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Narrative Identity

Ricoeur and Early Childhood Education

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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Abstract

The thesis argues that who we are, what we aspire to, and how we enact social and cultural practices are a result of the way we narrate stories about ourselves as both individuals and members of communities. The question ‘Who am I?’ is frequently answered with reference to what is important to us: our commitments and what we determine as good, valuable and right. Our identity is thus inextricably woven into our understanding of life as an unfolding story, bound by an ethical commitment to what we value. In this way, understandings of narrative and identity become part of the social and cultural context of education, drawing upon complex relationships between individual and community. It is through narrative that we construct *truth* about ourselves in relation to others.

The central concern of the thesis is the interplay between the ‘capable’ child subject and various readings of texts that form the educational landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand: in curriculum documents with their emphasis on relationships, reciprocity, community, culture and language; and in policy documents with their emphasis on economic rationality. The thesis examines some important narratives that emerge from readings of these curriculum and policy documents, and the impact of those narratives on identity formation in early childhood education. Examined in turn are a liberal narrative, an economic narrative and a social narrative. Each of these narratives emphasises particular discourses and rationalities within education. The thesis finds these narratives inadequate to explain understandings of the self of early childhood education.

The thesis argues that Ricoeur’s hermeneutical approach enables a range of narrative possibilities for early childhood education. The use of Ricoeur’s narrative theory in the thesis is twofold: a methodological approach for the study, and a critical exploration of the formation of ‘narrative identity’ (for both the individual and the group) through an examination of selected narratives. The thesis responds to the tensions of these narratives through Ricoeur’s understandings of ‘intersubjectivity’ and ‘just institutions’ and provides educators with an ethical framework by promoting Ricoeur’s understandings of the ‘good life’ and a ‘capable subject’.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	<i>ii</i>
Acknowledgements	<i>iii</i>
Table of Contents	<i>iv</i>
Abbreviations	<i>vi</i>
Introduction	1
Chapter outline	6
Chapter 1. The Child of Te Whāriki	11
Policy developments: from liberalism to neoliberalism.....	12
Local policy developments in a global context.....	20
The curriculum context	28
Towards a narrative framework	33
Chapter 2. Situating Ricoeur’s Narrative Theory.....	36
Narrative and identity.....	40
Narrative knowledge and education.....	47
Narrative: from formalism to poststructuralism.....	52
Narrative, interpretation and identity	56
Chapter 3. Ricoeur’s Hermeneutic: A Narrated Child Subject.....	58
Mimesis and metaphor	63
Explanation, understanding and interpretation.....	68
Temporality and historicity	70
Narrative identity and intersubjectivity.....	73
Ricoeur and early childhood	82

Chapter 4. A Liberal Individual	86
Sources of the liberal, humanist self	90
Twentieth century liberalism and education	97
Liberalism and the children of <i>Te Whāriki</i>	102
The ‘late modern’ individual.....	112
Chapter 5. An Individual Entrepreneur	117
The global economy and human capital.....	121
New Zealand childcare in a global context	127
The metaphor of business in early childhood.....	133
The individual entrepreneur	139
Chapter 6. A Social Institution of Childhood	144
<i>Te Whāriki</i> : a social history.....	148
Community and belonging	151
Family on the move.....	155
Culture and biculturalism	160
Institutions of childhood.....	166
Chapter 7. A Ricoeur Narrative: The Intersubject.....	169
Troubling identity.....	170
Identity and intersubjectivity.....	173
Community and ‘just institutions’	179
Narrative identity and new possibilities	188
Conclusion.....	193
Bibliography	197

Abbreviations

To facilitate reference to Ricoeur's writings, the following abbreviations are used in the thesis when referring to his published books and anthologies. The dates included below refer to the versions of the books used in the writing of the thesis and listed in the bibliography. Citations of Ricoeur's other writings, such as papers and chapters in general collections, follow conventional author-date style.

<i>FM</i>	<i>Fallible man (1965)</i>
<i>FT</i>	<i>From text to action. Essays in hermeneutics, II (1991c)</i>
<i>HS</i>	<i>Hermeneutics and the human sciences: Essays on language, action and interpretation (1981)</i>
<i>INT</i>	<i>Interpretation theory: discourse and the surplus of meaning (1976)</i>
<i>MHF</i>	<i>Memory, history and forgetting (2004)</i>
<i>OA</i>	<i>Oneself as another (1992)</i>
<i>PA 1</i>	Explanation and understanding: On some remarkable connections among the theory of the text, theory of action, and theory of history. In <i>The philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: An anthology of his work (1978a)</i>
<i>PA 2</i>	Metaphor and the main problem of hermeneutics. In <i>The philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: An anthology of his work (1978b)</i>
<i>PS</i>	<i>Political and social essays (1975)</i>
<i>RI</i>	<i>A Ricoeur reader. Reflection and imagination (1991d)</i>
<i>RM</i>	<i>The rule of metaphor (1977)</i>
<i>SE</i>	<i>The symbolism of evil (1969)</i>
<i>TJ</i>	<i>The just (2000)</i>
<i>TN 1</i>	<i>Time and narrative. Volume 1 (1984)</i>
<i>TN 2</i>	<i>Time and narrative. Volume 2 (1985)</i>
<i>TN 3</i>	<i>Time and narrative. Volume 3 (1988)</i>

Introduction

It is by examining the most fundamental forms of the question ‘who?’ and the responses to it that we are led to give its full meaning to the notion of a *capable subject*.... If such a function can be assigned to a person, it is owing to its intimate connection to the notion of personal or collective identity (TJ, p. 2) (emphasis added).

Who is the ‘capable subject’ in this quote from Paul Ricoeur’s *The Just*? In modern capitalist countries, we are identified and recorded from birth. We are tagged, dated and named, and our gender recorded. From birth, arguably before, we begin a contextual journey. One of the first acknowledgements that we are part of a human society is our birth certificate. This provides us with a social beginning where our parental details and place of birth is recorded. Our social history is augmented by various licenses and registrations: immunisation registers, school enrolments, car ownership, memberships of sports and recreation clubs, and records of marriages and deaths. Our identities track along a continuum from birth to death – an inexorable development programme in which we are identified in relation to a host of affiliations: our parents, our ethnicity, our partners, our children, our voting patterns, our religions and so forth. In general, identities emerge over time through social affiliations, historical appropriations and future dreams, an emergence in which we are in a constant process of identification and re-identification.

Why and how is the notion of the ‘capable subject’ important? The thesis explores emerging individual and collective identities within delineations commonly known as ‘early childhood’ and its main character, the ‘young child’. This is a philosophical journey which takes as its standpoint the notion that there is no one *who*, or one identity. Rather, various narratives tell us about a good child, an essential child, a bicultural child, and so on. As a conceptual delineation, the thesis argues that the ‘child’ is always emerging through particular historical and cultural permutations in various narrative formulations. The question ‘Who is the capable subject?’ is an important one in the field of early childhood education, which over the past two decades has experienced unprecedented growth both in New Zealand and globally. Furthermore, the questions ‘how?’ and ‘why?’ are important to understanding the purposes and aims of early childhood education. Exploring these questions helps us to see how and why particular narratives emerge in specific social and historical periods.

The individual is not separate from the social. Although she has agency to make particular choices and decisions, she will do so, by necessity, in relation to others and in relation to the

choices on offer through the discourses and narratives available to her. Recognising the importance of the social realm to the identifications humans make, the thesis argues that there is a need to look at the interactions and interplays involved in policy and curriculum development in early childhood discourses in Aotearoa New Zealand. Such a focus reveals how particular narratives may encourage particular identities to emerge. Because early childhood is the time of identity and habit formation, it is crucial to an understanding of early childhood, that various narrative formulations are critically examined, in terms of their veracity and in terms of the ethics and politics of individual and community identities.

Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy and his narrative theorising, in particular his notion of narrative identity, is important to the study of early childhood, because of his understanding that human life is deeply rooted in an ethical quest – a quest for right actions to enable humans to lead a good life. For the most part, Ricoeur's writings are concerned with developing a philosophy of the good person. One important question permeates Ricoeur's work: 'Who am I?' His philosophy of self is not answered by a singular, detached answer. Rather, it is firmly embedded in a response to the *other*, where asking 'who?' requires one to consider the humanity of the *other* before one's self. The self inhabits two irreducible orders of causality – the physical and the intentional. Ricoeur sees the relationships between other and self as symmetrical. That is, although others may seem like me, I have my own personal identity – I have something in which I am different from all others. Being *like others* and *different from others* are combined in what Ricoeur calls the moral identity of the person. I uncover who I am by living a good life, for and together with others, based on respect for self and others. This orientation takes Ricoeur into the world of shared community and the social and political structures that enhance the development of identity. Therefore, another question illuminates Ricoeur's primary question 'Who am I?' and that is 'How should I live?'

The thesis tracks some interstices where stories and identities, of both individual and communities, are created and recreated. It examines identity and narrative in early childhood policy and curriculum. Ricoeur's theory of *narrative identity* (TN 1, OA) is used to decipher who is the 'capable subject' of early childhood in Aotearoa New Zealand, through an analysis of different narratives. While the question 'who?' could be quickly answered by naming the author of an action, this response is merely a trivial use of language. Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy asks questions that are more challenging: 'Who did this?', 'What is the basis for this?', and 'Why?'

Once the answer to the question ‘who?’ can be answered only through the detour of the question ‘what?’ and the question ‘why?’, then the being of the world is the necessary correlate to the being of the self (OA, pp. 310-311).

According to Ricoeur, we understand our lives – either as individuals or within communities – as if they were narratives, and it is through interpretations of a range of texts and actions that we create narratives about ourselves. It is in the making of a narrative – the telling of a story – that we produce the self. Through this narrative meaning-making, we interpret past events, thereby creating history and identity. These narratives about our identities borrow from fiction and history, with any sense of narrative unity an unstable mix of fabulation and actual experience:

It is precisely because of the elusive character of real life that we need the help of fiction to organise life retrospectively, after the fact, prepared to take as provisional and open to revisions any figure of emplotment borrowed from fiction or history (OA, p. 162).

To answer the question ‘who?’ is to tell the story of a life with recourse to history and to fiction. The overarching theme of Ricoeur’s *Oneself as Another* and his three volume *Time and Narrative* (TN 1; TN 2; TN 3) is that the narrative constructs the identity of the character in the constructing and telling of the story: ‘the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character’ (OA, pp. 147-148). Ricoeur’s idea of narrative, as in the term ‘narrative identity’, is used in two ways in the thesis. First, it is used as a basis for critical examination of a number of metanarratives (that is, ‘big stories’ such as liberalism and neoliberalism) that inform the personal, micro-level narratives that we tell about ourselves. Second, it is put forward as a possible theoretical framework for early childhood education curriculum and pedagogy. Narrative identity involves an important relational, ethical commitment to understanding the capable subject. The interpretive basis of narrative identity involves a dialectical understanding of identity as both sameness (*idem*) and selfhood (*ipseity*), mediating between action theory and moral theory. This brings to the fore two important questions for Ricoeur: ‘What extension of the practical field is called for by the narrative function, if the action described is to match the action narrated?’ and ‘In what way is narrative the first laboratory of moral judgment?’ (OA, p. 141).

The question of who the capable subject is in the thesis involves an ethical engagement with a politic of *self* and *other* through the reading of text and the narrativisation of text: the way we create ourselves in relation to the discourses. The question ‘who?’ begets a complex line of questions: Who decides what is a good early childhood experience? Who benefits from early

childhood education? What are the functions of early childhood? What is the role of the State? Why is this so?

In their now classic sociology text *The Social Construction of Knowledge*, Berger & Luckmann (1966) refer to 'identity' as a social process involving familial socialisation and social institutions. In Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977), these institutions are seen to circumscribe and territorialise us: the family, the playgroup, the school, and the hospital. In this amorphous realm of the 'social', our identity is seen to emerge as, for example, a daughter/son, an infant, a schoolchild, a patient, a criminal or a parent. Embedded in institutions that segregate, encode, normalise and exclude, we are disciplined to become the 'good' child, the teacher, the nurse or the doctor. In such a way, then, identities are productive forces that identify *others*: for example, the child of special needs, the abuser, the poor parents or the immigrant family. These identifications create social spaces for normality, regulation and surveillance. We are who we are, then, because we belong, or not, to social groups, and involve ourselves with the plans and practices that provide us with wellbeing or disenfranchisement, and unity or disparity.

In the lectures that Ricoeur collects together to form *The Just* (TJ), he argues that the juridical question 'Who is the subject of rights?' is not distinguishable from the moral question 'Who is the subject worthy of esteem and respect?' In its moral form, he argues, the question takes on an anthropological nature: 'What are the fundamental features that make the self (*soi, Selbst, ipse*) capable of esteem and respect?' The capable person refers to one's ability to do something – to have agency. This invites us, he says, to begin with the specificity of the question 'who?' which calls for an identity accessible through the questions 'what?' and 'why?' (respectively, description and explanation). 'Who?' designates the author of an utterance; 'what?' provides description by way of action and verb; and the explanatory 'why?' provides cause and motive. The ability of a human to name herself as author of an act influences the assignment of rights and duties. In arguing the intimate connection between personal identity and collective identity, Ricoeur explores the idea of a capable subject along the temporal dimension of action and language. In distinguishing between an unchanging *idem* identity and changing *ipse* identity, Ricoeur arrives at an understanding of the self as a narrative identity, susceptible to change.

This mutability is that of the characters in stories we tell, who are emplotted along with the story itself. This notion of narrative identity is of the greatest importance in inquiry into the identity of peoples and nations, for it bears the same dramatic and narrative

character we all too often confuse with the identity of a substance or a structure. At the level of the history of different peoples, as at that of individuals, the contingency of turning points in the story contributes to the overall significance of the story that is told as well as of the protagonists (TJ, p. 3).

Thus, Ricoeur arrives at the intersubjective self as the way in which we become who we are. Ricoeur's self is neither a Cartesian nor a Kantian subject. Rather, she is an embodied subject embedded in historical and social projects. Ricoeur's narrative identity claims that our lives are made up of various narrative junctures, and while we have agency to act, the ways in which we act are formed within the social practices of which we are a part. This is not a deterministic view of self, since Ricoeur's dialectic of sameness (*idem*) and selfhood (*ipse*) argues that humans have agency to create new identities. For example, in spite of drawing on the same texts, each hermeneutical reading could accord quite a different narrative identity. In rejecting any metaphysical entity of self, Ricoeur draws on Heidegger's notion of *Dasein* to make important connections between care and selfhood. Care, for Ricoeur, is analogous to a unity of action. The self is an embodied self that is constituted by its material and cultural situations. Ricoeur does not go as far as to say that the self is constituted by an external impersonal system. Rather, he sees the self as always capable of creating something anew and as having agency.

The thesis is largely an investigation of the universal liberal self in early childhood education in its various formulations. It examines some of the sources of self in order to reveal the narrative undertakings of the discourses in which they occur. The liberal self as a basis for the subject of education is characterised as a free-thinking, independent, property-owning individual, who displays particular traits that make her both similar to and unique from others. The words 'free' and 'independent' are, of course, value-laden, holding particular social, cultural, economic and political value. The significance of identity in liberal thought is critically examined in various ways throughout the thesis. This is not a particularly novel venture, as the modern self has been a source of trouble since Descartes introduced the idea of a substantive rational self. However, in the spirit of poststructural problematisation, the thesis attends to the trouble of identity, arguing that the impasse of modern identity may be transgressed by an engagement with Ricoeur's elegant framework of narrative identity.

In accord with Ricoeur's theory of narrative, the aim of the thesis is not to reach a synthesis or final destination. To claim that there is one child, one narrative, one truth, would be antithetical to the argument of the thesis. Rather, the aim is to create a network of narratives,

in which the child is seen to be always emerging. In such a way, the thesis examines what being a child means. Here, the intention is not to answer the question ‘who?’ with a singular response but to put to play various identifications by way of the questions ‘what?’ and ‘why?’ Within this territory, particular themes and narratives emerge as significant formulations of children and early childhood education. The thesis lines up a particular constellation of narratives that address the following question: In what ways do we become who we are through our engagement and identifications within social institutions and the narratives in which they are embedded? It examines, through the institutions that circumscribe the child, why the categories: child, childhood and education are important in modern states, and in particular to Aotearoa New Zealand. It reveals narratives that underpin the categorisation of child and early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand, and addresses concerns about the way these categories of *childhood* delineate, segregate and alienate. It seeks to understand the degree to which children are agents in constructing their own identity, and ultimately the degree to which children have agency in creating and extending these categories.

Chapter outline

In overview, chapters one to three lay the groundwork of narrative theory and the field of investigation: early childhood education. This is the theoretical basis of the following chapters (chapters four-seven). Chapters four to six examine particular narratives, namely the liberal, the economic, and the social, to form a contextual delineation. They are constitutive of and constituted by particular stories about children. These narratives include assemblages of data from reports, curriculum, seminal texts and other media. Although they are treated organisationally and structurally within the thesis as discrete narratives, they do not exist in isolation; rather, they inter-relate and exist contemporaneously. They deserve a detailed focus because they impact significantly on modern identity and early childhood in Aotearoa New Zealand. In each of the narratives discussed, I examine the field and articulate a range of possible emerging identities. Chapter seven develops a ‘Ricoeurian’ narrative, further problematising the narratives outlined in chapters four to six. More importantly, it brings forth a possible framework for engaging in discussion about the purposes of early childhood education. With that general outline of the thesis in place, more can now be said about each chapter in turn.

Chapter one provides an overview of a commonly held understanding of history and policy development in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. It comprises a brief,

selected history of developments since the nineteenth century and outlines some salient features of the contemporary policy environment. In particular, it signals the changing roles of families in relation to the State, and the shifting role of both the charitable sector and privately owned institutions as providers of early childhood education. It outlines the development of the renowned bicultural early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) and the narrative-inspired, pedagogical orientation of current curriculum and practice. The chapter discusses the social and narrative underpinnings of curriculum and practice in early childhood education, in particular the importance of self-esteem and the vital role of the social and the community in identity formation. A number of themes raised in this chapter will be further discussed throughout the thesis.

Chapter two explores some features of narrative theories as a basis for the thesis. The chapter provides background definitions of some key terms, and a brief history of narrative studies. It discusses the inter-disciplinary nature of narrative studies, locating the roots of narrative within literature studies, and in the disciplines of history, philosophy, anthropology and sociology. The chapter overviews the emergence of narrative studies from formalism at the end of the nineteenth century, and then, in the early years of the twentieth century, the turn to structuralism and later post structuralism. By the end of the chapter, Ricoeur's narrative theories are brought to the fore and contextualised within the wider discourse of narrative theories. In a short discussion of his narrative framework, I situate Ricoeur in relation to other contemporary narrativists, such as David Carr and Alisdair MacIntyre. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the importance of narrative studies to the field of early childhood education, in particular as alternatives to the largely positivistic research environment.

Chapter three examines Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy in detail. His key works and the influences on his thought are outlined throughout the chapter, in particular, his theory of *narrative identity* that forms the methodological impetus of the thesis. His ideas about narrative identity are explicated through an examination of key concepts: narrative, text, discourse, mimesis, time and metaphor. Identity, in Ricoeur's view, is an ever-changing formation of the self at various narrative intersections. In his view, we know ourselves through our collective memories, through the stories we tell about ourselves, and through complex linguistic designations. Narrative identity is understood as the constitution of identity through intersubjectivity, underlining the importance of the social realm in which the self figures. Ricoeur brings an ethical dimension to identity, arguing that one makes oneself in relation to an *other*. This ethical dimension is one of Ricoeur's over-riding concerns.

Chapter four begins an examination of some narratives pertinent to education and the young child in Aotearoa New Zealand. Throughout chapters four to seven, specific curriculum and policy documents are examined as manifestations and testimonies of these narratives. These documents include the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), the national *Ngā Huarahi Arataki: Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education* (Ministry of Education, 2002), and the international *Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development Reports* (OECD, 2001; 2004a; 2006) on early childhood education. The four chapters in question, while treated organisationally here as discrete and separate, need also to be seen as contemporaneous and overlapping. Each of these four chapters is by necessity quite different in orientation, although some unity is achieved by the application of a Ricoeurian structure to each chapter. The pattern is:

- *describe* the narrative field in question
- *narrate* by bringing together various micro-narratives (data and evidence)
- *prescribe* or offer up interpretations of the narrative features.

While *chapter four*, the liberal narrative, acknowledges five hundred years of the troubled self, it does not claim to put together an entire history of liberalism or indeed the various sources of the self. Rather, it lays out a pivotal narrative about early childhood education, and the self that is the subject and object of knowledge in the liberal, humanist discourses. The chapter situates the project of contemporary education within a liberal tradition and outlines sources of the liberal child and the project of child-centred pedagogy. It examines the liberal child of *Te Whāriki*. Two botanic metaphors of the child are discussed: the flowering child of developmental discourse, and the child central to the growth and development of the flax plant (a *tangata whenua* perspective). By the end of the chapter, some troubling of liberal identity occurs, particularly in relation to biculturalism.

Chapter five shifts focus to an economic discussion, in which a ‘neoliberal’ self is examined in relation to global influences on early childhood education. The chapter begins with a brief outline of ‘neoliberalism’ and ‘third way’ discourse to situate the discussion. It then examines the influence of national and international policy documents on education. In particular, it focuses on OECD Reports, *Starting Strong I* (2001), *Babies and Bosses* (2004a), *Starting Strong II* (2006), and Aotearoa New Zealand’s strategic plan, *Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (Ministry of Education, 2002). By the end of the chapter, *Te Whāriki*’s competent capable child of

liberalism is re-interpreted within a narrow, instrumental and commercialised formulation of a flexible, self-responsible producer of knowledge.

Chapter six develops a social narrative, bringing together three important contexts in the education of young children, namely, *community*, *culture* and *family*. In the chapter, the amorphous realm of the social is examined within these contextual frameworks, identified as consistent intersecting lines along which social arrangements are developed. The chapter returns once again to *Te Whāriki* to examine each of these contexts, pulling together threads not totally separate from the earlier liberal and economic narratives, but amplifying the mutual dependence that each of these contexts plays within the social milieu.

Chapter seven, drawing upon Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity, adopts a multidimensional view of the narratives laid out in the three preceding chapters. It begins with some troubling of modern identity, favouring a view of selfhood that is contingent and inter-textual. The chapter offers a re-interpretation of *Te Whāriki* by embracing Ricoeur's notions of narrative identity and just institutions. The chapter examines trajectories and inconsistencies within policies and practices, arguing in particular that the community-inspired curriculum *Te Whāriki* offers a strong platform from which to challenge and debate. Yet, despite this orientation within *Te Whāriki*, understandings about childhood futures and the institutions that house young children are underpinned by tensions and silences rarely addressed in public forums and current policy initiatives. The chapter draws upon recent literature, in particular from the poststructural and critical theory arenas, to argue for stronger engagement and contestability in early childhood education policy and practice.

Having examined a number of narrative formulations of the capable subject, the thesis then concludes with a brief overview and synopsis of connections between the various narratives.

Throughout the thesis, the following conventions are adopted: (1) Humans are referred to in the generic female form unless specifically male. (2) Reference to 'early childhood' includes both care and education, unless noted otherwise. (3) Aotearoa New Zealand is generally referred to in one of the following three ways: 'Aotearoa' to reflect a Māori worldview; 'New Zealand' to reflect a European world view; or 'Aotearoa New Zealand' to reflect a bicultural worldview. (4) To facilitate ease of reading, and in line with conventions in Ricoeurian scholarship, Ricoeur's books are referred to by abbreviated initials (see Abbreviations page at the beginning of thesis). This also assists in distinguishing between books and articles

published in the same year. Ricoeur's articles are referenced in normal referencing convention.

Chapter 1. The Child of Te Whāriki

How and why particular models of early childhood service provision began, the support (or lack of it) which accompanied them, and the rationale of their eventual incorporation (or not) into government-supported services, have therefore been highly political processes, centring on relations of power and powerlessness, acceptance and non-acceptance (May, 1997, p. xi).

This chapter situates the thesis by providing a general overview of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand, in relation to some significant political, economic and social factors. The overview takes into account local, national and global shifts that have impacted on early childhood education over the last century. The chapter draws on the works of key thinkers such as Helen May and Margaret Carr – the writers of the renowned early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). It includes contemporary analysis of the field from researchers such as Joce Nuttall and Sarah Te One (2003). The chapter outlines a generally accepted interpretation of the history and politics of early childhood policy and curriculum development, arguing that a narrative interpretation is needed to appreciate fully the range of possibilities for early childhood education.

The chapter begins with a brief history of the early childhood sector, from late nineteenth century liberalism through to late twentieth century neoliberalism. This is a history characterised by both charitable and market endeavours in the European liberal tradition. In this tradition, early childhood education is seen as largely driven by a concern for young children, and underpinned by support for, or liberation of, women. As May points out, the gender politics of the sector has been influenced largely by the ‘roles of women’, the ‘welfare of children’, ‘the place of the state’ and ‘patriarchal views on families and motherhood’ (May, 1997, p. xi). Signalling a major turning point in policy and social history for early childhood, the chapter then outlines developments since the late 1980s, when social, economic and political influences (often referred to as neoliberal) changed the fabric of social and educational structures. The chapter then outlines the way that women are now being encouraged into the labour market (OECD, 2004a), the increase in the provision of early childhood care and education institutions (Ministry of Education, 2002), and the expectation of institutional education and care for young children as a form of child rearing (OECD, 2004a; 2006). Accompanying this shift in economic and political emphasis is a shift in thinking about the role of children, families, communities and culture in social organisation.

The latter part of the chapter looks at the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* and the narrative pedagogies that have developed from it, including learning and teaching stories (Carr, 2001). It provides an account of *Te Whāriki's* development and its position within education as a bicultural document founded on notions of social justice and empowerment (Reedy 2003). Last, the chapter briefly discusses the way in which the curricula orientation and the pedagogical basis of early childhood education are consistent with the narrative theory used in the thesis. It positions narrative theory, in particular Ricoeur's narrative hermeneutic, as a methodological orientation that lends itself to the interpretation and evaluation of policy and curriculum texts within early childhood education – an orientation that informs the thesis.

Policy developments: from liberalism to neoliberalism¹

The history of early childhood education and care in New Zealand, since colonial times, has paralleled liberal developments in Britain and Europe. New Zealand politics also followed Western liberal traditions in its government and social structures. Liberalism asserts the value of individual autonomy, equal opportunity, and liberty (Marshall, 1996a). It is perhaps best typified in the various permutations of democracies throughout the Western world. In terms of education, liberalism asserts the value of an educated individual as a good in itself, since it is through education that freedom is most likely to prevail. During the nineteenth century, liberal ideas about welfare flourished in Britain and Europe, where, with the increased migration of people to cities to work in labour mills, issues of poverty and infant mortality became increasingly apparent to a liberal and increasingly educated populace. While industrialisation in Europe brought about innovation and opportunity for some, the deleterious effects of poverty on others caused public concern. In response, largely through charitable means, founding homes and baby farms for infants and children were developed in an effort to improve conditions (May, 1997).

Although mirroring these European developments, New Zealand's concerns for its youngest citizens arose more from the effects of colonising a new country than from industrialisation. The *promised land* had proved more difficult than expected to colonise: poverty, illegitimacy and child abandonment were common features of society. The State in the early decades of colonial development served a traditional role of imposing authority and maintaining law and order, supervising financial development, developing infrastructure and catering for the growing numbers of early settlers.

¹ Parts of this chapter have appeared in chapters in two books: Farquhar (2008) and Farquhar & Flear (2007).

However, through the early twentieth century, a general embrace of State socialism in the face of war, recession and depression strengthened the need for social security and an insulated economy (Bassett, 1998). New Zealand's early liberalism was considered quite radical in its degree of State intervention. During the late nineteenth century, a series of Parliamentary Acts had sought to ameliorate the effects of poverty and neglect, but care and welfare during this time was haphazard. The 1877 Education Act made school compulsory for children over the age of seven, clearing the streets of waifs and strays, and generating an interest in educational issues and methods among the public. However, it also meant that babies and young children, who had been tended by their older siblings while parents were at work, were now increasingly likely to be neglected and abandoned. Relief came first in the form of foundling homes and baby farming, and later in the form of kindergartens and crèches. These early developments were *ad hoc* and limited in extent. They had negative social appeal and status, and were frequently attacked by a morally outraged public, who saw their very existence as perpetuating illegitimacy and abandonment. Formalised institutions for care of the young were seen as encouraging mothers to go out to work rather than care for their children at home (May 1997).

On the one hand, these institutions were seen as an enlightened response to those less fortunate; on the other hand, they were seen as morally suspect with little social acceptance. It is interesting to note that one of the first crèches in New Zealand, St Joseph's in Wellington, established by Mother Aubert in 1903, sat alongside a soup kitchen and a home for the incurable. Early childhood care in New Zealand was thus linked to charities dealing with the unseemly aspects of life and was therefore seen by society as unacceptable. The level of care provided in some of these establishments was, unfortunately, less than nurturing. It was common for children to be subject to neglect, abuse and even death. It is from these dishonourable beginnings that early childhood education and care first appeared in a variety of different forms (May, 1997). The sector's *ad hoc* developments and the lack of public acceptance of women in work outside of the home has perhaps contributed to the sector's limited acceptance as a form of child rearing and education throughout the twentieth century.

By the mid-twentieth century, early childhood in New Zealand, as in other liberal countries, was linked to the role of motherhood. Generally considered the father of the kindergarten movement, Froebel had, a century earlier, advocated for the importance of the educated mother, ironically weathering a sea of ridicule at his suggestion that women should be considered worthy to be teachers of young children (May 1997). Of significant and enduring

note here, is an understanding that liberalism, while championing a free and educated populace, did not extend to the equality and independence of women until much later. Care and education was framed as a women's issue and therefore frequently marginalised within conservative, patriarchal politics. Its importance was further undermined by the use of a growing body of deterministic research, which was effectively used to argue that childcare resulted in maternal deprivation with negative impacts on children. The work of Ainsworth (1962) on attachment anxiety and Bowlby's (1952; 1969) studies of childcare and maternal deprivation were used to argue that home was the best environment for young children. This championing of maternal-home care is perhaps one of the biggest reasons for the relative acceptance of kindergarten.

Historically, the kindergarten movement was a coherently organised charity with a strong leadership. It is significant that the kindergarten movement was championed by no less than the Premier of New Zealand from 1884-1887, Sir Robert Stout, whose wife, Lady Stout, was a foundation member of the Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association. Over the years, the kindergarten movement became adept at marketing itself as an adjunct to mothering and the home rearing of young children. By the mid-1940s, it was publicly considered a worthy and acceptable form of education and was deemed worthy of inclusion under the umbrella of the Department of Education, an acceptance heralded in the *Bailey Report* (Consultative Committee on Pre-school Educational Services, 1947). This acceptance continued through to the late twentieth century, until the release of the *Hill Report* (Committee of Inquiry into Pre-School Services, 1971) underpinned by a conservative politic about the role of women, men, children and families.

Although the kindergarten movement gained some public acceptability, childcare arrangements for working mothers were private, informal and largely unregulated. Without a strong organisational impetus, such arrangements had limited social acceptance and developed largely 'underground'. It is difficult to estimate the extent of the issue of appropriate care facilities for working mothers and their children during this time since the issue was simply not on the government's agenda. Few official reports focussed on the needs of working mothers and the attendant issue of childcare. The aforementioned Bailey Report and Hill Report underlined kindergartens as the preferred form of early childhood education provision. All nine of the principal recommendations of the Bailey Report evolved around kindergarten and playcentre models as preferred forms of education and advocated a 'state system' of 'pre school' education based on kindergartens. Childcare barely rated a mention.

However, after a number of scandals during the middle of the twentieth century, childcare did eventually find a regulatory home under the auspices of the Department of Social Welfare.

The division of early childhood ‘education’ and ‘care’ between Government departments (that is, Social Welfare and Education), and the demarcation between organisations regarded as either ‘care’ or ‘education’ services, have a long and particularly contentious history. Broadly stated, childcare was developed on the basis of unregulated market provision and was attended by children of working families. This area of early childhood was subject to the vicissitudes of the market place and, until the late 1980s, was negatively associated with, and characterised by, low quality and unqualified staff. Kindergartens, on the other hand, were seen as the ‘darlings’ of the sector. Supporting the conservative politic of the day, they were seen as an adjunct to the home and good parenting, and therefore attracted support from the government in the form of educated teachers and State funding. The later development of Playcentre also attracted a strong following in terms of social acceptance and some favourable State funding. Playcentre, like kindergarten, fitted with the social and political ethos of supporting the ‘mother-at-home’. It drew its teachers from among parents; in particular, the mothers of the community in which each playcentre was built, and it developed its own in-house training for parents as teachers. It is generally considered an organisation focussed on strong support for families, drawing largely on volunteers from the local community that it serves, in particular the families that use it.

The expansion of kindergarten and playcentre as educational services fitted the post-war mood neatly, whereas childcare was seen as ‘dumping’, serving the needs of selfish mothers and probably damaging to the child (May, 1990a, p. 100).

By the 1970s and 1980s, new social movements such as feminism and biculturalism began to gain ground in New Zealand. New legislation aimed to prevent discrimination against women, for example, the Equal Pay Act, 1972 and the Human Rights Commission Act, 1975 (Middleton, 1990). Various committees and reports focussed on the general state of education, with a particular emphasis on equality in education. For example, the 1975 Select Committee on Women’s Rights, and the 1975 Conference of Education and the Equality of the Sexes, both called for government action to improve childcare quality and to transfer childcare from the Department of Social Welfare to the Department of Education. In 1976, the Conference on Women in Social and Economic Development called for the provision of early childhood care and education within a national framework. In 1980, the State Services Commission Report on Early Childhood Care and Education recommended that childcare be moved to the

Department of Education and that up to fifty percent of its costs be funded by government. However, the government saw this report as being ‘too radical’, and as a consequence, the report was shelved (May, 1990a, p. 102)

It was during this time that Te Kōhanga Reo was successfully established, with the primary objective of ensuring the survival of Māori language and culture through specific *kaupapa Māori* processes. Childcare also became more visible as a political issue, with various political advocates taking a stand (notably Sonja Davies). The Early Childhood Workers Union and the New Zealand Childcare Association both became very vocal about the poverty of early childhood workers and early childhood centres. The political intentions of women and children’s advocacy groups were heard by the newly elected Labour Party, which changed the direction of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand in the 1980s. Within what was seen as a more progressive government framework, all early childhood services were brought under the auspices of the Department of Education in 1986. This relatively recent rationalisation of early childhood services means the divisions between ‘education’ and ‘care’ have been largely attenuated. This is generally regarded as a positive and significant step in the history of early childhood, although recent scholarly activity warns against the subjugation of ‘care’ within education (see for example, Gibbons, 2007a). Formerly, childcare had sat within the Department of Social Welfare and was subject to quite different regulations and funding structures than those of kindergarten, which sat within the Department of Education and whose teachers were considered part of the State sector. During this time, there were also some well-intentioned but limited extensions in funding, training initiatives and support services. However, while this was an initial move in a positive direction, ‘none of this was felt by parents in terms of affordability and access, or by childcare workers who still received the lowest wages in New Zealand’ (May, 1990a, p. 102).

Childcare and education was raising its political profile and the government commissioned a report on early childhood education, under the direction of Ann Mead. This report, *Education to be More* (Department of Education, 1988a), recommended a unified funding and administrative infrastructure, and policies for quality assurance and quality curriculum, for all early childhood services. It also recommended additional subsidies for children under two, improved regulations for buildings, and increasing teacher qualifications. New administrative structures were to be put in place for the development of this new direction. Charters had to meet new quality guidelines, and the new regulations included improving staff-child ratios and a requirement for qualified early childhood teachers. During the time this report was

written, New Zealand also began a rapid transformation of its political, social and economic structures, which effectively changed the shape of early childhood care and education, along with the whole social environment.

Until the mid-1980s, welfare liberalism had characterised New Zealand society for around a century. In the late 1980s, New Zealand underwent a radical restructuring of its political, economic and social systems, effectively ushering in a new form of liberalism. Like other Western economies, a series of neoliberal reforms severely reduced the level of government involvement in the public sector. Whereas welfare liberalism had ensured a strong role for government in providing for citizens, the new regime argued for minimal State involvement in the lives of the people. Under the auspices of economic crisis, Aotearoa New Zealand was subject to a programme of structural adjustment, characterised by deregulation, devolution, corporatisation and privatisation. The revolutionary change, dubbed ‘the New Zealand experiment’ (Kelsey, 1995), resulted in a major overhauling of economic, social, democratic and cultural spheres. The changes involved a dismantling of the welfare state in favour of free market liberalism (neoliberalism). Neoliberalism is a form of political reasoning that involves a notion of governance where the *freedom* of the individual *from* state intervention is seen as vital to economic and individual wellbeing. Its chief doctrine is that of minimal state intervention based on an economic rationality that considers that an unfettered marketplace provides a morally superior form of politics. Neoliberalism sees individual freedom as more important than welfare liberalism’s privileging of equality. (Liberalism and neoliberalism are discussed in considerable detail later in the thesis.)

Education reform was a key ingredient in economic and political restructuring. Treasury emphasised an economic approach to education and a programme of restructuring began in 1984 with the fourth Labour government. This programme was continued by the National government thereafter, and involved redefining culture within a globalised, market economy, restructuring the public sector, selling-off state-owned assets, and moving away from a system of welfare liberalism. According to Treasury reports of this time (1984; 1987a; 1987b), there was nothing special or unique about education for it to be treated any differently from other commercial enterprises. The argument for restructuring education relied on market theory. Treasury, with its powerful influence on government, claimed that education shared the main characteristics of other commodities traded in the marketplace and therefore could not be seen as a public good. It claimed that education had performed badly because it had not been responsive to consumer interests and desires, and because it was not accountable

enough. The argument was that government intervention had interfered with the free market contract between producer and consumer, creating educational inequality.

During this time, a raft of administrative and policy reviews of education took place. The *Picot Report* (Department of Education, 1988b) for schools and the *Hawke Report* (Department of Education, 1988c) for tertiary education both steered education in the direction of market reform. The Meade working group on early childhood had convened prior to and quite separately from these other committees, but was still caught up within the education reforms. These reports influenced a series of policy documents across all sectors in education: *Before Five* (Department of Education, 1988d) for early childhood; *Tomorrow's Schools* (Department of Education, 1989a) for the school sector; and *Learning for Life* (Department of Education, 1989b) for the tertiary education sector. In the compulsory education sector, control and coordination of schools devolved from the State to community-elected Boards of Trustees, who became responsible for the employment of staff and the management of finances, assets and property. In the language of the market, emphasis was on 'choice' at the level of primary and secondary schools, and on 'user-pays' at the level of early childhood and tertiary education.

Before Five was a seminal document in the history of early childhood education, providing a basis for funding and administration of early childhood services. However, it lacked some of the vital recommendations of the Meade Report that would have assured a strong community focus.² Early childhood education benefited from being caught up within the general education reforms as a coherent and legitimate sector within education. However, within a new administrative framework and amid deregulation and government devolution of social service provision, the intentions of the new policies were quickly undermined.

Education To Be More had originally arisen out of concern for women and children, and a belief in the need for state involvement in creating greater equity, but the late 1980s and early 1990s saw a shift in the ideology of government, which began to undermine these concerns. Assuming power in 1990, the National government released its *Economic and Social Initiative* (Bolger, Richardson & Birch, 1990), which set out the government's direction for social policy areas such as health, welfare, housing and education. This policy was based on principles of self-reliance, efficiency and choice. Treasury questioned the position taken by

² *Before Five* lacked strategies for Boards of Trustees in centres to ensure democratic provision. It did not separate salary and operational costs in the bulk grants; nor did it differentiate funding rates between for-profit and non-profit centres.

the preceding Labour government, that for women to participate equally in society, in particular in the workplace, they needed extra support in the form of affordable childcare from the birth of a child through to entry into school. Further, Treasury questioned the idea that children and society as a whole benefited from government involvement in the provision of early childhood education. Rather, any outcomes of government-supported early childhood services were to be measured in terms of economic benefits to individuals (May, 1992). Throughout the 1990s, early childhood education sustained a number of setbacks, including an eleven percent cut in funding, and decreasing quality requirements in terms of child/teacher ratios and teacher qualifications. Essentially, this resulted in a freeze on the vital cornerstone of the *Before Five* policy – the staged funding plan that advocated equal funding of all services over a four-year period. Without such a plan, the principles of equity funding across the services – affordability and accessibility – could not be successfully implemented. This freeze in the staged funding plan signalled the government’s lack of commitment to *Before Five* and hailed in a new era of economic determinism in early childhood education.

For all the ‘fishhooks’³ of the educational reform of the 1990s⁴, early childhood education did find a place on the government agenda and secured a position within the education sector. It would be mistaken to argue that there has been little positive change. Many in early childhood have been striving for a long time for better spaces and places for children, and for qualified teachers and good teaching conditions. It is important, though, to see the way in which these reforms mirror complex economic and political developments, which have increased the dominance of markets and the significance of profitability, paralleled by individualistic modes of thought and behaviour, and an entrepreneurial culture. It is interesting to note the Meade report to government, *Education to Be More*, centred on issues of:

- inaccessibility of early childhood services
- inequity of treatment between *care* services and *education* services
- inequity in funding of the various services
- inadequacy of funding of early childhood education
- need for quality early childhood services, and the

³ Maris O’Rourke commented on the Picot model: ‘we in early childhood know this model, we work with it every day, we know the broken glass and fish hooks backwards and have the scars to prove it’ (O’Rourke cited by May in Middleton, et. al. 1990, p. 103).

⁴ For further discussion of the 1990s educational reform period see for example, Kelsey, 1995; Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998; Middleton, Codd & Jones, 1990; Peters, Marshall & Massey, 1994; Roberts, 1998; Thrupp, 1999.

- need for qualified teachers

(Department of Education, 1988a).

When *Education to Be More* is compared with the current strategic plan, *Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (Ministry of Education, 2002) more than a decade later, the goals of the current plan appear to reflect to a large degree the same issues and concerns. This suggests a period of relative policy inertia throughout the 1990s, in a sustained drive to:

- increase participation in early childhood services (by being responsive to communities and families, increasing quality, and increasing accessibility)
- improve quality of early childhood services (through the effective implementation of *Te Whāriki*, raising teacher qualifications, improving teacher-child ratios and quality practices)
- promote collaborative relationships (strengthening links between services, schools, health and social services)

(Ministry of Education, 2002).

Although somewhat similar to the earlier recommendations, the later document specifies a more coherent policy line and the development of formalised structures and regulations to assure compliance. Furthermore, the strategy is being implemented and the sector is attracting substantial government funding. While the professional early childhood community in New Zealand takes a positive view of increased funding and attention from government, there is ambivalence about a number of issues, including the increasing privatisation of childcare, and professional concern about managerial rather than educational leadership (Aitken & Kennedy, 2007; Fasoli, Scrivens & Woodrow, 2007).

Local policy developments in a global context

Over the past fifteen years, the education of young children in the years before school has become an important focus for government and families in Western economies. In recent years, early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand has witnessed unprecedented growth and expansion. Previously, childcare and education, located within a regime of care, was seen as a family matter – a private concern ‘too dull and apparently insignificant’ to be an issue for governments (Vincent & Ball, 2006, p. 30). Current emphasis on the sector from business and government has ensured that early education and care is a

now a matter of public concern sufficient to be an election issue. For example, the Labour government's current '20 hours free' early childhood education policy (Ministry of Education, 2006), a major election platform in 2005, with newsworthy debate about the adequacy of funding and implementation arrangements (see further, chapter five).

