment because there’s a child that likes to push people or bite so there’s a lot of ...keeping a close eye on him”.

Frequently, teachers are responsible for a specific age group for a set period of time. One teacher says “and then at 20 to ten we go into group time, there were four teachers

on the floor in the over twos and two teachers were in each group and that's quite a nice time for me because I rarely get time with my little ones that have come through" and another says "we do have a group time for just the three and four year olds and that's where we basically sit down and do a more structured activity or set activity".

The administering of group care routines throughout the day position teachers as responsible to move children from one experience and/or location in the centre to another experience and/or location and to actively support the children through the routines that take place regularly during the course of the day. These care routines include routines around eating, sleeping, nappy changing, dressing and undressing, sun safety and greeting and fare-welling children and families. It is important to be organized for the routines such as eating particularly with under twos; "it's a bit crazy but if you're organized its good...and just that they're crying because...well you're making sure that everybody's sitting in their chair properly and not wandering off...and then some children are screaming because they want something and they're like hey I've been here and so we give them their lunchbox and they can choose what they want to eat...then trying to calm them down I suppose singing that usually does the trick usually". These routines often are accompanied by the supplementary routines of tidying up and cleaning as outlined below.

Second, teachers also see themselves as responsible for the centre environment and the resources within the environment. It is part of their role to make the environment "really inviting for play" for the children, "to present a nice centre" for children and families alike and to "make sure everything's safe". This means teachers make efforts to set up various areas in the centre ready for play. Setting up displays for parents/whānau is also one of the ways in which teachers can create an inviting environment for parents/whānau. Teachers are sometimes responsible for an area of the environment such as the puzzle area or the music area and it is their responsibility to keep this area tidy and ensure that the resources are complete and in a good state of repair. One teacher is responsible for the puzzle area; "I've got looking after puzzles and so might have a look and see if they need changing and if pieces are missing and puzzles need sending away for or if the cupboard needs tidying up". Another teacher comments on the maintenance of equipment; "cause we do a lot of fixing as well if something's broken we'll fix it".

Teachers make efforts to ensure the environment is clean and attractive and this means that teachers engage in tidying and cleaning duties through out the day. Teachers carry out a general tidy up of the indoors prior to morning teas, afternoon teas and lunch breaks including sweeping of floors, washing of dishes etc as well as a major tidy up at the end of indoors and outdoors at the end of the day. The tidy up at the end of the day has to be carefully planned and managed so that the teachers working at that end of the day can supervise children as well as complete the final housekeeping tasks of the day; sometimes this means that specific areas are shut off from the children as they are tidied. As well as housekeeping tasks such as cleaning bathrooms, sweeping floors, doing dishes, washing cloths, teachers clean equipment and resources that children come into contact with during their time at the centre; “we do quite a bit of cleaning like we scrub highchairs and scrub painting easels ...and then you are constantly washing like dress-ups”. The cleaning and tidying up duties are not particularly enjoyed but seen as a necessary part of the work. “Cleaning up is the least important I think but it has to be done” and “it’s part of the job and you just do it but as I say I don’t like it”.

Third, teachers see themselves as responsible for the overall day, that is, the atmosphere and mood as well as the flow of the day and the management of time throughout the day. Teachers place importance on having a settled and calm atmosphere for children and families. Teachers talk about the importance of “a nice calm, atmosphere” for children and they hope that parents/whānau will “feel good that the environment they’re leaving the kids in looks settled and calm”. They plan events such as the arrival of families, eating and sleeping routines so that there is a minimum of disruption and priority is placed on settling children that are arriving on and at each quarter of the hour. The management of time is part of teachers’ responsibility and control of a settled environment. In this respect, time off the floor for breaks, lunches and non-child contact time has too be carefully managed so that a settled environment is maintained and events can take place in a way that teachers can manage and control. “There’s always a bit of a rush to get the breaks for everyone and have we missed anyone out? When there’s a reliever there you need to ensure that they’ve had a break and can cover the next person. If there’s a hold-up in the system everything gets dropped back to the end of the day- I guess it’s just the way the day flows”.

In sum this chapter has presented the eight discourses that have emerged from the transcripts. Each discourse has been identified and these discourses are: the child-centred discourse, the child-in-context discourse, the discourse of normative mother care, the discourse of forum for care, the discourse of parent support, the discourse of being a team-player, the discourse of professionalism and the discourse of management of the day, the environment and the day. The strands of each discourse have been explained and illustrated with extracts from the teachers' talk (see Table 1). The following chapter provides analyses of these identified discourses.

Dominant Discourses	Positions teachers to...
Normative mother care	Provide close emotional support for children Provide one to one care as a substitute mother To take care of all children's needs
Child-centredness	To be responsible to meet children's needs and interests To use child development and curriculum knowledge to support children's development. To set up and organize the environment so that children can choose and play
Parent support	To be available and to support parents/whānau To support parents/whānau to build trust To respond to parents/whānau needs and wishes in relation to their child To provide advice and child development knowledge
Professional	To be trained and qualified and have the necessary knowledge and understandings To carry out professional tasks such as teaching and learning documentation To have a purposeful and educational orientation to the work To 'be there' for families and to subjugate their own personal lives.
Team-player	To communicate with other staff To pull one's weight and stay working with the children, even when tired To stay in position when carrying out assigned tasks To get along with other members of the team
Manager of environment, people and day	To organize and manage the children, through the routines and movement within the centre To be responsible for the upkeep and presentation of the physical environment To be responsible for the mood of the centre and to create a calm atmosphere.
Less dominant discourses	Positions teachers to...
Child-in-context	To support peer relationships To emphasize participation To work with what is happening
Forum for care	To see and support children as caregivers To care for themselves To offer guidance/support at times

TABLE 1 – Discourses

Chapter Five

ANALYSIS

Introduction

The preceding chapter outlined the discourses that were found to constitute the teachers' work in this study. Six discourses were found to be dominant in the teachers' work and two other discourses that were seen to be less powerful in shaping teachers work were also identified. This chapter provides analyses of these key findings in the following manner. Each discourse is first analysed in light of the pertinent empirical studies from the literature review (Henderson, 2004; Puriola 2002; Waayer, 2002). Then each discourse is considered in relation to a body of social constructionist literature and to the material conditions of the work. Lastly a discussion is provided that distils and synthesizes the various analyses. This discussion takes an overview of the discourses and looks at the totality of the teachers' work.

Analysis of each discourse

Analysis of child-centred discourse

This study then found that a child-centred discourse is the most predominant discourse through which teachers in childcare settings in this study construct their work as educators. This means that teachers are strongly orientated to get to know each child on an individual level, assess each child's development according to stages and domains of development and then select, plan and implement activities and experiences. In this way, each child's needs and interests will be met and each child's development facilitated (Miller Marsh, 2003). There is a strong sense of teachers who are resolved to enhance children's learning and development by supporting and ushering them along the 'developmental highway'.

It is interesting to compare this orientation with that of the participants in the New Zealand studies of Waayer (2002) and Henderson's (2004) studies that are located in homes. It seems that for the most part the experiences that these children are having

such as shopping and going to the beach are contextual in that they are an integral part of the everyday happenings of homes and communities. There is evidence however that some caregivers and nanny educators are making efforts to include 'educational activities' such as puzzles, drawing, counting and reading and in the case of Waayer's caregivers "seem to have a checklist of activities they should be doing" (2002, p. 161). Other caregivers in Waayer's study try and 'make' experiences such as going to the beach or baking educational by supporting the child's participation and conversing about the events. In this way according to Waayer education is "something you 'added' ...that made a caregiver more of a 'teacher' than a 'mother'" (2002, p. 162).

Puriola's (2002) study of teachers in Finnish day-care settings, as did this study, found that the teachers are strongly orientated to promote children's learning and development. In Puriola's case teachers' talk reflects a mixture of child-centred and more didactic teacher-led approaches. Teacher-led experiences included highly structured lessons based on preplanned goals whereas child-centred experiences included spontaneous, child-initiated activities and minimal teacher involvement. These findings do not seem to signal that teachers are taking a sociocultural approach to their work.

Burman (1994) succinctly sums up a child-centred approach to education as having five elements; namely, readiness, choice, needs, play and discovery. While all these elements are evident in the way teachers talk about their work it is of particular interest that teachers talk so much about setting up the environment for children to choose from and the importance of meeting the needs of children. On the face of it, it appears that this cannot be anything but beneficial for children; however critiques of the child-centred approach purport that this approach can actually be oppressive for children. In regard to children's choices, Cannella (2002, p. 121) maintains that the rhetoric of choice masks the fact that it is actually the adults who make all the choices for children to choose from and that "choice is an illusion". Children may make choices in their pretend play but meaningful choices and decisions are determined by adults.

Similarly for the meeting of children's needs, Cannella (2002) argues that it is problematic when needs are constructed as natural as it is in fact adults' view of needs that are paramount and the needs that adults respond to are the ones that fit with their

constructions. This orientation to meet children's needs tends to make invisible the issues of power in adult child relationships thus supporting adults to have power over children according to Cannella (2002). When teachers in this study talked about meeting children's needs there is a sense of them knowing what is best and making decisions accordingly. It is likely that this way of seeing children's learning will tend to work against seeing children as powerful and able to make significant and meaningful decisions about what happens in centres. So even with the best intentions teachers may be constraining children's voice.

When one considers the working conditions of teachers in this study, in particular the long hours of face to face contact and care of children and the limited amount of time to prepare for teaching, for assessment and planning, it is clear that these act as a constraint to teachers who are positioned to assess, plan and implement plans to support each child's learning and development. The amount of non-child contact time (that is usually allocated for documentation) varies from one hour a week to five hours a week and teachers are expected to complete other tasks such as housekeeping duties and the maintenance of curriculum areas within this time. Time to prepare and plan is clearly an issue; "you shouldn't be going around ignoring them (children) while you're cutting up the paper for the paint or and which is what happens you know because people don't have that time to set up the programme for the day".

As a consequence of these demands and the constraints within which they work, teachers worked hard to find processes and systems that will enable them to meet the requirements. There is a sense from the data that in order to fulfil their obligations teachers became more focused on getting the tasks done than reflecting on or exploring what is happening for children and their own pedagogy. In particular, it seems that a sense of performativity creeps into the planning, assessment, evaluation and documentation of programmes. As one teacher says "but each child has a profile book and I make sure my children have that every month... You know every month they get that and I tick them off". One wonders how fulfilling and enjoyable this kind of approach is for teachers. Moss and Petrie (2002, p. 78) warn that one of the dangers of an approach that is "atomized, controlling and delivery driven" is that it tends to drive out joy and spontaneity.

Analysis of child-in-context discourse

This way of being with and working with children has some features in common with a sociocultural approach to teaching, an approach that is currently being promoted in the early childhood education field both nationally and internationally. At the centre of this approach is a concern with how children develop understandings in the social contexts in which they are located. This process is described by Rogoff (as cited in Robbins, 2003, p. 96) “as a transformation of participation in which a person develops through involvement in shared endeavours”. There is a lessened resolve to support the child onto and along the developmental highway “through a series of stages towards the zenith of cognitive development” (Robbins, 2003, p. 96) compared with the child-centred curriculum. Moreover, the scope of the curriculum is broad and less bounded than that in the child-centred curriculum as it incorporates that which emerges from the context, from the business of adults and children being, working and playing together in the setting.

There are some commonalities between this way of working with children and those adults in the empirical studies that are located in home settings. As previously stated the caregivers and nanny educators in the studies of Waayer (2002) and Henderson (2004) tend to be orientated to children’s participation in contextually relevant experiences such as baking; “I’ll bake a cake and the kids will help me to measure the ingredients”. There is a clear sense of learning being embedded in meaningful and contextual experiences. On the other hand the teachers in Puriola’s (2002) study draw on child-centred and teacher-directed discourses. They seem less predisposed to a contextual approach but rather are concerned with explicitly directing the children’s learning. The child-centred and teacher-directed approaches foreground the support of children through ‘universal’, developmental stages.

When teachers appropriate the child-in-context discourse, children are positioned differently from the individuals in the child-centred discourse who are being supported to move along the developmental highway. Rather they are positioned as members of a community who are embedded in a web of relations. Moss and Petrie (2002) describe an alternative view of children to the view of children in a child-centred discourse. This alternate view of children describes how children can be seen as “citizens, members of a

social group” (Moss & Petrie, p. 101); this view is similar to the position offered to children in the child-in-context discourse.

Analysis of normative mother care, discourse

It is not surprising that teachers working in childcare construct their work significantly through a discourse of care. This discourse is also identified as a dominant discourse in the work of Puriola (2002), Waayer (2002) and Henderson (2004). Whilst the care discourse in the studies of Waayer and Henderson in particular is to be expected as home-based care and nannying have historically been closely aligned with mothering, it was also found to be evident in this study in the kinds of relationships that teachers form with children in childcare settings.

Grieshaber and Cannella (2001) argue that the discourse of mothering constructs all women as wanting to have children and to love children. It appears that teachers position themselves to varying degrees in the mother's place, drawing on the normative mother discourse; taking on the key role and responsibility for the child's well-being whilst he or she is at the centre. The teacher, just like the mother, may be responsible for any future unhappiness or deviance and so to avoid this, the teacher resolves to build a close and trusting relationship and meet all the child's emotional and physical needs. According to Burman (1994) the mothering discourse in childcare serves to maintain society's social and political order particularly in the way that this discourse interplays with discourses of child development and discourses of femininity. This discourse certainly helps to explain the sense of responsibility that teachers feel and the strong resolve to meet all the children's emotional and physical needs.

Within this construction of care teachers are positioned strongly as the caregivers and children are positioned strongly as the cared for. In fact it could be said that whilst the teachers are active caregivers, the children tend to be seen as passive recipients. This can be seen in the ways that teachers talk about their caring of the children. Whilst teachers have a strong resolve to protect and care for the children and make efforts to provide what they perceive as quality care, children tend to be positioned as having needs and that these needs will be met by the teachers. Again the likely ramification of

this is that children will not tend to be supported to make significant decisions about what they want to do and how the day will unfold.

The reality of the teachers' situation in terms of their prime responsibility for the group of children within the physical and temporal space means that their work is never done. Whilst some teachers mentioned that there are quiet periods during the day, there is an overriding sense of relentless demands for teachers to respond to. Teachers talked about how they experience this aspect of their work; "you're constantly giving out", "you're so full on all day...I just feel drained when I leave usually", "you're always constantly listening...you don't ever like get a chance to let your brain rest" and "you've got that noise around you all day because no children go home at lunchtime like there's always children there". One under two teacher challenged those who may underestimate the intensity of the work saying "you come along then do it and see how long you last" and another under two teacher expressed similar sentiments, "I think if only you really knew-I just want to drag them and then go -'sit in the corner' you know it takes a lot of tolerance and patience". This sentiment resonates with that expressed by the teacher in Wolf and Walsh's (1998) study in the United States who says "if you haven't been there you don't know what it's like" (p. 1).