In England, Vincent & Ball (2006) note that childcare, once not considered glamorous enough for government, is now an exciting policy issue having 'shot up the government agenda' with the development of a national childcare strategy in 1998 and a first ever ten-year strategic plan for childcare in 2004. A similar focus by government and policy makers in New Zealand has brought about increased funding; professionalisation of the sector; a framework of regulation and governance tied to funding; benchmarking of teaching qualifications for early childhood teachers; introduction of curriculum and assessment frameworks to 'guide' early childhood teachers' practice; and a government-funded research agenda. This research includes a number of specific projects such as Sarah Farquhar's quality practices (Farquhar, 2003) and the longitudinal 'competent children' studies (see for example, Hendricks, Meade & Wylie, 1993; Wylie, Thompson & Hendricks, 1995; and Wylie, Thompson & Lythe, 2001). Further, the early childhood strategic plan (Ministry of Education, 2002) lays out 'pathways to the future' reflecting an ongoing focus on increasing participation, improving quality and promoting collaboration while 'closing the gap' between Māori and Pakeha. Transformations undergone by the sector in recent years include:

- the integration of all early childhood services under the Ministry of Education (1986)
- increasing regulation of the sector since 1986
- the development and implementation of the world-renowned bicultural curriculum *Te Whāriki*
- a first-ever strategic plan for early childhood education *Ngā Huarahi Arataki*
- the development of learning stories as planning and assessment practices (Ministry of Education, 2004)
- teacher education qualifications benchmarked to minimum Diploma level
- the requirement that, by 2012, all teachers in early childhood centres hold a minimum Diploma qualification, for which a stepped implementation plan is currently in place.

The Early Childhood Education Strategic Plan Working Group, established in 2000 and again led by Anne Meade, identified a number of concerns about funding, quality, access and

participation in early childhood education. Drawing on the findings of this working group, the Ministry published the strategic plan for early childhood, *Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (Ministry of Education, 2002). This ten-year plan is the Government's policy for early childhood education's contribution to the ongoing and future economic health of the nation. Key strategies reflect the working group's concerns about increasing participation rates, especially those of Māori and Pasifika children. The strategies also address adult-child ratios, teacher qualifications, regulations, registration of teachers, and the implementation of *Te Whāriki*.

Implementation of the strategic plan has resulted in a period of rapid professionalisation in the sector: a move toward registration of all early childhood teachers; the development of the socio-cultural assessment exemplars *Kei Tua o te Pae* (Ministry of Education, 2004); pay parity for kindergarten teachers; a requirement for all early childhood centres to have fully qualified teachers by 2012; and the funding of a wide range of professional development and innovative practice schemes. The plan also sets out to foster stronger links with family, community, social services, health services and schools, as part of a seamless educational paradigm. The plan fits well in the wider context of 'family friendly' social policies, such as the introduction of 12 weeks paid parental leave and family assistance programmes (Ministry of Education, 2002).

For early childhood, the various 'services', including both profit and non-profit organisations, continue to provide a wide-range of diverse programmes for young children: kindergartens, kōhanga reo, playcentres, Pacific Island language nests, childcare centres, playgroups, and home-based care. Each centre or organisation may apply for government funding but must be chartered and registered, and meet a number of quality standards. Various quality indicators, such as qualification levels of teachers, assure a higher rate of funding. A comprehensive network of regulations and accountabilities through the Ministry and the Tertiary Education Commission assures compliance and increasing transparency.

Although public funding is provided in the form of bulk funding to early childhood centres and childcare subsidies are paid to qualifying families, private childcare costs can be up to \$300 per week, although the newly introduced '20 hours free' policy is intended to offset these costs. For dual-middle-income families, high fees for childcare often mean that work, or more work, barely pays for a second earner, unless parents have access to the largely publicly-financed kindergarten (limited hours) or informal private arrangements (grandparents and

other family members). There are three public funding streams, paid equally to both private and community-based services.

(1) Ministry of Education bulk funding: A ‘per child per hour’ rate (up to 30 hours per week, six hours per day – reflecting primary school hours) is provided to all chartered childcare institutions, including centre-based, home-based, private and community-based facilities. The rate is higher for children under the age of two, to accommodate the higher staff to child ratio. In order to raise the quality of care provided in formal structures, providers can also apply for a higher rate of subsidy if they meet higher quality standards, for example: ‘quality’ staff-child ratios and/or qualification level of teachers (Ministry of Education, 2007a). Equity funding may also apply to some community-based early childhood education and care centres. (Ministry of Education, 2007b).

(2) Work and Income New Zealand Childcare Subsidy. This means-tested programme is operated by Work and Income New Zealand. Financial support is granted to assist eligible families with the cost of childcare centres in chartered centres. The subsidy rates and eligibility criteria have recently been reviewed and raised as part of a new family assistance package (Ministry of Education, 2006). These reforms are seen to provide income gains for low and middle-income families with children. The aim is to provide better incentives for families to move off benefits and into paid work.

(3) During 2007, the government implemented a ‘20 hours free’ policy, providing another form of funding to centres that opt into the scheme (Ministry of Education, 2006). It was touted as being universal free early childhood education for all three and four year olds, for up to twenty hours per week. An hourly rate is paid to centres for each eligible enrolment. Ostensibly, the centre may not charge parents more per hour for those twenty hours. Although a number of centres and organisations have opted into the scheme, many have been reluctant or decided not to, claiming that the rate of subsidy is not cost effective. This reaction appears to be stronger in city areas such as Auckland where centre operating costs are higher. Some centres argue that ‘20 hours free’ should be a subsidy and that they should be able to charge ‘top-up’ fees above the government rate. Anecdotally, it is reported that some centres are ‘getting around’ the issue by ‘reviewing’ their rates for under-twos and increasing their rates for the hours attended that are not covered by the 20 hours (New Zealand Herald Editorial, July 2007). At the time of writing, this scheme is currently being implemented.

These developments have asserted a particular national and international stamp on the education of children under five. New Zealand is now well regarded among OECD countries in the provision of education and care of young children in terms of both policy and curriculum. A unified and seamless education umbrella promises a smooth transition from early childhood, through primary and secondary school, to the various tertiary education programmes on offer. At the level of tertiary education, universities, polytechs, *wananga* and private institutions now provide a basis for academic endeavour, offering specific early years teaching qualifications and research, with early childhood teacher education now seen as a significant sector within mainstream tertiary education.

With early childhood now integrated in a wider social programme, the policy direction needs to be seen in terms of the government's economic plan and the global context.

The intent has been to increase the skill base of the future workforce to ensure that the economy can benefit from sufficient workers who have a high level of flexibility of skills for work in the new technological era. Supporting this shift has been the impact of 'new right' economic views which seek to identify the benefits from government investment in education (Carr, May & Podmore, 1998, p. 2).

New Zealand policy direction mirrors a global trend towards economic investment in early childhood, a trend that frames adults as lifelong learners, and both adults and children as human capital (Keeley, 2007; OECD, 2001; 2004a; 2006). In line with this global policy trend is the focus of current policy, on increased professionalism (through a discourse of 'quality') and centralised alignment (through regulations) to ensure a seamless education from cradle to grave. Our strategic plan for early childhood warns that 'we cannot leave to chance the quality and accessibility of early childhood education' (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 1). Announcing a significant increase in annual funding for early childhood in the 2004 budget, the Minister of Education commented, 'Research tells us that intensive and regular early childhood education is critical to ensuring our kids do well later in life' (Mallard, 2004). This policy direction can be seen on the one hand as supporting children and families. On the other hand, the emphasis on increasing the labour market supply and intervening in families where poor parenting, poverty and other risk factors may be at play needs further examination. This is particularly so, in the light of what appears to be a strong policy of family support, but in fact may be a move towards de-familialisation, as women are sent back to work and children are increasingly sent to institutionalised childcare (OECD, 2004a).

Although increased funding, government attention and funded research can be interpreted as indicators of government support for early childhood education, such changes need to be seen as part of a broad sweep of global policy direction. Unashamedly economic in their focus, OECD reports (2001; 2004a; 2006) herald a shift in thinking about the role of early childhood education in social, economic and political life. By ‘investing’ in early childhood education, OECD countries are seen to be improving their human capital, increasing women’s participation in the labour market, and addressing issues of poverty and educational disadvantage (OECD, 2006). The OECD report on New Zealand, released in late 2004 as part of the *Babies and Bosses* series, consists of comparative studies of work and family reconciliation policies. It focuses on increasing workforce motivation and improving productivity and profitability to compensate for declining fertility rates (OECD, 2004a).

The series of reports is grounded in human capital theory and promotes purportedly ‘family-friendly’ policies, like ‘putting more women to work’ to minimise the inefficient use of labour market resources, and getting parents to go to work rather than caring for their children. The latter move is couched in terms of a better ‘balance of work and family life’, with employers needing to have ‘some assurance that employees will return to work after child-related absences’ (OECD, 2004b, par. 6). One of New Zealand’s key challenges is said to be ‘non-employment’ among ‘sole parents’ (OECD, 2004a, p. 22). It is reported that there are weak financial incentives to work because of ‘high levels of sole parent benefit payments’ (ibid, p.17). The report emphasises the high incidence of teenage motherhood, in particular among the Māori population, and recommends that there should be better incentives for families to move off benefits (ibid, pp. 11, 22, 37 and 38).

New Zealand’s strategic plan for early childhood aligns closely with OECD-driven global trends to get children out of the home and into ‘quality’ early childhood centres. Underpinning this objective are the assumptions that ‘families are not well informed about the value of ECE to their children’s development’ (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 6) and hence that children ‘may not be exposed to high quality early learning experiences in the home’ (ibid, p. 9). Government focus on the provision of early childhood education is clearly directed at *institutions* rather than at *home*, a focus arguably more economic than educational in its intentions. Sixty years ago, the Bailey Report (Consultative Committee on Pre-school Educational Services, 1947) had rejected the idea of investment in childcare because children would be ‘deprived of the vital experiences that only a normal home can provide’ (p. 11). Even in the 1970s when the issue of childcare came very publicly to the fore with the

women's movement and the advocacy of the New Zealand Childcare Association, the second government review, *The Hill Report* (Committee of Inquiry into Pre-School Services, 1971) still held the view that 'normal families' raised their children at home. While, one would not argue for a return to the conservative politic, such a dramatic reversal of earlier policy does call for further critical examination. Current early childhood policy is clearly in line with the international harnessing of human capital for economic productivity, and the framing up of early childhood education as a measurable return on investment.

Early childhood professionals have always espoused the importance of early education for children in building families and communities. However, the sudden government emphasis on increasing participation rates in line with the requirements of a market economy is worth further consideration, when twenty years ago mothers were vilified for 'abandoning' their children to the care of others. This sudden change also prompts discussion around whether early childhood education should be conceptualised as public good or as a private good and whether or not it should be seen as a private investment or a public cost. This foregrounds questions about the role of early childhood education and whether the State should provide it. Indeed, it raises questions about whether early childhood education should be free, compulsory and universal like the school sector, and if so to what degree and in what forms.

Around the turn of the twenty-first century, we have been witness to an acceleration of privatisation and commercialisation in many aspects of everyday life. We are accustomed to dealing with corporate entities for goods and services once provided through the public sector. In relation to the provision of childcare, the economic reform agenda of the 1990s has generated a huge reliance on the private for-profit sector, which has also given rise to an expanding and hugely profitable corporate sector. Over the past twenty years, full-day childcare services have become a growth industry with huge increases in the number of enrolments in private childcare. This is attributable largely to the increasing numbers of women returning to work earlier than in the past. An increasing trend towards privatised and corporatised provision of early education both reflects and promotes neoliberal values, like 'individualism, competitiveness, flexibility and the importance of paid work and consumption' (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999, p. 45). Early childhood services are now commodified as 'producers of private goods tracked on the market' (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 42). The level of privatisation has been noted by OECD:

In recent years there has been significant growth of full-day-care services (10-12 hours per day) in New Zealand; approximately 71% of services are full-day as against 'sessional-based' (up to three or four hours per day) kindergarten (OECD, 2004a, p. 91).

Notably, current enrolments in session-based kindergartens have stayed fairly much the same, while Te Kōhanga Reo enrolments have declined (Colbung, Glover, Rau & Ritchie, 2007).

Current policy and practice of early childhood is oriented toward a business model of education underpinned by plans and policies such as lifelong learning and standardised assessment practices. The concern here is with the educational implications of these policies and practices for children, families and communities. A particular concern is with the closed-circuit nature of some of these policies and practices – the apparent consultation, but with very little dialogue with (or responsiveness to) 'stakeholders'⁵ affected most: teachers, children and families. Business principles are not education concepts and practices, and do not emanate from social and professional practices in education. Yet business doctrines and the language of policy makers who have a business orientation and an outcomes driven agenda are single-minded in their restructuring of early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand. While some ideas from the world of business may be of interest to educators, the structuring of education on a business model may not be in children's best interests, given that the primary motivation for business is shareholder profit.

More than a decade ago policy sociologist Stephen Ball wrote: 'We tend to begin by assuming the adjustment of teachers and context to policy but not of policy to context. There is a privileging of the policymaker's reality' (Ball, 1994, p. 19). Some thirteen years later, Peter Moss argues similarly in relation to the field of early childhood education. In particular, he comments upon the singularity of vision that is represented in policy documents and the lack of explanation for the appropriateness of their privileging of a particular perspective. He widens his field of criticism, not just to policy makers, but also to practitioners and teacher educators who neither explain their own theoretical orientation, nor acknowledge the varying perspectives that are available:

In many years in the early childhood field, including much cross-national work, I cannot recall seeing a national or international policy document that recognises the existence of paradigm or acknowledges that there are different perspectives, understandings and

⁵ The term 'stakeholders' is a business term that has made its way into education, reflecting the various groups of people likely to be significantly affected by any changes.

answers available with which to frame policy, provision and practice. This is a stultifying state of affairs ... (Moss, 2007, p. 234).

It is not only stultifying; it is prejudicial to children and families in an increasingly globalised, multicultural world, in its lack of recognition of localised differences. A number of academics have written about the particular invasiveness of the child development discourse within early childhood policy (Burman, 1994; Cannella, 1997; Bloch, 2006; Fleer, 2006). Although child development theories have significant value for particular applications, these academics are concerned about the pervasiveness of the discourse, its inherently monocultural values, and its alignment with particular rationalities of state.

The curriculum context

In contrast to the heartless market realities, and perhaps as a useful mechanism for on-going contestability of the field, there is the highly regarded curriculum *Te Whāriki*. It has provided, and continues to provide, an important inscriptive surface upon which to view, value and revalue the *who*, *what* and *why* of early childhood. Its own development process is unique, in that, while the 1990s period of retrenchment proved difficult for early childhood, out of the ashes, so-to-speak, arose the acclaimed early childhood curriculum. It is seen by many as a protest document of now historical importance in its attempt to resist the homogenising effect of outcomes-based curriculum that had permeated other areas of education; in its focus on critical pedagogy and empowerment; and in the highly collaborative and inclusive manner that the writers went about developing the curriculum (Mutch, 2003). A number of commentators have written about its iconic status, its bicultural focus and its non-prescriptive nature. It is praised for its diversity and inclusiveness, and is unique in that, since its inception, it has been open to a variety of interpretations, paving the way for ongoing dialogue about early childhood education. Although the political climate to date has been inclement for dialogue and critique, and at times *Te Whāriki* has reached a level of rhetorical place-holding rather than on-going political and philosophical argumentation, calls for critical analysis and discussion within the sector are now being made (Nuttall, 2003; Duhn, 2006).

Mac Naughton (2005) talks about curriculum as a site ‘redolent with “différence”’, relying on ‘cultural traces and histories’ to give it meaning in specific texts (p. 91). In this, she can be seen to understand curriculum as a reflection of historical and cultural perspectives and a project of contestable meanings and different understandings. This is, she says, important in how we define curriculum and how we ‘practice’ it with children. Her claim that there can be

no objective, ‘true’ way to ‘do’ curriculum in early childhood is in line with *Te Whāriki* (ibid). As Nuttall (2003) points out, this curriculum respects the ‘fundamentally interpretive nature of teaching’, lending itself to postmodern interpretations of education, through its non-prescriptiveness, its valuing of difference, and its cultural constructions of identity (p. 14). With its emphasis on the social and cultural, and its political position as a bicultural document, *Te Whāriki* emphasises that the education of young children is not so much about skills, essential learning areas and learning outcomes. Rather, it emphasises the importance of relationships, reciprocity, community, culture and language. It takes a distinctly narrative approach to education that is, by design, non-prescriptive – a framework that can be used by each early childhood centre in its own unique way.

At the heart of curriculum texts such as *Te Whāriki* and *Kei Tua o te Pae* are implicit statements of participatory democracy founded on notions of reciprocity, sharing and negotiation between child and adult; mutual reconstruction through community, intergenerational dialogue, project and inquiry. These statements are grounded in both Western liberal social democratic traditions and Māori epistemology. *Te Whāriki* was a collaborative commitment between Helen May and Margaret Carr; Tamati and Tilly Reedy; and the wider early education community. What developed was ‘a treaty-based model of bicultural partnership’ (Ritchie, 2003, p. 86). Included in this document is a separate Māori curriculum, developed specifically as an intentional immersion curriculum, effectively giving new status to Māori pedagogy within early childhood education (Te One, 2003, p. 36).

The cornerstone to *Te Whāriki*’s success was its acceptance by a wary early childhood sector, some of whom were opposed to a ‘one curriculum fits all’ approach. They believed that the sector’s diversity warranted heterogeneity of practice, which would be undermined by a one-size-fits-all curriculum for early childhood care and education. Furthermore, those in the sector were concerned that being party to wider educational reforms, increased the possibility that a new regulatory environment could result in a ‘push down’ curriculum with a subsequent loss of autonomy in the local context (Te One, 2003). A ‘push down’ curriculum, or ‘schoolification,’ refers to the fear held by early educators that the primary school curriculum would be used as a model for the early childhood curriculum. The issue was that the focus on early academic tasks such as writing and reading would be inappropriate for many young children (Cullen, 2003) and may replace appropriate curriculum for early childhood, with its focus on play, exploration, and dispositions of learning such as risk-taking and curiosity.

Hesitations aside, *Te Whāriki* was well received. This is due in large part to the respect that the sector had for the developers of this curriculum and the way in which Carr and May took a highly collaborative approach to its development (Nuttall, 2003). A non-prescriptive document and an inclusive development process, underpinned by advocacy for children and women, is part of the social historical tradition of early childhood education. It is this tradition, along with the embrace of biculturalism, that might explain the buy-in from the sector to *Te Whāriki*, a document that reflects and attests to a particular social and political narrative in Aotearoa New Zealand society. Te One (2003) and Mutch (2003) comment that this curriculum can be seen as a protest document developed at time of increasing accountability and regulation with a focus on essential learning areas and achievement outcomes. Carr and May (1993; 1996) state that *Te Whāriki* was developed to protect the interests of curriculum for early childhood education, especially since the Ministry was promoting the idea of systematic assessment in early childhood (Te One, 2003, p. 22).

Although the final version of *Te Whāriki* appealed to the early childhood sector, the earlier draft version was less than warmly received by the Minister of Education. The Minister at first refused to call it a draft *curriculum* because it looked so different from the compulsory sector curriculum documents being developed at the time (Te One, 2003). While the Ministry had requested parallel curriculum for Māori and Pakeha this became a problem when presented in draft form. The Minister refused to sign off because there was not a translation of the Māori text. The publishers responded that a translation would be neither easy nor appropriate for the concepts were so deeply embedded in Māori. The objections did not stop there either. After the draft had been circulated and trialled within the sector, submissions went directly to the Ministry and a writer was contracted by the Ministry to work on the final version. Significant differences between the draft and the final version ensued, including

the deletion of the curricula developed by specialist groups, a description of a developmental continuum, the references, and the addition of learning outcomes. These changes were regarded as a loss and opposed by the writers (ibid, p. 36).

Despite these difficulties, the writers felt that the underlying integrity of the document had survived. Mutch (2003) comments that there was more focus on the compulsory sector curriculum development. A hands-off approach to the early childhood curriculum was perhaps due to a lack of knowledge about early childhood education within the Ministry, so the development of early childhood curriculum did not come under much scrutiny. Mutch claims that this effectively meant that a ‘more consensual and holistic approach was taken, the

result being an alternative voice in educational policy and curriculum’ (p. 126). Te One (2003) points out that *Te Whāriki* created ‘a point of solidarity in an unsympathetic and at times adverse political climate’. It is, she says, a ‘subversive, collaborative’ initiative (p. 42).

Te Whāriki has also provided the basis for the development of the *learning stories* assessment framework (Carr, 2001). The framework is integrally linked to *Te Whāriki*’s social, cultural and political contexts and its curriculum principles and strands. As an assessment tool, it signifies a departure from the more traditional checklist-style assessment tools. Instead, this framework is seen as integral part of the curriculum, thus linking *Te Whāriki* and assessment in a reciprocal relationship. Learning stories are designed to record changes in learning as children participate in everyday experiences. This form of assessment relies on narrative genres with an emphasis on documentation of stories (those of children, teachers and parents) through various media (written, photographic and video). It emphasises the telling of stories rather than discrete decontextualisations of children’s abilities or reifications of skill (Hatherly & Richardson, 2007). It focuses attention on children’s interests and strengths and at best involves all participants in reciprocal relationships, fostering teacher reflection and bringing about change in teaching practice. It is seen as part of a dynamic process drawing upon multiple events, experiences and interpretations thereof. It therefore has the potential to open the way for multiple perspectives, and for the use of learning dispositions rather than skills.

One study has found that teachers using learning stories ‘showed a greater appreciation of the complexity and scope of children’s learning; they developed closer relationships with parents and whānau; and they altered their programmes to be more responsive to children’s interests and strengths’ (Carr, Hatherly, Lee & Ramsey, 2003, p. 193). However, working within narrative genres is a complex and sophisticated activity requiring a broad knowledge base and articulate understandings of narrative genres and theories. The degree to which these interdisciplinary narrative theories are reflected in current teacher education programmes has yet to be revealed. Although some research is currently underway, to date little has been published on the use of learning stories as a form of assessment, nor how well these capture parents’ or children’s perspectives. This lack of research into, and reflection about, the veracity of learning stories is further complicated by the transitional state of the early childhood sector in education. While it is currently undergoing transformation in its professional status, it has a way to go yet in reaching the maturity, status and confidence of the older sectors of education. Currently, it is focused on meeting the requirement that all practitioners within the sector acquire teaching qualifications. Traditionally, this sector has

drawn its workforce from a largely uneducated populace. With a strong social history entwined with roles of motherhood and care, the focus was not on formalised educational qualifications. The sector wrestles with conflicting tensions: the intimacies of the practices of care (Aitken & Kennedy, 2007); the changing roles of women and families (OECD, 2004a); increased surveillance through accountability and managerial practices (Grieshaber, 2000); and the increasing provision of private and corporate care and the corresponding decrease in community-based provision (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999; Scrivens, 2002). In spite of the tensions, there is no real debate about whether or not the State should be involved in public provision of early childhood education.

Curriculum at the level of local practice and context is continually emerging. It was the intentions of the authors that *Te Whāriki* be an inscriptive surface – a place for multiple interpretations. At first, conceptualised on developmental foundations, albeit with a strong focus on the social and cultural, this document is now championed by many as an example of socio-cultural curriculum, and indeed the development of learning stories is strongly socio-cultural in its orientation. It is perhaps testimony to the non-prescriptive nature of this document and the harnessing of a number of inclusive metaphors that this can be so. However, it must also be remembered that *Te Whāriki* is a ‘child’ of child development, and developmentalism is still a strong feature in early childhood centres. Cullen (1996) argues that there is a theoretical tension in *Te Whāriki* due to the use of multiple theories. While this may not be a concern for academics with the ability to theorise this document and a willingness to juggle multiple theories, it may pose more issues for educators of young children who may not have the theoretical grounding in which to interpret these tensions. Furthermore, the legacy of developmental psychology is strong within the sector, especially in the emphasis on individual children and their acquisition of knowledge. In practice, Cullen notes that a large number of centres, while assuming the newer socio-cultural language, are still developmental in their programming.

Despite, or perhaps due to, these theoretical tensions, a curriculum such as *Te Whāriki* is an inscriptive, interpretive text. Socio-cultural theories, narrative-based pedagogies and the valuing of difference are current themes within the early childhood discourse in Aotearoa New Zealand. New initiatives in curriculum and pedagogy, such as learning dispositions and the development of learning stories for planning and assessment in early childhood centres, underline the importance of narrative pedagogies. These fluid pedagogies embrace the idea that identity is created through the stories we narrate and that are narrated about our lives.

These stories are seen as being developed at the intersection of relationships, community and culture and interpreted in light of current policy, curriculum and practice.

Te Whāriki highlights a number of perspectives about children and childhood. A document developed in the 1990s, borne out of cultural, feminist, liberal narratives, and forced to absorb the learning outcomes and the essential skills of the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework*, *Te Whāriki* signifies a number of narratives or discursive possibilities. The extent to which *Te Whāriki* can be conceptualised within a dialogical framework is attenuated by the permeation of economic rationality through education. It is a laudable document, and one that provides an inscriptive surface for difference and multiplicity, but creative curricular orientations and conceptualisations do not sit easily with the technical and efficient language of current policy. The resulting conceptual disturbance and the possibility of re-interpretive strategies are points of examination in the thesis.

Towards a narrative framework

May argues that in developing the curriculum, it was strategically important to have a vision of a good child, in order to ‘reveal issues rather than silence them’ (May in Te One, 2003, personal communication, p. 27). This articulation of the good child is a mantra in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Most student teachers can recite the ‘competent and confident’ child ode of *Te Whāriki* like the ABC song:

To grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9).

There is, of course, no one ‘good child’ of *Te Whāriki*, but there can be many interpretations. One interpretation (developed further in chapter four) of the competent and confident child is one that reflects the liberal humanist bicultural tradition: Reedy’s (2003) child of the *tangata whenua*. This child is inextricably linked to her ancestors with indisputable *turangawaewae* (p. 57). The responsibility for her protection, nurturing, and teaching is a responsibility of ‘the whole family, not just the parents’ (ibid, p. 60). Another interpretation of this competent ‘whole child’ is the psychologised child who is now being constructed in education via ‘various pedagogical techniques’, which regulate and prescribe areas of ‘humanity that were previously sacrosanct’, but which have now become part of ‘psychological and regulatory apparatuses’ (Fendler, 2001, p. 122). The ‘good child’ of *Te Whāriki* can be interpreted in a number of ways, some of which will be explored in the various narratives examined later in

the thesis. Throughout the thesis, *Te Whāriki* is explored as a political text to invoke a historical memory (albeit very recent) of family and child. This is explored, not in order to return to a ‘better time’, but to reopen silent omissions and forgotten voices, in order to re-examine and develop possibilities to counter current policy direction.

This chapter has provided an overview of historical and policy developments in early childhood education, as a basis for further understanding of policy and curriculum. In summary, it has outlined the ambivalent status of early childhood education in terms of policy direction and has positioned the sector as a new entrant in the field of professionalism. It has also identified a number of issues for the sector that will be discussed in depth throughout the thesis, in terms of their possible implications for children and families.

Ricoeur’s hermeneutical philosophy is put forward and defended as a way to bring narrative into educational research. The thesis argues that his interpretive theory enables an exploration of policy and curriculum in a way that is historical and interconnected. His position is that one’s identity is a narrated one, created from stories about one’s self, one’s community, one’s historical affiliations and the social practices involved. Identity is a blending of histories, memories, facts and fiction. Above all, it is primarily an ethical engagement with the ‘other’ where one’s engagement in the world, one’s understanding of one’s self – one’s own identity – is seen to be interdependent, subjective and contingently mapped within discourse.

Using Ricoeur’s narrative framework the thesis examines some of the narratives currently circulating, in order to think differently about our unique situation and to suggest ways we may begin to explore the current texts and create new ones. It is in a narrative context that we frequently talk about being human as ‘self’. The question of identity is often phrased spontaneously as ‘Who am I?’ The question ‘Who am I?’ is frequently answered with reference to what is important to us: our commitments and identifications; what we determine as good, valuable and right. Identity is thus inextricably woven into our understanding of life as an unfolding story, bound by an ethical commitment to what we value. In this sense, then, we can be seen to be making sense of ourselves through narrative.

This use of a narrative framework for analysing policy and curriculum documents can be seen as a ‘natural’ for research in early childhood. One reason for this is that narrative has had a long association with early childhood pedagogy in Aotearoa New Zealand, in the form of storytelling and literature as a mechanism for cultural transmission and identity formation. Here, young children are frequently seen by teachers to be creating and recreating themselves

through dramatic play and storytelling. Furthermore, current approaches to teaching, particularly in early childhood in Aotearoa New Zealand, build on the use of narrative genres as pedagogical tools in the assessment and planning practices of teachers. Examples of this include, in early childhood, the learning stories approach to planning and assessment (Carr, 2001) and, in the compulsory school sector, *kaupapa* processes that rely on a storied approach to learning (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Such practices recognise the situated, social, historical and cultural influences on children's identifications with themselves, with others, their families and the wider world around them. Narrative and identity are inextricably linked in complex interrelationships between individuals and communities, in the social and cultural contexts in which education can be seen as an important nexus.

Before exploring Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity and its possibilities for early childhood education, it is important to examine the field of narrative theory more generally, to locate Ricoeur's ideas within a wider discourse. It is to an exploration of narrative theory that we now turn.

Chapter 2. Situating Ricoeur's Narrative Theory

It has often been remarked that making sense of one's life as a story is also, like orientation to the good, not an optional extra; that our lives exist also in this space of questions; which only a coherent narrative can answer (Taylor, 1989, p. 47).

This chapter is an examination of narrative studies, focussing in particular on the relationship between narrative and identity. It outlines the development of narrative studies throughout the twentieth century and finds relevance for the educational context. First, it develops some key terms and ideas used in the thesis: *narrative*, *plot*, *action*, *temporality*, *metaphor*, *identity*, *text*, *discourse* and *subjectivity*. Second, it outlines the major developments in narrative studies out of the various schools of literary and philosophical thought (including formalism, structuralism, hermeneutics and poststructuralism). Third, it discusses the importance of narrative theory in education, pointing to a narrative framework in which to examine discourses in early childhood. This chapter does not provide an exhaustive account of a history of narrative studies. Rather, it seeks to provide an overview of narrative studies in order to situate Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy, in particular, his notion of narrative identity (to be developed in the next chapter).

The term 'narrative' is loosely applied to the description of a number of different activities across the humanities. For example, Derrida's *deconstruction* in the field of literature and art; *social constructionism* in the fields of sociology and psychology; and *narrative therapy* in psychotherapy and counselling are all connected to an understanding of narrative knowledges, albeit in vastly different ways. There is considerable ambivalence about the definition of narrative (Riessman, 1993). The term narrative is so ubiquitous that perhaps it might be better to ask what a narrative is *not*. In this amorphous terrain lies the importance of defining and describing the use of narrative and its relevance to the thesis.

From the Latin root *narrare* – to tell – derives the term narrative, implying the business of storytelling, telling stories, tales and truths. As a point from which to begin, Harris (1992) provides the following useful definitions of narrative:

1. The process of telling or recounting, in any medium, one or more actual or fictional events
2. The 'content' of narration, the story told
3. The plot, that is, the story regarded under the aspect of cause
4. The total form in which the story is told

5. An explanation of a state of affairs by means of a story.

Simply stated then, a narrative can be seen as an account using some form of textual framework (for example, verbal, written, visual) connecting events to provide coherent meaning. Harris outlines the intricacies in using the term narrative because of its tendency to shift meanings, ‘a tendency all the more confusing in that a number of the synonyms for narrative in one sense or another tend to shift as well’ (ibid, p. 255). These intricacies are indicative of the interdisciplinary nature of the field of narrative and debate about what constitutes the field of narrative theory. Debate can be traced in part to a variety of opinions on the different conceptual delineations between story and narrative.

Here, Polkinghorne (1988) provides a useful definition of narrative, as ‘the primary scheme by means of which human existence is rendered meaningful’ (p. 11). He also defines narrative and story synonymously as ‘the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite’ (ibid, p. 13). However, in the thesis and in line with Ricoeur’s theory of narrative, narrative and story are complicit rather than taken to be one and the same. Narrative is seen to take part in a story’s movement, in the dialectic between order and disorder, providing coherence and organisation to a series of events and facts. That is, the term ‘story’, while similar to the term ‘narrative’ in terms of features, is seen to operate at a lower level than narrative. For example, ‘the prince and the princess meet’ is a story, where story is seen as the irreducible substance. In contrast, narrative is the way the story is related, as in, ‘a long time ago, in a far away land, there lived a handsome prince ... who met a beautiful princess ...’.

Narrative in the thesis refers to both the theoretical framework and the recounting of various stories to form the content of a new narrative. Narrative, then, is involved in the way in which humans make sense of things, how they make connections and then how they interpret based on these connections. In particular, narratives in their written form are focused on in the thesis. (See further, next chapter for Ricoeur’s emphasis on written narratives.) Written narratives can take various forms, including for example, historical accounts, poetry, literature, government policies, curricula, PhD theses, graduation speeches, conference presentations, and an organisation’s annual report. These are all examples of texts that usually involve other individuals or organisational affiliations, and relationships between other texts and discourses, that come together to form particular narratives. Narratives rely on complex social configurations. A narrative may be involved in a complex array of language formations or other narratives. These may include facts, fictions, individual personal narratives that

portray an individual's habits, or complex metanarratives like 'liberalism' or 'neoliberalism'. Further, a narrative is a narrative because it is read or interpreted by a reader who, in a sense, re-authors the meaning of the narrative.

Narrative is primarily involved in expressing people's experiences of a world. Contemporary narrative theory recognises that this world does not exist as *a priori* reality. Rather, it is actualised through human interpretation of experience. The expression of lived experience engages people in interpretive acts and it is through these interpretive acts that people give meaning to their experiences of the world. The interpretative element of narrative is reliant upon a number of other elements including *plot*, *action*, *time* and *metaphor*. These terms are discussed here in a brief and general manner to describe the narrative field. They will be elaborated upon in terms of Ricoeur's philosophy in the following chapter, and later drawn upon in further chapters in regard to early childhood education.

Plot refers to the arrangement of incidents that imitate the action of a narrative. A plot is sketch or outline (with beginning, middle and endpoints) of a storyline that guides the narrative. It enables actions and events to be sequenced throughout a period of time. David Carr (1986) has *events* as the basic units of human experience, that is, identifiable and meaningful sets of sensations arranged in a sequence. Events are experienced as phases and elements of other events and processes. They 'make up the temporal configurations, like melodies and other extended occurrences and happenings ... we experience them as configurations thanks to our protentional and retentional "gaze" which spans future and past' (p. 24). This gaze is what helps us make sense of our current experience in the context of a larger whole.

Action is also subject to this protentional and retentional 'gaze', although with a different emphasis. It is phenomenologically different from events in that the future expected is brought about by the action one is engaged in, whereas events are experienced as configured elements of plot. That is, action embodies an intended result, rather than expectation or an experience. It is something that a person does and something that a person effects. In acting, we intend a future goal and there is a sense in which it occupies the centre of our concern. The success or failure of an action in meeting an intended outcome makes us reconfigure our present, past and future intentions. Actions have a beginning, middle and an end and more often than not are part of larger intended configurations.

Experience also denotes the temporal phenomenon of sensory perception and observation. The consciousness of a present sensation is connected to a consciousness of the past (memory) and an anticipation of the future. Thus, human experience and action occur in time and cannot be viewed dissociated from *temporality*. The present and past perform together within a perception of time, harmonising human experience, foregrounding and backgrounding particular perceptions. An understanding of the present occurs in the form of expectation, and an understanding of the future occurs in terms of what is retained in the past. Merleau-Ponty (2003) emphasised ambiguity and contingency as issues concerned with freedom, temporality, language and intersubjectivity. He stressed the role of the *lived body* or the *body subject* in the temporal continuity of experience (Audi, 1995). Experience is lived from the vantage of the embodied self, where the conditions of subjective experience necessitate consideration of temporality. In this sense, it is through the complicity of narrative and temporality that we continuously reconfigure the present in terms of our past experiences and future expectations. This reconfiguring of lived experience through temporality brings together history and fiction in creating new semantic representations of reality.

Metaphors provide the creative impetus for this reconfiguration. Derived from the Greek meaning to ‘carry over’ or ‘carry across’, metaphor suggests the making of meaning from one’s experience of a situation. While once characterised as merely decorations of language, they are considered in twentieth century philosophy to contribute greatly and are indeed indispensable to our understanding of discourse, from the scientific through to the poetic. Nietzsche went as far as to argue that all speech is metaphorical. Metaphor, as Kofman points out, contributes to human knowing, in that ‘we can never know reality as a thing, it is through metaphor that we express our ‘relation to things, not the things themselves’ (Kofman, 1993, p. 40). Thus, a representation of perception experienced as reality involves human interpretation and understanding.

Narrative as discussed so far denotes an experiential state of one’s being engaged through time in an active creation of meaning. It is related to subjectivity in that the meaningfulness of an action or a sequence of events is derived in relation to a notion of self (identity). As de Lauretis points out, narrative involves a conscious and embodied self-understanding, where

subjectivity is engaged in the cogs of narrative and indeed constituted in the relation of narrative meaning, and desire; so that the very work of narrativity is the engagement of the subject in certain positionalities of meaning and desire (de Lauretis, 1984, p. 43).

I have briefly described some of the elements of narrative. However, there is debate in narrative studies about the terms outlined above, highlighting different epistemological presuppositions: for example, as we shall see later between Ricoeur (hermeneutics) and Derrida (deconstruction), or between Foucault's and Ricoeur's understandings of discourse. The differing views also depend upon the task of the research undertaken. The study of narrative is contestable and does not fit neatly within the boundaries of a singular field or discipline. Once only the province of literary study, the study of narrative is now seen as interdisciplinary with its interpretive nature taking its lead from other fields such as history, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Large bodies of research have developed in which narratives and theories of narrative have a crucial function. It follows, then, that there is not a set narrative method, rather, that there are a variety of approaches to the study of narrative in the humanities. This includes for example, semiotics, hermeneutics, discourse analysis, deconstruction, narrative inquiry, narrative research, research from a biographical perspective, and so on. In the thesis, Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach to narrative identity is used.

Narrative and identity

Hermeneutics is a branch of philosophy that starts with questions of interpretation. It was originally concerned with theological questions and the interpretation of sacred texts. Schleiermacher marks the beginning of hermeneutics in the nineteenth century. His analysis of understanding culminates in the 'hermeneutic circle', which engages with a circularity of interpretation in which the relationship between the whole and its parts is seen to be dependent upon the whole (Audi, 1995). In the twentieth century, hermeneutics moved further away from theology and became a philosophical position with two distinctive branches. The first follows Schleiermacher as a methodology for human sciences providing rules for method, and an understanding of interpretation as being a discovery of what was really meant by an author. This method underlines the possibility of revealing an objective knowledge of human beings that empirical inquiry cannot discover. The second branch follows Heidegger (1996) who sees interpretation as an ontological event – an interaction between interpreter and text – where interpretation is seen to inevitably transform and alter the conditions of possibility. Twentieth century hermeneutics advanced by Heidegger and Gadamer (1989) understands interpretation as dialogical and open, in a sense challenging the notion of the hermeneutic circle, instead underlining the hermeneutics as situated and non-universal (ibid).

Following Heidegger, Ricoeur explains that we are alone and inauthentic for most of our lives. We are thrown into the world as beings, putting the responsibility of understanding our situation on ourselves and promoting a distance from others. However, we also exist in the world with others whom we interpret and *appropriate*. As a dialogical structure, appropriation overcomes being alone (INT). Through interpretation, we understand both a psychological subject and our existential conditions. Ricoeur's separation of *idem* and *ipse* identities (see further, chapter 3) is both epistemological and ontological. He argues here that selfhood belongs to the sort of identity that Heidegger calls *Dasein*, characterised by its 'capacity to interrogate itself about its own mode of being' (Ricoeur, 1991a, p. 75).

Hermeneutics can be defined no longer as an inquiry into the psychological intentions which are hidden beneath the text, but rather as the explication of the being-in-the-world displayed by the text. What is to be interpreted in the text is a proposed world which I could inhabit and in which I could project my ownmost possibilities (HS, p. 112).

However, while narrative is the theoretical basis of the thesis, not all agree that narrative is important to identity. Strawson (2004) takes a strong stance in arguing that narrative is a fallacy – that 'the narrative tendency to look for story or narrative coherence is ... a gross hindrance to self understanding' (p. 15). People are not self-made narratives, he argues, but could be thought of as episodics or diachronics. That is, we do not become who we are always in relation to an 'other' or to our personal histories or memories. He says, 'a gift of friendship doesn't require any ability to recall past shared experiences in detail' (ibid). Ricoeur, too, is at pains to point out that narrative does not account for all aspects of selfhood, but rather that narrative plays an important role in configuring our sense of being involved in the world. For humans do not usually, in the course of day-to-day existence, ask themselves the question 'Who am I?' We are generally too busy in our everyday experiences and actions to pause to ask such a question, let alone answer it. At the level of day-to-day events, I rarely take account of my 'I' by telling stories to myself about my existence. Yet I understand that I have a personal identity, particularly when I overcome personal challenges and make identifications with others.

Taking a narrative interpretive approach (as outlined) begets the question of *identity* – an important concern in modern education. The liberal education project (see chapter five) underlines the importance of the rational individual and the protection of her autonomy and rights. It will be seen, however, that the notion of identity, like narrative, is troublesome. Ricoeur's theory will offer unique and important insights in 'organising' this site of trouble.

Narrative studies and other theoretical positions holding to social constructionist perspectives are particularly important in early childhood in New Zealand, where narrative practices and pedagogies are the source of current research and development in curriculum and policy. The development of a child's identity is often construed, in terms of curriculum, with reference to the humanistic theories of, for example, Carl Rogers (1993), Abraham Maslow (1998), and Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979). Promoting a sense of belonging and well being and meeting the individual and social needs of the child are seen as important educational orientations. Curriculum and pedagogy in early childhood in Aotearoa underline the importance of narrative genres. Through narrative, it seems, we are somehow going to find out more about ourselves and the best ways to be educated. Identity in chapter one was phrased as a question 'Who am I?' This is not answered simply by providing one's name. Instead, there arises a series of further questions: Why? What? How? In other words, identity requires narratives to answer the question about self: narratives operating within the personal, the social and the political.

Berger & Luckmann (1966) argue that our sense of self arises from our habitation in the social world. Although they do not claim that everything we experience is socially constructed, they argue strongly for the importance of language in shaping lives: 'the reality of everyday life presents itself to me as an intersubjective world, a world that I share with others' (p. 23). In answering the question 'Who am I?', we recommend ourselves to others by affiliation and an understanding of what is of vital importance to us through narrative genres. Our personal identity is thus defined by the commitments and identifications from which we determine what good, valuable or right action is, and what we endorse and oppose: 'the horizon within which I am capable of making a stand' (Taylor, 1989, p. 27). Berger & Luckmann argue that identity as a phenomenon emerges from the 'dialectic between individual and society' (p. 174), embedded in an interpretation of reality located in a world. Identity is thus formed by social processes,

maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations. The social processes involved in both the formation and the maintenance of identity are determined by the social structure. Conversely, the identities produced by the interplay of organism, individual consciousness and social structure react upon the given social structure, maintaining it, modifying it, or even reshaping it. Societies have histories in the course of which specific identities emerge (ibid, p. 172).

Although we share a common existence in the world, our perspectives on the world are different from each other. In this existence, we engage in everyday life, continually interacting and engaging with others. Berger & Luckmann (1966) emphasise the inevitable role of language in the formation of humans, with everyday life maintained primarily by 'linguistic signification' – above all, 'life with and by means of language I share with fellowmen' (p. 37). An understanding of language is thus essential for any understanding of a *reality*. Language has its primary reference in everyday life, forcing one into patterns of communication, providing humans with the ongoing possibilities of communicating experience in ways that objectify and typify experience. Put concisely, 'through language an entire world can be actualised at any moment' (ibid, p. 39), a world 'capable of transcending the reality of everyday life altogether' (ibid, p. 40). It is the depository of a 'large aggregate of collective sedimentations' of institutional activities (ibid, p. 69).

The transmission of the meaning of an institution is based on the social recognition of that institution as a 'permanent' solution to a 'permanent' problem of the given collectivity. Therefore, potential actors of institutionalized actions must be *systematically* acquainted with these meanings (ibid, p. 70).

Narratives can be seen as the quintessential form of cultural knowledge, allowing the society in which they are told to define its criteria of competence, and to evaluate according to those criteria what is performed or can be performed within it. They usually obey rules that define the pragmatics of narrative transmission. The narrative positions (sender, addressee, hero, for example) are organised so that the rights to occupy the post of sender is based upon the fact of having occupied the post of addressee, and of having recounted oneself by a previous narrative. Thus, the knowledge transmitted in a narrative is determined by what one must say in order to be heard, what one must listen to in order to speak, and what role one must play to be the object of a narrative. Narratives, themselves hold authority. They also involve human interaction and judgments inviting interpretation and difference.

The thesis holds to a position that personal identity is both constituted by and constitutive of narratives. This is not to doubt the flesh and blood existence of people, but to problematise the way in which we come to think about our 'selves'. We talk about being human in terms of self – a term used in all sorts of ways to describe the ways humans experience the world. Our narrated and narrativised identities, as Taylor points out, involve a connection to what one believes is *good*:

Now we see that this sense of the good has to be woven into my understanding of my life as an unfolding story. But this is to state another basic condition of making sense of ourselves, that we grasp our lives in a *narrative* (Taylor, 1989, p. 47).

The connection between narrative and identity leads us into the position that Ricoeur takes, that our personal identities are narrated identities bound to the realm of ethics. For Ricoeur, all thought and all meaning is discursive and narrational. His philosophy of narrative identity has our lives made up of stories created from fiction and history, creatively expressed over time, through our engagement with others. Ricoeur's position is congruent with the idea that individuals and communities make sense of actions and events by telling stories; the function of narrative is to provide explanations of actions and events. Narrative, therefore, grasps together explanations retrospectively, as well as during the process of forming individual plans and projects. Narrative concepts and schemata are used to specify the goals and organise the means of action in the future. Narrative, therefore, occupies an important temporal position – not only with past actions and events and present process, but also in giving shape to the future. Thought of in this way, it is evident that narrative is not only a way of representing past facts, but a way of forming expectations about future events.

It can be seen, then, that a contemporary understanding of narrative theories tends to underline the idea that meaning is not only *reflected* in language but also *produced* within language.

It is not as though we have meanings, or experiences, which we then proceed to cloak in words, we can only have the meanings and experiences in the first place because we have a language to have them in (Eagleton, 1996, pp. 52-53).

The significance of narrative is not simply its textual framework, but rather its *interpretive* process, involving interaction between the reader and the text. This interaction includes elements of character, time, point of view and plot, and the complex mediation of events, authorship, self-referentiality, intertextuality, reception and interpretation by the reader. The integral nature of audience reception and readership to the authorship of a work is sometimes demonstrated by asking various individuals of an audience what a speaker has said after a performance of speech. The result is a variety of interpretations depending upon such factors as reader interests, comprehension of the topic, and degree of affinity with the speaker. This underlines the idea that readership and interpretation are fundamental to the authorship, although most interpretations share some common lines of understanding. In Ricoeur's terms, a narrative has both psychological and grammatical elements that are mutually reciprocal:

both elements inform and respond to each other in order to validate the interpretation. So, although we may interpret a speech or a piece of writing, particular structural elements will also validate and inform that meaning. These elements are complex, reflexive activities, which link, displace and condense meanings, making the realm of narrative a complex investigation. Some of these elements have already been discussed (for example, plot, time and metaphor). Other elements (including text, intertextuality, discourse and subjectivity) are elaborated in the following pages.

Like ‘narrative’, the word ‘text’ is another amorphous term that requires definition. It may be considered a linguistic artefact constituting a particular unit of meaning. Text also refers to the mode through which a message is transmitted. This is somewhat meaningless, though, and perhaps proves a small point. That is, that text alone is valueless without a *context* – a *narrative* and a *discourse*. Yet text is an important concept to bracket off and explore further here. Halliday (1975) has defined text as a semantic unit containing specific components that make the text internally cohesive and able to function as a whole. In other words, the material form of the text is important for the rendering of cohesion, for example, the book, the letter or the newspaper article tells us we have a textual unity.

The concept of ‘text’ is used in the thesis to cover media such as curriculum and policy documents, parliamentary releases, educational reports, video and documentary and critical commentary. While it will be necessary to demonstrate how a selected text constitutes an autonomous and meaningful order, the thesis is not restricted to the analysis of single texts. For example, a reading of *Te Whāriki* is only achievable by way of narrative structure. That is, the project of *Te Whāriki* is part of a context that draws upon various media to inform its production: a variety of theoretical projections; a historical horizon; and a number of conceptual delineations about children, childhood and education. The focus on text in the thesis is on the way in which texts are produced and reproduced in a field made up of many texts, drawing on multiple narratives from a number of discourses. The thesis, therefore, focusses on intertextuality or the context, requiring a higher level of organisation, taking us to *narrative* (as previously discussed) and to *discourse*.

The thesis works with the idea of *discourse* as a way in which language and texts are used in our understanding (narratives) of the world, to enable or disable particular ways of acting or being acted upon. Texts, narratives and discourses are embedded in each other in reciprocal productiveness. In a move away from structuralism (see following chapter), Ricoeur heightens the importance of discourse above language systems. He claims that discourse communicates

whereas a language system does not, that is, discourse says more than language, such as, who is speaking and who is spoken to at a particular moment in time.

Ricoeur's notion of discourse is reminiscent of Foucault's (1991a) understanding of discourse, although Ricoeur is ostensibly less focused on power relations. Foucault's 'discourse' involves the relationship between power and knowledge – where texts and narratives embody meaning from institutional practices and power and through social relations. Discourse, according to Foucault, occurs at the nexus of power-knowledge, informing what can be said, when it can be said, who can say it and with what authority it can be said. Foucault (1980a) maintains that power-knowledge is an inseparable configuration because power is immanent in knowledge and knowledge is permeated by power. Discourse constructs a set of possibilities, so that meaning is not constructed through language itself. Rather, language changes meaning and effects within the different discourses in which they are used. Discourse can therefore be thought of as an 'unconscious patterning of individual and collective psyche ... we do not speak the discourse. The discourse speaks us' (Ball, 1990, p. 18). Discourses can be seen to structure knowledge and social practices and are ways by which societies maintain structure, coherency and relationships. In this way, it can be said that discourse, narrative, time and action comprise the narrative unity of a person's life.

Between the activity of narrating a story and the temporal character of human experience there exists a correlation that is not merely accidental but that presents a transcultural form of necessity ... time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of experience (TN 1, p. 52).

(Ricoeur's understanding of discourse is explored more fully in the following chapter.)

In bringing about the possibility of understanding one's self through discourse, Ricoeur's ideas about the narrative unity of a person brings us close to the notion of *subjectivity*. Subjectivity, broadly speaking, refers to an individual's sense of self. An individual's subjectivity involves a continual process where the self is produced through interactions and experiences with others. Subjectivity is both being *subject to* and *subject of* cultural narratives and the discourses that enable them. While Ricoeur does not directly discuss the relations of power that underpin specific narratives of subjectivity, he does implicitly refer to the way in which narratives are linguistic devices to which we are subjected and through which we become subjects:

The definition of subjectivity in terms of narrative identity has numerous implications. To begin with, it is possible to apply the play of sedimentation and innovation, which we recognise in the works of every tradition to our understanding of ourselves. In the same manner we do not cease to re-interpret the narrative identity that constitutes us in the light of stories handed down to us by our culture. In this sense our self-understanding presents the same traits of traditionality as the understanding of a literary work does. In this way we learn to become the narrator of our own story without completely becoming the author of our own life (RI, p. 437).

So far, some key concepts have been traversed briefly to define the boundaries of the thesis. To recap, they include the elements of a *narrative*, such as *plot*, *action and temporality*, as well as *identity*, *text*, *discourse* and *subjectivity*. Further elaboration of these ideas will occur in the following chapter, particularly in relation to Ricoeur's treatment of *narrative identity*, *mimesis* and *metaphor*.

Narrative knowledge and education

In proposing narrative and identity as a basis for the thesis (and for educational research more generally), I am attending to notions of interpretation, identity construction and reflexivity in research activity. This linguistic turn, in which lived experience created in the social text by the researcher, directly challenges a key assumption in the social sciences – that researchers can directly capture lived experience and can validate such claims unproblematically through scientific method. Much educational research is founded on a belief in the accuracy of observations, the collection of evidence, and the extraction and processing of data, with little value ascribed to narrative knowledge in the understanding of our lived world.

However, those that champion the importance of narrative knowledge in research, for example, Ricoeur (TN 2), Lyotard (1984), and Rorty (1989), maintain that science is a form of narrative – one form of storytelling, if you like. This line of thinking, adopted from the philosophy of science with Thomas Kuhn's (1996) critical paradigm model has stimulated huge 'cultural' debates. Kuhn introduced the idea that the authority of the science narrative cannot be seen as the authority of objective truth. Rather, it is a 'consensually performed interpretation' and that the authority of a science was derived from 'the simple fact that everyone in the scientific community was playing the same game by the same rules' (Currie, 1998, p. 9). While Currie argues that Kuhn's work has often been misappropriated, a major significance lies in recognising the element of authority in relation to configurations of knowledge. For Lyotard, scientific knowledge does not represent the totality of knowledge:

It has always existed in addition to, and in competition and conflict with, another kind of knowledge, which I will call narrative ... I do not mean to say that narrative knowledge can prevail over science, but its model is related to ideas of internal equilibrium and conviviality next to which contemporary scientific knowledge cuts a poor figure (Lyotard, 1984, p. 7).

Knowledge, Lyotard argues, is what makes someone capable of forming 'good' denotative utterances, as well as 'good' prescriptive and 'good' evaluative utterances. Knowledge is not a competence relative to a particular class of statements (for example, cognitive ones) to the exclusion of all others. On the contrary, it makes 'good' performances in relation to a variety of objects of discourse possible: objects to be known, decided on, evaluated and transformed through narrative. For Lyotard, from this function of narrative derives one of the principle features of knowledge, that is, the necessity of an extensive 'array of competence-building measures ... embodied in a subject constituted by the various areas of competence composing it' (ibid, p.18).

Another characteristic ... is the relation between this kind of knowledge and custom. What is a 'good' prescriptive and evaluative utterance, a 'good' performance in denotative or technical matters? They are all judged to be good because they conform to the relevant criteria (of justice, beauty, truth, and efficiency respectively) accepted in the social circle of the knower's interlocutors. The early philosophers called this mode of legitimating statements opinion. The consensus that permits such knowledge to be circumscribed and makes it possible to distinguish one who knows from one who doesn't (the foreigner, the child) is what constitutes the culture of a people (ibid, p. 19).

By suggesting that knowledge gained in empirical research is merely provisional, I am outlining the need to take a cautionary approach to the way the empirical data is related to research texts. Bloch (2006) argues that the emphasis on science embodies disciplinary technologies that determine truth, to the point where the development of universal best practices are 'reminiscent of the early social efficiency, or manual dexterity movements of the late nineteenth century' (p. 39). She argues that who is able to speak should be made clear to all and that there should be acknowledgement and invitation of multiple truths.

In tracing the rise of modern government, Foucault focussed on the discourses and practices of institutions that shape the subject and that serve to legitimate and constitute the power of government. Discourses, practices of power and their legitimation, Foucault argued, constitute accepted narratives:

We are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need, in order to function: we *must* speak the truth; we are constrained or condemned to confess or to discover the truth ... we must produce truth as we produce wealth, indeed we must produce truth in order to produce wealth in the first place (Foucault, 1980b, pp. 93-94).

For Foucault, ‘regimes of truth’ refer not to any absolute truths (that is, universal and immutable facts), but to constructed narratives which perform particular roles. Within any given field of power-knowledge, many truths compete for the status of ‘the truth’. Of these many truths, some gain the status of truth and thereby create a regime of truth that governs our ideas and practices. They stand up as truths not because they are inherently true but because they have support from the institution and the individual.

There is a battle ‘for truth’, or at least ‘around truth’ ... I do not mean ‘the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted’, but rather ‘the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true’ (Foucault 1980c, p. 132).

This regime of truth is held in place by a complex web of power – between the ethical and political, and among other discourses and institutions that normalise them. Such a perspective does not discredit science, but recognises it as a very powerful *language game* and one possible form of truth, albeit a very useful mechanism for making our way in the world. Yet, science requires a particular language game – denotation – that excludes all others. Its refusal limits its field of research to only that which can be measured, proved/disproved and reproduced under a particular set of circumstances. Science is thus set apart from the sorts of language games that combine to form the social bond. Unlike narrative knowledge, scientific knowledge is not a direct and shared component of the bond. In science, the relationship between knowledge and society is one of mutual exteriority. Within the bounds of scientific research, the competence of the researcher alone is required. There is no particular competence required of the subject.

Liotard (1984) argues that scientific knowledge is not the only kind of knowledge. He uses the term *narrative knowledge* broadly to indicate another kind of knowledge that has always been in conflict with scientific knowledge. For Lyotard, knowledge cannot be reduced to science; it involves competence beyond the simple criteria of efficiency, involving ‘good’ performances in relation to a variety of possible discourses. Connolly & Clandinin (1990, p.

8) point out, 'a plausible account is one that tends to ring true'. Like other qualitative methods,

narrative relies on criteria other than validity, reliability, and generalisability. It is important not to squeeze the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research... apparency, verisimilitude, and transferability as possible criteria (Connolly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 7).

The idea that narratives do not belong in educational research because they are social constructions is rejected here in favour of a strongly narrativist view. It is within language that we are enabled to think, judge, observe and experiment.

There is no point of view outside of language from where we can judge whether a proposition corresponds with reality as it is, independent of our thinking. This does not mean that there are no constraints on what can be said, but the constraints are not foundations, ontologically prior to discourse, but the intrinsic constraints of critique itself, internal to discourse and intrinsically social. The innocent, atheoretical observation is an illusion. In this sense, every proposition about the world is a construction. The criterion used to judge a narrative would be a construction as well (Verhesschen, 2003, p. 458).

At the heart of Ricoeur's interpretive philosophy is a search for the kind of human truths that scientific propositions cannot reach, a sidelining of an empirical, scientific approach in favour of the multiplicity of story-telling: 'It is because absolute knowledge is impossible that the conflict of interpretations is insurmountable and inescapable. Between absolute knowledge and hermeneutics, it is necessary to choose' (HS, p. 193). Understanding in the form of agreement is not the goal because subjects take up different ways to arrive at their conclusions. As Gadamer (1989) reminds us, a reading that does not risk the possibility of misunderstanding is not a hermeneutical reading.

Ricoeur, like Lyotard, contrasts narrative knowledge (truth guaranteed by status of the storyteller) with scientific and technological knowledge (truth underpinned by proof of claims). Although Ricoeur accepts the need for scientific knowledge, he points out that knowledge cannot be reduced to science. Knowledge is a question of competence that goes beyond scientific criteria and must involve 'good' performances in relation to a variety of objects of discourse. Like Lyotard and Foucault, Ricoeur argues for the importance of the little narrative, involving our engagement within micro practices – actions and practices that we enact on an everyday basis. Focussing on these little narratives allows us to creatively

enable, disable, complicate, problematise and trouble the colonisation of our practices by metanarratives.

Ricoeur sets out to show that narrative is the proper object of social sciences. In *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (HS), Ricoeur points to the tyranny of method, with its insistence on outcomes and the dangers of allowing research methodologies to over-determine interpretations of reality. Instead, Ricoeur advocates a *methodological eclecticism*, arguing that the quest for a research method to yield results and evidence about reality is less important than deciding first what we believe in and looking at how we can make a space for explanation and understanding. Ricoeur's hermeneutics provides a direct route to understanding a multitude of variables that will decide our being in the world through what he calls his 'little ethics' (OA). For Ricoeur, hermeneutics does not prevent or impede us from acting; rather, it forces one to choose an interpretation in the face of uncertainty and in this way represents a form of decision. He argues that the text provides the opportunity to develop new ideas, new identities and new plans for actions. *Text* tells us some *truth* about the world; it is through the narrativisation of text that we construct meaning and value and hence our identity. In Ricoeur's project, text interpretation turns out to be the paradigm for interpretation in general. It is in the *narrative* interplay of *emplotment* and *temporality* that the text is narrated, providing the means through which we identify ourselves.

We understand ourselves only by the long detour of signs of humanity deposited in cultural works. What would we know of *love* and *hate*, of moral feelings and, in general, of all that we call the *self* if these had not been brought to language and articulated by literature? Thus what seems most contrary to subjectivity, and what structural analysis discloses as the text, is the very *medium* within which we can understand ourselves (FT, p. 87).

For Ricoeur, a person's identity is to be understood like a character in a piece of fiction or historical narrative. Just as a story of a life unfolds like a narrative, so too the identity of a person:

A life as a whole when then embraced in a single glance, appears to us as the field of constructive activity, borrowed from narrative understanding, by which we attempt to discover and not simply to impose from outside the narrative identity which constitutes us (Ricoeur, 1991b, p. 32).

The notion of narrative identity, introduced in *Time and Narrative 3*, follows the human understanding we have of the particular histories and fictions of people and their

communities. Ricoeur asks, 'Do we not consider human lives to be more readable when they have been interpreted in the stories that people tell about them?' He then responds:

It therefore seems plausible to take the following chain of assertions as valid: self understanding is an interpretation; interpretation of the self, in turn, finds in the narrative, among other signs and symbols, a privileged form of mediation; the latter borrows from history as well as from fiction, making a life story of a fictional history or, if one prefers, a historical fiction ... (OA, p. 114).

Narrative: from formalism to poststructuralism

At the beginning of this chapter, it was stated that narrative studies have their beginnings in the study of literature and that the development of narrative studies within the social sciences is a relatively new and inter-disciplinary pursuit. This section of the chapter provides a brief overview of the development of narrative studies in order to situate and develop the preceding ideas further and to locate the work of Paul Ricoeur in relation to narrative.

The study of literature, before the beginning of the twentieth century, was concerned largely with biography and history rather than the study of narrative. At the turn of the century, a group of Russian linguists and critics pioneered the first major school of literary studies. Included in this group are Viktor Shklovsky, Boris Tomashevsky, Roman Jakobson and later on Mikhail Bakhtin – often referred to as *formalists*. Broadly speaking, these linguists put forward the idea that a work of literature (the contents) is related to its form (how it is put together) and that meaning is generated by the way the form shapes action. They argued that the evolution of forms changes what literature is about. By distinguishing between the way a story is told and the series of events the story recounts, formalism allowed for the possibility of new meaning based on new modes of storytelling (Currie, 1998).

In America, another type of formalist movement evolved with the 'American New Critics'. While they shared much with the Russian formalists, they were more interested in the way language expresses universal truths rather than in performing a scientific description of literary forms. Whereas the Russian formalists were interested in entire genres, the American formalists focussed on close readings of individual works attending to the 'texture of imagery and language' in a given work rather than seeking out 'extra-textual biographical or historical referents' (Ryan, 1999, p. 6). Despite their differences, both of these formalist schools are credited with making the study of language – its construction and process – central to literary study, thus shifting literary studies into an analytical vein. However, both strains of formalism

are seen to have fallen short for failing to take into account their own politics and for not justifying the separation of the formal from other, more social or political concerns and influences in literature. What they did put forward, however, was the possibility of a *science-like* analysis.

This scientific impulse of formalism was carried further by the structuralists in their vision of a 'global science of narrative' (Currie, 1998, p. 14). The origin of structuralism is usually located in the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1983). Structuralist ideas influenced literary and cultural criticism in several ways. First, structuralism moved the attention away from the relation between text and world or between texts and meaning toward the study of literary systems – how texts operate logically or systematically. Second, the study of texts was to be seen as a study of sign systems where texts were organised according to latent logical or grammatical rules. It was argued that the latent logic and rules of a text could often be found in other similar texts. The meaning of a particular text, according to the structuralists, was inherently born in the grammatical construction of the text through a shared system of signification. In this way then, the key tenet of the structuralist position was that the situation of the text was not a reflection of language but a *product* of it. In this view, linguistics was seen to be a meta-language that could describe narrative, and reveal its operations and mechanisms, from a stance of scientific objectivity. The implication of this kind of analysis was that language constructed rather than revealed the structures that we think of as reality. There was no question of relating the work to the realities of that which it treated, or to the conditions which produced it. Neither did it involve the participation of the actual readers who studied it, since the founding gesture of structuralism had been to bracket off such realities.

What is seen to be the glaring flaw of the structuralist position is the assumed objectivity of language (Currie, 1998). While the poststructuralists agreed with the structuralist idea that language structures reality, they parted company with structuralism by asserting that there can be no position outside language from which language can be viewed objectively. In other words, from a poststructural perspective, there is not a meta-level language that provides an objective science of language. The assumed science of structuralism, which held that the inherent formal properties in a particular narrative could be discovered, was therefore sidelined by the poststructuralists. This heralded a significant shift in emphasis where the importance of language systems was usurped by the importance of discourse. This intellectual shift has had a profound effect, not only on literary criticism, but also on the wider fields of

humanities and social sciences. The poststructural emphasis on dimensions of language, psychology, and social life undermines stable orders of meaning, identity and truth. This runs counter to that which structuralism sought to establish. In structuralism, language is speech or writing viewed objectively, as a chain of signs without a subject, whereas in poststructuralism the recourse to discourse meant that language involved speaking and writing subjects and therefore potentially, readers or listeners. In discourse, the assumed distance between a narrative and its reading is abolished so that the narrative and its reading become identical. The narrative thus became the reading and the reading the narrative, highlighting the importance of readership and interpretation.

With poststructuralism, there was no longer a prescriptive model. Whereas structuralism emphasises order, structure and rules, poststructuralism argues that language is subject to contingency, indeterminacy, and multiple meanings. A key characteristic of poststructural narrative theories is the desire to sustain contradictory aspects of narratives, in order to preserve the narrative's complexity and to refuse the impulse of reducing a narrative to a singular meaning or coherent project. Logic and reason are not so much instruments of understanding, as instruments of mastery, discipline and social control – instruments that value the ideals and norms of Western philosophy and social life (Currie, 1998).

Commonly cited in poststructuralist theory is the work of the nineteenth century philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, who took issue with the dominant assumptions of Western philosophy and Christian culture. Sometimes referred to as a nihilist on account of his thoroughgoing critique, he took particular issue with the repressive nature of morality and further issue with the idea that reason is a legitimate transcendental value:

When someone hides something behind a bush and looks for it again in the same place and finds it there as well, there is not much to praise in such seeking and finding. Yet this is how matters stand regarding seeking and finding 'truth' within the realm of reason (Nietzsche, 1979, p. 85).

Following Nietzsche, Foucault (1991a) argued that reason is not the transparent instrument of knowledge that philosophers and scientists would claim it to be. For Foucault, reason represents a certain political choice regarding what counts as reasonable. He argued that knowledge in society consists of discourses. In other words, it creates and reflects objects rather than recording pre-existing realities. The way knowledge is organised in the discourses of Western society is allied with the organisation of power in society. Power seeps into society over time and becomes part of the everyday procedures and operations of social

institutions (childcare centres, schools, hospitals, prisons, workplaces) in which citizens learn to absorb, perform and discipline themselves.

By the middle of the 1960s, other significant poststructural thinkers, such as Derrida and Kristeva, began to link the study of language, especially discourse, to radical political critiques of Western capitalist society (Currie, 1998). These poststructural writers explored the way the signifying potential of language, its ability to hold multiple meanings within many possible references, posed a rich and creative counterpoint to the emphasis of traditional Western philosophy and criticism on pinning down meaning into singular terms. During the 1970s, Jacques Derrida (1973; 1976; 1978) developed the concepts critical for much of his later work, as well as for work carried out by other poststructural thinkers. Derrida argued that Western philosophy claims to speak for reason, truth and knowledge, but that in fact it consists of acts of opposition and judgments that subordinate one set of terms while privileging others. In Derrida's view, terms such as reason, rationality and logic are privileged whereas terms like difference, representation, artifice, and metaphor are subordinated. The privileged terms allow Western philosophy to organise itself as a coherent project of knowledge that can determine truth and authority.

Derrida is most notably associated with the term *deconstruction*. Within Derrida's deconstruction, there are three basic assumptions: first, language is marked by instability and indeterminacy; second, no method of analysis can be given authority in regards to interpretation; and third, interpretation is a language game involving various forms of analysis. His famous statement *Il n'y a pas de hors-texte* (Derrida, 1976, p. 158) implies not that there is nothing worth knowing outside of a narrative, but that everything falls within narrative. Even the scientific formula has recourse to a knowledge base that is formulated through narrative. Derrida's sentence, frequently interpreted as 'there is nothing outside the text', should perhaps be interpreted as *there is no outside text*. This is to say, that it is not possible to distinguish categorically between what is within and what is outside the text.

Poststructuralist ideas were developed further in the middle of the 1970s with the work of Deleuze, Guattari, Baudrillard, Irigaray, Cixous and Lyotard. Lyotard, a proponent of narrative knowledge, contrasts narrative types of knowledge to scientific knowledge. He argues that all thought and all meaning are discursive and narrational and that when we enter into social debates over the shape of the world, we merely trade stories and offer contending narratives.

Another contemporary debate in narrative studies centres around whether narratives represent reality, or as Ricoeur suggests, narrative brings about something into the world that was not there to begin with. In narrative studies, reference is frequently made to the work of Alisdair MacIntyre (1981), David Carr (1986) and Ricoeur or to authors that have derived their views from the work of these philosophers, for example, Michael Connolly, Jean Clandinin (1990), and Donald Polkinghorne (1988). While MacIntyre, Carr and Ricoeur are convinced of the value of narrative, they do not share the same view of the relationship between narrative and life or experience. The issue at stake here is the two opposing views about the origin of narrative; that is, whether we live out narratives in our lives or whether we first live our lives and then impose a narrative structure on it afterwards. On the one hand, for MacIntyre and Carr, the narrative structure is immanent in action and experience: 'Stories are lived before they are told-except in the case of fiction' (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 212). On the other hand, for White (1981) and Mink (1978), narrative structure is imposed from the outside. Stories are not lived but told: 'Our experience of life does not itself necessarily have the form of narrative, except as we give it that form by making it the subject of stories' (Mink, 1978, p. 133). White claims that narratives utilise a particular code and thereby produce certain kinds of meaning. Therefore, any given set of real events can be emplotted in a number of ways and can acquire a different meaning. He urges us to keep in mind that closure is a feature of the narrative. It is not inherent in events as such, but is imposed in the way we structure the events.

Narrative, interpretation and identity

It is useful for the purpose of exploring narrative theory, to cast these conflicting positions in terms of strong and weak versions of the narrativist position. The strong narrativist position claims that there is a fundamental connection between action and narrative; where action is presupposed by narrative and the self constituted by narratives. The weak narrativist position would dispute these claims and would suggest that *some* actions are presupposed by the narrative schemata. This position does not hold that the self is constituted by narratives, but rather that the self generates self-narratives.

The *impasse* of these two positions, in my opinion, is overcome in the work of Ricoeur. In his complex but elegant framework, Ricoeur does not claim that narrative is a necessary condition for the constitution of personhood at all levels. However, he is convinced, like MacIntyre and Carr, that there is a strong relation between narrative and life. Ricoeur, denies

the possibility of immediate consciousness and elevates texts and narratives as the medium through which we understand ourselves. Neither does Ricoeur propose an empirical theory of what is going on in the minds of all human persons. Instead, he brings attention to important ways of living, acting and thinking, seeing narrative as an essential means of constituting one's personal identity.

Ricoeur's project is not to formulate a new criterion for personal identity. Instead, he widens the notion of personal identity and integrates aspects that are neglected by analytic philosophers (Teichert, 2004). For Ricoeur, a narrative does not describe the world; it re-describes and re-presents it. When we talk about our identity, as in our life story, we include some things and not others. This process of exclusion and inclusion is carried out in the interests of constituting a particular kind of story about our self. It is in this process of making/telling the story that we produce the self. To do this we draw on our memories and our histories, 'the past does not exist except in the sense that we interpret past events and, in so doing, create history, identity and ourselves' (Sarup, 1996, p. 46). It is not as if 'nature' or the 'world' tells a story; it is individuals that do so.

Interpretation is inevitable because narratives are representations... Human agency and imagination determines what gets included and excluded in narrativisation, how events are plotted, and what they supposed to mean. Individuals construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and construct lives (Riessman, 1993, p. 2).

Chapter 3. Ricoeur's Hermeneutic: A Narrated Child Subject

The interpretation of a text culminates in the self-interpretation of a subject who thenceforth understands himself better, understands himself differently, or simply begins to understand himself.... In short, in hermeneutical reflection – or in reflective hermeneutics – the constitution of the *self* is contemporaneous with the constitution of *meaning* (HS, p. 158).

Ricoeur's impressive volume of writing spans more than sixty years on a wide range of subjects including theology, literary theory, psychoanalysis, political theory and law. Throughout his career, Ricoeur engaged with a large number of ancient and modern philosophers. In particular, he was greatly influenced by Aristotle (poetics and mimesis), Augustine (temporality), Kant (productive imagination), Hegel (dialectic) and Heidegger (*Dasein*). Aristotle's *muthos* in *Poetics* forms the basis of Ricoeur's account of *mimesis*, which he joins with the Kantian productive imagination to form his general theory of narrative. He refines Hegel's dialectic by appreciating conflicting positions, and extends it by refusing a synthetic culminating point or any form of reductionism. He then draws upon Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*, to make the connection between selfhood and care. Ricoeur's hermeneutic philosophy has our lives made up of stories borrowed from fiction and history, creatively expressed over time, through our engagement with others.

In this chapter, Ricoeur's main philosophical works are tracked through an examination of key concepts in his theory of narrative, including *discourse*, *mimesis*, *metaphor*, *temporality*, *interpretation*, *narrative identity* and his notion of *little ethics*. His philosophical quest follows a long tradition of Western philosophical investigation to find the path for a good life. He is guided by two questions 'Who am I?' and 'How shall I lead my life?' His narrative theory engages in an elegant symmetry of balance and counterbalance; concordance and discordance; innovation and sedimentation; *idem* and *ipseity*. At the same time, the dialectical nature of Ricoeur's work is marked by a sustained refusal to arrive at a final solution. Rather, his work elevates the importance of purposeful meaning-filled intersubjective engagements.

Ricoeur's central preoccupation is a concern with the meaning of meaning. One of his key beliefs is that meaning is marked by indeterminacy and contingency because of the polysemic nature of language. In this way, then, Ricoeur can be situated in a poststructural milieu. In the introduction to an anthology of Ricoeur's works, Valdés (1991) points out that a comparison

between Derrida and Ricoeur is useful, since although Ricoeur's hermeneutics has some ground in common with Derrida's deconstruction, there are also a number of differences. Derrida and Ricoeur agree that meaning-making is always a process of reiteration and that the polysemic nature of language assures indeterminacy. However, they part company over the extent and possibility of shared meaning and an understanding of the indeterminacy of text. Whereas Derrida's philosophy is a radical break with the metaphysics of Western thought, Ricoeur's is a continuation of a traditional inquiry from Aristotle and Augustine through to Heidegger (Valdés, 1991). For Derrida, textual indeterminacy is already in the text, invalidating all claims to a sense of order that is not one of absence. There is no origin, just endless circles of deferral and a process of constant reiteration. What is deconstructed is the assumption of fixed meaning. Like Derrida, Ricoeur believes that the polysemic nature of language rules out interpretive absolutisms and he understands culture as part of a continuous chain of iterations. However, for Ricoeur, texts operate in determinate frameworks – ordered systems that are present rather than absent within a text. These ordered, predictable conceptual systems are seen as determining frameworks within which indeterminacy operates. Ordering disorder leads to the revelation of a new creative order, or tensional order, where the semantic impertinence of a metaphor makes a connection between meanings rather than assuring a congruency of meanings. Valdés argues that the significance of Ricoeur's theory is that it establishes meaningful commentary overcoming the 'contemporary either/or traps of historical absolutism and the deferral of deconstruction' (ibid, p. 25).

Never far from Ricoeur's writing is an engagement with the hermeneutic of self. His philosophy forms part of a hermeneutic tradition that looks at the way we think, understand and interpret ourselves through texts. For Ricoeur, the task of hermeneutics is not to discover an unmediated reality, but to continue to mediate reality through new, creative interpretations. He sees language as polysemic and recognises the legitimacy of many meanings and conflicting views. A subject's discourse, then, is how she understands her world and her being, involving objectification and interpretation. Elevating this seeming inconsistency to the level of something that needs to be, he refuses an easy dialectical synthesis or reduction of meaning. For Ricoeur, there is 'no self understanding that is not *mediated* by signs, symbols and texts' (FT, p. 15). This position assumes that identity is a task to achieve through encounters with texts and institutions that objectify and mediate existence. His hermeneutic does not require a singular claim of truth to understand a text correctly. Rather, it poses a circularity of questioning in search of possible meanings and truths. A hermeneutic philosophy, writes Ricoeur, is

a philosophy that accepts all the demands of this long detour and that gives up the dream of a total mediation, at the end of which reflection would once again amount to intellectual intuition in the transparency to itself of an absolute subject (FT, p. 18).

In his early work *The Symbolism of Evil* (SE), Ricoeur begins to develop his hermeneutic approach with an emphasis on interpretation through the examination of symbolic systems. His *Fallible Man* (FM) has humans as flawed, but still capable of a ‘good life’ by making moral judgments. Turning away from the analytic philosophical tradition and the rationalism of Descartes, Ricoeur adopts a pluralist, problem-solving approach suggesting that truth is always contingent and that humans can and do make ethically sound judgements. His philosophy originally developed through a study of linguistics, but he found structuralism somewhat lacking in its failure to take in discourse. So, in a departure from structuralism in the late 1960s, Ricoeur shifts his focus from symbolic systems toward a wider sphere of language where he places the emphasis upon *discourse*.

With the word ‘structure’ and ‘system’ a new problematic emerges which tends, at least initially, to postpone, if not cancel, the problem of discourse, which is condemned to recede from the forefront of concern and become a residual problem ... Our task there will be to rescue discourse from its marginal and precarious exile (INT, p. 2).

To Ricoeur, a subject’s discourse is how she understands her world and her being, which involves objectification and interpretation. This emphasis on discourse continues throughout his 1980s work in his three volume *Temps et Récit (Time and Narrative)* – a series of works that is considered ‘the most important synthesis of literary and historical theory produced in our time’ (White, 1987, p. 170). Ricoeur engages extensively with the work of Aristotle and Augustine, drawing a ‘hermeneutical circle’ (PA 1, p. 134) around time and narrative. Time is humanised by its expression in narrative (lived time); narrative is meaningful in that it portrays temporal existence. From Aristotle he develops his thesis on the mimetic function of narrative, and from Augustine he explores the *aporia* of time, in particular the conflict between the phenomenological sense of time and the cosmological. (See further discussion of temporality and metaphor later this chapter.).

Ricoeur’s hermeneutic turn brings to the fore his belief that it is through discourse that we are provoked to be and to act (differently) in the world. The implication of this is that discourse and action come together in a particularly striking way as the *narrative unity* of a person’s life. In claiming a space for discourse, Ricoeur characterises all discourse as an essential component of language. He argues that discourse never exists for its own sake, but that it

seeks to bring to language an experience – a way of being-in-the-world, which both precedes it and which demands to be said. Discourse, for Ricoeur, involves a dialectic of action and meaning, an intersubjective exchange and communication with a recipient.

Discourse refers back to its speaker at the same time that it refers to the world. This correlation is not fortuitous since it is ultimately the speaker who refers to the world in speaking. Discourse in action and in use refers backwards and forward, to a speaker and a world. Such is the ultimate criterion of language as discourse (INT, p. 22).

Ricoeur draws on the distinction here between *langue* and *parole* made by de Saussure. *Langue* is the systematic code of language, *parole* is the particular meaning of a message. *Parole* is individual, temporal, intentional and subjective. Drawing on de Saussure's dichotomy, Ricoeur claims that it is easy to see 'why linguistics could make progress under the condition of bracketing the message for the sake of code'. Ricoeur refers to this as the 'eclipse of discourse' (INT, p. 4).

Discourse implies the presence of a subject. It refers back to itself by a complex set of indicators such as personal pronouns. There is always an *I* (or a *who*) that speaks. Discourse is always about something because language and experience are about the actual world and in this sense demand structure and meaning. Ricoeur refers to his hermeneutics as 'the art of discerning the discourse in the work', where 'this discourse is only given in and through the structures of the work' (HS, p. 138). According to Ricoeur, discourse has structure of its own:

But it is not a structure in the analytic sense of structuralism, i.e., as a combinatory power base on the previous oppositions of discrete units. Rather, it is a structure in the synthetic sense, i.e., as the intertwining and interplay of the functions of identification and predication in one and the same sentence (INT, p. 11).

Here Ricoeur gives privilege to the written discourse. Written discourse is important because it records and inscribes action and time in a way that, for example, oral discourse cannot do. Writing is the full manifestation of discourse 'because it fixes not the event of speaking but the said of speaking' (INT, pp. 25-26). Ricoeur points to a number of complexities that arise with written discourse. First, written discourse does not exist in a real time dialogue situation so it alters the dynamics of communication. Second, the relationship between the message and the audience of spoken discourse is generally more limited, in that written discourse has the ability to be read by more people. Third, when 'discourse is transferred to the field of production it is also treated as stuff to be shaped' (INT, p. 33). Last, and perhaps most complex, in the break between the writer and the reader, the text is freed from the author:

With written discourse ... the author's intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide ... Inscription becomes synonymous with the semantic authority of the text, of what the author meant and what the text means. The text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author. What the text means now matters more than what the author meant when he wrote it (INT, pp. 29-30).

Ricoeur argues that the detachment of meaning from the event of discourse – the actual occurrence of speech or action – does not cancel the dialect of event or the meaning of discourse. Rather, it makes the dialectic more apparent. The meaning of language separated from the speaker frees the message from the speaker. The message must do without the speaker's authority and replace it through the material medium. Yet it cannot be reduced to the sentences that comprise it. Rather, it is a totality structured by genre and structural methods that permit a process of interpretation.

The absence of the common situation generated by the spatial and temporal distance between the writer and reader; the cancellation of the absolute here and now by the substitution of material external marks for the voice, face, and body of the speaker as the absolute origin of all the places in space and time; and the semantic autonomy of the text, which severs it from the present of the writer and opens it to an indefinite range of potential reader in an indeterminate time – all these alterations of the temporal constitution of discourse are reflected in parallel alterations of the ostensive character of reference (INT, pp. 34-35).

Freeing up the text is an important part of Ricoeur's work in relation to the thesis, since it opens the pathway to interpretation. Ricoeur writes that 'the inscription of the discourse is the 'transcription of the world, and transcription is not reduplication, but metamorphosis' (INT, p. 42). The event of discourse, therefore, penetrates beyond language (beyond the world of signs) and mediates reality: discourse 'intends things, applies itself to reality ... expresses the world' (HS, 140). This situation places a priority of being in the world: 'It is because there is first something to say, because we have an experience to bring to language' (INT, p. 21). These traits show that language as discourse is an open, unlimited process of creation of meaning. It involves an internal dialectic between event and meaning. An event actualises language and gives it existence, which, however transitory, does not pass into oblivion because it can be repeated and recognised as the same.

Mimesis and metaphor

Mimesis

This dialectic of event and meaning involves a constant chain of iteration – a process Ricoeur refers to as *triple mimesis*:

a reference back to the familiar pre-understanding we have of the order of action; an entry into the realm of poetic composition; and finally a new configuration by means of this poetic refiguring of the pre-understood order of action (TN 1, p. xi).

Rejecting Plato's broad definition of mimesis as meaning anything that resembles anything in any way, Ricoeur prefers an Aristotelian approach in which mimesis involves *making*. Following this line, Ricoeur refers to mimesis, not as imitation or mimicry, but rather as a deliberate and creative endeavour involving plot, character, language, thought, spectacle and melody. This difference between imitation and creativity is critical to Ricoeur. Mimesis as imitation is concerned with appearance, whereas mimesis as creation is concerned with the *imitation of action* '*mimesis is poiesis, and poiesis is mimesis*' (RM, p. 44).

The poet, in writing a fable, a plot, a *muthos*, gives us a *mimesis*, a creative imitation of men in action. In the same way, a logic of narrative possibilities, which a formal analysis of narrative codes claims to be about, is completed only in the mimetic function by which the story remakes the world of human action (PA 1, p. 155).

According to Ricoeur, we understand our own lives as if they were narratives, and through the work of interpreting our lives, we turn them into narratives in which several different stories of the same event can be told. Ricoeur pairs the concepts of *muthos* and *mimesis* into a theory of narrative – a twofold reflection involving a complex, inextricable mediation between narrative and time. This pairing of *mimesis* and *muthos* Ricoeur called the 'melodic line' where the two work together, albeit tensionally: 'we have to understand them [*mimesis* and *muthos*] not as parts of a poem but of the art of composition' (TN 1, pp. 32-33). *Muthos* (emplotment) in Aristotle's *Poetics* is presented as the art of composing plots. While the function of *muthos* is to rearrange human action into a coherent form, that is, to order and organise action – it does more than *rearrange*: it *elevates* particular human actions.

Mimesis is thus defined by *muthos* (emplotment). In narrative we come to understand the character via the plot which 'grasps together and integrates into one whole and complete story multiple scattered actions' (TN 1, p. x).

The mediation that is attained in this triple *mimesis* (*mimesis*₁ *mimesis*₂ *mimesis*₃) involves a cyclic relationship between narrative and life, allowing us to transcend oppositional and binary views through a hermeneutic circling that carries the ‘mediation past the same point a number of times, but at different altitudes’ (TN 1, p. 72).

*mimesis*₁

The composition of a plot is grounded in a pre-understanding of the world of action, its meaningful structures, its symbolic resources, and its temporal character (TN 1, p. 54).

In *mimesis*₁ – *prefiguration* – human experience has what Ricoeur refers to as a pre-narrative quality that is meaningfully organised into a coherent and meaningful narrative by means of triple *mimesis* mediated by time. This pre-understanding or ‘pre-narrative’ is critical to the relationship of the subject and the objects of her world. It involves the shared ‘vocabulary’ in which the action and discourse takes place. This refers to *narrative understanding* and *practical understanding* – the shared space that the author and the readers must inhabit to understand each other. This shared space involves a practical understanding about how and why people behave in the world, an understanding based on our day-to-day experience within it. Our understanding is embedded in narratives that are, in turn, anchored in our practical understanding of the world. Thus, there is an intimate connection between narrative and actions. There is a sense here of a structural authority. Indeed, David Carr (1986) finds *mimesis*₁ reflects the structuralism that Ricoeur seeks to reject. Ricoeur, however, argues that *mimesis*₁ cannot be isolated or separated from the other constituent parts of emplotment and does not refer to narrative on the level of single actions or linear sequences of elementary actions. Instead, he distinguishes two further levels: *practices* and *plans of life*.

Practices include professions (such as farmer, teacher etc). Participating in a practice presupposes learning and training based on a particular tradition. Ricoeur does not say that practices as such display narrative structure. Rather, he speaks about a pre-narrative structure in terms of the organisation that is responsible for the fact that a practice gives meaning to the lives of the participating subjects. *Plans of life* are global representations based on goals and values. These plans organise an individual’s activities and are sketched in narrative form. Although Ricoeur resists any simple equation between narrative and life (OA, p. 190), he does link *plans of life* more explicitly to narrative. A narrative has a beginning, middle and an end but the unity of life is never a given. At best, it can only be forecast, since interventions and contingencies of events do not allow for the ‘authorial position’ in real life (OA, pp. 186-193).

*Mimesis*₂

draws its intelligibility from its faculty of mediation, which is to conduct us from one side of the text to the other, transfiguring the one side into the other through its power of configuration (TN 1, p. 53).

*Mimesis*₂ (or configuration) serves an important mediating function or configuring role in narrative between *mimesis*₁ and *mimesis*₃. This mediation occurs in a number of ways to bring about a synthesis of a multitude of events, actors, means, purposes, interactions, circumstances and time where multiple incidents are transformed into one narrative. It mediates in three ways: *organisationally* between the events and the story to organise the two into an intelligible whole; *configurally* bringing together factors as ‘heterogeneous as agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results’ (TN 1, p. 65); and *temporally* grasping together disparate elements over time. (See section on temporality later this chapter.) *Mimesis*₂ is pivotal to narrative development: the dimension of *mimesis* that comprises emplotment and ‘opens the space for fiction’. It opens the world of the *as if* (TN 1, p. 45) inverting the ‘effect of contingency’ by incorporating it into the ‘effect of necessity or probability’. *Mimesis*₂ begins the transfiguring event where the innovation of metaphor creates a new semantic innovation. (See section on metaphor below.)