At times teachers experience acute tension in trying to meet the needs of all the children. This seems to be particularly so for the teachers of under two children as they sometimes try to meet the needs of all children simultaneously. One under two teacher said "you're always feeling a little stressed because, you know you're not meeting this child's needs as well as the other child's" and " Yeah and so you can't sometimes because you're doing something else so you try to say to them to wait and yeah, and try and get it into your mind that I can't do all these things at once and accept that I can't do it". This emotional strain is also evident in the work of over two teachers when a teacher referred to teachers who are seen as not pulling their weight by avoiding working directly with the children; "because it's -they don't want to - they've had enough, they've had enough". This kind of emotional exhaustion is concurrent with what is found in the international literature and what Cameron (1997) found in her study of childcare in six countries.

The working context of the teachers is likely a contributing factor to the teachers' feelings of exhaustion and stress. Teachers talked about the need for more breaks so that they could recuperate from the intense demands. In particular teachers talked about how the 10-15 minute tea breaks and the 30 minute lunch breaks are not long enough to recoup from the hurly-burly of the centre when working long days of face to face contact. Also, the annual holidays that range from three weeks per annum to four weeks per annum, are seen as insufficient. Teachers are required to take two weeks holiday at Christmas, which means that teachers commonly have only two weeks holiday through the year and in the case of one centre only one week during the year. It is difficult to see how this amount of rest and recreation can sustain teachers in light of the emotional and physical demands of the work. One teacher questioned the amount of holidays saying "you've only got another two weeks throughout the year, so that's a long time to be on top of it with children I think, without a break, you know, you've got two other weeks...there must have been a reason why schools have terms and break them up". Sumsion's (2002) provocation as to whether the profession is placing excessive demands on teachers certainly seems to have traction here.

Analysis of forum for care discourse

According to Puriola (2002), Waayer (2002) and Henderson (2004) the teachers in their studies tend to draw on modernist, normative notions of care in the sense that care is mediated through a traditional mother/child relationship. The forum for care discourse that was evident in some of the teachers' talk in this study seems to have some aspects in common with a model of care as an ethic as purported by Tronto (1993) and Moss and Petrie (2002). This model sees care as not limited to the mother/child dyad but "inscribed in all relationships" (Moss, 2003, p. 39). Because care is seen as present in all aspects of living and not only just located in the care of the young, the sick or the elderly then children (and the sick and the elderly) can begin to be seen as able to care for others. When teachers draw on this discourse it is more likely that children will be positioned as active agents within their own lives.

As an adjunct to the view of children as active agents in the care of themselves and others, is the notion of children as members of a social community. As active agents the relationships that children have with others and the social processes that lubricate these

relationships are foregrounded. Children are seen as interdependent with other children and adults and early childhood settings can become “spaces for processes and relationships not primarily for the production of prespecified outcomes” (Moss and Petrie, 2002, p. 107). The unequal power dynamics that exist in a traditional caring relationship where the mother or mother substitute identifies the needs of the child can begin to shift - as children are seen as social agents who have dynamic and important relationships with other children and adults. There is the occasional glimpse of children as these active, social agents in the talk of some of the teachers; “Did you have a bit of trouble Jackson? So he told me a little bit about it, so I think he felt a wee bit better and the girls that were involved came over as well so that was interesting and they’ve had a bit of a chat about it and we ended up doing a bit of delayed conflict resolution ...and I said to them what do you think we could do?”.

Within a normative model of care, teachers are positioned strongly as the caregivers with prime responsibility to meet the needs of children. In order to carry out this responsibility, teachers need to be selfless and self-sacrificing. At times the actual demands that teachers have to meet seem excessive, particularly for teachers working with under twos; “you know four children at once who all want bottles at once and you can’t give four children bottles at once – not and do it properly and give them a cuddle”. In spite of these demands teachers seem orientated to mask their own stress levels and present an appropriate demeanour to children and parents/whānau; “I’m smiling at people when I don’t really feel that sometimes”. It seems that the teachers have gendered expectations of themselves as caregivers, seeing themselves only as caregivers and not receivers of care.

On the other-hand when teachers draw on an ethic of care discourse, teachers may be more predisposed to be aware of and consider their own needs. Tronto (1993, p. 110) states that whilst “the meaning of care varies from one society to another and from one group to another, care is nonetheless a universal aspect of human life” and “all humans have needs that others must help them meet”. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) add to this by supporting a shift from a normative model of care to a model of care as an ethic that foregrounds care in all relationships.

Analysis of discourse of parent support

Of the three studies that have specifically explored the discourses that construct teachers' subjectivity, namely those by Puriola (2002), Waayer (2002) and Henderson (2004) – it is the two latter studies carried out in Aotearoa/New Zealand that are the most pertinent. Interestingly, parent partnership is not a feature of the discourses identified by Puriola. Waayer's study of home-based caregivers identifies a 'welfare discourse' as a dominant discourse that shapes the work of caregivers with parents/whānau; this discourse tends to position caregivers as 'helpers' and families as 'needy' or 'disadvantaged'. The work of nanny educators in Henderson's study was shaped less by a discourse of need but more by a kind of social altruism in that nanny educators and families were working collaboratively together for society's well-being.

Whilst teachers in this study do not talk overtly about parents/whānau as being needy or disadvantaged there is a sense of families needing and benefiting from teachers' support. There appear to be some similar threads then in some of the teachers' talk in that teachers (as do the home-based caregivers) occupy a dominant position in terms of their knowledge of child development and curriculum. Whilst parents/whānau' knowledge about their child is valued, parents/whānau are less likely to be seen as shaping or making decisions about the curriculum. The nature of parent/whānau involvement seems to be in accordance with the kind of parent/whānau involvement as that identified by MacNaughton (2003) as reflective of a 'reforming' approach. This means that in this study parental/whānau involvement tends to take place on the centre's terms.

Even though teachers occupy a position of advantage with parents/whānau in terms of their professional knowledge, they are primarily positioned to be responsive to parents/whānau. This means that they see their role as one of listening to parents/whānau' wishes and concerns, giving feedback on the child's day, supporting the child's transition in and out of the centre, offering advice and guidance and generally being there for parents/whānau when they experience difficult times. In this study, teachers seemed particularly supportive to parents/whānau in regards to their juggling of paid work and parenting. Teachers are also positioned as meeting the needs of parents/whānau in regard to the care and education of their child. The parents/whānau are seen as clients whose needs and wishes must be responded to, particularly in relation

to the personal aspects of their child's well-being. From the teachers' perspective it is important to win the trust of the parents/whānau so that the parents/whānau can trust that the teachers are providing the close and careful care of the child in the centre that parents/whānau themselves give their child in their own home. In some ways then the teachers are positioned as 'substitute mothers' who are orientated to provide the individualized care that is promoted in a normative model of mother care. Here can be seen a clear link to the conflation of mother and teacher roles as discussed by Acker (1995) as teachers in centres are positioned similarly to mothers in their own homes.

Furthermore whilst teachers find their work with parents/ whānau rewarding it is not surprising that the teachers agree that the most stressful aspect of their work with parents/whānau is when parents/whānau are seen as having too high expectations of care. An under two teacher describes the pressure she feels with one parent saying "like her questioning of Sarah at the end of the day was like – has she done this, this and this? And you kind of felt it was a pressure on you ...it was like checking us out all the time ...have we met her child's needs? I guess everyday, you know and she would tell you something in the morning and you know and so woe betide you if you had forgotten something". Again, it seems that whilst parent relationships can be positive, they can also create more demands and requirements for teachers to meet. Whilst a parent may wish for the close attentive and exclusive care of a mother or mother substitute, the material conditions are such that staff are not able to give the one to one attention that the parent may give in the child's own home as teachers are responsible for a group of children and a set of parents/whānau.