*Mimesis*₃

marks the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader (TN 1, p. 71).

In *mimesis*₃ (or refiguration) the process of *configuration*, which began in *mimesis*₂, is completed – outside of the text and located in the reader. *Mimesis*₃ refers to our understanding after we have read the narrative. Accordingly, the reader attains self-understanding by *appropriating* the text. Ricoeur suggests here that the author loses authorship once the discourse is written. In the written mode, ‘the author’s intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide’ (RM, p. 29). By suggesting that the author loses authorship, Ricoeur is not suggesting a death or erasure of the author, rather he is claiming the space between authorial intention and reader’s interpretation to be a space where discourse is reconfigured. In a sense, then the author loses authorship and the reader loses self to the text. That is, the reader lets the text increase her understanding:

The convergence of the author’s configuration of the text and the reader’s refiguration is the dynamic merger that makes possible the net gain of new meaning in metaphorical writing (RI, p. 7).

Seen in this way, written text is autonomous ‘in relation to the speaker’s intention, to its reception by its original audience, and to the economic, social and cultural circumstances of its production’ (ibid, p. 17). Ricoeur reminds us that meaning comprises both the author’s intention and the reader’s interpretation within discursive dimensions: ‘If emplotment can be described as an act of judgement and of the productive imagination, it is so insofar as this act is the joint work of the text and reader’ (TN 1, p. 76).

Metaphor

A central theme in Ricoeur’s work on narrative identity is the power of metaphor. He discusses the creative and imaginative ways in which metaphor produces new ways of knowing. Alongside *Time and Narrative* sits Ricoeur’s earlier work *The Rule of Metaphor* (RM). These works explore what Ricoeur refers to as *semantic innovation*, that is, the creation of meaning based on units of language: the word, the sentence, the text. These texts, along with *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (1976), underline the theme of interpretation as a creative activity.

It is through the last sense that the mimetic function of the plot rejoins metaphorical reference. And whereas metaphorical redescription reigns in the field of sensory, emotional, aesthetic and axiological values, which make the world a habitable world, the mimetic function of plots takes place by preference in the field of action and of its temporal values (TN 1, p. xi).

In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur asserts that metaphors are more than tropes of language; he argues for their power to re-describe the world. Ricoeur’s theory of metaphor is not a mere substitution of one name for another. Rather, metaphors create tension between the literal meaning and the attributed meaning. A metaphor reduces the ‘shock engendered by two incompatible ideas’ creating ‘kinship where ordinary vision does not perceive any relationship’ (INT, p. 51). Metaphor is

a calculated error, which brings together things that do not go together and by means of this apparent misunderstanding it causes a new, hitherto unnoticed, relation of meaning to spring up between the terms that previous systems of classification had ignored or not allowed (ibid).

Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else on grounds of analogy. It brings together terms that at first seem distant but then suddenly they are close – requiring a perceptiveness of resemblances. A good metaphor, Ricoeur argues, is a newly

invented one. Metaphor involves ‘placing things before our eyes’, ‘spiritedness’, ‘elegance’, and ‘urbanity to make ‘discourse appear to the senses’ (RM, p. 38). It is in metaphor that the creative innovation lies: ‘the producing of a new semantic pertinence by means of an impertinent attribution’ (TN 1, p. ix).

The function of metaphor is to ‘instruct by suddenly combining elements that have not been put together before’ (RM, p. 37). It abolishes the distance between distinct semantic fields in order to produce a semantic shock – a new meaning. Metaphor points out, or makes visible, resemblances which are understood as a tension between identity and difference but which also set in motion a new semantic innovation.

The strategy of discourse implied in metaphorical language is neither to improve communication nor to insure univocity in argumentation, but to shatter and to increase our sense of reality by shattering and increasing our language. ... With metaphor we experience the metamorphosis of both language and reality (RI, p. 85).

Thus, the metaphorical process in *mimesis*₂ requires a competence to produce new analogies that resist our current categorisations of language. Accordingly, metaphor is the part of language that invites us to interpret. Metaphors are valuable in that they force the listener or reader to interpret them. This work of interpretation (hermeneutics) is itself an intrinsic part of the metaphoric process. It is through metaphor that *mimesis* becomes emplotment and ‘therefore not merely an imitation of nature, but an imitation of human action’ (Simms, 2003, p. 64).

Metaphor and narrative

Ricoeur brings together two frequently differentiated elements of language: metaphor and narrative; the first being traditionally part of the theory of tropes, the second belonging to the field of narrative theory.

With metaphor, the innovation lies in ... the resistance of the words in their ordinary use and therefore their incompatibility at the level of a literal interpretation of the sentence With narrative, the semantic innovation lies in the inventing of another work of synthesis – a plot ... It is this synthesis of the heterogeneous that brings narrative close to metaphor (TN 1, p. ix).

The passage to the hermeneutic point of view corresponds to the change of level that moves from the sentence to the discourse. In this way, metaphor finds a far greater new semantic pertinence, in the form of metaphorical statements and thus has ‘the power to redescribe

reality' (RM, p. 5). Ricoeur suggests that metaphor reveals human desire while at the same time breaking the relationship between language and things. This rupture 'over signifies' a meaning beyond the reach of the original term and enables the ability to go beyond the world as the totality of things to see the world 'as' something new or different. So metaphor can be seen as an act of imagination, telling us more about something we did not know. As such, it is also seen, like narrative, as an instance of discourse. Ricoeur connects metaphor and narrative innovation to discourse: 'This common ground already has a name – discourse' (PA 1, p. 135) and further links both to imagination, where the semantic innovation is 'carried back to the productive imagination' (TN 1, p. ix). Imagination, he argues, 'should be treated as a dimension of language', where links 'appear between imagination and metaphor' (PA 1, p. 148).

Explanation, understanding and interpretation

In Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy, to read and understand a text is not to understand it in one way at all times. Understanding is always subjective. 'It is always someone who hears, makes his own, and appropriates the meaning.' There is no short cut between the objective analysis of the structures of a story and the subjective appropriation of meaning: 'between the two lies the world of the text, the meaning of the work ... the world of possible paths of a real action' (PA 1, p. 155). While Ricoeur acknowledges that interpretation must involve appropriation by the reader, he argues that the hermeneutical circle is not correctly understood when presented as a 'circle between two subjectivities, that of the reader and the author' or as a 'projection of the subjectivity of the reader in the reading itself' (PA 2, p. 145).

In Ricoeur's view, the subject understands herself in the presence of the text, 'to the extent that the text is not closed on itself, but open to the world which it redescribes and refashions' (ibid). No science of reading or interpretation accords the *correct* meaning. Reading becomes a work of rendering the text meaningful. What is it to read and understand a text? Structuralist hermeneutics would cast readership and understanding in a linear, causal relationship. However, Ricoeur, adopting Gadamer's dialectic of explanation and understanding, sees that reading and understanding are rooted in event and meaning. He emphasises that understanding is mediated by explanation and that there is a constant to-and-fro action between an analytic explanation and an understanding open to interpretation.

In explaining a text, we seek to discover how a text works; that is, to comprehend it. Explanation and understanding are complementary elements involved in the interpretive

process. The process of understanding a text is undertaken by the reader, where the reader ultimately makes a text her own. While an opening *guess* by a reader may affect the outcome of an interpretive reading, it is not predeterminative – explanation will bring out the structure of the text. That is, explanation seeks the internal structure of the work while projecting itself into a potential world. Mediation of explanation and understanding is a central concern for Ricoeur: ‘To explain more is to understand better’ (TN 1, p. x).

Explanation requires understanding to bring forth an inner dialectic that constitutes interpretation. Humans approach a text with pre-understanding; explanation brings out the structure of the text, whereas understanding lays out the existential possibilities. Ricoeur identifies this dialectical encounter – ‘the reciprocity between *text*-interpretation and *self*-interpretation’ as a hermeneutical circle (PA 1, p. 134). This is not a subjective circle. Rather, Ricoeur defines it as an ontological one: ‘The circle is between my way ... of being – beyond the knowledge which I may have of it – and the mode ... of being disclosed by the text as the work’s world’ (PA 2, pp. 145-146).

Ricoeur argues here that ‘the coming to language of the sense and the reference of a text is the coming to language of a world and the recognition of another person’ (ibid). If appropriating a text is about disclosure, then the role of subjectivity involves a receptive stance: ‘To understand oneself before, in front of, a world is the contrary of projecting oneself and one’s beliefs and prejudices; it is to let the work and its world enlarge the horizon of my own self-understanding’ (ibid).

One of the strengths of Ricoeur’s work is that he recognises the legitimacy of conflicting views. He values apparent inconsistency as necessary, and in so doing, refuses an easy dialectical synthesis or reduction of meaning. In Ricoeur’s project, the task is not to discover an unmediated reality, but to continue to mediate reality through new, creative interpretations. Once discourse is written or inscribed, ‘the author’s intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide’ (INT, p. 29). Poststructural thought refers to the ‘death of the author’, although in Ricoeur’s poststructural hermeneutics it appears that the author is not so much *dead* as *distributed* throughout the many interpretations that can be made of a text, perhaps a ‘re-authoring’ of the author. The author’s text is one version, one point of origin, of the text that engages the reader, inviting the reader to increase her understanding of life. This interpretive framework allows for the possibility of bringing in new meanings (live metaphors) rather than imposing interpretation upon a reader or having the reader merely interpret. So, rather than the text being a one-dimensional transmission, Ricoeur’s notion of

interpretation engages the author and reader in a creative interplay. In Ricoeur's view, the reader attains understanding by the dialectic of *distantiation* and *appropriation*.

The concept of distantiation is the dialectical counterpart of the notion of belonging, in the sense that we belong to a historical tradition through a relation of distance which oscillates between remoteness and proximity. To interpret is to render near what is far (temporally, geographically, culturally, spiritually) (FT, p. 35).

The task of interpretation is to 'reconstruct the internal dynamic of the text so as to make manifest the world which it projects' (ibid, p. 32). The narrative grasps together character and multiple scattered actions and events. The plot orders the events, establishing causal relationships over time, and it is through an interpretive reading that intentions and new meanings occur.

Interpretation is the process by which disclosure of new modes of being – or if you prefer Wittgenstein to Heidegger, of new forms of life – gives to the subject a new capacity for knowing himself. If the reference of the text is the project of a world, then it's not the reader who primarily projects himself. The reader rather is enlarged in his capacity of self-projection by receiving a new mode of being from the text itself (INT, p. 94).

The verification or validity of a reading is not a falsification test for Ricoeur. Rather, it is a test of probability where different tools are employed to argue the validity of one interpretation over another. It is always possible to argue for or against an interpretation, to confront interpretations, to arbitrate between them and to seek agreement, even if this agreement remains beyond our immediate reach (INT, p. 76). It is not true, however, that all interpretations are equal. The text presents a limited field of possible constructions – that is, there are only a limited number of ways of interpreting a text and not all interpretations will make sense. To interpret is to 'appropriate here and now the intention of the text'. The intended meaning of the text is not necessarily the presumed intention of the author, 'but rather what the text means for whoever complies with its injunction'. The text seeks to place us in its meaning: 'to follow the path of thought opened up by the text, to place oneself en route towards the orient of the text' (HS, pp. 161-162).

Temporality and historicity

For Ricoeur, meaning comes from action – the unfolding of words in sentences and sentences in discourse – and this meaning is produced and understood within time through the temporal qualities implied by narration and prediction. The present moment of historical time in which

action takes place consists of an intersection between experience and expectation, two processes that mutually act upon each other. Without the dialectical tension between experience and expectation, action would be impossible, but neither can act alone. Historical time becomes a space where narrative forms discourse. To recall the past is to begin to understand the narrative embodiment of our temporal experience. Time, Ricoeur claims, is historical to the extent that it is organised after the manner of narrative.

It is at this point that the dialectic between historicity and narrativity may bring forth genuine insights, thanks to reinterpretation of each term of the one by means of the other. What is needed is not just an ‘application’ of the concept of historicity as repetition to the theory of narrative but a rereading of the latter capable, in turn of rectifying the former (HS, p. 179).

Following Augustine, Ricoeur wrestles with the problematic character of time. He reveals how the art of creating a plot responds to the aporia of time. This aporia refers to a gap between a phenomenology of time (mortal, subjective) and cosmic time (scientific, objective). Cosmic time refers to infinite age of the cosmos considered as endless and natural time (the time of astronomy and physics). Phenomenological or mortal time refers to the average finite life span of humans. The contrast between these two times is what defines us along a continuum of life-to-death: ‘Would we speak of the shortness of life, if it did not stand out against the immensity of time?’ (TN 3, p. 93).

Ricoeur states that what marks out cosmic time is that it stands apart from our efforts to master it. He speculates, however, that history mediates between these two times (TN 1). People harmonise mortal and cosmic conceptions of time through the use of diaries, calendars, documents and archives. This harmonising constitutes a humanising of cosmic time, which Ricoeur calls historical time. Ricoeur sees historical time as a third time that inscribes mortal (or lived) time on cosmic time. Historical time refers to the moments of our lives that are more important than other moments, for example, the birth of a child or the death of a loved one are more important than other moments.

Ricoeur’s explanation of time draws upon Augustine’s *intentio in distentio* – the dialectic between the intention of the mind towards stillness (eternity which is not time) and the distention of the mind that constitutes its movement in time and thus constitutes the perception of time itself. Ricoeur argues that it might be correct to say that ‘there are three times, a present of [de] past things, a present of [de] present things, and a present of [de] future things’ (TN 1, p. 11).

The mind in relation to these three ‘present times’ performs three functions: expectation, attention and memory.

The result is that ‘the future,’ which it expects, passes through ... to present, to which it attends, into the past, which it remembers, and yet expectation and memory are ‘in’ the soul, as impression-images and as sign-images It is in the soul, hence as an impression, that expectation and memory possess extension. But the impression is in the soul only inasmuch as the mind *acts*, that is, expects, attends, and remembers (TN 1, p. 19).

To conceive of the past and the future, the mind must be stretched – distended – out of the present. The present contains the past and future so long as the mind is distended in this way. The intention of *intentio* is the motivating force of the mind that animates meaning.

The historical time that narrative presents is an interpersonal, public time. It is the time in which one can locate sequences of generations and the traces their lives have left behind. Furthermore, it is the time in which debts to predecessors have been incurred. Indeed, Ricoeur holds that without at least a latent sense of indebtedness to predecessors, history would be meaningless. The time of narrative is public time, but not in the sense of ordinary time, indifferent to human beings, to their acting and suffering. Narrative time is public time in the ‘same sense that within-time-ness is, before it is levelled off by ordinary time’.

This first side of public time is, in some sense, internal to the interaction. But the narrative has a second relationship to public time: external public time or, we might say, the time of the public. Now a story’s public is its audience. Through its recitation, a story is incorporated into a community which it gathers together. It is only through the written text that the story is open to a public that, to borrow Gadamer’s expression, amounts to anyone who can read (HS, pp. 171-172).

By the end of *Time and Narrative 3*, Ricoeur has introduced the concept of narrative identity – a framework in which he sees both individuals and communities forming their identities by telling stories about themselves and where such stories become their history. This narrative identity has both historical and fictional components. Both fictive and historical narrative bring into relief the temporal character of human existence in that both forms of narrative make sense of time. The result is a recognition of human time – a fragile mix of the past of history and the imaginative variations of fiction. By writing history and telling stories, we provide shape to the enigma of time. Ricoeur shows us that history makes use of fiction and

fiction has a historical component, an interweaving that Ricoeur calls the *historical present*. This he sees as a proper present.

The world unfolded by every narrative work is always a temporal world ...time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence (TN 1, p. 52).

The historical component is bound by argument and verification; and the fictional component utilises imaginative variations of what has happened to create new interpretations and new ways of seeing things.

Narrative identity and intersubjectivity

While Ricoeur's discussion of narrative identity begins *Time and Narrative 3*, it is expanded upon and fully developed as a discussion of ethics in what is regarded as his magnum opus – *Oneself as Another* (OA). In this book, Ricoeur begins with 'the question of selfhood' and brings together his major themes: narrative, action, metaphor, time, evil and the ideal. It is here that narrative identity, as a basis for appreciating the intersubjective elements of personal identity, is developed further. Ricoeur argues that the complexity of the question 'who' opens up the question of personal identity:

How the self can be at one and the same time a person of whom we speak and a subject who designates herself in the first person while addressing a second person ... The difficulty will be ... understanding how the third person is designated in discourse as someone who designates himself as a first person (OA, pp. 34-35).

Drawing on Heidegger's notion of Dasein, Ricoeur states that 'to say self is not to say myself ... the passage from selfhood to mineness is marked by the clause "in each case" ... The self is in each case mine' (OA, p. 180). For Ricoeur, the question 'Who am I?' can never be fully answered because the question falls within the domain of inquiry giving a questing, dialectical character to selfhood. This requires a hermeneutic approach of 'embodied subjectivity' – an ontology of the self and one's body.

Ricoeur refers to the last three studies (or chapters) of *Oneself as Another* as his 'little ethics'. In the tenth study *What Ontology in View*, he poses the question, 'What sort of being is the self?' Here, he takes up the idea of *otherness* that he sees being at the heart of selfhood. According to his schema, a hermeneutics of self is the site of three interrelated problematics:

the indirect approach of reflection through the detour of analysis; the first determination of selfhood by way of its contrast with sameness; the second determination of selfhood by way of its dialectic with otherness (OA, p. 297).

Here, he develops his thesis that alterity is polysemic and that alterity is irreducible to the alterity of other persons. Ricoeur argues that we should instead see ourselves as other persons. In this embracing of heterogeneity and difference, Ricoeur establishes a position about selfhood far from Descartes' rational man.

I exist *insofar* as I think. But this truth is a vain truth; it is like a first step which cannot be followed by any other, so long as the *ego* of the *ego cogito* has not been recaptured in the mirror of its objects, of its works, and, finally, of its acts (PA 1, p. 102).

Rejecting a notion of self as intuitive or transparent, and aligning somewhat with Heideggerian *Dasein*, Ricoeur posits an *intersubjective subject*: a subject that is situated and embodied in the real world (named, dated, physical and historical) and one that is linguistically designated, mediated by signs and symbols (Ricoeur, 1991a; OA).

In developing his notion of narrative identity, Ricoeur understands that there is no entity called 'self', only *selfhood*, constituted by intersubjectivity. Ricoeur's identity is not simply there like an objective fact. Rather, to possess a selfhood is to be *subject to*, and the *subject of*, dynamic experiences and instabilities. To be a person and to gain one's identity – in the sense of identity as a narrated selfhood – means to be a being which without a fixed identity. A narrative identity is not a stable and seamless identity. Rather, it is a complex array of stories about one's self and one's other, entwined in history, community and memories – new and forgotten. Just as it is possible to compose several plots about the same incidents ... 'so it is always possible to weave different, even opposed, plots about our identities' (TN 3, p. 248).

Having adopted the term 'poetics of action' from Aristotle, to denote the creative act of configuration in *mimesis*₃, Ricoeur argues that because of our human capacity to re-create and to re-state action metaphorically, 'we are prepared to look at human beings in a new way' (RI, p. 84). We are therefore in a position to make moral judgments that are ultimately complicit in the creation of individual and community identities. Through the interplay of imagination and language, we can begin to see reality in terms of potential rather than in terms of actuality.

One of the tasks Ricoeur sets himself in the sixth study of *Oneself as Another*, 'The self and narrative identity', is to explore at a 'higher level' the dialectic of sameness and selfhood implicit in the concept of narrative identity. After all, it is not as though we become

completely different entities at each new narrative juncture. He argues that a person's narrative identity comprises an *idem* (sameness) and an *ipse* (selfhood).

The genuine nature of narrative identity discloses itself, in my opinion, only in the dialectic of selfhood and sameness ... this dialectic represents the major contribution of narrative theory to the constitution of the self (OA, p. 140).

Personal identity, he holds, is constituted by an inextricable tie between *idem* and *ipseity*. Without both forms of identity, there can be no self because a self has both an *idem* and an *ipse* identity. However, both aspects of identity are quite different. *Idem* identity is that which gives the self its spatio-temporal sameness; *ipse* identity gives the self its ability to initiate something new. For Ricoeur, identity is not *idem*; it is selfhood: 'I have repeatedly affirmed, identity is not sameness' (OA, p. 116).

Idem identity (sameness) is characterised by the question 'What am I?' It signifies uninterrupted continuity – numerical and qualitative. Our *idem* identity is what makes us recognisable as the same person over time: a person who can be identified as the same over her lifespan, with identifying characteristics that constitutes her sameness even though she may age, change shape, alter names and undergo various other changes.

In order to answer the question 'who?', Ricoeur unfolds the notion of *ipseity*

to look into the nature of the question to which the self constitutes a response, or a range of responses. This question is the question who, distinct from the question what (Ricoeur, 1991a, p. 75).

Unlike *idem* identity, *ipse* identity does not depend on something permanent for its existence; rather, it emerges from narrative. *Iipse*-identity gives self a unique ability to initiate something new and imputable. Identity as *ipseity* (selfhood) is linked to the realm of narrative where actions are ascribed to agents in the light of ethical norms. *Iipseity* calls for the 'assignment of an agent' and in this way action is attested to and to this is grafted 'the act of imputation' so that action takes on moral significance. Ricoeur's separation of *idem* and *ipse* identities is both epistemological and ontological.

While acknowledging the difference between the two concepts of identity, Ricoeur argues that both forms of identity are integrated by *permanence-in-time*. This integration means that the two aspects 'appear to cover the same space of meaning' – an apparent overlap that may be confusing, in that it is difficult not to attribute permanence over time to some 'immutable

substrate, to a substance' (Ricoeur, 1991a, p. 74). He argues, however, that the question of personal identity is obscured by not distinguishing between the two usages. The puzzle about personal identity arises because two models of permanence in time are available to us: (a) character, and (b) keeping one's word or promise. Ricoeur understands character as a lasting disposition or set of characteristics which permits the 'reidentification of a human individual as being the same' over time. Character provides the descriptive features that give the individual 'numerical identity, qualitative identity, uninterrupted continuity and permanence in time' (OA, p. 119). Thus, character belongs to *idem*. It is the 'what' of the 'who' (OA, p. 122).

While character appears to belong squarely to *idem*, the overlap of the *who* with the *what* reveals the presence of *ipse* as well – not in the notion of character but in the idea of a promise. This highlights the ethical dimension of selfhood: that of keeping one's word. Thus, a person gives permanence to her being through promise. In the act of promising, the person affirms herself as an individual whose identity is extended in time – an active identification with the future. In keeping the promise, she creates a continuous self in time.

Self constancy is for each person that manner of conducting himself or herself so that others can *count on* that person. Because someone is 'counting on' me, I am *accountable for* my actions before another (OA, p. 165).

Not keeping the promise does not mean she is a different person, but represents a distancing from the past self who made this commitment. Even in breaking the promise, she acknowledges the continuity of her life as a person.

It is within the idea of permanence-over-time that *idem* and *ipse* overlap, although not to the extent that they become indistinguishable. Instead, we are moved toward understanding the two realms in terms of the dialectic of innovation and sedimentation that underlies the acquisition of a habit. The equally rich dialectic of otherness and internalisation underlying the process of identification reminds us that 'character has a history' (OA, p. 123). Mediating between the poles of sameness and selfhood (*idem* and *ipse*) is Ricoeur's notion of 'imaginative variations' of identity (OA, p. 148). Emanating from a literary metaphor, imaginative variations provide a laboratory for thought experiments, for fictional accounts of who one is, for reinterpretation of the 'already interpreted' in a new and more creative fashion: 'The narrative does not merely tolerate these variations, it engenders them, seeks them out' (OA, p. 148).

Narrative identity and ethics

In *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur's discussion of ethics, morality and practical wisdom sits alongside language, action, identity and narration to develop his 'little ethics'. His triad of description, narration and prescription discusses how human action can be *prescribed* and determined by the predicates of 'good' and 'obligatory' (OA, p. 169), giving actions both ethical and moral dimensions. In the sixth study of *Oneself as Another*, 'The self and narrative identity', Ricoeur asks what extension of the practical field is called for by the narrative function if the action described is to match the action narrated. This questioning leads Ricoeur to the position that a narrative is never ethically neutral and that an examination of narrative proves to be the 'first laboratory of moral judgment' (OA, p. 140).

It is this preunderstanding of the historical significance of connectedness that the narrative theory of personal identity attempts to articulate...Understood in narrative terms, identity can be called ... the identity of character (OA, p. 141).

Ricoeur's notion of 'little ethics' argues that our being in the world is first and foremost an ethical engagement with the 'other'. His notion of ethics is not about codes, structures and frameworks, but rather, about response and responsibility where ethics is seen to be a self-inquiry into what it means to be a 'good person'. For Ricoeur, aiming at the 'good life' entails a narrative journey involving history and fiction. Ethics, like the truth, is not 'out there'. Rather, it is situated and embodied and it is within the encounter and the stories that we tell about ourselves as we encounter each 'other'. Whether at individual or community level, the dialectical encounter involves relationships between self and others.

Ricoeur suggests that there are three ways of thinking about action (discourse). First, it can be described; second, it can be recounted or narrated; and third, it can be imputed with value that is judged as good or bad. This triad of description, narration and prescription sets up the relationship between the three modes of language and how we come to view practical actions as potentially ethical ones. Ethics, broadly speaking, is concerned with making decisions about good and bad, encompassing a range of values and behaviours in relation to morality and what may be deemed right and proper. Ricoeur's position is that action always aims at some good and that the ultimate aim is having a "good life" with and for others, in just institutions' (OA, p. 172).

The fundamental question of Ricoeur's ethics 'How should I like to lead my life?' has a long history in Western philosophy. Ricoeur's moral philosophy links ethical and political interests with human action:

Certainly, there is no human life that should not be 'examined,' in the sense of the Socratic adage... But it remains the case that what calls for such examination is life, the way of leading one's life. The first question in the moral order is not 'What must I do?' but rather 'How would I like to lead my life?' (TJ, p. xv).

He distinguishes between ethics and morality: 'I reserve the term "ethics" for the *aim* of an accomplished life and the term "morality" for the articulation of this aim in *norms* characterised at once by the claim to universality and by an effect of constraint' (OA, p. 170). In this distinction, he recognises two heritages: the Aristotelian, in which ethics is characterised by its *teleological* perspective; and a Kantian heritage, defined by an 'obligation to respect the norm' (ibid). Referring to the opening lines of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, he argues that the first component of the ethical aim is what Aristotle called 'living well' or the 'good life' in praxis (ibid, p. 172). However, while he borrows the notion of the good life from Aristotle, Ricoeur places quite a different signification upon it. For Aristotle, the good life was achieved by position and wealth embedded in a Hellenic social order; whereas for Ricoeur, the good life in praxis refers to the 'nebulous of ideals and dreams of achievements with regard to which a life is held to be more or less fulfilled or unfulfilled'. That is, the good life lies beyond our conception of it: 'Between our aim of a "good life" and our particular choices a sort of hermeneutical circle is traced by virtue of the back and forth motion between the idea of the "good life" and the most important decisions of our existence (career, loves, leisure, etc)' (OA, p. 179).

Ricoeur's understanding of ethics is aligned with other contemporary approaches that focus on ethics as a practice. Rather than espousing universal codes and prescriptions, Ricoeur's ethics focuses on a creative ethical practice. In line with approaches such as Bauman's (1993) postmodern ethics, and the feminist orientation of the ethics of care (Tronto, 1993; Noddings, 2002), Ricoeur's 'little ethics' promotes personal responsibility and relationships, active engagement with others, and an acceptance of contingency. Framing ethics as a narrative engagement allows for different readings of situations. In this way, Ricoeur's ethics is particularly relevant in problematising current readings of the child and early child practice. This is in keeping with the postmodern approach that Dahlberg & Moss bring to ethics and politics in early childhood education. They claim that ethics should be based on 'active

practice, particularity, emotions, uncertainty, messiness, provisionality’ (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 69).

Ricoeur’s ‘three cornered ethics’ (Muldoon, 2002, p. 84), consisting of the *good person*, the *good life* and *just institutions*, emphasises the necessity to see the self, the other and institutions as intimately connected – a connection necessary to answer the questions of how one is to act and why. His understanding of the good life is not about wealth and status. Rather, he sees the aim of a good life is praxis (OA, p. 172). Praxis is central to Ricoeur’s thesis, where a person authors her own actions through an engaged involvement within a hierarchy of practices within the institution/ profession. Such practices involve socially constituted and established rules, learned from others and passed along by tradition. In such a way, one’s practices are open to comparison – ‘standards of excellence’ that act as both self-appraisal and a potential norm. Thus, institutions set the context for action: ‘It is as citizens that we become human. The hope to live within just institutions means nothing else’ (TJ, p. xv). Ricoeur’s definition of ethics a ‘wish for the good life’ is informed by desire for ‘personal fulfilment and the reciprocity of friendship’ (ibid).

The engagement and encounter through mutual vulnerability is important, and does not allow for *imposing* on others. Instead, it calls for us to *expose* ourselves to each other, in a responsive way so that we increase our understanding – of self and others. Ricoeur’s emphasis on the ethics requires a narrative opening. His recourse to *poesis*, developed through his narrative theory involving metaphor and new semantic meaning, indicates that it is important to keep our ethical practices in ‘play’ to reveal their poetic value and to be free from an obligation to finish a story. Such creative engagement aims at increasing our self-understanding and provides us with diverse and different possibilities of interpretation. Ricoeur regards tensions as inherent in human existence, describing them as intersections that provide new meanings. He argues that the stability we enjoy is tentative and subject to the material world, the body, the actions of others, the actions of institutions and one’s own emotional and cognitive states. The aim for Ricoeur is to weave heterogeneous concepts and discourses to form composite discourses in which new meanings are created and shared without diminishing specificity and difference.

In answering the question ‘who?’, a story is told about the action of the who. So, individuals and communities make sense of actions and events by telling stories. In other words, narrative has the function of giving explanations of actions and events:

Between the activity of narrating a story and the temporal character of human experience there exists a correlation that is not merely accidental but that presents a transcultural form of necessity (TN 1, p. 52).

This story is necessarily bound up in the stories of others. Ricoeur argues that the identity of the *who* must therefore be a narrative identity. Narrative and action together comprise the narrative unity of a person's life. The self is not distinct from her experiences: 'It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character' (OA, pp. 147-148). Thus, the basis of Ricoeur's theory of personal identity is that the narrative constructs the identity of the character in the telling of the story. This nexus of narrative and identity formation underlines the connection the narrative makes between estimations applied to actions and the evaluation of persons themselves – an ethical connection:

The narrative unity of a life therefore serves to assure us that the subject of ethics is none other than the one to whom the narrative assigns a narrative identity (OA, p.178).

Narratives comprise promises and present characters in such a way that we are impelled to act and evaluate. Every character in a narrative both acts and is acted upon, rising to the status of real or fiction when evaluated by another. This situation has practical dimensions: we have indebtedness to each other, a duty to care for each other, and to engender self-respect and justice. These dimensions are preceded by reciprocity (which underlies our mutual vulnerability and from which the possibility of friendship and justice arises). In order to feel commanded by duty, one must be able to hear and respond to the demand of the other: a primordial openness and orientation to others. All of this is necessary for the creation and preservation of self-esteem, which for Ricoeur, is part of the aim of leading a 'good life'.

It is through narrative that explanations, plans, schemes, projects and goals are organised, providing a means for future actions. Thus, narrative occupies an important temporal position – including past actions, present process, and giving shape to the future. Thought of in this way, it is evident that narrative is not only a way of representing past facts, or providing present functionality, but is also a way of forming expectations about future events.

Ricoeur emphasises the interdependence of history and fiction where the past is re-presented. In the fictional narrative, life can be re-described, revealed and transformed. Out of this fusion, the concept of narrative identity emerges. When we engage in narrative, we are not portraying the world as it is, but rather interpreting observed phenomena within historical perspectives. Our interpretation brings together these perspectives, equalises them, rendering

them contemporary and similar. According to Ricoeur, the aim of all hermeneutics is to struggle against cultural distance and historical alienation, 'to appropriate what is alien and to make one's own' (HS, p. 185). Understanding narrative is not to *impose* one's self on the text, but to *expose* oneself to it. That is, through narrative we engage with the text, we appropriate it and bring our historical and cultural understanding to it. We reconfigure within the frame of our current actions and texts, using both history and fiction. Furthermore, this form of 'readership' requires a pre-understanding – a historical-cultural horizon, from which we view the text-other. This is not only a historical-cultural horizon; it is also an ontology Ricoeur describes as belonging.

In this way then a narrative brings forth, or presences, the subject. Narrative is the way in which one's 'being this' or 'being that' is revealed so the subject of a narrative is not distinct from her experiences. A story and a character are mutually organised through narrative emplotment, drawing together discordant elements, bringing about concordance, and integrating contingencies which could have been different or nonexistent, but which, when integrated, become a quasi-necessity. Concordance and discordance is first introduced by Ricoeur in *Time and Narrative 2* in relation to emplotment. Ricoeur sees these two concepts dialectically: concordance serves as an ordering force that presides over the narrative arrangement; whereas discordance refers to actions, events that transform plot from its initial situation. This is the basis of Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity:

The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character (OA, pp. 147-148).

Promoting narrative as a medium through which we understand ourselves foregrounds ways of living, acting and thinking that are important to our being in the world. Every character both acts and is acted upon, becoming real or fictitious when evaluated by another. Ricoeur's point here is that the question of selfhood cannot be segregated from the social nexus in which one figures. Each person's identity always intersects those of other persons in the narrative. The self is an entity that is a product of intersubjective praxis and active appropriation of the cultural environment. Hermeneutics neither privatises nor co-opts the other's experience. Rather, it recognises a small window of opportunity where two worlds do not necessarily agree but can mutually co-exist.

It opens a text away from its author and toward the world it discloses. The subjective experience represents an irrepressible uniqueness through the singularity of an individual

but becomes shared through history, through the publicity of language (Leonardo, 2003, p. 340).

There is a close etymological connection between response and responsibility. The responsibility for an action presupposes the capability of an agent to communicate, to enter in a dialogue with others and to give a response to the question ‘Who did this?’ One makes sense of oneself only in and through involvement with others. In dealings with others, one does not simply enact a role or function that one has been assigned. While bounded by biological, physiological and psychological constraints, one can change oneself, encourage others to change, and be evaluated in a number of ways, for example, physical dexterity, technical ability or verbal fluency. Thus, the ethical dimension of selfhood to personal identity is not contingent on what personal identity is, but is essential to it, where the most important evaluation is one’s responsiveness to others.

Ricoeur and early childhood

Because Ricoeur’s narrative approach involves communication of interpretation and highlights the importance of human agency and imagination, it is well suited to a reflexive study of identity. Although the notion of modern identity is indeed troubling, Ricoeur asserts that it is a worthy problematic to trouble with. His is not a simple linear system. For Ricoeur, the self is the product of intersubjectivity and cultural appropriation. Theoretical perspectives that underpin the narrative pedagogy of various learning and teaching practices in early childhood in Aotearoa New Zealand, recognise the importance of personal stories, histories and cultural perspectives as being pivotal to children’s success in education, and reflect the complex nature of Ricoeur’s focus on subjectivity and the cultural context.

Reinforcing Ricoeur’s complex and always shifting notion of subjectivity, St Pierre is critical of positivist conceptions of education that rely too heavily on scientific notions of teaching. Such positivist views, she says, have ‘marginalised subjugated knowledges and done material harm at all levels of education’, although she also goes on to claim that ‘many educators have resisted this tendency over the last fifty years’ (St. Pierre, 2004, p. 286).

Te Whāriki is clear about the importance of a child’s identity, expressed in terms of ‘well being’ and ‘belonging’ through the inter-connectedness of the child’s ‘family and community’ and strongly linked to the importance of developing reciprocal and meaningful relationships in the world. This expression of identity is suggestive of dynamic interpersonal, dialogical

engagement of children, teachers, parents and whānau in social and cultural settings. Narrative theories and an understanding of the life world of the child through narrative underpin early childhood curriculum, pedagogy and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. Such underpinning also applies in some spheres of the compulsory sector where a storied approach to learning is seen to be both educationally and culturally relevant. This is evidenced in the development of *kaupapa* processes for Māori immersion education in Aotearoa, in which language and culture are recognised as key socio-political interventions.

The children learning in the kohanga are socialised through learning, and language learning is in turn organised by socio-cultural processes. In this way language learners are active, not passive, and it is the real-life activity that teaches the language; therefore, the cultural context will influence the language used (Bishop & Glyn, 1999, p. 77).

The importance of narrative theory is further underlined by the comparatively recent introduction of the planning and assessment tools – *learning stories*. This notion of storied learning takes its theoretical formation from the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki*, as well as social and cultural theoretical theorists like Vygotsky (1978), Wells (1985) and Wertsch (1991). The emphasis is on narrative genres, multiple voices, learning dispositions, children's interests and the teacher's involvement in what is seen as reciprocal and responsive relationships. This narrative-based pedagogy recognises the personal and collective histories of indigenous people. It also recognises, elicits and establishes Māori cultural practices as necessary new metaphors for educational initiatives, including a research paradigm that 'seeks to establish collaborative narratives ... determined and defined by the community itself' (Bishop & Glyn, 1999, p. 64). Here, Māori self-determination is promoted, 'to give Māori control over decision-making protocols on language use and pedagogical developments as they relate to the Māori language' (ibid, p. 97).

The principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* were developed in a collaborative curriculum development context with members of the Te Kōhanga Reo Trust. The writers, Helen May and Margaret Carr, were involved in a wide-ranging series of dialogues within the early childhood communities. What resulted includes a separate curriculum for the Māori immersion context of Te Kōhanga Reo, and a bicultural curriculum for Aotearoa New Zealand. Māori contexts are embedded within the text, and within the title of the curriculum, *Te Whāriki* – a woven mat – a title suggested by Tamati Reedy as a central metaphor to situate a framework of concepts in Te Ao Māori:

I can remember Tamati Reedy spent a day explaining ... the concepts and their origins in Te Ao Māori [the Māori world]. It was a complete framework and included the five 'wero' – aims for children. Margaret and I then worked with this framework to position the parallel domains for Pākehā, which later became the goals. These were not translations (May, personal communication in Te One, 2003, pp. 32-33).

A strong recognition of history, difference, narrative and metaphor are therefore important features embedded in early childhood curriculum in both indigenous and in mainstream early childhood education in New Zealand. This focus sits alongside 'the critical role of socially and culturally mediated learning' and an emphasis on 'reciprocal and responsive relationships for children with people, places, and things' (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9).

Ricoeur's narrative theory is used in the thesis as an ethical practice, one based on intersubjectivity, situatedness, interpretation and criticality. It forms the theoretical basis of analysis of particular narratives and practices within early childhood that are foregrounded in the thesis. In contrast to theories that impose a mechanistic model of human behaviour, Ricoeur's narrative emphasises the active, self-shaping quality of human thought, emphasising the interpretive and creative possibilities within narrative. Although Ricoeur did not write explicitly about early childhood education, his theory of narrative provides a rich resource for ways of understanding current policy and curriculum practices as narrative injunctions.

With an appreciation of the richness of Ricoeur's process of identity formation, and his emphasis on history, memory and metaphor, the chapters that follow examine a number of discourses in terms of narratives that impact on the identifications of children in early childhood education: a liberal narrative, a neoliberal narrative and a social narrative. Although treated separately for the purpose of analysis, their effects are contemporaneous and inter-related, and provide particular readings of the various aspects of early childhood education outlined so far in the thesis. Treating these perspectives in turn as different narratives does two things. First, it helps to explore the way particular social and political perspectives on young children are translated into policy and curriculum requirements. Second, it provides a meta-level to illustrate Ricoeur's ideas about how narratives function to mediate identity. The final narrative is inspired by Ricoeur, and involves elements of intersubjectivity, advocacy, community and 'just institutions'. Clearly, such aspects are relevant to the context of early childhood education; more importantly, they bring together the elements of a Ricoeurian ethical framework as a basis for interpreting early childhood identity in Aotearoa New

Zealand. The next section, then, begins with an exploration of early childhood from a liberal perspective.

Chapter 4. A Liberal Individual

But modern Western societies are unusual in construing the person as such a natural locus of beliefs and desires, with inherent capacities, as the self-evident origin of actions and decisions, as a stable phenomenon exhibiting consistency across different contexts and times No less unusual, historically, are our politics, which place so much emphasis on individual rights, individual choices, and individual freedoms (Rose, 1996, p. 22).

The chapter examines the traditional humanist notions of the individual, and locates the philosophical context of modern liberal education. It discusses liberal government and forms of social organisation, alighting on two forms of liberalism that are particularly relevant to the thesis: welfare liberalism and neoliberalism. Historically, liberal educational institutions, including early childhood centres, schools and universities, have legitimated themselves and their practices by reference to a discourse of subject-centred reason. Liberalism is a fundamental set of principles upon which education turns. Richard Peters (1966) notes the concept of education ‘is almost indistinguishable from that of “liberal education”’ (p. 43). The chapter tracks the liberal self in early childhood education, through the philosophies of Descartes, Locke, Kant and Rousseau, the last of whom inspired the pioneers of early childhood education, Pestalozzi and Froebel. This is by no means an exhaustive account of these liberal philosophers and educators. Rather, it is a laying out, in broad brushstrokes, of some sources of the modern liberal child in order to reveal a particular narrative of the child of *Te Whāriki*.

The chapter then focuses on a child-centred pedagogy to examine the liberal education project of *Te Whāriki* and to reveal the developing, self-actualising child of a humanist discourse. It plays with a botanical metaphor of the growing child inscribing a rational, private self with a unique identity, integrally located in a progressive social progressive context. Later in the chapter, liberalism is problematised in relation to Māori cultural understandings implicit in *Te Whāriki*, pointing to a number of issues and implications involved in liberal education. Another botanical metaphor of the child emerges – a child of *tangata whenua*, examined as a counterpoint to the ‘growing child’ metaphor of liberalism. This troubling of the liberal narrative leads us back to a Ricoeurian hermeneutic as a useful framework for understanding questions concerning liberal identity – in particular, Ricoeur’s understanding of the way in which narratives presence the self; and the way in which identity is a product of cultural and historical intersubjectivity (OA, 1992).

Liberalism and humanism frequently assume the status of metanarratives in Western education and culture. Liberalism denotes the ruling assumptions, values and meanings of the modern era (since the latter part of the seventeenth century) and espouses individual freedom of thought and opinion. Developing out of Enlightenment approaches to human nature, liberalism is committed to a belief in the existence of a rational human essence and makes appeals to nature, freedom and universality (Porter, 1990). The Enlightenment period saw the emergence a new era of science and reason, where European society, once subject to the traditional authorities of church and monarchy, was seen to enter a new era of enlightened reason. This period in history signified an end to

public wars of faith, put a stop to witch persecutions and heretic burnings, and signaled the demise of magic and astrology, the erosion of the occult, the waning of belief in the literal, physical existence of Heaven and Hell, in the Devil and all his disciples. The supernatural disappeared from public life.... Religion remained, of course, but it gradually lost its props in learning, science and in the well-stocked imagination. The Enlightenment sapped their credibility (Porter, 1990, pp. 72-73).

Enlightened approaches to understanding the world dismissed as unscientific the idea of innate sin, and argued that passions such as love and desire were not inevitably evil or destructive, but could be used for human advancement. By elevating the position of science, it was believed possible that the whole of humanity could be understood. At the heart of this, is the premise that people are rational beings who possess within themselves the capacity for truth and goodness (ibid, 1990).

Humanism is sometimes conflated with liberalism and indeed, there is a common thread of reason and human dignity running through both systems of thought. However, humanism preceded liberalism by a couple of hundred years. As a dominant intellectual movement of the Renaissance period, humanism represents a move away from the medieval worldview into an era of rationality and respect for human life. Together both humanism and liberalism can be seen to diminish the traditional high place accorded to God and the adherence to supernatural authority. Promoted, instead, is the reasoning human self as a source of individual authority, and replacing religion with science as the legitimating narrative. This is not to say that religion has no place; but rather, that reason becomes the ruling logic of the modern state. Human experience and universal reason become the arbiter of knowledge about humankind and the natural world (Gay, 1966).