Other features of the working context can also constrain the kind of relationship that teachers have with parents/whānau. Teachers agreed that there are quieter times when teachers can converse with parents/whānau however there are consistent constraints for teachers in carrying out these tasks. The working context for teachers, in particular the structural features of centres such as ratios, group sizes and lack of time off the floor, constantly raise their head as teachers endeavour to support individual parents/whānau whilst carrying out other tasks. This may mean balancing talking to a parent/whānau whilst supervising a group of children; "it is very hard to find the time to actually talk to a parent and you're usually trying to find the time to supervise the children as

well...you're always trying to do something else so you're not fully available to discuss things with them”.

One teacher described the barrier of time she experiences in building a relationship with a parent who has English as a second language saying, “and then if she doesn't understand I'm going to have to do you know what I mean? And its like you can't stand there ten minutes you know you don't have ten minutes. You have like two minutes”. There is a sense that whilst relationship building with teachers is something that teachers want to do to do there is not enough space and time given to do this within the working day. It maybe that this obligation and responsibility that teachers feel to build supportive relationships with parents/whānau is a contributing factor to the emotional burnout and exhaustion that some teachers experience and that has been identified in the international literature (Lyons, 1997; Sumsion, 2002).

Analysis of team player discourse

The discourse of being a team-player is not evident in the international studies by Puriola (2002). This is surprising as Puriola was interested in exploring the “multiple faces” (2002, p. 36) of the teachers' everyday work. A team-player discourse does not feature in the work of Waayer (2002) or Henderson (2004) either as their participants, caregivers and nanny educators respectively, do not work in a team in the same way that centre staff do in this study. It is likely that the team-player discourse is significant in childcare settings as a result of the particular nature of a team that can be large and disparate and because of the need to create seamless care and education for extended days.

It is likely that this discourse is to some degree a ‘bottom up’ discourse in that it arises from within the context itself. The teachers find themselves working in particular structural conditions such as group size, ratios of adults to children and length of day and these contextual conditions impose on teachers, particular ways of working. Similarly, there are some aspects of the work which teachers have little control over such as conversing with families, changing children's nappies and clearing away after kai times; these tasks are necessary for the operation of the centre. Certainly there are some choices as to how one changes a nappy for instance and teachers construct these

aspects of their work through discourse - yet in the end the nappy does need changing. Therefore, the team player discourse can be viewed as an internal discourse that is in some ways a response to the more functional and pragmatic tasks that arise directly from the work.

It is clear that teachers have exacting responsibilities in terms of meeting the care and education needs of each child, in supporting and responding to parents/whānau and in the maintenance of the physical environment. This discourse then directs teachers to stay working with children when they are on the floor and to limit the amount of time spent with parents/whānau thus ensuring that even when teachers may be feeling exhausted, a sense of order and control are maintained. Thus in this context where teachers provide a large amount of care over extended days with limited breaks, this discourse serves to pull everyone together and keep teachers doing what they are supposed to be doing. Furthermore there is an unspoken expectation that teachers will mask their own tiredness or emotional strain so that a positive appearance is presented to the children and families; “Yeah and all the time I’ve got this yeah to think things are ok and kind of pretend it is”.

Whilst teachers see it as important to keep a clear and ongoing communication with other staff, the working conditions do not always support this. One teacher appreciates the benefits of sorting out issues with staff on the spot but feels unable to do this whilst working with the children. Staff talk about the difficulties that they experience in keeping everyone ‘in the loop’ especially when shifts are staggered and breaks and lunches are staggered so that staff may not have the opportunities to share in these times off the floor. Staff meetings are usually held after a day’s work on the floor and staff are often tired. One over two teacher says “the timing is horrible...you’re at the end of the day and you’re really ready to be home with your family and quite often it is a bit of a feeling that not everything is important and people don’t have energy” and another over two teacher says “sometimes it takes a lot to get into the planning of it cause you really just can’t think...its quite a pressure too cause you’ve got to do it in an hour”. In this way, there are tensions for teachers between their need to communicate with the team and the actual working conditions within which they work.

Analysis of professional discourse

For the teachers in this study, there is a particular body of knowledge, specific skills and attitudes that are associated with being a professional. Teachers endeavour to realize this knowledge, skills and attitudes in their practice. There are also responsibilities and tasks, in particular in curriculum, assessment and planning which teachers view as being a core part of being a professional. The notion of teaching is an important aspect of their identity as a professional as they see that they are educating children as well as caring for them. Of the four studies that explored teachers' discourses, Waayer's (2002) and Henderson's (2004) are the only studies that have identified the discourse of being a professional in the work of the participants. For the caregivers in Waayer's study, being a professional means having paid 'employment', even though technically the caregivers are reimbursed for their expenses.

However there are significant tensions between the working conditions of teachers and the discourse of being a professional. Conditions such as non-child contact time, lack of sufficient holidays, evening meetings and lack of breaks and opportunities for professional development are viewed negatively and seen as exacerbating stress levels as they are in the national and international research literature. Teachers do not feel that they have enough time allocated for preparation, assessment, planning, and evaluation and to complete the range of documentation that is associated with these tasks. The non-child contact time is seen as insufficient; some teachers getting as little as an hour a week. Another teacher says "our contract says we're to have five hours a week and we don't get five hours a week ...we probably get three hours a week...some weeks will go by and I haven't had any contact time because I've let other people have it and I've got so far behind in my books I was just taking them home".

There are issues too around staff meetings. Some centres hold some of their under two or over two planning meetings during the day and these are certainly preferable to the evening meetings that are a common weekly or fortnightly event. In the case of the evening meetings a key issue appears to be making time at meetings for the curriculum and planning issues amongst the myriad of other business that needs to be discussed and addressed. When giving an account of their last staff meeting teachers made comments such as "so we didn't do any planning...we purely did agenda items", and "that was

kind of frustrating cause we didn't have any time for planning" and "because our last one we had, um we had get half an hour and we just did a bit of a catch up thing on what Sue needed to know while I was gone". There is a strong sense of teachers struggling to find the time for these tasks and to ring mark time for them at staff meetings.

Working with untrained and/or relieving staff can also create tension for teachers as they try to support them to become familiar with the routines and operation of the centre as well support them to implement what they see as appropriate practice. Sometimes untrained staff are seen as not being able to play a full role in the assessment and planning tasks and this can mean an increased workload for qualified staff. Sometimes untrained staff are seen as holding views that run counter to current thinking. One teacher says "it's all loud laughter about funny things they've done 'hee hee look at that - so and so fell over' and it's not respecting them". There is a sense of teachers trying to support untrained staff but not always feeling that they have the time as they themselves are working on the floor. One teachers describes how it is being outside on her own with a group of children; "you're basically outside by yourself really those days are very chaotic, very, very chaotic when you have an untrained reliever that's not used to the centre".

Clearly, structural features such as the staggered breaks and lunches, evening staff meetings and the limited time off the floor as a team, means that there is minimal time for teachers to think, reflect, read, dialogue and discuss and share ideas with other staff. Teachers are often working alone when assessing and planning for children as there are insufficient opportunities to share together. When do teachers have the time to reflect on their pedagogy, process and assimilate new ideas and innovate new ways of working and teaching? There have been fundamental shifts in pedagogy recently as sociocultural ideas have become more influential. Teachers are being encouraged to use a sociocultural lens in their assessment, planning and evaluation and yet there seems scant time and space for teachers to become familiar with and process these new ideas. This seems a long way away from Moss and Petries's (2002) vision of teachers as "reflective practitioners, as thinkers ...constantly questioning their own images of the child" (p. 111).