A humanistic orientation endows human beings with a special importance in the world. Humans are seen as the source of meaning and value, and the development of *human potential* is seen as the highest goal of politics. Freedom of thought and belief is seen as vital to a strong culture of democracy. Education is seen as an important mechanism to cultivate the individual's talents. In this way, then, humanism is a pivotal discourse in the history of education.

Humanists attribute crucial importance to education, conceiving of it as an all-around development of personality and individual talents, marrying science to poetry and culture to democracy. They champion freedom of thought and opinion, the use of intelligence and pragmatic research in science and technology, and social and political systems governed by representative institutions. Believing that it is possible to live confidently without metaphysical or religious certainty and that all opinions are open to revision and correction, they see human flourishing as dependent on open communication, discussion, criticism and unforced consensus (Audi, 1995, p. 341).

The liberal tradition, with its roots in the European Enlightenment, is underpinned by a quest for a science of humankind, in particular the idea of a human individuality. Scientific discovery (with the ideas of Kepler, Galileo and Descartes, for example) engendered new ways of thinking about the self, and advanced the technologies of human and social organisation. Liberal ideas countered older feudal and religious views, bringing about new views of humans, social organisation, education, learning and motherhood. New developments in the sciences and technologies occurred, including inventions like the telescope, the microscope and the thermometer. These new technologies, coupled with the religious wars of the seventeenth century, unseated traditional understandings of the self. Human nature became the subject of a new scientific inquiry. This new scientific spirit led to the development of a mechanical philosophy (Descartes), in which nature was seen to comprise 'particles of matter governed by universal laws whose actions could be expressed mathematically' (Porter, 1990. p. 15). Two elements in scientific method were identified as important to understanding humankind: the empirical element, which used sensory observation and experimentation; and the rational method, which relied on mathematics and deduction for the basis of reason.

Alongside the emergence of the rational, free individual, democracy emerged as the modern, liberal form of government. Liberal organisation and government involves a set of propositions that sees society comprising individuals whose liberty is paramount. It attaches importance to the rights of the individual and, adopting the tenets of the humanist tradition,

promotes the idea of individual autonomy as an important aim (Marshall, 1996a). The unified, knowing, autonomous human is seen to be reflexively part of a political system, guaranteeing freedom of choice, equality, individualism and rationality. While there are various forms of liberal government, all of them have, in some form or other, the development of personal freedom and social progress as fundamental concerns.

Liberalism is a rather amorphous term that has been variously interpreted and instituted. It is perhaps best characterised as a movement – philosophical, social, political and educational. So rather than being a single doctrine, it is more appropriate to see it as an amalgam of discourses encompassing many theories and concepts. Liberalism needs to be seen as a continuing history and as a ‘style of thinking quintessentially concerned with the art of governing’ (Gordon, 1991, p. 14). As a philosophical movement, it can be seen to celebrate the autonomy of the individual through reason and self-governance. As a political movement, it can be seen to advance a state of government informed by popular consent and equality. As a social movement, it champions the humanistic values of freedom of conscience, religious tolerance, and the advancement of reason. It is largely through education that the individual is trained into liberal society.

There are many forms of liberalism; of most importance to the thesis are what Marshall (1996a) describes as *welfare liberalism* and *neoliberalism*. Although both these forms of liberalism have the rights of individuals as basic, and although both justify the actions of coercive institutions as promoting those rights, they are very different in their emphasis. Welfare liberalism, emanating from a line of European thinkers including Kant, Rousseau and Voltaire, maintains a faith in rationality and the ability of the individual to improve society, and focuses on the relationship between reason and liberal values. It promotes the ideas of social minimums and equal opportunity. Neoliberalism minimises state involvement in people’s choices, and values an individual’s reasoned choice to carry out actions for which the individual is solely responsible. This form of liberalism is fiercely individualist, and is essentially a conservative form of liberalism harking back to the once progressive doctrines of early liberalism (classical liberalism), which held as its key tenets the enhancement of life, liberty and property (the Lockean trinity).

John Locke (1632-1714) held the view that coercive institutions are justified when they promote *liberty*, believing that people had certain fundamental rights that were to be protected by government. For Locke (1952), property is the key to civil society and the powers of government must be limited to promote the rights of the *individual*. In political liberalism,

freedom is conceived as the right of humans to associate with others voluntarily without coercion or threat; to be treated equally and to have their individual life, liberty and property protected. Underpinning these rights is the belief that all humans are rational and so all authority structures and social institutions should be subject to rational scrutiny. A key belief is that the individual should be free from unnecessary brute authority from the State or church, and treated with dignity and respect. In terms, of neoliberalism, this means limited government, a free economy, minimising of state assistance, underpinned by an imperative that the State should not intrude on the rights of the individual, except to protect others from harm. (See further discussion of neoliberalism in chapter five.)

Sources of the liberal, humanist self

Who is this liberal individual self? By the end of eighteenth century, the enlightened individual assumes the existence of a substance – a unified entity called the self. This autonomous, rational being exists prior to any subsequent discussion and construction through language. In this paradigm, the subject to be educated is *a priori* a rational self. The notion of the autonomous rational mind is crucial to liberal education and to the constitution of the individual self (Peters, 1966). Since the Enlightenment, liberal education has seen rationality as essential to the improvement and advancement of the human condition. Although one could go back as far as Plato for an idea of the autonomous self, this chapter on the liberal self begins with Descartes (1596-1650) who is considered an important figure in the philosophy of the self and the nature of knowledge. He is said to have given birth to the modern subject. From Descartes comes the beginning of individualism, as he places the moral source within us (Taylor, 1989). Descartes' modern subject is synonymous with the humanistic desire for humans to justify themselves, to become masters of their own fates, and to free themselves from dependence on authority and tradition. In an attempt to view the world without the distortions of subjectivity, Descartes locates the human subject as the source of the truth and value of all things through the means of science. Descartes' thinking self builds an internal order of thought. Using doubt to arrive at true knowledge, his famous and oft quoted response to the dilemma of existence: *cogito, ergo sum* – 'I am thinking, therefore I am' (Audi, 1995, p. 195) – positions the thinking being at the centre of the universe.

I exist as a thinking thing even if I am deceived in all my beliefs, I must exist in order to be deceived. That is, I am conscious of thinking, even if my thinking is dubious (Descartes, 1996).

Although sometimes interpreted as ‘I think ...’ rather than ‘I am thinking ...’, Descartes emphasises thinking as a ‘process’ rather than a single thought ‘event’. In other words, my existence is true for as long as I remain thinking. He stresses the ability to conceive of himself as an existing subject, while at the same time doubting the existence of any physical thing. This led Descartes to the conclusion that he is a *res cogitans* – a being whose whole essence consists simply in thought. Yet, while I may be able to imagine myself without a body, this hardly proves that I could in reality exist without one. Our experience teaches us that we are flesh and blood, and while there are properties such as understanding that belong to the mind, there are physical and psychological sensations that belong to me.

Descartes’ theory of mind involves a dualistic approach, which raises more problems for philosophy than it answers, but Descartes’ insistence that experience cannot explain existence in purely physical terms remains deeply influential. He assumes the existence of universal reason, disengaged from ordinary experience. This order of thought argues that all rational minds think through an individualistic notion of the self. Descartes’ plan for a unified science, in which philosophy and all the sciences would be interconnected in one systematic totality, was based on two mental operations: intuition (our understanding of self-evident, non-doubt principles) and deduction (logical reasoning).

John Locke’s ideas about the rational individual had a major influence on education and permeated eighteenth century liberal ideas. Locke’s contribution to subject-centred reason distinguishes between two sources of experience: sensation (experience gained from the senses), and reflection (experience in which we perceive the operations of our own mind). By reflecting upon our own mental processes we obtain simple ideas and are able to think, doubt, reason and will. The basis of Locke’s liberal self, revealed in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1952), undermines the notion that humans are born with innate principles, promoting the idea that our knowledge is ultimately derived from experience of the world. He is known for his portrayal of the mind as a *tabula rasa*, ‘white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas’ (ibid, p. 43).

Challenging divine rule and arguing for the power of the King to be transferred to individuals who were then to govern by consent, Locke condemned the education of his day as being little more than a reproduction of the old interest in the classics and religion. He sought a more practical education – one that distinguishes between belief and knowledge. Locke’s liberalism demands rational individuals where reason is the source of authority. For Locke, the role of education is to create an environment in which children acquire appropriate experiences. In

Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1964), he proposes an education system based on the belief that the art of reason should be taught from a young age. He argues that while an infant may not be able to be reasoned with, the child is potentially able to reason. His ideas imply that inequalities of birth can be overcome by education and environmental influences. He also wrote of the importance of observing children and engaging their curiosity.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is a pivotal philosopher in understanding the liberal self. For Kant, the notion of the self is universal in that it applies to all human beings; it is transcendent, in that it refers to a realm inaccessible to the senses; it is also inherently rational comprising a logical system of concepts and principles universal to all rational minds. This rational system organises experience and is thus logically prior to experience. This implies a human essence that is the centre of a known universe.

For Kant, an individual's freedom is possible only in a life governed by the rational will. Such a life is determined not merely by the given facts of nature (including inner nature), but ultimately by one's own agency as a formulator of a rational and therefore moral law. Because the self is universal, Kant demands that one acts according to general principles that can be applied universally. The moral law then, as such a general principle, is defined by reason. Because reason is by its very nature objective and universal, a person acting rationally will therefore be acting within the moral law. A moral person is one who fulfils a duty to conform to the moral law, but through a sense of duty alone rather than any extrinsic motivation – thus the notion of duty for its own sake – a duty expressed in terms of Kant's categorical imperative: 'Act according to a maxim which can at the same time make itself a universal law' (Kant, 1988, p. 66).

Kant places reason in the transcendent realm (the *noumenal* world) and treats the world we know (the sensory world) as mere *phenomena*. Although Kant acknowledges the reality of the phenomenal world, the true self – the moral self – is seen to be embedded in the transcendent world of reason. In the moral domain Kant refers to an 'invisible self' – a self that has 'true infinity', traceable only by the understanding with which one has 'a universal and necessary connection' (Kant, 1996, p. 191). This self is revealed by the moral law as independent from our animal or sensory world, and 'not restricted to conditions and limits of this life, but reaching into the infinite' (*ibid*).

So Kant's self can be seen as universal, transcendent and intimately connected with morality as a rational domain. In Kant's transcendent self, morality, reason and freedom are linked in

his concept of autonomy. Autonomy refers to the situation where one makes one's own decision to follow the (rational) moral law, acting from a sense of duty rather than self-interest. Autonomy brings together the objective good and the idea of self-rule. For Kant, humans are mature enough to find their own way without authority and can think for themselves. In his treatise on education, Kant proposed that children should be educated for an improved future, 'in a manner which is adapted to the *idea of humanity* and the whole destiny of man' (Kant, 1960, p. 14). Through education, humans were to be subject to *discipline, culture, discretion* (conduct), *refinement* (manners) and *moral training*. The child must be 'allowed perfect liberty in every respect' and must be 'shown that he can attain his own ends by allowing others to attain theirs' (ibid). Restraint is used only so that the child may 'learn in time to use his liberty aright'; his mind is to be 'cultivated so that one day he may be free' (ibid, p. 28).

Kant acknowledged the work of Rousseau (1712-1778), a contemporary, in according humans value and dignity through the capacity for rational thought, and his focus on the freedom of the individual. Rousseau took the notion of the rational self in a different direction to Locke and Descartes. In a sense, he was singularly unimpressed with the achievements of science and the rational scientific calculation of the Enlightenment period. Instead, he believed in a more romantic view of the world, claiming that the Lockean view of the world was around property rights not the 'natural state' of man (Cohen, 2001, p. 85). Rousseau, like Locke, saw the importance of environmental influence on children, advocating that they should be shielded from negative social impact. He believed that society warps the child and that the child should be protected from the evils of society so that it cannot destroy her inner nature (although for Rousseau this should perhaps read 'his inner nature'). To ameliorate the worst effects of socialisation, Rousseau advocates a social contract by which the freedom of the individual is surrendered to self-imposed laws that are a result of the general will. Rousseau believes in combining liberty with law by instituting a state in which *men* could make the laws they lived under. Rousseau's philosophy, outlined in both *Émile* (1993) and *The Social Contract* (1973), emphasises that sovereignty lay with the people at all times and government should merely carry out the will of the people.

Rousseau's individual is understood as a universal, reasoning self: 'Reason alone teaches us to know good and evil' (Rousseau, 1993, p. 39). However, he extends the concept to incorporate an ordinary *feeling* self as well, thus acknowledging that there might be more than just a *reasoning* self. This is a significant step beyond Descartes rational self, toward a notion

of self that is both subject and object of knowledge. In his doubting of the ability of science and rationality to articulate the importance of intuition and feelings, Rousseau elevates the place of arts, poetry and self-expression generally. Although Rousseau takes issue with Descartes' idea of rationality as constitutive of human nature, for both thinkers the free self is still fundamental.

Rousseau is a significant figure in the story of the constitution of the young child as the liberal subject of modern early childhood. As one of the key figures in the romantic tradition, he is seen to be the father of child-centred educational philosophy (Cohen, 2001, p. 83). He argued that children should be educated with few limits in order to create independence and happiness, maintaining that the harsh discipline of traditional education caused rather than corrected negative behaviour: a 'cruel education ... that burdens a child with all sorts of restrictions' (Rousseau, 1993, p. 50). His ideas articulate an education based on a child learning in a natural way: 'When our natural tendencies have not been interfered with by human prejudice and human institutions, the happiness alike of children and of men consists in the enjoyment of their liberty (ibid, p. 57). In particular, he has had a major impact on early childhood pedagogy where the early years of life are paramount: 'Man's education begins at birth, before he can speak or understand he is learning. Experience precedes instruction... ' (ibid, p. 33). Likening the child to a growing plant, Rousseau is attributed with initiating a botanical metaphor for the young child in education, a metaphor that has endured over the years:

Tender, anxious mother, I appeal to you. You can remove this young tree from the highway and shield it from the crushing force of social conventions. Tend and water it ere it dies. One day its fruit will reward your care....Plants are fashioned by cultivation, man by education (ibid, pp. 5-6).

Both Pestalozzi and Froebel, followers of the ideas of Rousseau, are generally seen to be the first major influences on the development of early childhood education in the Western world. Pestalozzi (1746-1827) believed that education should be for rich and poor, and should be used as a tool for social reform. Adopting Rousseau's ideas of natural development and goodness, many of his ideas were taken up by later exponents of early childhood education. These ideas include the importance of a loving family environment; a belief that mothers were important 'first teachers' at home; and that the mother's affection should be continued by teachers when children went to school. Education, he believed, should involve affection between teacher and child, so that both home and school should be places of love, which in

turn would foster good moral and emotional development. Following Rousseau, Pestalozzi likened the child to a developing plant that requires the right environment to develop its fullest potential. The botanic metaphor of child development as a flowering plant has become an enduring image for early childhood education (May, 1997).

Froebel (1782-1852) regarded as the father of the modern kindergarten movement (garden of children) develops this botanic metaphor further. He compared the child to a seedling plant and the task of the teacher to a gardener 'who has merely to provide the right environment for the plant to develop naturally to the best of its potential' (Cohen, 2001, p. 62). Like Pestalozzi, he saw self-activity as the basis for his kindergartens. This kindergarten metaphor is representative of the relationship between the child and the world, suggestive of a gardener growing, watering and fertilising the garden in order for the flowers (the children) to grow and develop (Vaughan & Estola, 2007). Froebel did not stop at the education of young children; he was convinced that parents must be involved in education as well. While he originally educated male friends and family as kindergarten teachers, he later advocated the importance of women becoming teachers. He resisted the notion that women had a natural aptitude for educating young children and promoted the idea that women needed to be educated to raise children and be mothers. Contrary to popular opinion, he was convinced that women were the most appropriate teachers for the very young, and instituted a training programme for governesses and teachers. While this view was not well accepted, it was indicative of changing attitudes.

By the late nineteenth century, with the rise of the middle classes and the nuclear family, a new role for women emerged. Her identity was closely tied to family, household and child rearing matters. She was no longer regarded as fragile and feeble, but seen as pivotal to the important role of family in industrial and economic life. Her historical visage begins to take on new dimensions to reflect her new position within the family where she becomes more robust and capable, and perhaps worthy of an education (albeit limited) to enhance her role as the child's first educator (Weyenberg, 2006). Prior to the twentieth century, education was primarily regarded as appropriate for creating a free male individual. Equality for women was not seriously addressed within liberalism, a shortcoming exemplified in Rousseau's *Sophy* – a limited character in relation to *Émile*. The idea of women's liberty, education, and ownership of property was an absurd proposition.

If woman is made to please and to be in subjection to man, she ought to make herself pleasing in his eyes and not provoke him to anger; her strength in her charms, by them she should compel him to discover and use his strength (Rousseau, 1993, p. 385).

Although Froebel is seen to have favoured an educated woman for the important tasks of mothering and early childhood teaching, women's liberty, equality and rationality were not on the agenda for another few hundred years. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) had argued for the liberal principles of equality, freedom and rationality to be extended to women (Wollstonecraft, 1993). However, she was not taken seriously in her quest for sexual, political and economic equality in public life – an equality that she saw as achievable through education, and which she believed would allow women to be rational individuals and to participate as citizens. She was ridiculed and called a 'hyena in petticoats' and a 'philosophising serpent' (May, 1997, p. 10). Wollstonecraft was particularly critical of Rousseau's sentimental portrayal of women and his assumptions of natural differences. She envisaged a different kind of woman than Rousseau did: educated, property owning and independent. For women to rear children in a liberal society, she had argued, they must be educated as part of rational society, not set apart from it. The emancipation of women, and their reconceptualisation as liberal subjects with rights to freedom, education and property, did not come about until well into the twentieth century when ideas about early childhood education emerged as a distinctive field of education outside of the home.

By the late nineteenth century, new codes of child rearing had begun to appear. Set within a liberal paradigm and a changing economic and social landscape were the beginnings of early childhood education. Increasingly, urbanisation and industrialisation in Europe changed the nature of social relations with an increasing number of working poor, and a developing middle class who were educated. Although the industrialists needed a stable, healthy supply of workers, a growing social concern from the liberal middle class about the poverty and destitution of children and families resulted in various campaigns about child survival, protection, and illegitimacy. These campaigns were indicative of moral concern over the state of society. A new mood of social reform took hold against this industrial landscape, and a number of philanthropic endeavours emerged in order to provide protection and care for children. Legislation was established in order to provide a greater degree of protection for children; and a variety of institutions emerged for young children: including infant schools, foundling homes, kindergartens and the practice of baby farming. A dual strand of care and education emerged at this time, centred around economic and class differences. Infant schools

were provided for the infants and children of the working class, and home-based care and education for the upper/middle-classes (May, 1997).

Baby farms and foundling homes, also emerged as products of an enlightened society. Frequently though, these institutions were mean and dangerous affairs that performed the function of removing from sight the plight of the poor, rather than providing any real form of care and education for children. Children in these homes were frequently subject to lack of care, neglected and abused, and very often died. The institutionalisation of children in this way frequently hid problems away from a society that was seeking to enforce stronger moral codes (ibid).

However, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are also regarded as a watershed for liberal education where new models of the child and society emerged. At the time, Darwin's theory of evolution was having a major impact on the educated middle classes. Educators, influenced by liberal thinkers like Locke and Rousseau who subscribed to the idea of natural education, were developing new educational environments. The new approach contrasted with the traditional focus on rote learning, punishment, and curriculum with little connection to experience. Instead, new philosophical, scientific, psychological and educational models began to emerge under the influence of John Dewey; Stanley Hall, Edward Thorndike, Arnold Gessell; Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, Jean Piaget and Maria Montessori.

Twentieth century liberalism and education

According to Marshall (1996a), modern liberal education is based on at least three critical assumptions: first, the idea of personal autonomy in which individuals are free from the authority and dogmas of others; second, self-identity closely tied up with this notion of personal autonomy; and third, an abiding faith that education, through the development of personal autonomy, can ameliorate the human condition. This project of liberal education is based on an intellectual authority inherited from the Enlightenment, through thinkers outlined earlier. It is 'grounded in a European universalism and rationalism heavily buttressed by highly individualistic assumptions' (Peters & Marshall, 1996, p. 174), with education in the modern liberal project seen as an important tool for shaping the individual – conceived of as being personally autonomous. Adopting the basic premises of the humanist tradition, modern liberal education concerns itself with the development of personal freedom, where personal autonomy is regarded as an important aim:

It is almost taken for granted in Western education and schooling that self-determination ... that is to say personal autonomy, is an educational ideal (Marshall, 1996a, p. 83).

Freedom of the individual from authoritarianism is the foundation of the liberal platform. The individual's interests have priority over the interests of the church and the State. Educational practices within liberalism assume the presence of a rational being with a self-identity closely associated with the notion of personal autonomy. In general, the liberal objective is to increase the individual's opportunity for freedom, with proponents varying their approach depending on which version of freedom they espouse. Within liberalism, beliefs, authority and social structures are generally subject to rational scrutiny and to an idealised notion of 'the good' in its many guises. This means an individual must be allowed the space, free from external constraints, to work out, and follow if they choose to, what is in their best interests.

The Cartesian-Kantian tradition conceived of the epistemological subject as the fount of all knowledge, signification and moral action. In transhistorical terms liberal philosophers pictured the subject within a set of highly individualistic assumptions as standing separate from, and logically prior to, society and culture. These same assumptions vitiate the planning and policy documents of liberal capitalist and democratic societies. The individual is conceptualised in theory, and seen in practice, as the primitive unit of economic and political analysis, the ultimate beyond which one cannot go (Peters & Marshall, 1996, p. 174).

Within the liberal tradition, humans are believed to be essentially rational. It is accepted that improvement in the human condition will come via the rational institutions and processes of education. It is the advancement of knowledge that produces the autonomous, rational being who will move society along the path of progress. Liberalism is concerned with the development of humans as individuals. This individual development is brought about through humanistic educational processes, where the individual to be educated is a subject of what we can loosely characterise as the social or human sciences. These relatively new sciences (psychology, sociology, pedagogy, for example) parallel the methods of natural science with an underlying belief that human potential may be fulfilled through rational stages of development and progress through incremental steps of learning related to age and life span characteristics.

This programme of scientific understanding of humankind underpins a faith in future progress of society. Scientific understanding, in turn, is reliant upon a view of the individual as

essentially rational, interacting with other individuals and the practices of the group to which she belongs.

The school, along with the family as an institution, constructs us as 'individuals' through a network of educational practices, including for example, examinations, forms of surveillance, records, reports, competitions and so on (Peters & Marshall, 1996, pp. 179-180).

One of the central issues in the liberal tradition is the relationship between individual nature and social control. The issue translates into a question of whether education should focus primarily on the individual child or on the needs of the community in producing good citizens in harmonious communities. On the one hand is the idea of enabling the *inner nature* of the child; on the other hand is the idea of building citizens according to a socially accepted and determined pattern. Since both are important to liberal education, there is a perennial tension played out in the relationship between educational institutions and the State, where too much emphasis on serving the State may result in totalitarianism and authoritarianism.

Many educators (John Dewey and Richard Peters, for example) believe that the individual should be encouraged to grow according to her nature and permitted to deviate from the group. By promoting individual freedom in this way, they argue, the social is better served. The individual, in this sense is seen as an authentic entity whose education is seen as an intrinsic good in itself, not subservient to the State or the social good.

Dewey (1859-1952) saw the individual and society as inextricably intertwined, arguing that the individual could choose only those opportunities provided by her community. In a social democratic tradition of liberalism, he promoted the idea that equal opportunity for all was most important. He rejected the conservative strand of liberalism because he saw that form of individualism as paying scant attention to important social ties. Whereas the conservative strand of liberalism sees group belonging as essentially voluntary and non-necessary, Dewey regarded the group as vital to education. Arguing against atomistic individualism, he emphasised the social context of learning, with rational education of the young child necessary for a democratic society:

Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder (Dewey, 1916, p. 99).

Dewey saw education as a means to achieve a homogeneous society with equal opportunity for all, a society in which the individual was empowered to move out of lesser circumstances if she so chose. He saw the individual as socially constructed and advocated for strong measures of social control, both in the constitution of the individual and in the development of democratic structures. This level of social control is acceptable to Dewey because the individual's freedom is not violated if the individual willingly puts aside any personal desires for participation in society.

Richard Peters, also writing from within a liberal democratic and rational framework, emphasises equality and freedom too. The primary concern of education for Peters is individual development rather than its benefit to the community. While he does admit to education having some benefits to society as a whole, for him education should be associated with individual freedom:

If the demand is made that man should be free to do what he wants or allowed to do what he wants freely, this does not imply that he should do anything else; rather it implies that restrictions on or impediments in the way of doing what he wants should be removed (Peters, 1966, p. 43).

Liberal education, for Peters, can be thought of as lifting restrictions that prevent people learning what they want to learn. His solution to the individual/group contradiction is to offer a balance between authoritarianism and permissiveness. In this mode, freedom is achieved through unfreedom; and autonomy achieved through the restraint of desire and emotion. Freedom then, for learners, is suspended while education develops the autonomous person.

In line with a modern liberal society composed of rational, free, equal individuals, education emphasised these values in the form of *child-centred pedagogy*. Focusing on children's interests, needs and developmental growth, this pedagogy emphasised the unique individual child whose inner potential was to be realised through education. Although the roots of child-centred pedagogy lie in the philosophy of Rousseau and with educators like Froebel and Pestalozzi, a number of other thinkers and educators contributed its early development. These include Jean Piaget, John Dewey and Maria Montessori. All these thinkers and educators, despite major theoretical differences, are recognised as part of a child-centred tradition and as part of a progressive movement in education.

Progressivism is a broad name given to a range of theories involving a practical approach to education. It can be seen in various modern formulations: in the classical progressive

movement which includes the likes of Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel and Dewey. It can also be seen in the more recent twentieth century education reform movement with the likes of Ivan Illich and A.S Neill. Twentieth century progressivism has developed out of dissatisfaction with traditional approaches to education that involved a pre-existing body of knowledge and a series of objective truths that could be passed along in an essential form. In the modern progressive movement, education is connected with a number of developments: including the new child psychology of the late nineteenth century; the importance of self-activity and experience-based learning; and the idea that education contributes to the development of democracy. While progressivism is difficult to define exactly, Darling & Nordenbo (2003) outline a number of themes that have been identified with progressive movement. Foremost is the idea that education should take its lead from the perspective of the child. Second, progressivism involves a critique of the overcrowded curriculum of state-governed schools. Third, educational institutions should be organised around community in which all participants are equal.

Rousseau was one of the first writers to advance the idea of the child-centred approach to education: 'Childhood has its own ways of seeing, thinking and feeling; nothing is more foolish than to try and substitute our ways' (Rousseau, 1993, p. 54). The twentieth century progressive movement can be seen as following in the tradition of Rousseau, arising in part as protest against the instrumental focus of education, against rote learning methods, against the idea of a child as an empty vessel waiting to be filled, and against behaviourism and the child study movement of Stanley Hall. Instead, a child-centred pedagogy focusing on the uniqueness of each child demanded that learning be relevant to the needs and interests of the child; and that the process of learning be valued more than the topic or content of learning. Child-centred pedagogy remains a cornerstone of Judeo-Christian Western educational institutions. It emphasises that children should be given the freedom to experience and discover through self-selected activity. In this way, the child develops independence and reason through experience and active learning. The teacher's role in a child-centred pedagogy is one of *guide on the side* rather than *sage on the stage*, 'structuring the environment' rather than instructing or regulating the child. The aim is to promote independence and the development of autonomy (Burman, 1994).

In early childhood education, the unique, rational, free child of child-centred pedagogy develops through the technology of play, whereby the child exercises individual choice through activity and discovery learning (May, 2001). A *natural* individual model of childhood

is advocated where the child's potential is characterised by *readiness*. Readiness is understood as the child displaying particular behaviours, understandings or dispositions that indicate to the teacher that the child is ready to internalise and/ or develop to a next stage of learning. The role of the educator, then, is to recognise the child's individual needs and potentials, and through her understanding of the child as developing in a rational stage-like manner, to engage developmentally and/ or socio-culturally in a humanistic psychological dance to further the child's understanding. The child is seen here developing along a continuum of natural occurring stages. Given the right environment, appropriate dispositions and habits of learning, the child will develop and achieve her potential in a relatively linear and rational way, albeit that variations or individual differences occur (Burman, 1984).

Liberalism and the children of *Te Whāriki*

From the late 1800s through until the 1990s, liberalism in New Zealand, in keeping with the progressive advance of democracy in Europe, can be characterised as an early precursor to welfare liberalism. Welfare legislation and State ownership were part of the fabric of settler society. In fact, New Zealand's early liberalism was considered quite radical in terms of the extent of state intervention provided. This was due to the large settler population who had escaped the poverty and rigid class barriers of English, Scottish and Irish societies. These settlers formed the larger part of a population wanting access to property and material security previously unavailable to them. Equality was an important liberal tenet for these early settlers.

Throughout the twentieth century, a strong commitment to welfare continued to develop into what is often referred to as a cradle-to-grave ethos of state care. The provision of a welfare net was legislated for all citizens, and social organisations instituted to provide forms of government support (Bassett, 1998). A large integrated State infrastructure supported and regulated many aspects of human endeavour from State-owned schools and health services through to State ownership of roads, transport systems, electricity, water supply and so forth. Free universal education for primary school children was established through the 1877 Education Act. Throughout the twentieth century, the role of universal, public education was extended to include secondary and tertiary education. Early childhood education was largely left out of this universal provision of education. While the 1947 Bailey Report endorsed kindergartens as a form of potential public education, universal provision of any form of early childhood care and education was never realised. The role of early childhood care and education was seen to be part of a mother-at-home private affair located within family.

Various social movements, in particular the feminists during the 1970s, argued for stronger government involvement in the provision of care and education. However, generally, early childhood education and care has been seen as a private, individual affair to be handled within families by parents (to date, largely by mothers).

Welfare liberalism continued in New Zealand until the late 1980s when New Zealand underwent a radical restructuring of its political, economic and social systems. The change effectively ushered in a return to a conservative and more classical form of liberalism, in which State-owned assets were privatised; government departments were deregulated and where the role of education was significantly altered (Peters & Marshall, 1996; Dale & Robertson, 1997). The recent re-invention of liberalism (known as neoliberalism) underpins current educational reforms in New Zealand and will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter.

Despite its early *outsider* status, the early childhood care and education sector has drawn on a variety of liberal discourses to inform its practices. This includes theories and models from education, health, medicine and social welfare. This liberal tradition is inherent in the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, where the unique individual child is seen as central to the educational concern: “It is about the individual child. Its starting point is the learner and the knowledge, skills and attitudes that the child brings to their experiences” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9).

This unique individual is indeed a child of humanism who has rights and special privileges conferred upon her for protection, for nurture, and in order to develop to her potential.

To learn and develop to their potential, children must be respected and valued as individuals. Their rights to personal dignity, to equitable opportunities for participation, to protection from physical, mental, or emotional abuse and injury, and to opportunities for rest and leisure must be safeguarded (ibid, p. 40).

An *a priori* rational child self is assumed as a cornerstone of *Te Whāriki*, through the model of education it espouses. A child-centred pedagogy is central to the curriculum. Children are to be taught to think, reason, justify and to use language to explain behaviour through the medium of play, drawing upon resources from the environment:

... their play is valued as meaningful learning ... they gain confidence in and control of their bodies... they learn strategies for active exploration, thinking, and reasoning ... (ibid, p. 16).

Children learn useful and appropriate ways to find out what they want to know and begin to understand their own individual ways of learning and being creative (ibid, p. 82).

Children experience an environment where they can learn strategies for active exploration, thinking and reasoning (ibid, p. 88).

Children experience an environment where they develop working theories for making sense of the natural, social, physical and material worlds (ibid, p. 90).

Child-centred pedagogy emphasises the experiential nature of learning by doing, problem solving, and critical thinking (rather than rote learning). It also emphasises the role of social learning in relation to wider community, social, cultural and environmental influences. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model is explicitly developed with a full-page (p. 19) 'nested doll' diagram of the child at the centre of learning influenced by family, social and political factors. The curriculum is reminiscent, too, of the democratic education of John Dewey (1937), where learning is a subjective experience, socially situated, with a focus on reason and criticality. Through reason, children are seen to be future contributors to the improvement and advancement of the human condition. There is also a strong focus on the influences of the wider social and political environment.

This curriculum emphasises the critical role of socially and culturally mediated learning and of reciprocal and responsive relationships for children with people, places, and things. Children learn through collaboration with adults and peers, through guided participation and observation of others, as well as through individual exploration and reflection (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9).

New Zealand is part of a world revolution in communication, technology, work, and leisure. Change in these and other spheres is a feature of everyday life. To cope with such changes, children need both the confidence to develop their own perspectives and the capacity to continue acquiring new knowledge and skills. The curriculum provides an educational foundation that supports the full range of skills that children will need as life-long learners (ibid, p. 18).

Examined in this way, *Te Whāriki* is seen to be involved with a complex programme of liberal principles and strands. It is consistent with a child-centred pedagogy that recognises the child's natural growth and learning capacities. It is also consistent with a commitment to wider social goals and cultural commitments and recognition of the collaborative role that adults and peers play. The botanical metaphor of the child growing like a plant from seed through to mature plant was mentioned earlier as an enduring metaphor in early childhood. It

symbolises children's growth and development through their involvement in self-activity and self-discovery. The metaphor is underpinned by a belief in individual development through concrete experiences, and is fundamental to the key principles of child-centred pedagogy.

... the principles of Te Whāriki

Empowerment *Whakamana*

'The early childhood curriculum empowers the child to learn and grow.'

Holistic Development *Kotahitanga*

'The early childhood curriculum reflects the holistic way children learn and grow.'

Family and Community *Whānau Tangata*

'The wider world of family and community is an integral part of the early childhood curriculum.'

Relationships *Ngā Hononga*

'Children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things.'

... the strands of Te Whāriki

Well-being *Mana Atua*

'The health and well-being of the child are protected and nurtured.'

Belonging *Mana Whenua*

'Children and their families feel a sense of belonging.'

Contribution *Mana Tangata*

'Opportunities for learning are equitable, and each child's contribution is valued.'

Communication *Mana Reo*

'The languages and symbols of their own and other cultures are promoted and protected.'

Exploration *Mana Aotūroa*

'The child learns through active exploration of the environment.'

(*ibid*, abridged, pp. 14-16).

A singular unifying *whāriki* captures the complexity, multiplicity and diversity of the sector. Four principles provide the central threads of the *whāriki*, along with five strands, each with three-four goals. These principles, strands and goals form 'an integrated foundation for every child's development' (*ibid*, p. 15). This *whāriki*, a textured and highly evocative weaving, embraces a number of liberal values and attitudes. In particular, the curriculum promotes the idea of the developing self, with 47 references in such phrases as 'self-help', 'self-esteem' or 'self-knowledge' occurring throughout the document. Through the development of self-esteem, self-independence and self-reason, it is envisaged individuals will be empowered to be free. The project of the self is a hallmark of humanistic psychology where individual needs and children's development are paramount. One of the aims of *Te Whāriki* is that each child

will have her own uniqueness and individuality recognised. The child's identity will be recognised and cultivated through a process of validating the child's culture and heritage, alongside her exploration of the environment. The role of the teacher is to be responsive to the child, empowering her growth, development and learning.

Embracing a humanistic psychology, *Te Whāriki* promotes a combination of rich environment, self-governed activity and the child's natural development, through all of which the child's self-realisation will occur. While theorists are not specifically referred to within the document, there are traces of the humanistic theories of Carl Rogers (1993) and Abraham Maslow (1998) with an emphasis on children being empowered to reach their full potential in an environment of unconditional positive self-regard.

To develop a sense of their own identity and the strong sense of self-worth necessary for them to become confident in relationships and as learners, infants must experience physical and emotional security with at least one other person within each setting (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 22).

The principle of Empowerment relates to *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* principles of encouraging children to become independent and lifelong learners, of providing equal educational opportunities for all, and of recognising the significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (ibid, p. 40).

This strand is based on the principle of Empowerment. Children develop an enhanced sense of self-worth, identity, confidence, and enjoyment as they reach the goals of well-being in a responsive, stable, safe environment which supports the development of self control and self-esteem (ibid, p. 46).

The humanistic child is also a stage in the process of becoming an adult through a lifelong learning process linked to further educational processes. She is situated within a continuum of universal progress and development. Developmental theories like those of Arnold Gesell and Jean Piaget are evident, although again not directly referred to. The curriculum is indicative of this in its laying out of specific characteristics for each stage of the child's development: the infant, the toddler and the 'young child'

'Young child' is used in this document to distinguish this developmental stage from infants and toddlers (ibid, p. 99).

Part A includes some indicators of broad stages in children's learning and development (ibid, p. 10).

During the early childhood years, children often demonstrate needs and capabilities at a variety of stages (ibid, p. 21).

The notion of a continuum related to developmental psychology has underpinned the evolution of early childhood education for a century, positioning the child inside of universal laws of maturation, growth and human development. In *Te Whāriki*, special characteristics of the infant, the toddler, and the young child are outlined in a linear continuum of learning ‘as a lifelong process that begins at the very start of life’ (ibid, p. 7). These characteristics are portrayed in picturesque images of frond-like unfurling that accompany a developmental litany (ibid, p. 21). Each sentence starts with an adjective such as *increasing*, *growing*, *developing*, *widening*, and *expanding*, and there is a focus on identity, control, reason and cognition. For example, the child with special needs will have an ‘Individual Development Plan or Individual Education Plan (IDP or IEP)’. This will be ‘age and developmentally appropriate’, and ‘promote independence’ (ibid, p. 11). A clear purpose here is to individuate the child through a particular development plan that will enhance the child’s autonomy. The presumption is the promotion of independence, where developmentalism is seen as the appropriate technology to apply to all children. This continuum of age/stage progress is individualised through recognition that development is not always predictable, that there is a need for flexibility (ibid, p. 21).

Emphasis on the individualised developmental continuum is seemingly attenuated with the inclusion of social and cultural theories of development and learning: in particular, Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theories, and the emphasis on Māori and bicultural development. The document champions a strong sociological message about the importance of special identities, unique philosophies, cultural diversities and changing needs: a whole section written in Māori, for Māori children and families in Māori immersion centres, goes untranslated in English. Nevertheless, it is interesting that a digital count of the word *development* and its derivatives reveals 112 references; whereas a digital count of the word *socio-cultural* reveals no references at all (although there are 63 instances of the word *social* and 40 of the word *cultural*). The predominance of developmentalism seen in this way is perhaps startling when *Te Whāriki* is often considered an example of a socio-cultural curriculum (Nuttall, 2003; Cullen, 2003).

Yet such anomalies are indicative of the democratic and interpretive surface of *Te Whāriki*. Rather than seeing *Te Whāriki* as supporting one particular theoretical perspective, I would instead position it as a living document within a paradigm of ongoing curriculum

conversation and contest, where the curriculum is largely interpreted and re-authored. This is very much in line with the emphasis that Ricoeur places on the importance of dialogue and interpretation. He stresses the importance of not reducing ideas to a singular view, arguing that texts remain salient through readership and interpretation – where new understandings can be reached through continual dialogue (HS). Arguably, the highly metaphoric structure of this document facilitates a number of readings.

A host of theoretical perspectives can be detected throughout the document (some of them have been discussed above). In the draft version of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1993, pp. 147-156), a ‘notes’ section sets out the literature that underpins the document (For some reason, this was not included in the final version.) The literature referred to is varied, but includes a general embrace of humanistic and development theories. For example, references are made to Piaget, Bruner, Bronfenbrenner, Erikson, Gardner, Vygotsky and Wells. It also includes literature on culture, with reference to Tangaere, Metge, Pere, and Te Kōhanga Reo Trust. Although seen by some as a complex document, with tensions between developmental and socio-cultural theories, and with difficulties in interpretation and implementation into practice (Cullen, 2003), the document makes a strong attempt to be theoretically inclusive. This may be seen at times as problematic, because, as Ricoeur points out, text orients the reader. In other words, only a particular number of readings are possible. While the author may lose authorship and the reader may indeed appropriate and interpret, this appropriation and interpretation requires validation and will lead us back to the text in question.

While developmental in form and function, *Te Whāriki* manages to embrace for the first time in our history, a bicultural curriculum context, inviting a variety of perspectives, including Māori spirituality and a *tangata whenua* perspective. As a first curriculum for early childhood education in Aotearoa, and indeed one of the first internationally, it is remarkable that in an era of right-wing conservatism, the document was able to capture the spirits of feminism, Māori sovereignty, children’s rights and educational theories – at the same time as traversing the politically treacherous path to acceptance. This is, I believe, testimony to the highly collaborative way in which *Te Whāriki* was developed, and the intentions of the writers that it was to be an inscriptive and interpretive document, not a prescriptive one. In this way, too, the newer socio-cultural theoretical perspective has become part of the curriculum over time and through the developing narratives within early childhood scholarship. Through a process of redescription, explanation and reinterpretation, new understandings of curriculum and pedagogy are reached. As Ricoeur argues, we must let the text be, so that new interpretations

and new metaphors can continue to flourish (1975). For Ricoeur, reading and understanding transforms us as the result of the appropriated meaning of a text:

To understand oneself is to understand oneself as one confronts the text and to receive from the conditions for a self other than that which first undertakes the reading. Neither of the two subjectivities, neither that of the author nor that of the reader, is thus primary in the sense of an originary presence of the self to itself (FT, p. 17).

The botanical metaphor elaborated earlier emphasised individual growth as the essence of child development. The young European-New Zealander playing in a holistic garden environment buoyed by psychology and maturing through an individualised staged growth continues to flourish. Another botanic metaphor has flowered alongside the developing child of Froebel's kindergartens, one that pays attention to environmental influences. She is now joined by a new *tamariki*. Tilly Reedy (one of the writers of *Te Whāriki* (from the Te Kōhanga Reo Trust) likens the Māori child to the shoots of the flax plant by using a now famous poem (Reedy, 2003, p. 60):

Unuhia te rito o te harakeke
Kei hea te komako e ko?
Ki mai ki a au
He aha te mea nui o te ao nei?
Maku e ki atu
He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

Strip away the central shoots from the flax plant
Where will the bell bird sing?
Tell me
What is the most valued thing in the world?
I will say
Man, man, man

Reedy suggests an alteration to the last line of the poem:

he tamaiti, he tamaiti, he tamaiti
a child, a child, a child

This popular *waiata* likens the child to the central shoots of the flax plant, protected by the mature outer leaves. If the young shoots are damaged or removed, the plant dies. The protection, nurturing and training of the child is the responsibility of the whole family, important to the survival of all. The healthy mokopuna has links to history, whakapapa, genealogy and whānau, with a spiritual connection to the land. According to Reedy's *tangata*

whenua perspectives, the child's identity is formed and nurtured in connection with her ancestry – 'the personification of the worlds of yesterday' (Reedy, 2003, p. 53).

Although it is perhaps unclear, how the European psychology and philosophy of *Te Whāriki* is to sit alongside a Māori immersion and bicultural focus, its historical collaborative focus is an important underpinning. Other national curriculum documents, developed around the same time, are considered less successful in terms of biculturalism. As discussed in chapter two, Mutch (2003) compares the development of the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* with *Te Whāriki*, suggesting that *Te Whāriki's* success is due to the highly collaborative and inclusive manner in which the development process took place. She further suggests that the government was less focused on the development of an early childhood curriculum. With its gaze on the development of curriculum in the compulsory sector, and a lack of understanding about matters early childhood, the government's limited interference with *Te Whāriki* enabled a strong community-inspired, inclusive development.

Yet, as Waerea-i-te-rangi Smith⁶ (2000) points out, 'the palisades of Māori thought' are 'defended territories of encounter between Māori and those who seek to "understand" us ... these points are defended territories of knowledge as well as defended boundaries of encounter' (ibid, p. 43). Ranginui Walker explains it this way:

Māori belong to the tradition-orientated world of tribalism, with its emphasis on kinship, respect for ancestors, spirituality and millennial connectedness with the natural world. Pakeha on the other hand were the bearers of modernity, the Westminster system of government, scientific positivism, the capitalist mode of production and the monotheism of Christianity (Walker, 1999, pp. 187-188).

So what is the Māori knowledge represented within *Te Whāriki* – to what extent does/can *Te Whāriki* embrace and enact Māori thought, ways of living, desires and culture – particularly when Māori epistemologies challenge liberal doctrines? Waerea-i-te-rangi Smith discusses three beliefs that are implicit in Māori epistemologies: first, that everything in existence is connected; second, that all things are alive; and third, that unseen worlds can be mediated by humans. Even in this outline, she argues that it is difficult to use the English language to describe Māori concepts, that 'unseen' worlds in English are indeed 'seen' worlds in Māori (Smith, W., 2000, p. 45). For example, she explains, there is no original word in Māori for

⁶ Two authors with the same surname and year of publication are cited in the thesis. They are differentiated as Smith, T. (2000) and Smith, W. (2000).

week and there is an ‘ocean’ of difference between the Māori world ‘wai’ and the English world water.

An important juxtaposition of liberal identity and Māori ‘identity’ is articulated by Waerea-i-te-rangi Smith’s description of *whakapapa* as identity. *Whakapapa*, she says, is often reconstructed in terms of liberal identity and understood as one’s identity by reference to ancestors, genealogy or lineage – a unidirectional line to ancestors. However, in a Māori worldview, *whakapapa* ‘actually maps out the nature of existence’ (ibid, p. 46). In this view, then, religious and spiritual connections are an important part of a Māori world. Although similar concepts exist in the Judeo Christian world, Smith points out some differences:

There are two things that make us different from Pakeha, we are descended from gods and we speak to our dead (Kaumatua, Whanganui) (ibid, p. 48).

Bodies and parts of bodies are envisaged in the landscape so that a river can be an ancestor, fishing grounds can be envisaged as being placed on the different parts of a woman’s body. There are numerous land formations that are male and female... (ibid, p. 48).

Takirirangi Smith (2000) confirms such differences in what she considers a philosophy of *tangata whenua*, ‘which rationalises existence through interconnectedness and the identification of relationships of those things which are identified as existing’ (p. 58). Whereas European traditions value individuality and private property, Māori perspectives are more akin to notions of communal ownership with land integrally linked to gods, ancestors and children.

The spiritual dimension of Māori is mentioned in *Te Whāriki*. At a hui to mark ten years of *Te Whāriki* (2003), Rose Pere spoke passionately about the way in which the development of *Te Whāriki* sometimes ‘just came to us’ (Duncan, 2003, video). This was in reference to a spiritual aspect of *Te Whāriki* – one that is not translatable and perhaps difficult to understand in rational terms. The degree to which it informs current theory, policy and practice is questionable. Differences arise in our education institutions concerning the place of religion and spiritual matters. Takirirangi Smith speaks of the way in which

Māori talk to the dead quite often. Generally speaking though, this is either done in the Māori language or out of earshot of Pakeha During colonisation we have developed quite complex codes to protect knowledge from appropriation (Smith, T., 2000, p. 48).

The 'late modern' individual

In light of quite different epistemological positions, one has to question the validity and veracity of current institutional processes, habits and traditions. Appropriating indigeneity and biculturalism within a liberal construction of empowerment is not without its problems, particularly when the power of the individual and the child's autonomy is conceptualised in liberal universal terms. As Bishop stated in his professorial address, 'Current educational policies were developed and continue to be developed within a framework of colonialism' (2000, p. 3). This is a particular problem for liberalism which values diversity, yet applies its own narrative to that which it different, in order to render it familiar.

For modern, liberal societies, education is a major political and social tool where particular knowledge and skills required for political, social and economic participation are perpetuated. These knowledges and skills are grounded in a certain language, a particular culture and a particular historical liberal narrative. The language of liberalism – individualism and rationality – permeates all other narratives. While the discourses of biculturalism and equity acknowledge to some extent the importance of the social and Māori cultural perspectives on *whānau* and land, these concepts are at risk of being stripped of meaning when rendered in liberal terms. While the collaborative production of *Te Whāriki* assured the early childhood sector of a highly inclusive *document* that is socially, politically and culturally responsive, the degree to which this curriculum is *realised* within current policy and practice is yet to be seen. This document laid the groundwork for ongoing curriculum contest and conversation that must involve a wider population and a wider understanding of language, if one is to regard the whāriki as an active verb rather than a passive noun. The whāriki concept recognises the diversity of early childhood education in New Zealand, allowing distinctive patterns to emerge from 'different programmes, philosophies, structures, and environments' (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 11).

The modern self is imbued with characteristics of the Enlightenment subject: humanist, rationalist, essentialised and individual. In light of the above discussion, however, the liberal ideals of individualism, freedom and rationality need further examination. The individual is seen as the source of agency, signification and moral authority. She is an ahistorical entity standing apart and separate from society. Giddens' (1991) model of the 'late modern' individual is a useful counterfoil here. He describes the late modern individual as having developed at a particular time, in particular, unique, cultural and historical circumstances in which new mechanisms of self-identity have emerged. Such mechanisms are shaped by the

institutions of modernity. For Giddens, this individual is striking in the degree to which she is required to shape knowledge and identity from within the self. Rather than learn from tradition, the individual is seen to learn through an internalised set of decisions. Each step in life is created as much from an inner process as it is from outside influences. In this order of modernity, against the backdrop of new forms of mediated experience, self-identity is a reflexive endeavour that consists of a continuous self-construction. An individual who has particular characteristics is part of a reflexive project for which the individual herself is responsible. In this paradigm, we are what we make ourselves. The self develops along a developmental trajectory from the past to an anticipated future deriving coherency from an awareness of the stages of a life.

These liberal underpinnings impose a fixed subjectivity on others through education. Obviously, the young child is not consciously aware of conceptualising her 'lifespan' nor is she consciously self-reflective. However, such mechanisms of development, goal seeking, evaluation and self-motivation are structured within curricula. Just as the adult 'late modern' individual absorbs and processes information *internally*, working continuously *on the inside* shaping her own model of herself, so too does the young child: processing, assembling and responding to a developmental self that fits a particular social model that connects her to the world.

Because of the dynamic and inter-relational nature of self-development, the notion of a free, autonomous individual needs to be seen within the power/knowledge authority of education. For Foucault, being an autonomous individual means being rational within public forms of thought. Foucault (1997a) names four techniques that individuals deploy to understand their selves:

- technologies of production, which permit the production, transformation and manipulation of things;
- technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings and symbols;
- technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination; and most importantly, here in term so the liberal self;
- technologies of the self, which permit 'individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality' (p. 225).

Important here is the way that Foucault draws attention to the significance of relationships with others. He argues that a master's help is essential to teach a person to take care of the self. In the modern early childhood centre, the educator can be seen as that 'master', directing activities as she teaches children techniques of self-knowledge, self-control and self-transformation. This situation is one where someone more experienced dedicates herself to teaching someone less experienced. Power is inevitable in this relation between teacher and pupil. Although not necessarily bad, power exerted in educational institutions may be perverse when it becomes arbitrary and universalised domination as a technology of self. Tarc (2005) argues that educators might consider asking the elusive and complicated question 'Who are (are not) the human subjects I encounter (in education)?' His critique of human subjectivity and the way in which educators go about recreating humanist institutions to serve the collective (law, family, education, etc) underlines the need for a vigilant receptiveness to the uniqueness of the other. For Tarc, education should involve the 'constant negotiation of human subjectivity against, or in the image of, the "normative" subject' (Tarc, 2005, p. 836).

The reification of self-understanding involves particular interpretations of the notion of rights, conceptualised in highly individualistic and rational terms. This may be problematic for children with special needs, for Māori, and for various cultural groups or migrants who operate outside liberal traditions historically, culturally or institutionally. The technologies associated with self-understanding may act in a subtle way to marginalise and subjugate children. Herein lies the deep-seated irony that, for all its social focus on equal rights and commitment to the humanist subject as a project of liberation and emancipation through education, twentieth century liberalism is fraught within colonising limitations of its own rationality. Ignoring the other, in this way, 'masks patterns of difference based on gender, class or culture' (Burman, 1994, p. 167). Liberal theories of humanism and developmentalism permeate *Te Whāriki*. While the emphasis on biculturalism and socio-cultural theory may ameliorate the inherent difficulties of the developmental paradigm, we are still caught within the language of liberalism.

To some degree, empowerment of minorities (in New Zealand, in particular, Māori through biculturalism) has eroded the homogeneity of language and culture, and enabled differences to arise. Yet, the autonomous, rational individual is inscribed through our cultural signs and significations. Education, massaged to fit this reality, faces the task of embracing difference and allowing for cultures and languages to flourish, while at the same time teaching good citizenship, social responsibility and national unity. Identity and *whakapapa* are formed by

membership of cultural and linguistic communities. In liberal democracies that place importance on a universal free education based on individual autonomy and freedom, educational systems are obliged to rethink education processes to accord all children a curriculum that refuses cultural suppression, inequalities, exploitation and injustices, preferring instead to meet the needs of all children from all backgrounds.

The problem for liberalism and for modern identity is that liberalism may very well acknowledge freedom and equality, but it can only do so on its own terms – in its own language. Liberalism in this sense, then, is neither tenacious nor broad enough in its orientation to be able to act in a deployment of wonder, to suspend belief or to inculcate otherness. Rather, it must rationalise and normalise competing others. It seems to me that the liberal metanarrative is unable to cope with the radical focus of politics such as Māori sovereignty. Liberal rationality operates in a totalising logic, in which talk of difference, diversity, identity and culture belies a discursive, contradictory tendency to pin down these terms to unified essential meanings. In other words, the defining of ‘other’ reduces the ‘other’ to a common identity – the very thing that it attempts to avoid.

However, in spite of such limitations, liberalism provides some hope for an environment of tolerance in which difference is possible, and offers the space in which this politic can be played out. While, this is an ambivalent state, Rorty argues that there is no way to synthesize the views of writers on justice with writers on autonomy, seeing them as two different kinds of tools ‘as little in need of synthesis as are paintbrushes and crowbars Both are right, but there is no way to make both speak a single language’ (Rorty, 1989, pp. xiv-xv). Such ambivalence, Rorty suggests, can best be overcome by allowing for the co-existence of multiple views.

This chapter has argued that educational systems in liberal democracies place importance on a universal, free education based on individual autonomy and reason. In the past, a national education system was crucial in transforming individuals into a nation by promoting a homogenised view of society through language and culture, and by spreading an official historical narrative to foster a common vision. Now, though, education must recognise that a child’s identity is formed by membership of a variety of social, cultural and linguistic communities far more diverse than they were fifty years ago. Through pedagogies, technologies and curricula orientations, education now faces the task of embracing difference, and allowing for cultures and languages to flourish, as well as teaching good citizenship, social responsibility and national unity. As early childhood education increasingly becomes

part of the national education infrastructure, it is reasonable to expect that the early childhood sector will be subject to similar expectations and thus caught in the same dilemma, particularly since that infrastructure is shaped and driven at the level of national government and beyond.

With increasing ethnic diversity (some would say *multiculturalism*), urbanisation, globalisation, and, governments are now under pressure to have their educational institutions offering a curriculum that militates against cultural suppression, inequality, exploitation and injustice. The same governments are faced with having to meet the needs of all children from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds. The following chapter, *An Individual Entrepreneur* develops these issues by focusing on another narrative about identity and community in early childhood education – the narrative of neoliberalism – which appropriates the language of liberalism to depict the individual under the imperative of global economic capitalism.

Chapter 5. An Individual Entrepreneur

The new capitalism ... is not about commodities or standardisation, and very probably not about democracy ... [it is] ... about customizing desire (Lightfoot, 2006, p. 43).

As part of a global economy, New Zealand is reliant upon worldwide meta-level relationships involving economy, trade and investment. This means being integrally part of globalised governance structures, for example, membership and/or alliances with international organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. Where, once upon a time, national borders protected local manufacturing and industries from competitive international incursions, these borders are increasingly open. In global economies, the traditional four factors of production – land, labour, capital and enterprise – are now seen as less important than the value of knowledge and information technologies. Education is pivotal to this new form of knowledge, frequently referred to as education within and for the *knowledge economy*, manifestly linking education to information and the economy (Roberts, 2004).

This chapter explores education within the global economy and examines the impact and implications of neoliberalism on early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand. It examines neoliberalism in its variant forms and discusses a shift in conceptualising the liberal self and the aims of education. It then discusses early childhood care and education in terms of global economic policy, drawing upon human capital theory, social capital theory and managerialism, to situate New Zealand early childhood policy. Under neoliberalism, the chapter argues, the individual is less free than in liberalism. In *Political Essays* (PS), Ricoeur emphasises the need to resist globalisation, especially the technicist and universalistic tendencies of the global economic narrative. He argues that vigilance is required in assessing the economic in a narrative, suggesting that an ethical and creative praxis is determined by a dialogical openness that is not available in deterministic and non-metaphoric economic language. The technologies used to govern the individual involve fewer creative metaphors, despite the appeal to the educated individual as being innovative, flexible, enterprising, and knowledgeable lifelong learners (Maharey, 2003).

The chapter argues that education in the neoliberal condition is in constant realignment with the needs of the international knowledge economy, with an attendant focus on business principles of quality assurance, accountability and regulation, and within an increasing managerialised framework for education. Human Capital theory and managerialism function

as a form of *busno-power* (Marshall, 1995) to define education as an economic device to be managed productively for the New Zealand economic enterprise. Early childhood care and education is framed within this market economy, with return on investment underpinning provision. There is continual structural alignment to economic drivers such as assuring stable labour markets and ameliorating poverty. The young child of this care and education enterprise is cutely articulated in the media as a modern techno-savvy sophisticate: the four-year old telephone company executive (Telecom); the almost naked, nappy-wearing, boy and girl surfers of the car advertisement (Hyundai), as well as on the cover of an international report on early education policy (OECD, 2004a). In these examples, young children appear wearing business suits, managing four-wheel-drive vehicles, toting laptops, and providing expert advice while speaking on cell phones. These are provocative and significant metaphors in the language of early childhood education; the flowering child metaphor of liberalism replaced with the entrepreneurial pseudo-adult child of the productive economy.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the ideal of the autonomous individual underlies liberal theory; and within education, the promotion of personal autonomy has been identified as one of its principal aims. 'It is almost taken for granted in Western education and schooling that self-determination ... that is to say personal autonomy, is an educational ideal' (Marshall, 1996a, p. 83). This idea of liberalism, associated with freedom in a positive sense, sees the autonomous individual as being involved in more than just a capacity to act on particular desires and choices. To be autonomous in this positive sense – where resources, laws and institutions are provided for the 'general good' – implies that the autonomous individual is working within a public domain. It also means that the rational and autonomous individual must make choices with moral respect for the lives of others. It follows that emphasis on the rights of the individual must also accord with good citizenship, the development of commonality and solidarity, and acceptance of certain moral duties consistent with notions of public good, equity and tolerance. This view of liberalism necessitates that individuals have an adequate range of options from which to choose. This depicts a view of society where the individual determines her own wants and interests without being controlled by others. The State is given sovereignty by the individual to take part in the individual's life so that the good of all is maximised. Before the mid-1980s, state intervention was a strong feature of government in Aotearoa New Zealand. The government aimed to protect the individual and ensure social cohesion. That is, the State was required to safeguard the 'individual's life, liberty and property' (Peters & Marshall, 1996, p. 35).

A move from welfare liberalism to neoliberalism in the late 1980s resulted in political, economic and social reforms in New Zealand, which effectively reduced the size and involvement of the State in the public sector. Under the shroud of a country in economic crisis, the liberal, social democratic tradition in New Zealand was systematically dismantled, and replaced with a neoliberal philosophy. Neoliberalism provides the rationale for government to act simply as a referee or security guard. It is a view predicated on the belief that individuals know better than government what is good for them (Peters & Marshall, 1996). This form of political reasoning involves a notion of governance where the *freedom* of the individual *from* state intervention is seen as vital to economic and individual wellbeing. As a consequence, state function under the guise of equality and freedom is minimised, reflecting an economic rationality that considers that an unfettered marketplace provides a morally superior form of politics. This form of rationality has individual economic freedom as more important than egalitarian society.

Gordon (1991) outlines three strands of neoliberalism: a German strand, which emphasises economic freedom in securing the State's legitimacy; an American strand, which relies on a redescription of the social as a form of economic, and in which the capacity for perpetual adaptation is pursued: 'Economic government here joins hands with behaviourism' (ibid, p. 43); and a French strand, which involves mass unemployment, and in which the individual is continuously involved in the enterprise of self-improvement in a new 'psychological culture' (ibid, p. 44). Common to all of these forms of neoliberalism, however, is the notion of the rational, self-interested, utility maximising individual.

In New Zealand, changes to government and social institutions took place in the form of deregulation, devolution, corporatisation and privatisation. The governance of New Zealand changed from an ethos of liberal, positive freedom, involving the provision of certain resources for the public good, to neoliberalism, characterised by a hands-off approach to government. The move has been described as 'the most ambitious attempt at constructing the free market as a social institution to be introduced anywhere this century' (Gray, 1998, p. 39). Various critiques of the neoliberal reforms and their implications for education can be found, for example: Jesson, 1999; Kelsey, 1995; Marginson, 1997; May, 1990a; 1990b; 1992; Peters & Marshall, 1996; and Peters & Roberts, 1999.

Education reform in New Zealand was viewed as a key ingredient in economic and political restructuring. According to Treasury reports of this time (1984; 1987a; 1987b), there was nothing special or unique about education for it to be treated any differently from commercial

enterprise. Treasury, with its influential role in government policy, claimed that education shared the main characteristics of other commodities traded in the marketplace and therefore could not be seen as a public good. Education was deemed to be performing badly because it had not been responsive to consumer interests and desires, and because it was not accountable enough. Treasury argued that government intervention had interfered with the free market contract between producer and consumer, thereby creating educational inequality. By 1987, Treasury openly espoused an economic approach to education, even suggesting that the government might make a profit out of education (Peters, Marshall & Massey, 1994, p. 258). Significant changes to education administration and practice were enacted in law, which ‘fundamentally altered the notion of state education that had been in place since the enactment of the Education Act of 1877’ (ibid, p. 260). These changes were characteristic of those occurring in other areas of the public sector, both in New Zealand and in other Western democracies.

The aims of education in the neoliberal state are somewhat different from the aims of education in the old social democratic strain of liberalism that dominated New Zealand until the 1980s. As Peters (1996, p. 88) points out, ‘individuals are modelled as seeking their own interests (defined in terms of measured net wealth positions) in politics as in other aspects of behaviour’. The aim of education, therefore, can be seen as the management of a more unequal society and a spur to the individual to behave enterprisingly and competitively. Consequently, the emphasis is on creating individuals who are entrepreneurial and competitive, rather than cooperative and educated. Education is now designed to cater to individuals who are consumers and who act rationally in the marketplace.

This is not merely a change in education but a total change in culture. It involves a penetration into the patternings of culture that structure the individual and the very values which it may become possible for individuals to hold (Marshall, 1997, p. 321).

Within the economic rationality of neoliberalism, each person in society is seen to make rational decisions in order to maximise economic choices. These decisions are seen as more important than others; for example, social or community decisions. This is a particularly individualistic mode of human action, privileging individual freedom as more important than ensuring equality or justice. Peters & Marshall (1996) describe this new form of individualism in terms of *homo economicus*, conveying the idea that individuals seek to further their own interests in terms of wealth, positions in politics, and other aspects of behaviour (Peters, 1996, p. 88). The individual is thus shaped as one who is enterprising, competitive and self-

interested. This individual is to be ever adaptable to the changing demands of an increasingly technical and specialised marketplace. Within an economic narrative, the State maintains the appearance of minimal involvement in the activities of the individual. Yet regulatory and audit requirements assure a strong measure of central control. In terms of early childhood care and education, devolving responsibility did not mean less scrutiny.

The state became active in shaping constructions of childhood linked to global economic agendas. National curricula across the education sector were promulgated, with nationally defined ‘learning outcomes’ and ‘essential skills’ required to participate in a new ‘enterprise society’. A culture of audit and assurance imported from the world of business management became operative throughout government agencies The ‘gaze’ shifted to include the systems and policies of early childhood practice. Audit trails required surveillance and evidence. The tools of child observation were co-opted towards sighting the measurable outcomes of learning amongst the minutiae of children’s daily routines (May, 1999, pp. 126-127).

It is interesting to note another variant of neoliberalism arising around the late 1990s – *third way*. English political economist, Anthony Giddens, explains the term third way as a form of ‘social democratic renewal’ (1991, p. viii), claiming that it is the basis for a society ‘more egalitarian than it is today, but which is meritocratic and pluralistic; where the devolution of government is further advanced, but within a unitary nation’ (Giddens, 2002, p. 38). Posing as a new form of social democracy akin to welfare liberalism, with invocations of ‘community’ and affirmations of values, third way is also lambasted as a ‘kind of kitsch, a “caring” veneer pasted over the relentless commodification of the world that is the inner truth of the Third Way’ (Callinicos, 2001, p. 65). Various educationalists (Codd, 2001; Fitzsimons, 2007; Peters, 2001; Roberts, 2007) have argued that third way politics is a continuation of neoliberalism, which, disguised as third way politics, has ‘continued to structure key policy initiatives in recent years’ (Roberts, 2007, p. 490). Third way, in this light, with its focus on community, values and responsibility, under a banner of social democratic renewal, is merely a form of political rhetoric: ‘With something for everyone, the third way begins to look not like an alternative to the first and second way, but both ways at once!’ (Fitzsimons, 2007, p. 154).

The global economy and human capital

Traditional family and child rearing patterns in New Zealand have changed dramatically, as they have in many other Western democracies (OECD, 2006, p. 19). This is reflected in the

rapid increase in the number of women in paid employment (OECD, 2004a, p. 87) and their early return to paid work after having children. There has been a consequent rise in the use of early childhood services. This is acknowledged and reflected in *Te Whāriki*:

The growth of full-day early childhood education services reflects social and economic changes in society as women increasingly move into employment while their children are young. In the past, early childhood curriculum development assumed that early childhood education services would be providing sessional programmes. *Te Whāriki* brings together the inseparable elements of care and education in a curriculum which can encompass the wider functions of full-day services (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 18).

While a more traditional attitude of at-home child rearing still exists, the attitude of parents to childcare has changed radically over the last 30 years, with a majority of parents considering child care as an option, ‘particularly if it is local, affordable and of suitable quality (OECD, 2006, p. 39). Structural changes to the early childhood sector are occurring, both nationally and internationally. In New Zealand, a growing private and corporate sector provides for the increased enrolments in full-day childcare centres. This is accompanied by a focus on the professionalisation of the sector through managerial systems, the implementation of quality processes linked to a centralised regulatory structure, and the benchmarking of minimum qualifications for teachers in care and education⁷. Although early childhood education and care policy is linked closely to women’s employment, early childhood is entwined in a myriad of other narratives as well, including child development, child poverty, labour market supply, health, and social welfare. Early childhood education is now an integral part of social and economic policy considerations (OECD, 2006, p. 19).

Over the past decade, reports published by the OECD on social and economic development prioritise the importance of policies on early childhood education and care, particularly those involving better reconciliation between work and family commitments. These reports include: *Starting Strong 1* (OECD, 2001); *Babies and Bosses* (OECD, 2004a), *Starting Strong 2* (OECD, 2006) and publications such as *Human Capital* (Keeley, 2007). The focus is unashamedly on increasing workforce motivation, and improving productivity and profitability as a measure against declining fertility rates.

Marginson (1993) argues that human capital theory is the most influential economic theory for Western education, providing the framework for government policy since the early 1960s.

⁷ By 2012, the minimum qualification for all early childhood teachers will be a three-year diploma or degree. A stepped implementation is currently in process.

He identifies three phases in the application of human capital theory to government education policy (p. 43). The first phase, in the 1960s, was public investment in human capital, linking education to economic growth. The second phase, which eclipsed the earlier phase, abandoned public investment with a return to classical liberalism (neoliberalism). The third phase (currently underway) sees a renewed policy commitment to investment in human capital. However, in the rationality of the free market, the emphasis is now on private rather than public investment. In this latest phase, of which current policies pursued by the government are a prime example, education in human capital terms is seen as a source of labour-market flexibility in relation to technological and social change.

Building human capital is seen as important to economic participation in global economies, and education is a key driver in developing the requisite attributes within citizens. Viewed from the perspective of the individual, human capital is represented as actual or potential benefits such as increased earnings. From the perspective of the national economy, it represents the productivity of the work force. Early childhood care and education is ‘critical to the development of human capital and investing in children’s health and learning ‘their human capital – brings lifelong learning benefits’ (Keeley, 2007, p. 41).

Human capital is an important influence on the social policy of a nation. Defined by the OECD as ‘the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being’ (Keeley, 2007, p. 29), human capital plays an important role in economic growth and education in order to create ‘a workforce capable of taking on more complex and better-paying jobs’ (p. 30). In a globalised world with an insatiable need for technological skills, the ‘importance of human capital will only grow in the years to come’ (Keeley, 2007, p. 3) as going out to work is likely to provide a ‘greater sense of belonging in society’ (ibid, p. 44).

Becker (1994) argues that work and money are not all that concern human capital theory. The theory also claims to consider culture as a matter for research. It considers that education can be subsumed as a cultural artifact within the economy. Studies funded for research within the human capital paradigm show that education (in the human capital sense) ‘promotes health, reduces smoking, raises the propensity to vote, improves birth control knowledge, and stimulates the appreciation of classical music, literature, and even tennis’ (p. 21). In this sense, then, another form of capital engages with human capital – social capital. These two forms of capital are linked in complex ways, both promoting and developing each other. Social capital refers to ‘the links, shared values and understandings in society that enable

individuals and groups to trust each other and so work together' (Keeley, 2007, p. 102). So, even the relationships that we share are construed as a form of capital that enables people to 'achieve economic success' (ibid, p. 11). Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as the aggregate of actual or potential resources linked to a network of institutionalised relationships. Here, mutual recognition, made up of social obligations or connections, is converted into economic capital, the conversion rate dependent upon the amount of social capital possessed, the network of connections and the amount of capital each individual has.

Coleman (1988) emphasises parents' involvement in developing this social capital through the support they gain in social structures such as knowing the parents of their children's friends. In this way then, social capital can be seen as social control with positive features such as trust and communication being part of the community (Dika & Singh, 2002). Raising children, once mainly a job for families, has increasingly become a public issue as more and more women go out to work. While providing economic benefits to the individuals concerned, this shift arguably changes the nature of social capital as children are frequently located in out-of-home care arrangements, outside the context of their local community, with fewer parental social connections through neighbours or community playgroups.

With restrained level of public spending in liberal societies, governments are focussed on maximising return on investment in early childhood education and care, through the promotion and regulation of services outside the home. A recent review by the OECD *Starting Strong II* (2006) of 20 member countries found that the cost of childcare is generally shared to greater or lesser degrees, depending on the country, between governments and parents. There is a wide range of funding mechanisms:

- sharing of costs across ministries, communities and parents
- allocating resources within education budgets
- creating markets in child care (a strategy 'found mostly – but not exclusively – in the liberal economies')
- public-private partnerships – involving community and private sector
- support from the corporate and business sectors

(OECD, 2006, pp.109-111).

While most countries in the Review had extensive public early childhood funding, independent markets in early childhood services were more likely to be found in neoliberal

economies, where the parental share of funding is also significantly higher. In some American services, parents pay up to the full cost. Three neoliberal economies (Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) also provided universal free early education for children from at least four years for some hours every day. The general picture is that in Europe, governments contribute from about 66% to 90% of childcare costs, whereas in most liberal economies, parents pay the major share and governments provide about a third of costs (OECD, 2006, p. 113).

The review found that only three of the twenty countries reviewed (Denmark, Finland and Sweden) considered children from one-year old and over as being entitled to public provision of high quality early childhood education and care. In continental European countries, public childcare programmes predominate, with parental contributions averaging 25-30% to their costs. Belgium, France and the Netherlands subsidise costs for infants and toddlers and provide universal and free early education from different ages: two years in France, two and a half years in Belgium, and from four years in the Netherlands.

The earlier *Babies and Bosses* report found that, in line with a neoliberal economy, New Zealand's early childhood policy is characterised as 'non-interventionist, with family matters and costs for children predominantly being the responsibility of the parents' (OECD, 2004a, p. 19). The later *Starting Stronger* report found this hardly surprising since governments in economies such as New Zealand 'generally do not support universal and free early childhood education and care' (OECD, 2006, p. 39). Childcare fees are much higher in New Zealand, 'accounting for around 24% of a couple's earnings at all income levels' (OECD, 2004a, p. 109). The new 'working for families' reform and '20 hours free' childcare policy may go some way to alter this situation. However, they were introduced mid-2007 and so are too new to evaluate.

From this brief comparison, it can be seen that in neoliberal countries like New Zealand, early childhood services have been marketised, with early childhood education promoted as a private good (OECD, 2004a). The stated reasons for this are to limit public expenditure and to allow greater choice and control by parents. Proponents of choice argue that the range of programmes presented to parents is more innovative and responsive to parental wishes than that supplied by public services. It is also argued that making more information available to consumers (parents) and fostering competition among providers will eventually bring quality at lower cost. Social and funding programmes are, however, maintained to provide, in principle anyway, middle to low-income families with subsidised childcare to ameliorate the

costs. This form of funding corresponds closely to the ‘third way’ model of addressing targeted social need all the while maintaining the creation of markets within the public services as a means of having lighter, less expensive and more responsive public services.

The most recent OECD report (2006) clearly indicates a shift away from the strong economic view promoted in *Babies and Bosses* (OECD, 2004a). The new rhetoric is that early childhood education and care should be seen as a ‘public good’. Although this shift in thinking is significant, the report still promotes early childhood as part of an investment strategy to develop human capital.

Without significant investment there is a shortage of good quality programmes, unequal access, segregation of children according to income, less participation of children from disadvantaged backgrounds or the quality of service is inadequate and women experience barriers to accessing work (OECD, 2006, p. 102).

Not surprisingly, the OECD view is supported by education economists referred to in their own publication (OECD, 2006). For example, Cleveland & Krashinsky (2003) state that the argument for treating early childhood education as a public good are similar to those used in favour of public sector education: general health of a nation’s children, future educational achievement, labour market volume and flexibility, and social cohesion. There is a strong acknowledgement that market theory should not determine early childhood provision and practice. The report argues that if early childhood becomes a market place commodity, it is subject to market failure with potentially serious consequences for the development of young children. Drawing on the results of a 1997 study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in the United States, the OECD observes:

Education is rarely a repeatable process. Unlike buying a product that can be returned or exchanged, to remove a child from an inferior early childhood placement cannot compensate for the previous loss of opportunity, while the continued use of an inferior service may actually harm the development of the child (OECD, 2006, p. 37).

Although the notion of early education as a public good is widely accepted, government provision and entitlements to access differ widely across OECD countries. OECD note that in more liberal systems there is a tendency to bypass local authorities and to give private companies more autonomy while binding them with regulations, outcome targets and regular evaluations. This is seen to be an unsatisfactory arrangement:

An early childhood system can hardly work satisfactorily in this way given the far greater diversity of providers involved in the early childhood field and the ‘comprehensive services’ character of much early childhood provision (OECD, 2006, p. 50).

The report further claimed that early childhood services need to be local in character, to combine both the public interest in early education and the wishes of the parents of the children within the service. For this reason, it claimed that, in many countries, early childhood education policy and provision is becoming a responsibility shared among national governments, local authorities, communities and parents. The rationale for the shift is to bring decision-making and delivery ‘closer to the families being served and to adapt services to meet local needs and circumstances’ (OECD, 2006, p. 50).

New Zealand childcare in a global context

In 2002, the New Zealand Ministry of Education published a ten-year strategic plan for early childhood, *Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki*. The plan is broadly expressed as the government’s policy for early childhood education’s contribution to the ongoing and future economic health of the nation.

If we are to build a strong future for this country, I believe we must firmly establish early childhood education as the cornerstone of our education system. Our social, educational and economic health can only benefit from efforts and resources focused on young New Zealanders. We cannot leave to chance the quality and accessibility of early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 1).

The plan maintains that early childhood education is ‘a critical first step in building the foundation for a child’s ongoing learning and development’ and that there are opportunities to build further on the strengths of the sector to fulfil the government’s vision of ‘lifting the educational achievement of all New Zealand children’. All those working within the early childhood sector are said to share ‘a common vision of what success looks like’ (ibid, p. 2). Key strategies are to improve access, quality and collaboration. The means to achieve these strategies are summarised by the Ministry as involving a complex mix of four approaches: funding, regulation, information and support.

The development of the early childhood strategic plan has resulted in a period of rapid professionalisation in the sector: promoting registration of early childhood teachers; development of assessment guidelines (*Kei Tua o te Pae*); pay parity for kindergarten teachers; and the funding of a wide range of professional development and innovative practice

schemes. In addition, all early childhood centres are required to have fully qualified teachers by 2012, for which a stepped process is currently underway. All these developments are seen as largely positive, although concern continues to be expressed about privatisation and managerialism as the preferred form of delivery (Aitken & Kennedy, 2007; Farquhar & Gibbons, 2008; Scrivens, 2002).

New Zealand policy development is in line with OECD reports that point to the need for governments to strengthen their investment and focus attention on the early childhood sector. A package of ‘family friendly’ policies, such as ‘20 hours free’ and ‘working for families’, underlines a shift in thinking about the role of early childhood education in social, economic and political life. By ‘investing’ in early childhood education and encouraging family-friendly workplaces, OECD governments are seen to be improving their human capital. Such moves fulfil OECD aims: to increase women’s participation in the labour market; to reconcile work and family responsibilities; and to address issues of poverty and educational disadvantage (OECD, 2006, p. 19).

The first years of life are crucial to human development and lay the groundwork for our ability to develop human capital. It’s such an obvious idea that it hardly seems worth stating. And yet across the world, disabilities and poverty mean many children never lay those vital foundations (Keeley, 2007, p. 40).

Current early childhood education and care policies in New Zealand align with the earlier OECD report, released in late 2004, as part of the *Babies and Bosses* series rather than the more recent report *Starting Strong II* (2006). *Babies and Bosses* consists of comparative studies of work and family reconciliation policies, with a focus on increasing workforce motivation and improving productivity and profitability as a measure against declining fertility rates. The series of reports promote ‘family-friendly’ policies like encouraging women into paid work to minimise the inefficient use of labour market resources, and getting parents to go to work rather than care for their children. This is couched in terms such as a better ‘balance of work and family life’, with employers needing to have some assurance that employees will return to work after child-related absences. Early childhood care and education is promoted through an active social policy, as ‘reconciling work and family life and promoting gender equity in employment opportunities’ (OECD, 2004a, p. 49).

The strategic plan can be seen in terms of this third way rhetoric of an ‘active social policy’. An active social policy is not a return to welfare liberalism and its distribution of income from rich to poor to create a more egalitarian society. Rather, an active social policy aims to ‘invest

in people' to prevent problems, for example, childcare subsidies and 'tax breaks to encourage mothers to go work to increase family income' (Keeley, 2007, p. 49). An active social policy is part of an economic rationality: childcare supports the labour supply by minimising the loss of human capital due to labour market withdrawal (OECD, 2004a, p. 90). Thus, early childhood is now seen as a mechanism for facilitating women's re-entry into the workforce; for the prevention of family problems; for early intervention and protection of children at risk; and for building a healthy and wealthy State.

The intent has been to increase the skill base of the future workforce to ensure that the economy can benefit from sufficient workers who have a high level of flexibility of skills for work in the new technological era. Supporting this shift has been the impact of 'new right' economic views which seek to identify the benefits from government investment in education (Carr, May & Podmore, 1998, p. 2).

The withdrawal of women from the workforce is seen as a major issue for labour markets, even though the female labour force participation has grown since the 1990s. In contrast, the male labour force has stabilised (OECD, 2004a). Childbirth and childrearing are seen as major determinants of 'female labour force behaviour (ibid, p. 11). The presence of children in a household has little to no affect on the 'labour market behaviour of fathers', but it has a 'significant but different impact on maternal employment patterns' (ibid, p. 55). Characteristically, on becoming a parent, a woman will return to employment after a period of child rearing, usually on a part-time basis (returning, perhaps to full-time employment once children have started school). The larger the family, the more likely the mother is to remain in part-time employment, with the birth of a third child decreasing the likelihood of any return to work at all (OECD, 2004a; 2006).

Maximising opportunities for women's participation, particularly in full time capacity, is a key focus on international and national economic and social policies. While greater participation of women in the workforce is being encouraged, so too is child rearing and optimising population growth in OECD countries. With women electing to have fewer children, there is less future human capital – an important economic driver. Ironically though, encouraging women to have more children moves them out of the workforce for significant periods of time. To produce more children and continue in quality employment is fraught and complex. Furthermore, governments wrestle with the complexity of their own dual interests: on the one hand, balancing economic and social returns on investment in early childhood; and

on the other hand, increasing the health and wealth of a nation within the restraints of the non-interventionist ideology of the neoliberal state.

The promotion and development of early childhood education and care is seen not only as a mechanism to facilitate women's re-entry into the workforce after child-related absences; it is seen also as important in the prevention of family problems; and a key early intervention strategy to protect children 'at risk'. Building a healthy, wealthy and educated state is paramount. Despite rapid economic growth, New Zealand reportedly faces a number of key issues to be addressed: skill shortages and continued low labour productivity, high working-age poverty caused by joblessness, large disparities in social outcomes across ethnic groups, and a large proportion of sole parent families (OECD, 2004a, pp. 51-52). The remedy for poverty is clear: Children in families where only one parent works are more likely to be poor than children living in families where both parents work, with the 'more acute in jobless single parent families' (Keeley, 2007, p. 44).

These issues impact directly on the development of human capital and young children situated as lifelong learners. Māori and Pasifika are more likely to have lower educational qualifications and lower paid jobs, and are more likely to be unemployed (OECD, 2004a, p. 37). The high incidence of teenage sole motherhood among the Māori population is also reported as a problem.

Quite uniquely, almost one in four children in New Zealand live in a one-parent household. As only one in two sole mothers in New Zealand is in paid work, many children grow up in jobless families. The incidence of one-parent households increased rapidly since 1985, with declining marriage rates and increasing divorce rates (ibid, p. 11).

The OECD recommends 'integrating' sole parents into the labour market, citing employment rates among sole parents at about 50% (ibid, p. 17) and claiming that DPB clients have weak financial incentives to work as long as benefits are easily available. As rhetoric for reducing welfare benefits, the OECD promote reducing 'financial disincentives' and to encourage work through 'employment activation programmes'. The OECD further recommends: that sole parents should be required to actively seek work (ibid, pp. 12-13); that benefits for families with children should be conditional on employment; and that the DPB should be modified 'to make work pay' (ibid). The report also points out that 'some groups of parents face a situation in which work, or more work, does not pay' because available 'benefits are high relative to earnings' or because 'centre-based childcare fees are so high' (ibid, pp. 23-24).

The national and international focus on Māori participation in social and economic life, especially the participation of young sole-parent Māori women, is highlighted as causing concern (OECD, 2004a). The OECD sees as one of New Zealand's key challenges the non-employment among sole parents, and focuses particularly on the high incidence of teenage motherhood in the Māori population (ibid, pp. 11, 22 37, 38). The suggestion is that sole parent benefit payments are too high, and that there should be 'better incentives for families to move off benefits' (ibid, p. 17). Current policy in early childhood education in New Zealand focuses on increasing accessibility, affordability, and participation rates, especially for low-income families, Māori and Pacific Island children and their families (Ministry of Education, 2002).

The children primarily affected come from Māori, Pasifika, and low socio-economic backgrounds. A lack of access to appropriate ECE services is also proving a barrier to rural families and to around 15 percent of parents wanting employment. The Government could increase participation for these groups by becoming more involved in facilitating access to quality ECE (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 6).

Interventionist strategies within the strategic plan are clear:

Research shows that having access to quality education in early childhood offers the greatest benefits for the very children who are least likely to be attending (children from low socio-economic backgrounds) (Ministry of Education, 2002, Foreword by Mallard, p.1).

For children from disadvantaged backgrounds, participation in quality ECE is particularly important, as they may not be exposed to high quality early learning experiences in the home (ibid, p. 9).

New Zealand's strategic plan for early childhood aligns closely with global trends, with its focus on getting children out of the home and participating in institutional programmes in early childhood centres. The direction is justified with the claim that 'families are not well informed about the value of ECE to their children's development' (ibid, p. 6) and because children 'may not be exposed to high quality early learning experiences in the home' (ibid, p. 9).

In OECD parlance, investment in early childhood will ameliorate the effects of poverty, allow sole parents to work, and therefore provide for their children. Instead of viewing poverty and its effects (for example, inadequate healthcare) as a failing of liberal democracy to care for its citizens, the underlying morality play within the neoliberal way is that we humans need to be

more entrepreneurial and more competitive. The real problem, according to an economic rationality, is in motivating people and ensuring that they gain employment. As Giroux (2003) points out though,

instead of complex social analyses, the public is treated by the dominant media to incessant celebration of those individuals who have made it in the marketplace because of their ability to 'go it alone' through the sheer will of their competitive spirit (p. 34).

Investing in childcare to cure poverty masks a variety of social and cultural issues. While childcare may contribute to raising family incomes through enabling maternal employment, the strategy does not necessarily raise household income, since most mothers ended up in low-paid employment paying for the cost of childcare (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Furthermore, although the OECD argues that parents want to work and would readily do so if affordable quality childcare was more available, there is a widely held belief that mothers of under-fives should not work. In a policy forum on childcare in *The Australian Economic Review*, Evans & Kelley (2002) discuss the degree to which moral reservations about the employment of mothers with children under five influences maternal employment and childcare policy. 71% of New Zealanders reportedly subscribe to the view that mothers of under-fives should not work, while those that do work experience feelings of guilt and social alienation. The authors claim that support for mothers' employment is not growing:

Nowhere in the developed world is there substantial support for full-time work by mothers with young children There is more support for part-time work. But in most developed countries – and especially in Australia, Great Britain and New Zealand – full-time home-making is preferred by a clear majority. Moreover this is true of men and women alike, and of young and old, and for mothers and childless (Evans & Kelley, 2002, p. 190).

This view is in stark contrast to the strong pro-labour-force view that is promoted within OECD policy documents. Seen in this way, 'family-friendly' policies and associated moves to toughen conditions for welfare recipients can be seen as a re-moralising of potential workers to contribute effectively to the economy. Perceived issues, such as the participation of women, Māori, sole parents and the under-employed, identify targets for market correction strategies – not only the immediate parents, but also their children.

Intensified interest in early childhood by government, parents, employers and communities is making the early childhood sector an increasingly contested site of education and social policy. It is perhaps a little too corrosive to view the strategic plan as a piece of government

social reengineering, although it must be noted that the strength of a society is highly dependent upon the productiveness of the *developing* child. This is particularly so when global economics and politics define and measure development in terms of participation rates of children in early childhood services, and the participation of women in the workforce.

The metaphor of business in early childhood

The logic of economics permeates the education of young children, and while the notion of ‘the child’ is constantly in narration through a number of intersecting discourses, there is a consistent rationale underpinning these emerging identities. Early childhood education and care systems in New Zealand are now embedded in powerful economic models. Terms appropriated from the world of business, economics and politics provide new meanings and metaphors for child subjectivities. Education is now a commodity to be invested in, based on economic inputs and outputs. The individual is seen to make rational, autonomous choices in an education marketplace, with early childhood education and care *services* restructured as ‘producers of private goods tracked on the market’ (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 42).

The constant call for education to align itself to business, while not new in education (a liberal education has always been important to business and industry), does take on new meanings, signified by the language of business permeating educational texts (efficiencies, skills, outputs, quality standards, for example). The language of business ushers in a new era in education, framing knowledge in terms of skills, outputs and outcomes. Standards are used to commodify education into recognisable, assessable packages of knowledge in the interests of measurement, accountability and control. Delivery is separated from the conception of the curriculum in the interests of efficiency.