When one considers the busy nature of centres and the relentless interpersonal demands it is likely that this lack of space and opportunity to think will contribute to teachers' feelings of tiredness and low energy. The amount of caring that teachers do in their work means that it is vital that there are opportunities for teachers to recharge and bring themselves back to a state of equilibrium where they can then apply themselves to cognitive tasks such as planning and assessment or discussion of curriculum, theory and practice.

Finally, the teachers in this study are orientated as professionals to place central importance on the well-being of children and parents/whānau and to the building of meaningful relationships. In doing this teachers may find it difficult to focus on and employ strategies to advance their own well-being. The key focus for teachers is the well-being of others. Asserting one's own needs could be contentious and seen as not conducive to the building of positive relationships. Sumsion (2005) considers the childcare sector in Australia and suggests that traditional notions of professionalism are underpinned by a commitment on the part of teachers to the interests of children and families and the subjugation of teachers' own interests and well-being. Whilst teachers in childcare in Australia have more unfavourable working conditions than their counterparts in New Zealand there do appear to be elements of what Sumsion (2005, p. 45) calls a "self-sacrificial, gendered professionalism" in the work of the teachers in this study.

Analysis of discourse of management of people, the environment and the day

Waayer (2002) and Henderson (2004) do not identify a distinct discourse of management as does this study, however elements of management are included by both researchers within the discourse of mothering. The nature of the management tasks obviously differs for adults working in homes rather than in centres however as substitute mothers the participants in both these studies are involved in the management of domestic tasks and routines such as cleaning, shopping and preparation of food. The management of these tasks is seen by both caregivers and nanny educators as an integral part of the work. Interestingly, nanny educators seem more predisposed to focus on the child and their learning exclusively whilst home-based caregivers seem more orientated

to facilitate children's learning by inviting children to participate in domestic tasks. The location of home-based caregivers in their own home and nanny educators in the child's home may be an influential factor here.

Puriola (2002) identifies a discourse of management in the construction of teachers' identity; there is an intention towards order and peacefulness in the way teachers evaluate the management of the day. This corresponds with a similar intention expressed frequently by teachers in this study to achieve a 'settled' atmosphere. Creating a settled atmosphere is important as when the children are settled, teachers feel that they can manage the situation and avoid the situation getting out of hand.

While there are cognitive, emotional and physical demands in the teachers' work with children it is clear that as teachers talk about the management aspects of their work there are significant considerations and physical demands for teachers particularly when one considers the housekeeping tasks such as cleaning, tidying up and the general maintenance of the environment and the resources within it. This is a demand that is possibly overlooked and not recognized. The often limited and finite space of the early childhood setting is intensively used. The space accommodates a large number of young children and several adults for extended periods of time and it is inevitable that large amounts of energy need to be expended in order that a sense of order and standards of hygiene and operation are maintained. Tronto (1993) draws attention to how work that involves the care of physical spaces such as cleaning and tidying is often carried out by women and is not given the recognition it deserves but rather is devalued and trivialized. Material conditions of work such as ratios, group size and limited time off the floor combined with the requirement to manage the centre and all its aspects mean that teachers are frequently juggling several balls at the same time as they try to complete necessary practical and management tasks whilst they work with the children. This attention to a myriad of tasks at the same time must surely contribute to teachers' levels of stress and tiredness. Interestingly, Puriola (2002) comments that the educational and care aspects of the work have been the main foci of the early childhood literature and that little attention has hitherto been given to the practical aspects of the work.

The totality of teachers' work in childcare settings

Particular discourses position teachers to meet the needs of others in specific ways. These discourses may be complementary at times, and at other times, contradictory. The child-centred discourse constitutes the teacher as an assessor of children's development and following this, responding to and meeting the needs and interests of children (Miller Marsh, 2003). The normative mothering discourse positions teachers as being exclusively responsible for meeting the needs of each individual child and this is particularly in relation to each child's emotional and physical needs. Teachers also subscribe to a discourse of parent support, which places the needs of working parents/whānau to the fore and lastly, the professional discourse prompts teachers to privilege the needs of children and families over and above their own needs (Sumsion, 2002). The commonality between these discourses serves to strengthen and fix this aspect of teachers' subjectivity ensuring that teachers are overwhelmingly predisposed to be responsive to the needs of others.

As teachers are centrally and critically responsible for each child's development and for everything that happens in the centre, they are in a powerful decision-making position. In relation to children, teachers are able to make significant decisions about what children learn and when and how they will learn it. In a child-centred approach it is the adult "who will reveal what is normal, what is expected" and "only those who are older possess the power to determine the what and how of the world" (Cannella, 2002, p. 152). In relation to parents/whānau teachers hold important 'scientific based' knowledge about child development and curriculum which renders them as the experts (MacNaughton, 2003). However, while teachers are positioned in an advantaged position, this superiority comes at a cost. In this position, teachers have immense responsibilities and tasks, as they are the 'movers and shakers' of everything that happens in the centre and potentially to blame if children's healthy development is in question. As teachers endeavour to meet the myriad of demands, it seems that likely outcomes are emotional strain and/or performativity.

As teachers are positioned as responsible, accordingly children are positioned as dependent and immature and unable to make significant decisions about their time in early childhood centres. It is the adults who 'know best' and while a child-centred

approach has elements of freedom and choice for children especially when compared to limited choices available for children in an adult-directed behaviourist model of teaching, this freedom to choose tends to be limited to ‘what I can play with next’ (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). This kind of stance is self-reinforcing; children remain dependent while adults continue to make decisions on their behalf and thus children’s agency is constrained. Furthermore, a child-centred discourse and a normative mother discourse place the adult/child dyadic as central; these are the prime, important relationships. This tends to undervalue and undermine the other relationships children have with other adults and children again reinforcing children’s dependency and constraining their interdependency with others. Moreover, this creates an intensity of interpersonal relationships for both teachers and children.

Similarly, teachers are positioned to respond to and meet the needs of parents/whānau whilst at the same time the child development and curriculum knowledge that teachers hold establishes them in a ‘knowing’ position over parents/whānau. So, on the one hand, teachers feel the pressure of meeting the wishes of parents/whānau and can feel vulnerable to their disapproval, while, on the other hand, teachers construct their subjectivity as being knowledgeable over parents/whānau and as the decision-maker when it comes to curriculum. Hence, while teachers feel genuine empathy and support for parents/whānau and make considered efforts to meet parent/whānau’ wishes the latter tend to be relegated to a less powerful position in the case of the curriculum.

Increasing professionalism has improved the status of childcare and some amelioration of conditions, but it has also ushered in an intensification of accountability, particularly in the area of assessment, planning and review. Tensions are created here as teachers try to juggle their professional responsibilities with the individual care and education of children that they are positioned to provide in normative care and child-centred discourses respectively. Furthermore, notwithstanding the extra requirements for teachers the pill of professionalism is bittersweet, as being a professional also constitutes teachers as demonstrating their professionalism by privileging others’ needs over their own. Interestingly, the discourse of being a team player and of being a manager of the people, the environment and the day whilst speaking of the discourses that inform teachers’ teaching they importantly serve to help the teachers cope with and manage the demands of the work and in some ways maintain the status quo.

The material conditions within which teachers work clearly exert powerful influences in the way teachers experience their work. In the case of the teachers in this study, the amount of care that they provide for children, in that children may be at the centres for eight to nine hours per day, as well as the actual working conditions such as length of the working day, amount of non-child contact time, amount of holidays and the physical space itself all constitute the structural nature of the work. The material conditions are clearly discursive as they represent and speak of society's constructions of the child and of childcare and of teachers of young children. Furthermore the material conditions are not separate to the discourses that constitute the teacher's subjectivity but rather they interact in dynamic ways with teachers and the subjectivities that they take up. The subjectivities that teachers take up when they draw on a normative mother care discourse and a child-centred discourse are clearly at odds with and create tensions with the material conditions of the work, as they are not conducive to the focus on each individual child that is promulgated within these discourses.

The discourse of professionalism also urges teachers to assess and plan and complete documentation for each child in ways that draw on current thinking and reflect sociocultural constructs. Teachers encounter problems in finding time to complete the documentation, to share and discuss ideas and in being refreshed enough to apply themselves cognitively to the tasks, particularly in the evening after a day's work. Teachers become depleted and in need of time to recuperate and yet the working conditions do not support breaks away from the work on an everyday basis or in the way of sufficient sustained breaks as in holidays. Furthermore, there is barely time in the working day for teachers to think per se let alone discuss and make sense of new theoretical ideas so it would seem unlikely that teachers will be able to make the theoretical shifts that the field is urging them to make. Cullen (1996) warned of teachers' lack of understanding of sociocultural theory and ability to implement Te Whāriki in 1996; one wonders whether the situation will have ameliorated since then. Therefore, whilst the discourse of professionalism is appealing and seductive for teachers as it promises the status of being a 'professional' it is also problematic and ironic as the working conditions do not support them in their 'professional' tasks and in fact fall far short of what one would consider as those befitting a 'professional'.

Lastly, at times teachers (some more than others) draw on alternative discourses to the child-centred and normative mother care discourses and these render a different way for teachers to work with children. The child in context discourse and the forum for care discourse both decentre the teacher, denying the exclusivity of the mother/teacher and child dyad. This has immense ramifications for adults and children. In both discourses teachers are positioned as one of the significant others rather than the significant other in children's lives (whilst they are at the centre) and the children are positioned in ways that support their agency and their interdependency with others. The 'developmental highway' with its universal codes and standards are backgrounded in favour of what is happening now in this particular context with this particular group of adults and children. Moreover as care is seen as stretched over people, places and things rather than located solely in the mother/teacher and child dyad.

In particular, the discourses of normative mother care, parent support and professionalism position teachers in powerful ways to consider and meet the needs of others and subjugate their own needs. The discourses of child-centredness and parent support position teachers in an advantaged and superior position over children and parents/whānau in relation to decisions about curriculum. This superior position however has a cost as it contributes significantly to teachers experiencing emotional strain and/or performativity. The intense relationships between teachers and children that are engendered in the child-centred discourse and the ways in which children are viewed as dependent within this discourse, further exacerbate the physical, emotional and psychological demands for teachers. The discourse of professionalism is coercing teachers to carry out increased tasks and responsibilities which create a tension with the individualized care that is required of teachers in the discourses of normative mother care and child-centredness. The alternative discourses of child in context and forum for care appear to position teachers, and in turn, children and parents/whānau in more favourable ways. The teacher is decentred and opportunities for more equitable relationships are opened up. The discourse of management of people, the environment and the day and the discourse of being a team player enable teachers to manage their working situation. One key element of the latter discourse serves to ensure that teachers keep working with children even when they are experiencing exhaustion and/or alienation.

There are also clear tensions in the work between the working conditions and certain discourses. Particular constraints such as the length of the working day, the insufficient amount of non child contact time, the amount of face to face work with children and insufficient holidays are at odds with the demands on teachers who take up positions in the discourses of normative mother care, child-centredness and professionalism.

This chapter has focused on the analysis of the discourses and the final section has provided a synthesis of these analyses. The next and final chapter of the thesis provides a distillation of the findings, reflections on the methodology used in the study, suggestions for further research and the implications of this study's findings for policy and practice.

Chapter Six

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The previous chapter presented the analysis of the findings of the study. Each discourse was analysed in relation to empirical studies from the literature review, to a body of social constructionist literature and to the material conditions of the work. These analyses were then drawn together into a coherent whole. This final chapter is divided into four parts and these are as follows: the key findings of the study, reflections on the methodology used in the study, suggestions for future research and implications of the study's findings for policy and practice.

The research question in this study was focused on the identification of the discourses that construct the work of teachers who teach in fulltime childcare settings. I was interested in how the experiences that teachers had in their work, could be explained by the discursive space around the work. The key discourses and the positions that teachers take up within the discourses illuminate how the teachers see themselves and their work and how they experience the work.

Key findings

The teachers in this study were found to constitute their professional identity by drawing on the following dominant discourses:

- **Discourse of normative mother care-** positions the teacher as a substitute mother providing intimate one to one care for children.
- **Discourse of child-centredness-** positions the teacher to assess and meet children's individual needs in terms of the stage of their development.
- **Discourse of parent support-** positions the teacher as the expert who responds to and supports the parents/whānau.

- **Discourse of professionalism**-positions the teacher as having professional knowledge and expertise and as ‘being there’ for children and parents/whānau.
- **Discourse of team-player**- positions the teacher as ‘pulling their weight’, carrying out the work in ways that have been agreed by the team and continuing to work with the children even when exhausted.
- **Discourse of manager of environment, people and the day**- positions the teacher as responsible for the smooth-running and upkeep of the centre and the maintenance of an inviting and calm atmosphere.

There are alternative discourses to the discourse of normative mother care and child-centredness and these are:

- **Discourse of forum for care**- positions teachers to care for children and themselves and to view children as caregivers as well as care-receivers.
- **Discourse of child-in-context**- positions teachers to foreground relationships over developmental stages and to place importance on what is happening in the context.

While some teachers drew more on certain discourses than others it is likely that all teachers appropriate from all of the discourses over time. The teachers’ work is predominantly shaped and influenced then by the six key discourses of child-centredness, normative mother care, professionalism, parent support, being a team-player and a manager of people, the environment and the day. The everyday working life of teachers can be seen to fall out of the positions that the teachers take up within these discourses. The two alternative discourses of child-in-context and forum for care are less significant in shaping the work of teachers and offer alternative positions for teachers and accordingly different kinds of relations with children and parents/whānau.

It is clear that gender is a predominant feature of the discursive space around the work of teachers in this study. Gendered expectations are a central feature of the discourses of child-centredness, normative mother care and professionalism. The former two discourses draw heavily on the knowledge domain of developmental psychology. Within this domain, all women are rendered as mothers and according to Bradley (as

cited in Morss, 1996, p. 145) “they are expected to provide a hyper-sensitive interactive partner for the baby, a partner who is at the same time natural, educationally constructive (but non-directive) and who at all costs must enjoy what she is doing”. This positions the teacher aptly to meet the needs and interests of children at all costs. Walkerdine (as cited in Acker, 1995, p. 23) views “child-centred teaching as a trap for women as it privileges the child over the teacher” and they become caught “inside a concept of nurturance” which holds them “responsible for the freeing of each, little individual”.

Teachers are strongly orientated to be the prime instigators of curriculum. The discourses of child-centredness and normative, mother care position teachers to make the significant decisions about the curriculum and to be the prime ‘movers and shakers’. This places a huge burden on teachers and likely constrains both children and parents/whānau to exercise agency in respect of the curriculum.

The dominant discourses of child-centredness and normative mother care support primacy being given to the substitute mother/child dyad. These relationships are privileged above others and this contributes to an environment of intense and demanding relationships for the adults and accordingly limits the relationships that children have with others.

It is not surprising that teachers experience emotional strain and feelings of being unable to give out to others. The relentless responsiveness and the intense nature of the relationships put immense demands on the psychological and emotional resources of teachers. As teachers become exhausted, the team player discourse serves to keep the teacher doing the work, responding to others. In addition, the professional discourse, whilst bringing positive elements to the work, reinforces the foregrounding of the needs of others and the subjugation of the teachers’ own needs.