Under the rubric of innovation, flexibility, enterprise, knowledge economy and lifelong learning, a variety of new metaphors in education emerge, such as management, services, quality and best evidence. The collectivising of early childhood education under the label of *services*, for example, denotes a particularly strong factory metaphor for the performance of duties, such as repairing or replacing. Constructed in this way, an early childhood service becomes a place where ‘provision is made for a specified purpose’ (ibid, p. 63). Although the notion of service might also connote the selfless helping of others, the way in which the various narratives and significant actors inter-relate limits the contextual meaning.

Viewed as businesses, early childhood centres are in the competitive market of selling services, with children as second-order consumers. These businesses, however, must conform to quality indicators instigated and monitored in a strong regulatory environment. Each early childhood centre/organisation is accountable for the public funding that it receives. In this way, the State governs public funding of private enterprise through regulatory processes such as audits, education reviews, and the mandating of the early childhood curriculum and quality practices. The regulatory environment ensures accordance with accountability mechanisms set by an array of government or government-appointed bodies, like New Zealand Qualifications Authority, New Zealand Teachers Council, the Ministry of Education, Work and Income New Zealand, to which centres and organisations are responsible for compliance.

To maintain systems of accountability and to ensure compliance with relevant ‘quality’ indicators, the regulatory framework requires centres to have high levels of administration and management. This includes the development and implementation of quality systems, processes and frameworks, along with the identification and management of risk. It is through these mechanisms that a management environment becomes an effective part of the day-to-day lives of children and teachers in early childhood centres. Early childhood centres have managers, directors and accountants to whom teachers are accountable. Teachers must comply with regulations and quality indicators for health and safety; they must also work within a network of structures that assure their compliance with curriculum and assessment frameworks. On top of this, teachers are also held to be autonomous professionals with sufficient knowledge to make independent decisions in accordance with professional standards and a code of ethics as set out by the New Zealand Teachers Council. Yet, a common conversation among teachers is the degree to which they are now heavily involved with administrative and compliance responsibilities, to the detriment of the teaching-learning relationship.

Perhaps nowhere else in education in New Zealand is the language of management so prevalent. This is part historical: one of the early hallmarks of childcare is the privatised, market arrangement with a history reaching back into the nineteenth century. Policy documents that underpin teachers’ practice are permeated by the language of management. In 1998, under the title *Quality in Action*, the Ministry of Education issued what might be called a handbook for early childhood services in New Zealand to support the implementation of Government’s statement of *Desirable Objectives and Practices* (DOPs). Despite appeals to

collaboration between teachers, management, parents and whānau, the Ministry is clear that management is to develop and provide services by way of curriculum, determined by quality:

Management is responsible for ensuring that all the requirements of the DOPs are met, and management and educators are together responsible for determining how they are met. Management develops and provides a service in collaboration with educators and parents/whānau. The management and operation of the service, and the curriculum that results, determine the quality of the service, which is reflected in the outcomes for children's learning and development (Ministry of Education, 1998, p. 5).

Quality in Action indicates various ways in which management and educators might meet the requirements of the revised DOPs based on 'sound educational and management practices for all New Zealand early childhood education services, regardless of their individual philosophies and emphases' (ibid, p. 6). Seen in this way, then, early childhood education is clearly positioned within a managerial framework.

The early childhood centre operating under the efficiency of economic rationality is now modelled on the model of the modern corporation. This intensification of management has meant a significant shift away from the importance of the professional teacher, and an emphasis on the professional manager as a key figure in teaching and learning. To appreciate the full significance of this shift, we need to take into account the techniques which accompany it, the models of management within which it is deployed and the broad assumptions about the role of management underlying it. The essence of managerialism lies in the assumption that there is a process called 'management' that entails generic, purely instrumental activity, according to a set of principles that can be applied to both public and private business. At the level of specific techniques and practices, the ideological components of managerialism are frequently difficult to discern. Particular performance indicators such as teacher-child ratios appear in themselves to be relatively neutral. However, the dominant rhetoric of organisational culture that underpins managerialism emphasises a normative, homogenising value system, against which performance can be measured, assessed and adjusted, and against which human components will need to adjust, compare and standardise themselves (Drucker, 1993; Pollitt, 1990).

This managerial impulse is threaded throughout early childhood policy (local and global), where the notion of *quality* has become a key issue, in particular as it relates to measuring economic benefits to individuals, communities and even countries. The use of this business concept is applied to all aspects of early childhood education and care, from policy and

funding through to implementation of the curriculum and is seen as critical in supporting children's social and educational development. Three of *Starting Strong II's* (2006) ten policies for OECD governments relate directly to quality, with recommendations that nations:

- create the governance structures necessary for system accountability and quality assurance
- base public funding estimates for ECEC on achieving quality pedagogical goals
- improve the working conditions and professional education of ECEC staff

(OECD, 2006, p. 4).

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Education regulates quality through a number of mechanisms, including self-reporting, centre reviews by the Education Review Office, and funding tied to quality indicators. Quality standards operate in the areas of health and safety, building regulations, staff-to-child ratios and group size, compliance with educational policies, qualifications and staff pay rates, and implementation of *Te Whāriki* through meeting the *Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPs)*. In terms of teaching and learning, the DOPs, along with *Quality in Action*, have been key documents that support the implementation of *Te Whāriki* and convey government's expectations of the standard of education and care that early childhood services provide. Implementing the DOPs is currently mandatory for all chartered services in New Zealand.

Ministry-funded research also identifies quality as a key lever for improving outcomes for diverse children in early childhood. *Quality Teaching Early Foundations* (Farquhar, 2003) is one of a series of best evidence syntheses commissioned by the Ministry of Education in its aim to 'contribute to an ongoing evidence-based discourse amongst policy makers, educators and researchers' (Executive Summary). While, as Sarah Farquhar points out, achieving quality is dependent on an interpretation of pedagogy, curriculum and policy, the ubiquitous term 'quality' remains an important regulatory accountability situated within a network of managed assurance systems (not seen to the same extent in the compulsory school sector). What parent would not want 'quality' for their child? However, quality is a highly subjective term, what is regarded as quality, or as having a high priority, is different for each of us. Yet what counts as quality is quite clearly specified in policy initiatives and used to define and regulate the sector in a top-down manner.

A different but related notion of quality is that used as a key selling point for private enterprise – quality purchasable by the consumer. Childcare consumers are the parents of young children who choose from a variety of suppliers, using indicators such as price and *quality* to make choices. Individual centres develop their own point of difference and their own identities in a competitive marketplace. These identities are marketed to parents who are increasingly advised to base their decisions on quality indicators. However, an American study by Cryer & Burchinal (1997) found that even consumers who know what to look for may have a lack of ‘perfect information’ about what they are purchasing. They argue that, due to the complex nature of ‘parents-as-consumers’, the ‘emotional conflicts’ around choice, and the limited study undertaken of market childcare, further study was required for policymakers to ‘feel secure’ in relying upon parents to be well-informed judges of childcare. It would be difficult, the study reports, for parents to admit that they had chosen inappropriate care:

The economic and social pressures that compel parents to utilize child care, combined with the limited numbers of high quality programs that parents can afford or access, create a dilemma for parents who must make child care choices to the best of their abilities and then feel secure in their decisions. If the larger society values the benefits of high quality programs for children, then the implication is that those types of programs should somehow become available, even if parents do not presently demand them in the child care market (ibid, p. 56).

This study suggests that the market is not a satisfactory model for childcare. Unlike consumers of commodities in a market, parents cannot easily obtain a refund or a new model if they are dissatisfied with their child’s *outcome*. Cryer & Burchinal suggest that an error at national level in the choice of organisation of early childhood services may carry serious penalties for certain groups of families and children. The second OECD report in the *Starting Strong* (2006) series also corroborates this.

The overwhelming evidence from the reviews of twenty countries suggests that without significant public investment in policy, services and management, both affordability to parents and the quality of services are likely to be undermined. This is true not only for public services but also for licensed private providers. Without sustained public funding (either directly to services or indirectly through parent subsidies) and public regulation of all providers, ECEC services are destined to be patchy and of poor quality in all but the more affluent neighbourhoods. This defeats a main purpose of early childhood systems, that is, to provide quality care, development and learning for all children, and in particular, to improve opportunity for children living in at-risk situations (OECD, 2006, p. 118).

The terms 'quality' and 'management' are business terms that are frequently used in the evaluation of children's services and that permeate policy documents (*The Strategic Plan, Quality in Action, Desirable Objectives and Practices*). Little heed is paid to the criticism that quality is a subjective, value-based, relative and dynamic; or that management is a form of social control. Rather, an arbitrary approach is taken by policymakers who install quality as systems to be managed on the basis of known criteria. This situation limits the possibility of multiple perspectives or understandings of quality, and establishes quality indicators as something that can be imposed irrespective of 'time, place and values' (Moss & Petrie, 2002, p. 69).

The concept of quality in relation to early childhood institutions is irretrievably modernist, it is part of the Cartesian dream of certainty and the Enlightenment's ambition for Progress and Truth. It is about a search for definitive and universal criteria, certainty and order – or it is about nothing. Working with complexity, values, diversity, subjectivity, multiple perspectives and temporal and spatial context means taking another position which understands the world in a different postmodern way (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999, p.105).

Lyotard (1984) claims that the 'role of knowledge is as an indispensable element in the functioning of society' (ibid, p. 13) and that 'knowledge is now more than ever a question of government' (ibid, pp. 8-9). Knowledge now emphasises skills and optimal performance, with an emphasis on science and technology in education. This emphasis is a requisite for the globalised, technologised marketplace. The value of knowledge is determined by its alignment and consistency with computer information systems. With computerisation, knowledge undergoes exteriorisation, objectification and mercantilisation:

The true goal of the system, the reason it programs itself like a computer, is the optimization of the global relationship between input and output – in other words performativity (ibid, pp. 11-12).

The development of electronic technologies has made it possible for virtually everything about life to be calculated, and therefore available for investment. That which is not easily recognised, miniaturised, measurable or cost-efficient is unlikely to be included. Within the global, technological economy, education aligns itself structurally to the technological demands of the economy. Science and technology offer a form of control over life, and are instrumental in creating the possibility of thinking about humans as capital. Life expectancy,

for example, can now be calculated and many aspects of life determined through genetic technology.

To govern the State now relies upon ‘selected knowledge and research, mostly situated within a positivistic, empirical-analytic paradigm’ (Moss & Petrie, 2002, p. 76), which promises human technologies able to produce more certain outcomes, and which, along with the computer, ensures control. Seen in this light, the economic and technological narratives can be seen as structurally imposing and non-dialogical, thus excluding other perspectives.

The narratives of the liberal-humanist and the social child are still strong in terms of early childhood curriculum practice in New Zealand. However, the move toward privatisation, standardisation and normalisation of teachers’ work, and the push towards a seamless education system within an increasing regulatory structure, put pressure on the dialogical teaching practices and narrative pedagogies of the early childhood sector. From a Ricoeurian perspective, this is not an ethical, creative praxis upon which to develop identity because it is missing a dialogical openness. Children are marginalised by adults – without voice and excluded from personhood. The problem here is the way childhood and education are constructed through an incalculable mixture of common sense, management, technology and economic rationality, where the child must always be subject to adult colonisation. Ricoeur’s (PS) assertion that ‘global capitalism’ should be resisted and the particularly technicist and universalistic tendencies be mediated by cultural particularity puts ‘a stutter’ into such narratives (Moss & Petrie, 2002). Social science and management practices convert what are ‘essentially moral and ethical problems’ into technical and administrative ones (ibid, p 12). Locking down the discourse into the technicist language of management prevents comparative examinations on other epistemological fronts, for example, humanistic perspectives on childcare and/or *tangata whenua* perspectives on social relationships. In the business-oriented approach to ‘service provision’, parents are the primary market and the child merely a second order consumer in a business focussed on investment return.

The individual entrepreneur

Human capital theory has demanded a reformed educational culture with new subjectivities. Education in New Zealand is now implicated in managing an unequal society, through practices designed to motivate individuals to prosper in an enterprise culture. Although the rhetoric of government policy stresses the importance of a strong social and community sphere, the social processes reflected in policy documents are more consistent with an image

of the individual as a privatised entrepreneurial consumer, developing skill sets to be economically productive. This individual arises from a supposedly free and politically neutral activity of self-development, although the new subject of education is formulated in a culture that ascribes to the values of ‘individualism, competitiveness, flexibility and the importance of paid work and consumption’ (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999, p. 45). This involves a particular subjectivity, where individuals are to behave rationally, economically, competitively and entrepreneurially.

In an individualised culture of accumulation, the discourse equates existence with improved productivity. Since human beings are thought to be infinitely flexible and adaptable, the process of improving productivity may have no bounds. Human capital theory advocates a perspective on culture that equates with a picture of the ‘good life’ promoted by its main beneficiaries; that is, entrepreneurial investors intent on accumulating capital. Within neoliberalism, all facets of life are subsumed under the economic, and investment in the self, by the self, is the essential purpose of life. The self, then, becomes inscribed in the language of continuous reform of the economy, society and education.

The entrepreneurial self of neoliberalism differs from the autonomous individual explored in the previous chapter, subject to what Marshall refers to as ‘busno-power’ (1995; 1996a), a policy regime that promotes human capital theory as a form of government rationality. Within busnoprater, the economic narrative has penetrated the ‘very basis of human nature’, reformulating ‘relations between individual and society’ (Peters & Marshall 1996, p. 93). Under *busnocratic* rationality, neoliberalism has no internal spaces within which to contest values. Rather, it shapes individuals as particular kinds of subjects who choose in particular ways. The apparent neutrality of the market allows the self to appear independent of political, economic and cultural circumstances. However, the neoliberal ethos masks the manipulation of needs and interests within a market paradigm. Individuals here are transformed into atomistic subjects with limited social and community ties, making atomistic consumer choices – personified in the figure of the ‘rational autonomous chooser’ (Marshall, 1995; 1996b).

Busnocratic rationality appeals superficially to agreed ends (such as those of ‘efficiency’ and ‘quality’) by conflating its means with its ends. For example, to define a system as a ‘quality’ one (the mere existence of which is said to ensure what counts as quality) is to reify the notion of quality from where it is unable to be critiqued from within that system. This closed language system precludes difference and critique. Through this closure, neoliberal authority has replaced the former liberal account of education, meaning that education has been

captured by a non-refutable language of busnocratic rationality, characterised by a public relations smoothing and a seamless systemisation: ‘The values permeate at a microscopic level, are difficult to identify, and thus difficult to debate and contest’ (Marshall, 1995, pp. 9-10). The discourses of *managerialism* and *quality*, and the elevation of business and commercial language as the medium of educational exchange, constrain and limit the once creative art of education and the metaphors that we use to describe and imagine different realities of childhood and the institutions that house them. Just as liberal education did not fulfil its promise of freedom in the name of Enlightenment, neither (despite its rhetoric) does a neoliberal education with its underlying busnocratic rationality. Ricoeur’s objection to the effects of neoliberalism is the way in which personal identity is structured with little intersubjective exchange at the level of micropractice.

So, who is this child of the economy? The ‘competent and confident child’, who makes a ‘valued contribution to society’ (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9), begins to look a little different from the liberal child. In pursuit of commodification, we have seemingly forgotten education’s existential dimension: that it is closely tied to questions of personal identity and the formation of character, and that education is an embodied project. Within a neoliberal discourse of self-management, and using the rhetoric of autonomy, freedom to choose implies freedom from power. Within a neoliberal entrepreneurial market, individuals are required to experience themselves as acting rationally, autonomously, and maximising their own self-interest. The ‘competent, capable learner’ is now a child suited to the needs of capitalism, a flexible worker adapted to the ever-changing requirements of the market. The ‘centred’ subject, prevalent in psychology and pedagogy and enacted in formal education, is replaced by the ‘flexible self’ (Fendler, 2001, p. 119). This is a self willing and able to respond and act in a constantly changing environment where efforts are made to ‘empower’ the child, and the curricula constructs the child not as a passive recipient but as an active producer of knowledge, engaged with the adult world at all levels. Bloch (2006) argues that today each child must become self-responsible, self-governing, multicultural and cosmopolitan. Steering mechanisms, such as standards and testing, mimic

the circulation of governing technologies in the media, in medicine, in the respatialization and corralling of bodies and minds The child must be part of a cosmopolitan world; children and their parents must be cosmopolitan, entrepreneurial, and flexible participants in the global economy, political, and cultural context. They are privatized members of a nation that is now part of global society (ibid, p.38).

Although entrepreneurial bodies are fashioned as increasingly competitive, some forms of interdependence are necessary to construct national citizenship in a world where children are to become global citizens. The discourses of individualism, entrepreneurialism, enterprise, choice, and competition signal an enhancement of a neoliberal rationality that is seemingly universal and inclusionary. However, diverse cultural ideas, identities, and actions are effectively excluded in the face of seemingly incontrovertible data, at once universal, evidence-based and quality-focussed.

Standards and pedagogies are touted as being for all, while, even in early childhood education, current pedagogies are organized differently for those who are poor, different, 'at risk,' or dangerous, compared to those available privately for children of the middle and elite classes. Governing difference and danger, even when it is of small bodies, is different from the governmentalities of those constructed as 'normal' (Bloch, 2006, p. 39).

The entrepreneurial individual of neoliberalism has similar features to Giddens' (1991) 'late modern' individual, in that the entrepreneurial individual is self-reflexive and independent. All entrepreneurs are, by definition, individualists: both the liberal and the neoliberal individual appeal to reason as the universal standard for the developing child as future citizen. However, today's individual has greater entrepreneurial qualities. She appears more flexible, more multicultural, more knowledgeable, and more competitive. Lightfoot's (2006) critique of the new capitalism likens the child to an automatic goal striving machine – a cybernetic child modelled on capitalist literature of commodities and standardisation. It is a world where individuals should train their minds like 'guided missiles' (p. 91), using information and feedback to fly towards ever-changing and ever-increasing goals. In this world, the child will inculcate the manners and habits of business, of fast capital, goods and services, opportunism, and continuous self-improvement, although it is clear that the 'self' involved is not the one of Ricoeur's ethical project.

The narrative developed in this chapter has argued that education plays a pivotal role in the enhancement and development of its citizens. Particular characteristics, roles and functions are portrayed as enhancing social, economic and political aims of governments. Ricoeur regards economic rationality as too limiting upon the individual, in that the individual becomes too autonomous and lacking in social and community bonds (PS; TJ). Ricoeur's values of care and community and the importance he attaches to the 'good life' are not merely economic. Nor are they concerned primarily with productivity and progress. An economic

narrative does not supply the metaphors for creativity and interconnection. The relationships between children, families and communities, highly valued in *Te Whāriki*, are impoverished by a singular focus on the economic. While an economic perspective may be a necessary and useful part of life in a modern world, it has been found wanting as an all-encompassing narrative for the ‘good life’. The following chapter now turns to a social realm of families, communities and culture to examine another constitution of identity for the child of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Chapter 6. A Social Institution of Childhood

Let us not, therefore, ask why certain people want to dominate, what they seek, what is their overall strategy. Let us ask, instead, how things work at the level of on-going subjugation, at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviours etc. In other words, rather than ask ourselves how the sovereign appears to us in his lofty isolation, we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts etc. We should try to grasp subjection in its material instance as a constitution of subjects (Foucault, 1980b, p. 97).

This chapter extends the narratives and identities explored so far, examining the way in which the individual is located within the realm of the social. In the preceding chapters, liberal narratives from the Enlightenment through to the late twentieth century were examined. These narratives connected early childhood education and the young child to two different but related discourses. The first emphasised the liberal tenets of freedom, reason and equality; the second emphasised the neoliberal character of the self-managing and interactive entrepreneur. Another interpretive turn needs to be addressed in order to recognise the enculturated and socially embedded process this entrepreneurial self engages with.

As the concept of civil society evolved, so too did the governing of social relations (Lasch, 1977). The joining of the family and the child through the school has traditionally been seen as a way to improve social and personal life, to improve society, to save the soul, and to fabricate a modern identity (Popkewitz & Bloch, 2001). The narrative developed in this chapter examines the way particular social contexts constitute identities through subjectivity. Three important contexts within the social milieu are developed: *community*, *family* and *culture*. These have been selected because they are consistent lines that emerge and re-emerge in early childhood curriculum and policy documents. The social realm is broad, however, so this chapter limits its examination of the discourses of family, culture and community to their relationship with policy and curriculum, and in particular to *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Most dictionary definitions of the word ‘social’ refer to the relationship of humans to society and its organisation. Such definitions also refer to mutuality, living in organised communities and *humans as social animals*. Definitions of *family* generally refer to members of a

household, and descendents of common ancestors regarded as a group. *Community* is generally discussed in terms of collections of people with common interests, where reference is often made to fellowship, or the sharing of interests. Likewise, definitions of the word *culture* place importance on the group association, with reference to collective customs, civilisations and the arts of a particular time and people. Collectively, these terms cohabit and recognise shared spaces of meaning which I have labelled ‘the social’ – an amorphous term that takes a wide sweep and ‘staggers under a heavy theoretical load, coming to mean communication, enculturation, participation and ... adaptation’ (Burman, 1984, p. 36). It is important, then, not to *conflate* the family, community and the cultural into an entity called ‘social’ but rather to *examine* some of the interrelationships and intersecting lines. A fluid conception of the social is consistent with the approach taken in the thesis to the notion of individual identity as not finite, belying absolute definition, and always in process.

The chapter analyses some aspects of the social in terms of the development and the theoretical positions of *Te Whāriki*. *Te Whāriki* is seen here as an inscriptive and interpretive surface for this social narrative. The chapter draws upon some understandings of community, family and culture in order to examine various formations and representation of cultural and historical selves and social positions. Curriculum is integrally connected to the cultural, political, and economic institutions of society – ‘institutions that may be strikingly unequal by race, gender, and class’ (Beyer & Apple, 1998, pp. 4-5). The history of any curriculum will involve the merging of political rationalities into pedagogies. Castenell & Pinar (1993) argue that curriculum debates about what is taught to young children are ‘debates about who we perceive ourselves to be and how we will present that identity, including what remains as left over as difference’ (p. 2). They argue that a curriculum project should be to recover memory, to understand how the systems of reasoning and categories of inclusion have erased ‘the other’ except as different from what is perceived and classified as the ‘normal’.

The narrative developed in this chapter has a twofold purpose. One purpose is to provide an analysis of three contexts of the social, which are cornerstones of early childhood theory and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. The second is to continue the challenge of the social contestability of curriculum and to contribute to the on-going debate that keeps curriculum alive and revitalised. This challenge answers a recent call (Nuttall, 2003) for further critical dialogue around *Te Whāriki*. In line with this call, I begin to argue in this chapter for the nurturing of the dialogical understandings that clearly underpin *Te Whāriki*, since that dialogue seems at risk of prescription, closure and finality.

The chapter begins by recalling briefly Ricoeur's narrative identity and Foucault's notion of subjectivity. These are useful perspectives from which to understand the way in which a variety of inter-disciplinary formulations (derived from psychology, science and medicine), have been instrumental in governing the social relations of individuals. Rather than seeing the individual as governed by an intentional will of the State, Foucault (1977) argued that individuals subject themselves, through particular technologies and disciplinary formations. It is argued here that an understanding of one's personal identity is developed through these disciplines in both their past, present and future formulations. In this way, identity is produced in the modern social through a linear, developmental continuum in which educational practices and pedagogies act as a form of moral technology, inculcating obedience and reflexively shaping personalities. Particular pastoral techniques encourage self-knowledge and enhance the feeling of sympathetic identification with particular ideas of what is good and virtuous – ideas embedded in social institutions. For better or worse, these ideas about ourselves, and the way we appropriate them, make us who we are. Children exist in relation to, and dependent upon, others. Children and adults are involved in mutually dependent, mutually constitutive relationships, which reflect and invoke models of social, cultural and political organisation. Education can therefore be seen as part of a reflexive organisation of practices, taking place within this particular social order where the child's appropriation of the various resources on offer is constitutive of learning transformation and a resultant shift in identity formation.

Foucault (1997b) and Ricoeur (1991a) both argue that the unitary model of the self of the humanist tradition is no longer viable. The self is not a *noumenal* existence prior to experience, nor is it a rational form, thought into being. Understanding of the self as a linguistic entity acknowledges the interpretive nature of reality, self and other. Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity supports the proposition that there is no entity called 'self'; only an identity constituted by intersubjectivity where the self is linguistically designated and mediated by symbols (INT). For Ricoeur, a subject's discourse is how she understands her world and her being, which involves objectification and interpretation. As already discussed, the question of identity, for Ricoeur, cannot be segregated from the social nexus in which one figures. The self emerges from intersubjective praxis and active appropriation of the cultural environment. In this, he claims that understanding must be part of an individual's, or a group's relationships with the world and with others. Hermeneutics does not aim to discover an unmediated reality or an observable fact, rather it is involved in the task of continual mediation of reality in order to find new creative interpretations (new semantic productions).

Recognising that many meanings and conflicting views are important in leading a creative ethical life, Ricoeur refuses an easy dialectical synthesis or reduction of meaning. As argued in chapter three, there is a close etymological connection between response and responsibility. The responsibility for an action presupposes the capability of an agent to communicate, to enter into dialogue with others and to give a response to the question ‘Who did this?’ To possess a selfhood is to be *subject to*, and the *subject of*, dynamic experiences and instabilities. To be a person and to gain one’s identity – in the sense of a narrated selfhood – means being without a fixed identity. A narrative identity is not a stable and seamless identity. Rather, it is a complex array of stories about one’s self and one’s other, entwined in personal and collective histories, in communities to which an individual is affiliated, and in institutions to which an individual belongs. The institutions of family and childcare centres figure large in this complex array. Ricoeur sees the self as constituted by narratives and discourses which circulate within such institutions and which intersect in different ways, giving lives different, numerous and irreducible meanings. In his view, these intersecting narratives provide a basis for ways in which we create ourselves and, therefore, ultimately ways we can form new understandings of society and of living together.

In chapter two, parallels were drawn between Foucault’s subjectivity and Ricoeur’s narrative identity. Foucault’s subjectivity is anchored in the human body and the material world where language is a kind of second order articulation. Foucault held that there is no substantive subject, that is, subjects do not first pre-exist in an ‘I’ form prior to description or action. Rather, identity is a result of subject formation, a production of subjectivity. We have come to be individuals with a certain view of ourselves and as subjects who are subjected. Foucault’s substantive body of writing can be seen in terms of an on-going fascination and curiosity with the way in which ‘in our culture, human beings are made subjects’ (Foucault, 2001, p. 326). His use of the term ‘subject’ is important. It articulates the ambiguity of the self as in both *subjecting* and *subjected*. Identity is constituted within what he calls ‘regimes of truth’. Truth is linked to discourses and sustained in relation to systems of power. We are constituted and we constitute ourselves through techniques Foucault calls ‘technologies of domination’ and ‘technologies of self’ where our identity is produced by the power/knowledge relations of particular discourses. Foucault believed that we are trapped in our own subjectivity when we believe that we are rationally autonomous individuals free to make certain choices. However, he sees us as far from free, arguing that our identities are the result of a highly politicised set of acts resulting from the effects of power/knowledge. Foucault argues that it is through the human sciences of education, economics, biology, psychiatry and medicine that we are both

the subject and object of knowledge, and is sceptical about the sciences that constitute such knowledge, seeing them as ‘very specific “truth-games”’ (Foucault, 1997a p. 224).

Foucault claims that power relations drive us to become subjects, that is, individuals with a certain identity, who can, as subjects, be subjected. He argues that it is through the psychological, medical, penitential and educational practices that a model of humanity was developed, and now this ‘truth’ of human beings has become normative, self-evident, and is ‘supposed to be universal’ (Foucault 1988, p. 15). He argues that the language of humanism has been used by ‘Marxists, liberals, Nazis’ and ‘Catholics’ to various ends. This does not mean we have to get rid of what we call human rights or freedom, but we cannot say that freedom and rights are limited to certain frontiers:

I think there are more secrets, more possible freedoms, and more inventions in our future than we can imagine in humanism as it is dogmatically represented on every side of the political rainbow: the Left, the Centre, the Right (ibid).

In asking questions about how individuals have come to be significant elements of the State, Foucault concludes that as nations developed, successful state governance required something more than just an implementation of general principles of justice and wisdom. A ‘bio-politics,’ consisting of political knowledge and a harnessing of individual desire, became critically important in preserving and extending the State. ‘Bio-power’ is the term Foucault gives to an elision of the macro management of the population and the micro management of the practices of the individual. Hence for Foucault there is no individual subject, but a production of subjectivity, ‘the process through which results the constitution of a subject, or more exactly, of a subjectivity which is obviously only one of the given possibilities of organising a consciousness of self’ (Foucault, 1989, p. 330). This elision of government and individual practices occurs within a social realm.

Te Whāriki: a social history

The social context of learning is vital to most early childhood curricula throughout liberal democracies. The curriculum which guides educators’ practice is one of the most important sources of the social in that it defines the nature of social authority, constitutes and ascribes value to the knowledge that is to be taught, and determines social and political norms, cultural heritages, historical narratives and languages spoken in the public sphere (Applebee, 1996). To this end some discussion about Aotearoa New Zealand’s very first formal early childhood curriculum; *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) is useful because the importance of

social context is highlighted throughout. Lyall Perris's Foreword recognises the social as a foundation stone of the curriculum.

The importance of the social context within which children are cared for and learning takes place is one of the foundation stones of the curriculum. It is clearly acknowledged that the relationships and the environments that children experience have a direct impact on their learning and development (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 7).

The terms *family*, *community*, *communication* and *relationships* are pivotal terms in the curriculum, forming the basis for embracing individual children within environment and culture. The child-centred pedagogy at the heart of *Te Whāriki*, while individualistic in its orientation, is highly dependent upon the social context of learning. The *Four Kauri Trees* positioned as metaphorical pillars in *Te Whāriki* emphasise a concern for the child's individual social development in relation to the wider world of family and community. These kauri trees include Bronfenbrenner's social-cultural-political influences on the child, Bruner's child of social dynamics, Piaget's developmental child, and Vygotsky's child of culture and language. This embrace of humanistic psychology in *Te Whāriki* promotes a view that a child will 'self-realise' through interaction with peers, teachers, parents and others in the wider world, whether it be through stages (Piaget) or zones (Vygotsky). Vygotsky and others in the humanistic tradition propose that identity formation owes its very existence to the social order. For Vygotsky, socio-cultural meanings are acquired by using language for particular purposes in socially defined activities (Vygotsky 1978). Socio-cultural perspectives that prevail in contemporary theorising of early childhood studies emphasise the interrelationships between the educator and the child. Paramount in the child's socialisation is 'mutual participation in semiotically mediated routine practices' where narrative practices are seen as both social and symbolic involving 'recurring conjunctions of child and caregiver mediated by the activity of telling a story of personal experience' (Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra & Mintz, 1990, p. 294).

In New Zealand, the development of *learning stories* – a form of narrative assessment and planning based on socio-cultural theory – is now informing teaching practices that focus on the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories involving learners, teachers, and researchers who are seen to be storytellers and characters involved in their own and other's stories (Carr, 2001). This affinity between narrative and personal identity is such that narrative can be said to play a privileged role in the process of identity construction in both individuals and communities. Bruner (1986) has suggested that stories are one of the first

cultural constraints on the nature of selfhood. It is through stories that we construct truth about the world and ourselves and it is through narrativisation that we construct meaning and value and community: ‘the narrative metaphor suggests that people lead storied lives and that what we call “learning” is a process of storying and restorying’ (Bishop & Glyn, 1999, p. 5).

A number of commentators have discussed the curriculum’s unique development, outside the radar of the Ministry who had little understanding of this sector of post-compulsory education (Te One, 2003; Mutch, 2003; Nuttall, 2003). It is interesting to note the relative autonomy of the development process of *Te Whāriki* in relation to the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Mutch, 2003). This could be attributed to a number of factors: the Ministry’s limited understanding of the pedagogy of early childhood education; the lack of early childhood curriculum precedents to source; and early childhood being a fringe education sector with little formal ‘education’ research done locally. Until recently, early childhood had little traction in policy or formal education, so when the idea of a national early childhood curriculum was mooted, it was able to develop largely without State interference because, one could speculate, nobody really knew what it should look like. The public perception of early education was quite conservative and tied to a ‘traditional’ notion of motherhood and home keeping. Largely voluntary in nature, the community-based sector was buoyed by the social activities of community fundraising for Plunket, or for the local kindergarten or playcentre. These arenas of social activity were focussed strongly on advocating for women and children.

At first, the idea of a national early childhood curriculum was not particularly welcome by all within this diverse sector. The histories of each organisation within the sector were generally ad hoc and curriculum was generally not formalised (Cooper & Tangaere, 1994). A one-size-fits-all curriculum that could fit the range of entities within the sector was viewed with some scepticism. Each organisation had developed differently, each with distinct histories, funding sources and approaches to curriculum. In 1990, Helen May and Margaret Carr signalled an intention to respond to the Ministry’s call for tenders to develop a curriculum. Their interest was strongly supported (Te One, 2003) and what ensued was a remarkably consultative and collaborative process of curriculum development which included ‘reciprocal arrangements between the writers, researchers, working groups, and people working in the sector’ (ibid, p. 29). The collaboration recognised a long history of social, community and cultural traditions, including the women’s movement and Māori self-determination. This collaborative approach is seen by many in the sector (Mutch, Te One and Nuttall, for example) as a reason for its successful acceptance. It has been pointed out that the degree to which *Te Whāriki* and *Kei*

Tua o te Pae are part of a regulatory framework runs counter to the ethos of the dialogical principles upon which these documents were developed (Farquhar & Fleer, 2007; Hatherly & Richardson, 2007). This, of course, was never the intention of the authors of the curriculum and assessment frameworks. *Te Whāriki* and *Kei Tua o te Pae* are predicated on notions of power-sharing and reciprocal relationships.

Te Whāriki has a strong tradition of the social and community – in its development, in its form and in its content. Implicit in its social perspective is the view that the child will not develop or assume full *beinghood* without a strong social network. The social is the place where children can be seen to be developing a means for expressing and understanding who they are through their participation in socially organised narrative practices; and through mutually dependent, reciprocal relationships within families, whānau, communities and the wider influences of societies and cultures. Three different but inter-related contexts will now be used to extend the discussion of *Te Whāriki* as a socio-political document and to track various lines of thought as they relate to the way in which children become subjects. The three contexts are *community, family* and *culture*.

Community and belonging

At the heart of *Te Whāriki* is a vision of democratic, bicultural, community-based educational provision. I have commented earlier on the liberation politics that galvanised a group of women (mainly) in a collaborative development to produce a unique bicultural heritage for early education. Comparing the development of *Te Whāriki* with the development of the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* for primary schools, Mutch (2003) notes the extensive collaboration involved in the former, whereas the primary school document was developed around ‘national curriculum statements and aims and objectives ... all part of the neo-conservative drive for accountability and excellence’. *Te Whāriki*, on the other hand, stressed the importance of ‘self-esteem and a sense of belonging... a perspective more akin to earlier liberal-progressive views of the purposes of education’ (ibid, p. 120). She comments further that *Te Whāriki*, unlike other curriculum documents developed during this time, was able to be ‘shaped by the political and social goals of both the women’s movement and the early childhood community’ (ibid, p. 113). As Te One comments, *Te Whāriki* is regarded as a subversive and collaborative initiative, from within an early childhood sector that was suffering. *Te Whāriki* created a point of ‘solidarity in an unsympathetic and at times adverse political climate’ (Te One, 2003, p. 42). The notion of community underlying this document

includes aspects of participation, partnership, consensus and empowerment. It aspires to be a community free from patriarchy strongly liberatory in its politics, particularly in relation to marginal groups: children, women and Māori. Throughout the document, themes of belonging, family, community and relationships invoke images of a form of community akin to communitarian views of liberalism.

One of the four principles of *Te Whāriki* is *whānau tangata* or *family and community*. The broad intention of this principle is that ‘the wider world of family and community is an integral part of the early childhood curriculum’ (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.14). Under the principle of *whānau tangata*, the well-being of children is seen as interdependent with the well-being and culture of adults in early childhood education setting, and with families and local communities:

Children’s learning and development are fostered if the well-being of their family and community is supported; if their family, culture, knowledge and community are respected; and if there is a strong connection and consistency among all the aspects of the child’s world (ibid, p. 42).

The *Belonging* strand – *Mana Whenua* – also promotes warm interrelationships between family, community, belonging and well-being. It portrays the early childhood setting as a ‘caring home: a secure and safe place where each member is entitled to respect and to the best of care’. The early childhood setting is seen as contributing to ‘inner well-being, security and identity’, as a place where ‘the families of all children should feel they belong and are able to participate in the early childhood programme and in decision making’. This strand also credits the early childhood setting with providing ‘meaning and purpose, just as activities and events at home do’. Furthermore, it ‘respects the achievements and aspirations of the child’s family and community’ (ibid, p. 54). Such a view of the family and the child is also echoed in the current strategic plan for early childhood: ‘Children can develop and build on strong early learning foundations in a number of settings, including their own homes’ (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 9).

The community context highlights the importance of communication, belonging and contribution that will contribute to the child’s wellbeing in society (inculcating four of the five strands of *Te Whāriki*) where the vision of the child is

to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9).

An understanding of the term curriculum is articulated as

the sum total of the experiences, activities, and events, whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster children's learning and development (ibid, p. 10).

This emphasises 'the critical role of socially and culturally mediated learning' and of 'reciprocal and responsive relationships for children with people, places and things'. Children are seen to be learning through collaboration with others in their community, guided in their participation, as well as enjoying their own 'individual exploration and reflection' (ibid, p. 9).

The contribution strand – *Mana Tangata* – states that children are to 'experience an environment' where 'there are equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity, or background; where 'they are affirmed as individuals' and 'encouraged to learn with and alongside others'. The communication strand – *Mana Reo* – promotes and protects the child, where children are to 'experience an environment' where they develop verbal and non-verbal 'communication skills for a range of purposes,' 'they experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures, and where 'they discover and develop different ways to be creative and expressive' (ibid, p. 16).

The community context is emphasised further in the strategic plan for early childhood, the front cover featuring images of children in social encounters – with adults and with other children. *Ngā Huarahi Arataki* is not only a pathway to the future; depicted on its cover is a sub-theme announcing 'a journey towards increased participation, improved quality and stronger relationships'. The first couple of pages highlight the importance of the social context by stating that the plan is the result of 'intensive consultation' and therefore 'presents a shared vision between the sector and the government'. Two of the three goals of the plan appeal explicitly to the social: to increase participation and promote collaborative relationships. The third goal of improving quality is also reliant upon the social as well. In particular, the plan includes specific strategies for building a sector that is 'responsive to the needs of Māori and Pasifika peoples' (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2). It claims that some of the biggest shifts in direction will be in support of diverse services; support for community-based services; promoting co-operation and collaboration between services, parents, education, health and social services in order 'to empower parents and *whānau* with greater involvement by the government in focusing particularly on communities where current participation is low (ibid, p. 3).

A number of strategies are developed to increase participation in quality services, with a focus on communities where participation is low. The focus is on Māori, Pasifika, low socio-economic and rural communities, where services will be ‘driven by the needs of those individual communities’. Government is to play an increased role in ‘facilitating access’ to ‘support ECE services to be more responsive to the needs of children, parents, families and *whānau*’ (ibid). The strategies developed to promote collaborative relationships are designed to ‘improve the development and educational achievement of children between birth and age eight through forming strong links between ECE services, parent support and development, schools, health and social services’ (ibid).

Evident in both *Te Whāriki* and *Ngā Huarahi Arataki* are constant appeals to community. The notions of community within these documents are worthy of further examination, especially since appeals to community sit alongside appeals to privatisation and institutionalisation. The kind of community promoted in *Te Whāriki* is not the same as that promoted in the Strategic Plan.

Early childhood organisations were somewhat sceptical about becoming part of the education sector in the mid-1980s. Although government involvement in what had been a largely independent sector might mean greater resourcing and social acceptance, the concern was that it may come at a cost to the diversity of the organisations that comprised the sector. Each early childhood organisation had developed uniquely over the years, largely in response to the communities that they served. Mostly they had survived on charity, philanthropy and small government subsidies and had relished their independence. Being taken up within a government net of regulations, curriculum was seen by many as a death knell to autonomy and to expressions of diversity within the sector.

Ricoeur’s idea of *ipseity* emphasises the importance of creating new understandings of a community’s identity as part of responsiveness to others. In this view then each organisation’s identities should be encouraged to be open to adaptation and change. However, Ricoeur (RI) also discusses the importance of institutional memory and more particularly being wary of the economic in narratives. Here, according to Valdés (1991) Ricoeur tends to promote a communitarian view of living the good life. So on the one hand, the evolution of an organisation should be supported; on the other hand, that evolution should be questioned to understand the reasons for the changes. In light of this latter perspective, the identity of some organisations is somewhat under siege, in particular, the parent cooperative-style playcentre and the part-day community-based kindergarten, with their focus on complementing

parenting. Playcentres and Kindergarten Associations around the country are currently looking at ways to adapt to new funding regimes tied to ‘quality’ indicators that undermine the parent/community basis and the sessional nature of these organisations. Kindergarten Associations are moving towards full-day childcare models to attract government funding and to adapt to the changing work environments of parents.

Notions of community are, then, contestable, with meanings dependent on theoretical orientation. The values underpinning the notion of community in *Te Whāriki* are akin in many ways to a communitarian perspective, particularly to the *tangata whenua* perspective embedded in its principles. This perspective rejects individualism, and while *Te Whāriki* can be seen to be a liberal document, it embodies a wider political philosophy. Communitarians argue that our identity depends on our membership in a community of shared values and meanings, where the self is ‘constituted and defined by social relationships’ (Peters & Marshall, 1996, p. 181). This is in direct contrast to the impoverished sense of community underpinning neoliberal market theory, and undermining any sense of identity or rights grounded in group loyalties or tribal affiliations (Peters & Marshall, 1996). Neither view of the community is without issue, however. The communitarian ideal is critiqued as being undesirably utopian and politically problematic in its romanticising of community. The negative effect of this is that it may further subjugate minority values by substituting one form of universal individualism for another, that is, by privileging the social self over the individual self. On the other hand, the neoliberal ideal espouses economic motivation for individual interests in preference to communitarian concerns, and is associated with the increasing professionalisation and regulation of the sector. Whether or not the politics of community within current curriculum and policy can move beyond the communitarian and/or the individualistically liberal intentions of politics is perhaps dependent upon the uptake of current calls for a politics of difference (Moss, 2007; see further, chapter seven).

Family on the move

For all its purported stability, family is complex and contextual, situated at the intersection of various discourses, such as the public and the private, the political, the judicial, the cultural, the economic and the geographic, while being shaped and disciplined by the institutions of education, health, medicine, psychology and the school. In a Foucauldian genealogy of family, Donzelot (1977) argues that the social is located at the intersection of various discursive lines, with the family as a ‘concrete locus’ where multiple discourses implicitly

converge (p. 4). In similar manner, Christopher Lasch locates family within the socio-political domain. He argues that the family has not simply *evolved* in response to social and economic influences. Rather, he argues, it is ‘deliberately transformed by the intervention of planners and policymakers’ (Lasch, 1977, p. 13). Discursive formations of family have secondary ‘flow on’ effects in the narrating of children’s identity, so it is important here to examine some of the forces impacting on family in our society. The strategic plan for early childhood notes the strong connection between children’s learning and development and the well-being of their family and community, in particular, the need for their family, culture, knowledge and community to be respected. The plan notes the positive potential of ‘a strong connection and consistency among all aspects of the child’s world’ (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 16).

Supposedly ‘family-friendly’ policies (discussed in chapter five) were seen in light of economic influences and the international trend toward harnessing human capital. The family, then, is not just a nurturing vehicle for children, but must be seen in light of its expected contribution to a market-based society. The understanding of family in its various manifestations is examined here, particularly in light of the modern nuclear family model, an image of which has been prevalent in liberal societies. The nuclear family refers to a family unit including mother, father and children, whereas, for example, an extended family may include members of a nuclear family plus other relatives living in the same home.