As professionalism has ushered in an increasing list of responsibilities and tasks, particularly in the area of assessment and planning, teachers find themselves under pressure to complete the requirements of their work. While working within the material and structural constraints of the work, teachers struggle to develop systems and approaches to assist them in this regard. One unfortunate outcome is that teachers adopt

a performative and perfunctory approach to the assessment tasks. This is obviously less than satisfactory for themselves and for the children.

Whilst professionalism has raised the standing and status of childcare within the early childhood education sector and beyond into the wider community, the material and structural realities do not yet sufficiently support the teacher in childcare settings to teach as a professional. The working conditions of teachers, in particular, the amount of face to face work, the amount of caring, insufficient breaks, holidays and non-child contact time conspire together to create a particular kind of working environment that does not support teachers to assimilate new ideas and reflect on their practice. Furthermore, the dominant discourses of child-centredness, normative mother care and professionalism urge teachers to work faster and harder as the emphasis is on meeting the individual needs of children, despite the reality that childcare is group care. It is as if teachers are on a treadmill and there is little opportunity to change direction.

At times teachers draw on alternative discourses to the dominant ones of child-centredness and normative mother care. These discourses, the child-in-context and the forum for care discourse respectively, position teachers differently and proffer different kinds of relationships for teachers with children and parents/whānau. These discourses orient teachers to adopt a more contextual approach and to acknowledge and work with what is happening for the group of children over the drive to usher children along the 'developmental highway'.

These alternative discourses offer a way of working where the adult takes a less central and powerful role. The exclusivity of the substitute mother/child dyad and the knowledgeable assessor of the child-centred discourse give way to a way of working where children are viewed within a web of relationships and where they are supported to exercise more agency. This may offer a less intense and demanding way of working with children for teachers.

Lastly, it would appear that when teachers draw on these alternative discourses, they are more likely to take an assertive approach to their own self-care. While the normative mother care discourse and the child-centred discourse conjoin to orientate teachers to forego their own needs, the discourses of child-in-context and form for care discourses

view position teachers more favourably to acknowledge and place importance on their own well-being.

Reflections on methodology

In order to research the work of these teachers, a feminist, qualitative approach was taken and semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. This methodology was effective in eliciting meaningful data, as teachers were able to talk freely and at length about their experiences. I was familiar with the details and nuances of the work, and I was known to five of the six teachers; these factors, I believe enabled me to achieve an intimacy and a depth of intersubjectivity that would not otherwise have been possible. The strategy of asking teachers open questions such as ‘tell me about your work with parents/whānau’, accompanied by the request to select a story/experience that illustrated their response was used frequently in the interviews. This kind of approach was fruitful as it gave teachers opportunities to make meaning on different levels as they themselves sifted through their experiences and made selections in order to respond; in this way, my own bias was minimized. Furthermore, while this approach produced voluminous quantities of data, the data was rich and conducive to analysis, as the stories/experiences spoke of fundamental elements in the teachers’ work such as power, emotions and relationships.

Janesick’s (2003) metaphor of the analysis stage of research to choreographing a dance proved to be pertinent in the stages of analysis in this study. The process was time-consuming as I spent time in the initial stages reflecting on what kind of dance I might be creating or what it might look like. There are a myriad ways of exploring discourse and no singular path, so I found it was imperative to refrain from having a fixed view but remained open to possibilities as I embarked on the analysis. I found that I had to repeatedly move from the literature to the data, at all stages of the analysis until meaning and pattern became clear and the discourses came into view. I found this process, of moving back and forth between the data and the literature, also informed the development of a mode of analysis. The more familiar with the data and with the literature I became, the more I was able to map out a process for analysing the data. Hence, in this study, I devised a path (or a dance) by making a series of decisions as the process emerged and unfolded. This path consisted of layers of analysis: from sifting

the teachers' utterances, to identifying the discourses, to explaining the strands of each discourse, to the final stage of a critical analysis of the discourses, in relation to a wider body of literature. The process that I constructed and documented or aspects of the process may be of interest and value to others who are conducting similar research into discourse.

Recommendations for further research

Further research could be carried out that would build on this study and the other empirical studies referred to in the literature review. This piece of research illuminates the experiences of teachers in childcare settings by consideration of the discourses that teachers draw on and the material conditions within which they work. Waayer (2002) and Henderson (2004) throw light on the discourses that caregivers and nanny educators respectively construct their work here in Aotearoa/New Zealand. There are clear similarities and differences between these three areas in the early childhood sector. Future research could explore the dominant discourse in other areas of the sector such as kindergarten, playcentre and kohanga reo. This would provide a clearer picture of the distinctive nature of settings and could be validating for services as well as establish a forum for critique.

Research could be carried out in a range of settings on other key discourses that shape the work of teachers. The discourses that are identified and analysed in this study do not of course represent a definitive list of discourses that constitute teachers' work in childcare settings because there are a myriad of discourses that are shaping the work at any time. The discourses around monoculturalism, biculturalism and multiculturalism would be fruitful areas to explore. This could throw light on the origins of teachers' thinking in these areas and this could be helpful in terms of supporting teachers to move towards a more bicultural practice. The discourses of ability/disability would also be worthwhile areas for future research. Such a study could throw light on how teachers take up particular positions and how these shape the kinds of relationships that teachers have with children with diverse abilities. Research in this area, could lead teachers to adopt a more inclusive pedagogy.

Certainly, there is scant research on how teachers carry out the caring part of their work. How do teachers experience the intense, emotional and psychological demands of the work? How do these demands affect them and how do they impact on their work? How do teachers sustain themselves? What strategies might be employed to ameliorate these aspects of the work for teachers? This would be a valuable line of research for the future, bearing in mind the demands of the work and the obvious strain that teachers experience.

The final suggestion for research is specifically in relation to the focus of this study, namely childcare settings. More research and examination of how teachers are positioned within discourses will continue to explicate why teachers do what they do in their everyday practice. The particular positions that teachers take up, set in motion a raft of relations with others, children and adults. Hence a deeper understanding of what happens in centres can be gained from exploration of the particular positions that teachers take up.

Implications for policy and practice

The findings of this study suggest specific implications for the policy of early childhood education. The working conditions of teachers can be improved so that emotional strain and alienation of teachers is avoided. The intense interpersonal demands of the work need to be acknowledged and addressed in the making of policy. This will involve consideration of the breaks (from the face to face work with children) that teachers have in their everyday work as well as their annual holiday entitlement. Allowance needs to be made for staff to come together more frequently so that they can dialogue and have time for discussing curriculum, assessment and planning matters. A physical space for staff to recoup from the hustle and bustle of the centre and to meet and talk, should be seen as a priority. Centres could be supported to find alternative arrangements to evening meetings, so that they are no longer held at the end of a long day, of face to face work with children. Consideration needs to be given to the emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing of teachers.

In terms of teachers' practice, it is clear that the positions that teachers take up within discourse have powerful effects on the way teachers make meaning and practice their

work. I would advocate that teachers be supported to reflect on how their practice can support a sharing of power in terms of the curriculum, an increased opportunity for children to have a voice and a foregrounding of their own care and well-being. Content on discourse and subject positions and the ramifications of these for practice, could also be included in teacher education programmes, so that student teachers become cognizant of the range of positions open to them.

In summing up this piece of research that seeks to throw light on the experiences of teachers in childcare settings, it seems appropriate to refer to the work of Bronwyn Davies who is a leading exponent of the use of post-structuralist theory to explore the work of teachers. Davies (1994) advocates that as teachers we need to become more aware of how our lives and work are both fashioned and embedded in discourse. While post-structural theory problematizes the nature of knowledge and resists the rendering of truths and answers, it can support teachers and academics to gain a deeper understanding of why teachers do what they do in their everyday work. Concomitantly, as teachers come to understand how their work is fashioned through discourse, they are able to exercise agency. Finally as Davies (1994, p. 122) so aptly says “the challenge is to find ways of catching ourselves in the act of constituting and being constituted and to find ways of to attend to the power of discursive practices as we use them to make worlds and lives”.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A Participant Information Sheet

Research Study- Teaching and Discourse in Childcare

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Dear staff member

I am writing to you in regard to a research project that I am undertaking as part of my Masterate in Education for Massey University. My supervisors for this project are Judith Loveridge and John O'Neill.

This intended study will explore the experiences and views of teachers who are working in a fulltime capacity in community childcare settings. I myself have worked in community-based childcare and hence my interest in the area. I am particularly interested to find out what the experience of teaching is like in the present climate of professionalism and accountability. I am hoping this study will throw light on this area and be of use to policy-makers, academics and teachers.

I am therefore interested to make contact with teachers who are interested in taking part in this project. I intend to interview between 5 and 7 teachers who will all be working in different centres. I therefore may not be able to include all those teachers who are interested in participating.

I realize that involvement will be another demand on teachers' time however I do hope the experience will be valuable as you will be able to express and communicate openly 'your side of the story'. Participants will be asked to undertake 2 interviews at a time and place that is convenient for them. I will audio-tape the interviews and participants will be given the opportunity to read, comment and amend the transcripts. Each participant will be given a copy of the summary of findings.

Please read the following information about your rights as a participant and then indicate your response. If you are interested in participating in the research, could you please complete the 3 questions concerning your experience and level of qualification?

If you have any further queries at this stage you can contact me or my supervisors at the contact details below.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank-you
Lesley Robinson

*Contact details are:

Lesley Robinson- [REDACTED] or email lesley.robinson@nzca.ac.nz
Judith Loveridge- 06 356 9099 or email J.Loveridge@massey.ac.nz
John O'Neill- 06 356 9099 or email J.G.ONeill@massey.ac.nz

APPENDIX B
Participant Consent Form

Research Study- Teaching and Discourse in Childcare

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and the information below about the rights of participants.

I consent to participate/ do not wish to participate in the study. (Please indicate response)

Please complete the following questions if you are interested in participating in the research.

1. How many hours do you work each week? And how much of your time is spent on the floor with children?
2. Are you qualified or not? If yes, what kind of qualification do you have?
3. How long have you worked in community-based childcare?

Participants Rights

I am under no obligation to accept this invitation. If I decide to participate, I have the right to:

- *Decline to answer any questions;*
- *Withdraw from the study at any time;*
- *Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;*
- *Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher*
- *Be given access to a summary of the findings when it is concluded;*
- *Ask for the tape-recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview*

Full name-printed.....

Address.....

Home phone number.....

Signature:.....Date:.....

*Contact details are:

Lesley Robinson- [REDACTED] [REDACTED] or email lesley.robinson@nzca.ac.nz

Judith Loveridge- 06 356 9099 or email J.Loveridge@massey.ac.nz

John O'Neill- 06 356 9099 or email J.G.ONeill@massey.ac.nz

APPENDIX C

Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule for Research Study Discourses of Teaching in Selected Childcare Settings

Interview Guidelines:

Everyday Reality

- Typical day
- Routine
- Feelings about the day and the demands of the work
- Relationships

Working Conditions

- Views about conditions
- Pay
- Holidays
- Professional development
- Sick leave
- Environment
- Expectations

Views about Policies

- Policies that support work
- Policies that create issues/difficulties

Views about Practices

- Practices that support work
- Practices that create issues/difficulties

Rewards/Incentives

- Satisfaction
- Highlights
- Positive, lasting memories
- Exciting moments
- Impact on teacher

Difficulties/Stresses

- Stresses
- Issues
- Impact on teacher
- Crisis moments

Self-identity

- View of a teacher
- Own values/beliefs about teaching

APPENDIX D

Questions

Questions

In these interviews I'm hoping to find out what it is really like to work fulltime in a community-based centre and what teachers like you think about the work. It is difficult for those who have not worked in a centre to know what it is like so if you like- I'm keen to hear your story about your work.

1. Typical Day

First of all can you tell me what a day is like for you starting at your arrival at the centre? Could you tell me about your last date at work?

Pick up on key ideas

Ask for detailed information about each stage e.g. can you tell me more about

Ask for concrete, explicit information

At times, ask for teacher's internal observations such as feelings, perceptions, thoughts e.g. what thoughts did you have? What were the feelings you had?

Develop any indications of emotions such as tension, stress, distress, satisfaction, fulfilment and pleasure

2. Feelings about the work

- a. When you think about the work, what feelings come up for you, come to mind?
- b. What are the most fulfilling aspects of the work?
- c. Can you tell me about an incident that would illustrate this clearly?
Another fulfilling aspect?
- d. What aspects of the work give you the most stress?
- e. Can you tell me about an incident that would illustrate this clearly?
Another aspect?
- f. Can you think back to when you arrive at the centre in the morning – how do you feel?
- g. Can you think back to leaving the centre – how do you feel when you leave work at the end of the day?

3. How do teachers see/construct their work?

I'd like to know how you see your work, what it means to you?

- Can you tell me about something that you did really well that you felt good about?
- Can you tell me about a serious mistake that you made?
- Can you tell me about a time when you did not do your job as well as you think you should do?
- Can you tell me about a time when you learnt something important about being a teacher?
- Knowledge?
- Skills? Can you tell me about a time when you developed a particular skill?
- Attitudes? Can you tell me about a time when you developed a particular attitude?
- How does working in a community-based centre shape your work? Can you give me an example? Another?
- What are your feelings about working in a community-based setting? Positive? Negative?
- How would you describe the work that you do? What words would you use to describe it from your perspective?
- What qualities/attributes does a teacher need to work in the setting that you work in?
- What do you do as a teacher in your setting? What are the range of jobs that you do?

4. How do teachers experience the various requirements of their work?

- Can you tell me about a recent time when you were on the floor? What is it like?
- Can you tell me about a time recently when you implemented the curriculum te whariki in your teaching?
- Can you tell me about a time when you were responding to children's interests?
- Can you tell me about a time that really sums up for you what the work is about with children?
- Can you tell me about a time that illustrates the challenges of working on the floor?

5. Can you tell me about a time that you felt good about your work with parents?

Can you tell me about a time when you felt disappointed about yourself in regard to parents?

What would you see as the most satisfying parts of the work with the parents?

What would you see as the most difficult issue in working with parents?

6. Tell me about some recent planning that you did. How was this for you?

7. How many weeks holiday do you have each year? How does this work for you?

- How many hours a week do you work at the centre? On the floor with children? What is it like to work this number of hours?
- Can you tell me about what happens when you get sick? How is this for you?
- With relievers?
- Tell me about the responsibilities that you have in relation to documentation? What is it like for you to carry out these responsibilities?
- Tell me about staff meetings? Recent example?
- Some research has indicated that there are issues for teachers in carrying out their work. I wonder how this is for you? I'm thinking of
 1. actually teaching children, working on the floor
 2. carrying out observations, doing assessments, planning and evaluating
 3. consulting with parents
 4. working in a team
 5. keeping up to date with theory and practice

8. Is there anything else that you would like others to know about the work that you do that they might not know?

List of Tables

Tables

Table 1 Discourses