The cosy image of the nuclear family epitomised, for example, in the paintings by Norman Rockwell with Mum, Dad, and children eating roast turkey in a cosy kitchen, is seemingly under threat. Whether the realities of such an image have ever existed, in particular for those ‘others’ outside this picture of domesticity, is questionable. However, what is significant here is not so much the truth of the narrative, but the way the nuclear family has served as an icon of fidelity and self-assurance. Although this image of the nuclear family is still prevalent in policy and curriculum documents, the following pages argue that new roles are being assigned to family, particularly for mothers in their return to paid work.

The middle class nuclear family of modern liberal societies rose to prominence in the late nineteenth century. At this time, a surprisingly powerful role for women also emerged, consistent with a new understanding of the importance of motherhood. This new role signalled a move away from the image of the passive, febrile, frailty of women toward a view of women as capable, robust and with some intellectual capability. Women were pivotal to the functioning of normal families, where ‘the well being of the family was her most important duty – to herself, to God and to the nation’ (Weyenberg, 2006, p. 110). In this way then,

women were transformed into professional mothers – primary caregivers to educate children in the home. The young child’s care at home was seen as a determining factor in shaping her adjustment to school and the broader social environment.

By the middle of the twentieth century, various disciplines: health, medicine, science, and psychology promoted the naturalness of the mother-child dyad. The mother was seen as the *natural* first educator, with the father relegated to the background of this dyad as an economic support for the family. The nuclear family was deemed to preserve the normality of the child, avoid appearances of vice and poor conduct and assure adjustment to the social. It was allotted responsibilities, natural capacities, and shaped by experts in order for families to have confidence in their own capacities. This particularly psychological view continues to control family lives today through constant scrutiny of family interactions, involving a variety of social discourses including medicine, health and education. The provision of expert knowledge, with particular support from the discipline of psychology continues to inform us that children and their successful progress through to adulthood is dependent upon the family. Any form of maladjusted or non-conforming behaviour is attributed to bad parenting, which can be ‘cured’ by interventions that transform family habits (Lima, 2006). As Rose (1989) claims, these ‘relational technologies’ of the family are ‘installed within us’ as mechanisms necessary ‘for the government of family’ (p. 208).

Forms of parental authority, ways of disciplining children, prohibitions on certain types of activity differed among the classes and cultures, yet, in an ethnocentric and discriminatory way, social workers and the courts imposed one set of norms as if they were universal. Further the regulatory apparatus coercively imposed upon women certain doctrines of motherhood, of the naturalness and desirability of psychological theories of maternal instinct, mother-child bonding, and primary maternal preoccupation (ibid, p. 206).

The humanistic orientation and psychological expertise underlying family structures of ‘normal’ families and proper child rearing practices are predominantly white, middle class and professional. As Rose argues, views different to this normality are easily seen defective. In the New Zealand context, different might constitute, for example, Māori, Asian or working class. While contemporary rights and equality discourses may attenuate the worst instances of exclusion, there is always a continuous process of inscription involved in identity formation, with the possibility of ‘other’ family formations constrained by powerful metanarratives.

The role of the family continues to emerge, transforming attitudes about non-maternal care of children and reconfiguring the traditional role of motherhood and the nuclear family. The locus of family now begins to reveal contradictory tendencies. Sometimes the family is portrayed as a refuge from the world, providing security and love; and sometimes it is portrayed as a threat to order, perpetuating anxiety, domestic violence and child abuse. The model of the nuclear family is in transformation, moving away from mothering as a central parenting role to a dispersal of roles: the increasing role of fathers in parenting; the trend for mothers to be working and grandparents assisting in raising families; and recognition of the *whānau* concept in child rearing. Add to this list a fast-growing rise in institutional care, including full-day childcare for infants and young children, and afterschool or holiday care for school-aged children (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Policy texts are ambivalent about the role of women and families. Current curriculum and policy documents hold firm to the more traditional and powerful model of the nuclear family, where the definition of a good mother is prescribed as a key determinant of child rearing. For example, OECD documents (2001; 2004a; 2006) articulate that the main impact of maintaining work-life balance falls on women rather than men. At the same time, however, the current policy environment is underpinned by a new re-ordering of families providing choice from a range of institutionalised childcare options to support women in their apparent desire to return to work after having children. Conflicting research provides divergent evidence about women and their desire to work. Defamilialisation policies of the OECD are at odds with a recent Australian study (Evans & Kelley, 2002 in *The Australian Economic Review*) that surveyed parents and wider society and found evidence to suggest that the majority of those surveyed believed that women should remain at-home with her children while they were young.

New Zealand curriculum and policy reflect these contradictions, for example, the strategic plan claims that ‘parents are key in their children’s development and most children experience much of their early learning within the home’, although parents may not be ‘well informed’ either (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 5). Women are promoted as mothers and paid workers, along with the idea that children and families will be less well off if they do not receive a strong dose of early childhood education. Notably, the children said to be missing out are from Māori, Pacific Island and low-income families:

Although New Zealand ECE participation rates are high, some children are still missing out, often because families are not well informed about the value of ECE to their

children's development both in the present and in the future. The children primarily affected come from Māori, Pasifika, and low socio-economic backgrounds. A lack of access to appropriate ECE services is also proving a barrier to rural families and to around 15 percent of parents wanting employment (ibid, p. 6).

In line with OECD policy recommendations, the strategic plan contributes to de-familialisation with its focus on increasing participation in early childhood care and education outside of the home, with a particular focus on Māori. The plan also makes strong links between children's learning and their social environment, acknowledging the changing social and economic climate and the importance of providing government resources and support to parents, families and whānau, so that they can be 'informed and keen education providers to their children' (ibid, p. 13). In spite of OECD recommendations to get more mothers out to work and their children into paid childcare, recent OECD rhetoric includes the argument that it is important 'to provide the best for one's own children giving them the care and nurturing they need' (ibid, p. 3). The argument is that parenting is 'crucial to child development, and thus the shape of future societies' (ibid, p. 10).

Te Whāriki acknowledges the changing social and economic climate as women increasingly move into employment: 'A child's learning environment extends far beyond the immediate setting of home or early childhood programmes' (ibid, p. 19). Policy documents still idealise the traditional role of motherhood and the nuclear family, although there is growing recognition of the changing roles of women and the cultural diversity of New Zealand family:

The growth of full-day early childhood education services reflects social and economic changes in society as women increasingly move into employment while their children are young (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 18).

So motherhood is on the move. The spectre of the apron-clad, home-baking, rosy-cheeked capable woman with a well ordered home at the centre of the nuclear family is fast disappearing. Now mothers are even more capable, robust and rounded out, with a good education and eminently capable of man's work while attending the affairs of the family. From media images of mother as a baby-toting corporate executive, through to harried fathers 'ham-fistedly' taking an increased parental role, the new executive baby tells us we can have it all: beauty, brawn, brains, success and money. This new 'normal' mother has undergone a transformation: she is portrayed in the statistics as one who is married and in her thirties, juggling a work-life balance. However, despite the changing role of individual family members, the portrayal of the nuclear family is still intact. The impact on women and their

families may be quite corrosive. The reality for women returning to work is that of entry into low paid jobs, frequently characterised by casual rates of pay and without the benefits associated with full-time work:

In addition to naturalising women's roles as mothers and home-makers, the model of the nuclear family therefore reinforces the low-waged status of women workers. It should be noted that the so-called 'third industrial revolution' of the computer age relies on low-paid labour of southern hemisphere women and children (Burman, 1984, p. 67).

The rhetoric of the nuclear family model is still prevalent in curriculum and policy documents. However, the role of the family is ambivalently located in quite divergent discourses of family. Traditional understandings of family are now undermined by a number of emerging themes, including rising numbers of women in the paid workforce, the extended roles of institutions in child rearing, the reduction of welfare services and benefits, the increasing roles of fathers in parenting, and the increasing role of other family members such as grandparents. Forms of family emerging in current discourses include whānau, extended families and blended families.

Culture and biculturalism

Cultural contexts may involve stories about racism, ethnicity, social acceptability, citizenship, nationalism, colonialism and many other aspects of human experiences. These stories support and inform both imagined and performed social identities. Friedman (1998) refers to cultural narratives that encode in story the norms and values of a social order around which culture is organised. Such stories involve interactions and resistances between groups and individuals as they 'negotiate with and against hegemonic scripts and histories' (Friedman, 1998, p. 8). The focus of this section is on developing a context of culture, particularly as expressed in terms of biculturalism, a strong and thematic thread throughout early childhood curriculum and policy. A focus on biculturalism here is not to denounce the importance of other cultural narratives. In fact, much of what is discussed over the following pages may have relevance to other cultural contexts. The bicultural focus, though, is a reflection of the historical, legislative and social story of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Through education, the child is central to social policies – a signifier of civilisation. Up until the 1960s, education policy in regard to Māori was based on the assumption of Pakeha cultural superiority and a largely ethnocentric approach of assimilation and integration. In this approach, the Māori child and family were largely seen as a social problem due to their

cultural deprivation. The child was seen as deficient and needing to conform to some ‘higher’ cultural norm. By the 1960s and throughout the 1970s, a multicultural approach brought cultural awareness into discussions of nationhood and citizenship. This culminated in a ‘melting pot’ idealism, which, while aiming to bring a unified national identity, sat alongside a growing recognition of the difficulty of superimposing one culture over many. Throughout the 1980s, *cultural sensitivity* and a growing liberal focus on individual rights, social justice and citizenship characterised a number of new social movements (such as women’s rights and Māori sovereignty).

A number of changes occurred which moved the ‘problem of Māori’ into an era of biculturalism. Concepts of *tinu rangatiratanga* and *whakamana* emerged with a focus on *Te Reo Māori* and kaupapa processes. These developments generated social and political awareness of cultural, historical, social, economic and political injustices. A strong discourse of equality threaded its way through public policy, underpinned by the newly enacted Treaty Act (1975) and its amendment (1985). *Te Reo Māori* became an official language, and an increased regard in both social and judicial processes was paid to Māori *rangatiratanga*. The Māori child is now a legitimate identity within Aotearoa New Zealand. In the empowering of Māori people, there has been an identifiable resurgence of Māori language and recognition of the oral tradition, with an emphasis on group culture, dialogue and decision-making. The importance of Māori culture is underscored in official documents and legislation.

This importance is reflected in the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki*, regarded as a bicultural curriculum, not only in terms of the process of development, but also in its final form and content. Its foundation in Māori values and belief systems is reflected in Te One’s (2003) depiction of the document as a ‘national curriculum whose conceptual framework was based on the cultural and political beliefs of the minority indigenous people’ (p. 36). The positioning of the Māori oral tradition, with its histories and theories, alongside a Pakeha written tradition has resulted in what I call a curious document. I understand ‘curious’ here in terms of Foucault’s discussion of curiosity and care – it evokes the care that one takes of ‘what exists and what might exist,’ ‘a sharpened sense of reality,’ a ‘readiness to find what surrounds us strange and odd’ (Foucault, 1994, p. 325). This document looks decidedly Māori in both colour and design. *Te Reo* is privileged in the title, and the main principles and strands are seen to have developed from within Māori traditions. One full section of this curriculum is written in Māori, not as a mere translation but as intentional curriculum for Māori immersion centres based on *kaupapa* processes, standing testimony to the embeddedness of *Te Reo*

Māori within the document. The joint endeavour between Te Kōhanga Reo, Margaret Carr and Helen May was to develop a Māori curriculum that was not an *add-on* or *integrated*, but rather, *separate*. A significant political statement was being made, with two distinct identities to be retained: Māori and Pakeha.

Mutch (2003) notes the way in which *Te Reo* permeates *Te Whāriki* and in one part goes untranslated into English. In contrast, the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework*, despite being developed around the same time in the presence of *kura kaupapa*, is not nearly as reflective of *Te Reo* and biculturalism. She argues that the strong, united early childhood community, working together to take a political advocacy role, was responsible for a ‘liberal-progressive/socially-critical discourse’ and ‘an alternative voice in educational policy and curriculum’ (ibid, p. 126). Furthermore, despite the sector being highly resistant to a ‘one-size fits all’ curriculum, the curriculum was largely and uncritically accepted by the early childhood sector. This is attributed partly to the agenda of a distinct Pakeha and Māori curriculum, but mostly to the collaborative nature of the development process and the wide involvement of many in the sector. Noted in particular, is the partnering of Margaret Carr and Helen May with Te Kōhanga Reo trust representatives, Tilly and Tamati Reedy and Rose Pere (Nuttall, 2003; Te One, 2003). All of these writers, in various forums around Aotearoa over the past decade, have discussed the unique development of *Te Whāriki*. Its historical, cultural and political importance is attested to as a living document of political and cultural resonance.

The development process was not always smooth. The draft form of *Te Whāriki* was subject to various revisions at Ministerial level, including the insertion of the essential learning areas from the primary school curriculum. Further, the Minister demanded a translation of the Māori section into English, provoking a debate over the difficulty of providing such translation, as the Māori concepts were embedded in Māori language. The Minister’s call highlights the irony of Māori being an official language, yet one that must be translated into English. Based on this reasoning, a similar call could be made for all English documents to be translated into Māori. Despite revisions and political challenges, the writers were happy that the integrity of the draft document was maintained in the final version. *Te Whāriki* has now become part of the sector’s collective psyche (Te One, 2003), reflecting an important period in the various histories of a number of individuals and communities. It continues today to provide an inscriptive surface for a number of narratives. Significantly, it is New Zealand’s first national early childhood curriculum, renowned internationally for its inclusive, indigenous bicultural foci.

The writers maintain that there are many stories of *Te Whāriki*. For Reedy (2003), *Te Whāriki* is about self-determination as evoked in the title of her chapter ‘*Toku Rangatiratanga na te mana-matauranga – knowledge and power set me free*’. She says that *Te Whāriki* encapsulates the dreams she has for her mokopuna:

Adults working with children should understand and be willing to discuss bicultural issues, actively seek Māori contributions to decision making, and ensure that Māori children develop a strong sense of self-worth (ibid).

Kura kaupapa and Te Kōhanga Reo Māori immersion options, developing seemingly outside of the State auspices and driven by Māori communities, are testimony to the bi-cultural development and Māori self-determination of the 1980s and 1990s. Yet it is interesting to note that the Ministry’s intent to increase Māori participation in heavily regulated and audited early childhood institutions. According to the Strategic plan:

Two factors sharpen our focus for the future of Māori in ECE. Firstly, Māori children do not currently participate in ECE services at the same rate as other New Zealand children. Secondly, Māori children will form a larger proportion of this country’s birth-to-five-year-olds within the next 10 years (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 10).

A dominant focus in these policy documents is on children seen as social problems, threatening the social order. Māori and Pasifika children, along with Māori teen solo mothers are signalled as significant social issues. The problem of the cultural *other*, is defined in terms of needs and deficits, that is, children who ‘may not be exposed to high quality early learning experiences in the home’ (ibid, p. 9). The ‘problem’ is seen to be ameliorated by providing accessible, affordable childcare. This is targeted, in particular, at Māori and Pacific Island children, and families who may not have access to (or perhaps do not want to access) ‘quality’ early childhood education.

While acknowledging the importance of Māori protocol, the strategic plan’s smoothing out of difference can be seen through pleasant sounding words that set in place a rhetoric of cultural appropriateness within a monocultural institutional framework. For example, the strategic plan claims to provide for ‘greater empowerment of parents and whānau to be involved in their children’s early learning’ through a wide range of education, health and social services. Despite claiming that this empowerment will occur within in the provision of a range of services, the Ministry admits that these services ‘are not always strong’ (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 6), since the families are not well informed about the ‘value of ECE to their children’s development’ (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 6). The Ministry’s explicit

intentions sound admirable, but there are questions about whose development is being promoted here and why only formal early childhood education is emphasised. It is also not clear how these strategies fit with Māori and Pasifika worldviews. While perhaps well intentioned, national strategies may in fact further alienate and disempower those for whom the strategies are ostensibly implemented. Despite a legislated commitment to biculturalism and the Treaty of Waitangi, the language of the strategic plan allows for such cultural alienation in its implementation.

A stronger commitment to biculturalism and to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi is evident in the politics of *Te Whāriki*, which can be seen as a real attempt to recognise and challenge dominant monocultural thinking, and to foreground the ambiguous and irreconcilable tensions within cultural formations. In *Te Whāriki*, it is argued that early childhood ‘must be flexible enough to take into account the varying needs and characteristics of individual children’ (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 21). Accordingly, the early childhood curriculum is to ‘actively contribute towards countering racism and other forms of prejudice’ (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 18). This contribution is signalled through the recognition of ‘distinctive contexts’ and ‘cultural diversity’ to vitalise culture and language. Specific strategies are suggested: emerging immersion curriculum and *kaupapa* processes of Māori; the history and geography of Pacific Islands; and diversity of ‘beliefs’, ‘codes of behaviour’, ‘kinship roles’ of the many migrants to New Zealand.

Te Whāriki’s child is undoubtedly an attempt at imagining a child of *culture* – socially engaged in a world of relationships, symbolically positioned within tradition and civilisation. This curriculum recognises the links between culture, language, and learning, and addresses the issues faced by children growing up in a society with more than one cultural heritage. ‘Ngā Kōhanga Reo now play an integral part in transmitting Māori culture and values to young Māori children and, in particular, supporting both the survival and revival of the Māori language’ (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 17). The child is linked to tradition, to genealogy, to *whakapapa*. This *tangata whenua* perspective has the child’s identity formed and nurtured in connection with her ancestry – ‘the personification of the worlds of yesterday’ (Reedy, 2003, p. 53).

Mentioned in chapter five were two botanic metaphors of the child. One was linked to Froebel’s kindergartener, where the child was likened to a young plant, and the adult a gardener who cared for the growth and development of this child. This child was linked to psychological development with the ‘four Kauri trees’ of Western theory. The other child,

linked to *tangata whenua* and represented in the popular *waiata* of the shoots of a growing flax, is seen as an integral part of society linked to land and a spirit world. Linking Western theory with four kauri trees is a highly symbolic metaphor: the spiritual god-status of *Tane Mahuta* providing strength to the foundations of liberal theory in the curriculum. This is an interesting blend of the foundationalism of liberalism with *whakapapa* and *tangata whenua*.

As the first bicultural curriculum in New Zealand, *Te Whāriki* has a specific indigenous focus in the form of Māori *kaupapa*. It would be reasonable then, to expect a negotiated definition of what biculturalism might entail. Yet, it claims to cater for ‘the bicultural nature of curriculum for all early childhood services’ (p. 7). Emphasis here is on the word *all* – surely a negation of the difference inherent in any multicultural model. In other words, the document enframes biculturalism within a monocultural and universal perspective.

In her critique of the bicultural child in *Te Whāriki*, Duhn (2006) suggests that this well-behaved, blended *mokopuna* continues to promote a liberal Pakeha perspective in a romantic, idealised tradition. This child is neither Māori, nor pakeha. Instead, it is universalised and straddles two worlds. This image of the child is masking a multitude of differences rather than reflecting and embracing them. Once again, captured in the colonist’s nest, the child is no longer allowed to be different but must instead be blended and homogenised.

According to May (in Te One, 2003) it was never the intention of *Te Whāriki* to silence difference. Reedy (2003) argues, ‘*Te Whāriki* recognises the child as the living link to the past, the embodiment of the present and the hope of the future’. She claims that *Te Whāriki* is a challenge where

our rights are recognised, and so are the rights of everyone else ... [it] recognises my right to choose, and your right to choose. It encourages the transmission of my cultural values, my language and tikanga, and your cultural values, your language and customs. It validates my belief systems and your belief systems (Reedy, 2003, p. 74).

These are quite divergent cultural stories. Bhabha (1994) claims all nationhood is narrativised. He points out the complexity of cultural formations and that there is always ambivalence at the site of colonial domination. He rejects the tendency to *essentialise* or homogenise Third World countries, arguing that culture is at its most productive where it is most ambivalent. The representation of cultures as homogenous inscribes assumptions of sameness/difference onto the narrative formulations of nations, cultures, ethnic groups, individuals and communities. Bhabha’s (1990) understanding of ‘nation as narration’ articulates the

difference between the representation of cultures as culturally different or culturally diverse. The discourse of cultural diversity assumes that cultures have universal and identifiable characteristics, an assumption that in effect limits our understanding of difference to that which can be interpreted according to Western cultural values: in terms of progress, rationality, and what is normal. This sanitised view of cultural diversity is then included in curricula as diverse perspectives on human behaviour, but in effect promotes and operates within parameters of ‘normal’ childhood and universal human development. In effect, this produces parameters for acceptable difference, re-iterating and re-inscribing Western cultural values prevalent in knowledges that assert universal notions of progress, rationality, and development. In contrast, Bhabha’s notion of cultural difference refers to a process of ‘cultural enunciation’, establishing parameters of inclusion and exclusion across multiple domains. An enunciation about childhood or Māori-ness will delineate possibilities, shape meaning and establish parameters of inclusion and exclusion within relations of power. Bhabha’s focus on cultural enunciation is perhaps a useful paradigm to engage with, in the way that it articulates an understanding of the social and intersubjective understanding of both personal and community identity.

Institutions of childhood

The social context of infants and young children’s worlds is in a process of constant narrative (re)formulation. Currently, what is emerging is a stronger role of institutionalised care that moves children further away from home. Children, at younger ages, are increasingly exposed and encouraged into educational institutions such as childcare centres. Where once, children spent more time in community-based, sessional-play-focussed kindergarten-type arrangements – as an adjunct to at-home parenting, more and more children are now spending their days in full-day childcare arrangements while their parents work. Increased government attention has put childcare and education on the social policy agenda as a means to effect important social and economic cohesion. A variety of strategies are used: increasing social inclusion; combating child poverty; raising standards in education; revitalising the labour market; encouraging women, and welfare parents to participate in the workforce; and increasing ‘access’ for Māori and Pacific Island families.

Countries develop childcare and educational institutions differently. For example, in Nordic countries (such as Finland and Norway), where it is common for both parents to work, the care and education of young children is underpinned by a societal view of care and education,

and the community (in conjunction with parents) is responsible for the care and education of children under five. Currently in Britain, childcare and education falls within a 'mixed economy', provided for by both a private providers and the development of a universal state provision (Vincent & Ball, 2006). The private sector in Britain is currently undermined by a newer development of state provision (pp. 31-32). In Australia's market context, Goodfellow (2005) points out the paradox of addressing the needs of children and families in a socially responsible framework within the commercial orientation of the childcare marketplace.

New Zealand is also clearly following a path of marketisation, promoting de-familialisation policies that lessen the reliance upon families to provide care and education of their young. This observation addresses, to some extent, one of the questions underpinning the thesis: in what ways do we become who we are through our engagement and identifications within social institutions and the narratives in which they are embedded? The sort of early childhood education being promoted in Aotearoa New Zealand is clearly formal and outside the home. The rhetoric of quality in current social policy promotes the idea that children will thrive within institutional care arrangements. However, little independent research is available that compares the care and education of children in the home with the care and education of children in institutions. The research and interventions that link the value of institutional care early in life to improved performance in school life later is tenuous (Burman, 1984).

Childcare institutions provide experiences that will enable children to interact with others beyond their immediate community, family and peer group. In providing these experiences, institutions override parental authority in an effort to build a cohesive community. The childcare institution is conceptualised as a fixed entity, centrally regulated, imposed on by those who should know better and who are vested with moral and legal rights to intervene in family affairs. There is little discussion and research about the values and authority that inhere in the relative positions of parents/families and institutions. Research tailored to the institution of early childhood perhaps needs to be rethought to take into consideration the values that are to be inculcated, the habits that are to be perpetuated, the cultural particularities and differences that are to be expressed, and the personal and public dispositions which are to be hoped for. Perhaps it is time to address issues around the adult colonisation of childhood, and children's access to privacy and confidentiality. Given the institutional mechanisms that redefine boundaries of families and communities, there is need to examine the extent to which cultural differences are to be recognised as important identifications that a child makes. These are generally seen to be with parents, family members and community affiliations.

The modern social and education sciences practiced in schools and early childhood centres focus on the child subject through a network of social stories. These stories act as a moral technology, not merely inculcating obedience, but also seeking to shape personality ‘through the use of pastoral techniques to encourage self-knowledge and enhance the feeling of sympathetic identification, through establishing the links between virtue, honesty, and self-denial and a purified pleasure’ (Rose, 1989, p. 223). Curriculum involves problems of the formation and representation of cultural and historical ‘selves’ and social positions.

I argued at the beginning of this chapter that a curriculum should recover memory, seek to understand systems of reasoning, and categories of inclusion. The challenge is to keep critical dialogues open, to recall histories and provided new semantic meanings of what it means to be a child in education at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Rorty (1989) proposes that ‘speaking more or less the same language’ will result in ‘more or less the same ideas’, with intellectual progress as merely the literalisation of selected metaphors. What he advocates is a redescription of the territory, since the vocabulary of Enlightenment rationalism is an impediment to new ways of thinking. Refuting the idea that the self ‘is not given to us’, Foucault takes recourse in what he calls the *practice of creativity*: ‘From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art (Foucault, 1984, p. 351). Along similar lines, Ricoeur advocates new semantic interpretations through a process of dialogical understanding. His championing of multiple lines of conversation without end resists the temptation of applying limits or reaching conclusions, offering a unique way in which to engage in our historical past, present and future.

Chapter 7. A Ricoeur Narrative: The Intersubject

It is impossible to describe childhood as existing before thought or in its essence. Rather, childhood is a cultural event in a specific time/place and this is what produces local knowledge of the child. The child emerges differently within different rationalities, rules of formation, conditions of possibility, and confluence of forces (Pena, 2006, p. 178).

Although Ricoeur did not comment specifically on matters of early childhood education, he has had a great deal to say about identity and just institutions, which, I have argued, are important concepts for education. It is argued in this chapter that Ricoeur's notions of discourse and narrative, and his understanding of mimesis and metaphor as creative meaning-making and action, are important concepts in widening the scope of the language in which current projections of early education and childhood exist. The chapter advances another reading of children and education that both accords well with the democratic intentions and spirit of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), and challenges the assumptions upon which the current policy environment is evolving. To do this, the chapter draws on Ricoeur's theory of narrative and his notion of selfhood to interpret implications of the economic narrative, the instrumentalisation of early education, and the colonisation of childhood by adults. Then Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity – an interpreted and narrated self vested in social practices – is used as a basis for further examination of early education in Aotearoa New Zealand and as a basis for a narrative about the child as an intersubject.

The previous three chapters examined narratives that, in essence, were critiqued for being too linear and ethnocentric with strong subject-centred positions. This chapter poses a different narrative, one that might be called a Ricoeurian narrative approach, allowing for creative formations of a subject contingent upon the narrative of which it is a part. This form of narrative enables an organising (or emplotment) of plots and actions in which appropriation of new meaning becomes available. This is a fluid contingent space of possibilities and divergent meanings. The requirement of this form of narrative is an on-going dialectical engagement with multiple narratives to ensure open dialogical spaces for creative interaction. A narrative engagement of this order requires that a person 'expose' herself to a text, finding meaning in indeterminacy and contingency. Ricoeur proposes that a narrative theory provides an empirical purpose in which action is based on historical reference. As well, it provides an imperative to open the way for multiplicity, fluidity, mimesis and metaphor. In terms of a personal identity based on narrative, this approach announces an intersubjective subject,

integrally collaborating with others in social situations. This collaboration informs the narrative identity of a person.

The first part of this chapter, *Troubling identity*, engages further with the problem of modern identity raised at the end of chapter four. This foregrounds further discussion of Ricoeur's philosophy in relation to early childhood education. The second part of the chapter, *Identity and intersubjectivity* discusses the child subject of curriculum and policy in terms of Ricoeur's notion of the intersubjective self. It underlines the importance of childhood in both philosophical and pedagogical thought. Engagement with interpretation and creative re-imagining argues for a dialogical relationship between adult and child, and attendance to a concern for the other in a manner that argues for a transformative and mutual pedagogical relationship. The third part of the chapter engages with Ricoeur's understanding of *just institutions*. This entails a view that individuals are intimately and necessarily connected with others, with communities and with political structures – it is within institutions that we form our identity. The fourth and final part of this chapter, *Narrative identity* returns to Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity, in particular his notions of semantic innovation and *ipseity*. It argues that there can be no single perspective that depicts children and childhood. The child is always emerging in narrative forms located within specific times and spaces, and in relation to social practices and institutions. Drawing upon earlier discussions of intersubjectivity, just institutions and the Ricoeur's notion of *ipseity*, it argues that one's identity or a community's identity is neither free-floating nor stable, but shaped by conditions of that which it is a part. The chapter closes with an argument for the recognition of the social and the democratic in the institutions of family and education, to ensure that individuals and communities are afforded a range of identifications and social practices. Recognising difference and welcoming the challenge of ongoing debate invites a wide range of narrative possibilities for both individuals and communities.

Troubling identity

Various readings can be made of the creative, capable child in *Te Whāriki*. Those that are non-dialogical limit the range of identifications that can be made. In the previous chapter, it was argued that our identities form within the social milieu – directing personal and collective understandings of identity. It is argued in this chapter that further consideration is needed about the assembling of young children in centres that are increasingly regulated and standardised, so that government policy – itself driven by imperatives of international trade –

can become more efficient in normalising the desired economy-friendly behaviour in the youngest sector of the education population. As Ricoeur points out, we need to identify and address the economic component of narratives, since the language of economics is not oriented toward the creative or the metaphorical – two important aspects in his understanding of narrative identity.

A Ricoeurian troubling of identity would argue that the narrative texts the liberal child subject has maintained are too singular and homogenized in their focus. Various historical, textual projections of the liberal child subject abound, including the child genius of the Romantic period, the *tabula rasa* that the behaviourists wanted to fill, and the Piagetian child developing along a rational continuum. Current projections of childhood, grounded in modern scientific theory (such as developmental psychology) and rationalities of state (such as quality care indicators, key competencies, and learning outcomes), permeate curriculum and policy documents and are resoundingly definitive in their assertion of what is true and valuable for children and families. For example, developmentalism is still a feature of policy and curriculum in Aotearoa New Zealand couched in language such as *promoting development, ready to learn, ready for school, developmentally appropriate practices, desirable outcomes, and quality* (Ministry of Education, 1998; 2001).

The ubiquity of such terms indicates the dominant status of developmentalism in educational discourse, which, like other discourses, operates within a complex web of power relations (*regimes of truth*) and perpetuates a particular constellation of *truths* that locate our thinking about childhood. While not necessarily wrong for all purposes, developmentalism can be seen to serve a particular economic and political role (Farquhar & Fler, 2007, p. 34).

Seen in this way, development theory and other child centred pedagogies are primarily adult projections about childhood, locating the child within a Western subjectivity and within specific ideologies of childhood. These inadequate pedagogies underpin mainstream theory and practice in education, and construct the child as immature, dependent and incomplete. The child, so seen, is typically cast in relation to, and as a text for, adult projections of children as a continuous state of becoming mature and adult. The child in this narrative formation can be seen to serve adults as a text for adult assumptions about human nature and for the politics of the human condition.

In her troubling of the notion of identity, Mozère (2007) claims that identity is important to the ‘axiomatic of capitalism’ and that this is a major issue for education. The idea that

education is linked to production is not new, nor is it particularly sinister in and of itself: in one way or another, all societies have harnessed human capital to the means of production. What is of particular relevance and of probable concern for contemporary early childhood education, especially to a Ricoeur narrative, is the way capitalism can and does endanger the notion of difference and otherness through inclusion and incorporation, and through buying up and colonising counter arguments, alterity and otherness as commodities. Difference is thereby incorporated into a network of limited choices. In this way, too, teaching is compartmentalised into commodified areas of professionalism, promoting particular scholarship and empirical research orientations that are deemed important, but when reified, risk becoming prescriptive forces on education.

Such orientations are supported by a particular form of self-legitimising research inquiry, rather than requiring teachers to engage critically with the subjectivity or the purpose of education. As Kennedy points out, a scientised view of the child leaves us with a colonised view of the child, a child ‘who has been – at the very moment we thought we had accessed the “thing itself” – neutralised by the techniques used to study him or her’ (Kennedy, 2006, p. 2). Here the child is always relational to the adult, often marginalised and subject to adult colonisation. By analogy, such violence also applies to groups of ‘others’ (for example, women and *tangata whenua*), despite well-intentioned (but paternalistic) attempts at benevolence and betterment, through an ‘incalculable mixture of “common sense” and scientism’ (ibid). While the child may be offered a variety of choices and a range of identities to adopt, and even the flexibility to switch innovatively between these identities, she does so as long as capitalism is not endangered.

The way in which we delineate the categories of childhood and education (the rational self, the consuming chooser, for example) is where the trouble with modern identity lies. The self is imagined in the cultural psyche within quite narrow margins of the needs of market place within a capitalist economy. As Mozère points out,

what we usually call agency, or human liberty, and that Deleuze & Guattari name desire, must be kept strictly under control But, at the same time – Deleuze & Guattari stress this point strongly – capitalism needs the creative force of desire, its innovative and explosive strength, to be able to feed on it for its own purpose. Otherwise capitalism risks suffocation. So as soon as desire explodes – one could say, agency is empowered – there is a double movement for the axiomatic of capitalism. One aspect is the recuperation of that which has given life (or birth) to innovation, and the other is the recuperation of the

excess of desire, channelling the overflow back into old or newly patterned identities, keeping them under control (Mozère, 2007, p. 112).

It seems to me, we have forgotten education's existential, embodied project/problematic of personal identity and formation of character. Instead, the project of early childhood education is now in service to an ordered pursuit of accountability, transparency and commodification, where children have become 'learners'; and where teachers are 'professionals' regulated by authoritarian rationalities of State. This is not nostalgia for the *good old days of childhood* in New Zealand – that too is problematic. Rather, the aim is to recover memory and invoke a historical perspective in order to develop an understanding of the defining logics and to critically examine contemporary implications particularly in relation to the community ideals of *Te Whāriki*.

Identity and intersubjectivity

The narrative-inspired theorising of early childhood pedagogy in Aotearoa suggests that Ricoeur's theory may have useful implications for understanding identity formation in early childhood. Ricoeur's emphasis on intersubjectivity suggests that the development of the adult-child relationship should involve a commitment to a dialogical, power-sharing endeavour where the question of identity cannot be segregated from the social nexus in which the child figures. For Ricoeur, a subject's discourse is how she understands her world and her being. This involves acts of engagement and interpretation. The self is seen to emerge from intersubjective praxis and an active appropriation of the cultural environment. Ricoeur underlines the importance of praxis. In this, he claims that understanding must be part of an individual's, or a group's relationships with the world and with others.

Ricoeur understands that there is no entity called self. Rather, to possess a selfhood is to be *subject to*, and the *subject of* dynamic experiences and instabilities – an intersubjective self, formed by interactions within the social realm. This self is a complex narrative formulation in relation to one's other, entwined in history, community and memories. This section examines the way *Te Whāriki* has been appropriated and given a strong socio-cultural theoretical emphasis. It then looks at the appropriation of socio-cultural theory – in particular the notion of intersubjectivity – and puts forward a Ricoeurian perspective.

The vision of childhood and education within key curriculum documents such as *Te Whāriki* and *Kei Tua o te Pae* is one of power sharing and is indicative of community and dialogical

education. Such texts embody commitments to the liberal ideals of *empowerment*, *belonging* and *wellbeing* that are pivotal discourses within early childhood and subscribe to an ethical orientation of power sharing, reciprocity, mutuality and dialogical relationships. This points towards a framing of early childhood care and education as multistoried and embracing of complexity. The historical horizon of *Te Whāriki* – seen as a protest document based on *whakamana* and *tino rangatiratanga* – has provided moving canvases upon which a narrative approach to planning, teaching, learning and assessment in early childhood has developed.

One narrative approach in particular is learning stories based on Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (Carr, 2001). In the attendant calls to view children through multiple lenses, this curricula/assessment orientation 'takes a view of learning that focuses on the relationship between the learner and the environment, and seeks ways to define and document complex reciprocal and responsive relationships in that environment (Carr, 2001, p. 5).

Embodied in the highly participatory community model of *Te Whāriki* and the assessment exemplars *Kei Tua o te Pae* is a narrative approach to planning and assessment in early childhood. There is also a strong recognition of *family and community* embedded in the historical, cultural horizons and humanist intentions of these curriculum documents, with a vision of the child subject embedded in family and community revealed as a 'natural', 'whole child', a 'confident', and 'capable' learner (Ministry of Education, 1996). The child is situated within a vision of educational provision that is democratic, bicultural, and community-based. In such a way these are texts embedded in narratives of historical, cultural, psychological and educational importance, providing an inscriptive surface from which to vision and revision, and from which to develop contemporary ways of thinking, learning and teaching. They are texts that engage with a number of narratives, predicated on social and cultural theories involving dialogical relationships between child and adult. These are important engagements for Ricoeur, in which the human subject is seen to belong primarily to community

While the learning stories assessment exemplars (*Kei Tua o te Pae*) are buttressed by socio-cultural theory; the bicultural curriculum *Te Whāriki* (in its original form) can be seen as strongly developmental, although attenuated by an emphasis on social learning theories and biculturalism. Subsequent semantic innovations have been made through contemporary dialogue, in the research and the literature, and within the sector at large, to the degree that despite its conception within a developmental framework, *Te Whāriki* is now generally interpreted as a socio-cultural document. This is testimony to the participatory, democratic framework of *Te Whāriki* underlining an understanding of curriculum as contingent and

contestable. In Ricoeur's view, it is the fate of every text to be decontextualised from its original social and historical conditions (distantiated) and appropriated within the current social milieu. *Te Whāriki's* historical and political roots of social justice and biculturalism provided a conceptual basis for this shift to a contemporary socio-cultural framing of curriculum and practice. In this way, *Te Whāriki* has been interpreted and appropriated, and new understandings reached, the veracity and applicability of these understandings legitimated through the social practices within the community in itself an example of intersubjective praxis.

Narrative pedagogies based on these texts take the form of learning and teaching stories. Less intrusive and directive than the old skills-based checklist approach to assessment, *learning stories* is based on the idea that children are knowledgeable and conscious record-keepers of their own learning. Rather than focusing on age-stage continuums or development checklists, children and teachers are seen to participate together. Informed by a notion of intersubjectivity that locates curricula and pedagogical orientations as emergent meaning-making within the context of social and cultural knowledge, learning and teaching stories emphasise the cultural and contingent elements of learning. To date, most of this takes the form of a Vygotsky-inspired approach. Children and teachers together are seen to document learning in shared meaning-making endeavours. In the creation of a learning story, documentation of learning is collected, by way of various data-gathering technologies: video, photos or children's art work, for example. The possibilities of technology in this form of assessment are undoubtedly exciting points of communication for young children whose ability with written narrative genres is less advanced than that of adults.

This form of documenting learning and assessment is said to envisage children as active makers of their own meaning, where they are participants and are actively encouraged to 'author' their own work. However, the current emphasis on creating individual learning stories and on maintaining an individual portfolio of learning for each child, which documents a child's learning through collection of data, is perhaps more complex than it first appears. While drawings by the child or photographs may inform the story, the written record is frequently that of the teacher or the adult. The issue here is the degree to which the adult/teacher tends to author or narrate the child's experience as opposed to the degree that children author their own portfolios. There is an argument to be made here for oral literacy and the use of symbolic systems with a strong focus on communication, action and event rather than record keeping. The written narrative is a sophisticated and inscriptive technology

that tends to sediment understanding. Arguably, few infants, toddlers and four-year-olds understand this, and the creation of a material form of learning story is highly dependent upon teacher competency. Reliance upon teacher competency in this new area of pedagogy has been largely confined to a Ministry roll out of professional development workshops where exemplars are tied to socio-cultural theorising. There has been limited discussion and educational engagement for teachers in the form of ‘writing’ narratives, and minimal exposure to the wide range of children’s activities available for teacher interpretation. Furthermore, as part of a relatively new profession in education, many practitioners are still to complete teaching qualifications. The complexity of narrative genres at the heart of learning stories requires a high degree of story-telling skill – largely, to date, dependent upon written narratives. The degree to which teachers, student teachers and indeed academics have been able to upskill, and indeed come to an integrated understanding of literary forms and narrative genres is questionable.

Further research into the dialogism of learning stories may well be needed, that is to say, an understanding of the narrative approach to learning and assessment as a form of community action. The focus on learning stories as a form of assessment is a recognition of the social nature of learning. Emphasis to date has been on the individual in the learning process. Another caution is that portfolios do not simply become record-keeping spaces for teachers in order to fulfil regulatory requirements, particularly in the light of the regulatory framework that requires learning and assessment to be documented. While portfolios are seen as key documents to be shared with family as recognition of the importance of family in a young child’s education, these documents are also viewed by third parties, including the Education Review Office who ‘inspect’ documentation of children’s learning as part of monitoring a regulated sector in the managerial technology of quality assurance. Under such regulation and surveillance, the iterative, story-telling function of the learning story alters course. Assessment as a form of surveillance raises issues of confidentiality for children in the development and management of their own learning portfolios and the degree to which children own their own stories.

In a similar vein, the tendency for portfolios to become mere photo albums – used in a tokenistic or voyeuristic way to survey and enter into the everyday activities of a child is also an area that perhaps requires further discussion. These questions are particularly pertinent in light of one of the themes that started this chapter: the colonisation of childhood by an ideology of adulthood. A child’s activity is determined and interpreted as learning to fit

within the auspices of the regulated learning environment. In terms of ethical considerations, further discussion is required around whether the child has rights to privacy and confidentiality and if so the degree to which this applied in practice. This requires dialogue between the child, the teacher and the parent about relationships, privacy, rights and about what is to be learned.

All of this is not to say that the learning stories or portfolios attesting to a child's learning are inherently inadequate. That is far from the perspective of the thesis. Rather, what is required is further research in this new area of pedagogy, including continued exploration of narrative genres from a variety of perspectives. The issues here are put forward, not to denounce teacher interpretation or the skills of teachers, but to attend to the limitations of the learning story in relation to the child's lived experienced and authentic voice. The intention is to argue for a better understanding of some of the difficulties, particularly the degree to which learning stories are authentically dialogical and involve forms of power sharing.

Early childhood contexts are structured in particular ways that actively encourage/discourage particular ways of being. The extent to which children actively form the spaces in which they interact, and the extent to which they are expressly encouraged to do so, are yet to be fully examined. Further, the degree to which young children can shape and extend their own learning through highly complex narrative genres needs further attention. Indeed, whether children actually see this as important is also germane to the exploration. While there are further avenues of examination of the learning stories as a form of planning and assessment pedagogy, it must be remembered that this is a relatively new form of assessment. However, the limited research to date indicates that this is a successful direction for curriculum and pedagogy in early childhood education (Carr, Hatherly, Lee & Ramsey, 2003). The importance of the dialogical nature of intersubjectivity and its role in decentring the role of the teacher are seen as paramount, especially where the *relationships* between the child and significant others becomes a determining factor in the learning-teaching relationship.

In terms of a Ricoeurian understanding of subjectivity, the dialogical direction needs to be encouraged further. This is to say, if teaching practice is based on dialogue where the boundaries between the child-subject/adult-subject are blurred, it ensures that the teacher becomes a hermeneut of childhood and engages in dialogue with children. Ricoeur's philosophy embraces the notion of playing philosophically with dialectical difficulty, neither requiring a consensus nor allowing an impasse. This philosophical playing is a serious game of language, in which attendance to the dialogue of the other requires a form of concern or

care for oneself as well as one's counterpoint – one's *other* – through having the courage to enter into a condition of mutual understanding. That is, the *game* is not to convince one to believe that a particular perspective is better than another, but rather to hear the various perspectives in order to understand not only the *other*, but also one's *self* better. Advocacy for multiple perspectives is strong throughout the literature on learning stories. What is perhaps needed is further recognition of the importance of keeping multiple narratives at play; especially so, considering Ricoeur's idea that identity is contingent on these narratives.

Ricoeur's approach offers an elegant perspective that does not require humans to privatise or co-opt the experience of another. Instead, the approach is to recognise a small window of opportunity where two worlds may not necessarily agree but can mutually co-exist. At the level of the child-adult relation, this argues for a dialogical approach where children are not seen as individuated subjects reified by the authorial voice of the teacher. In other words, distance creates a relationship in which the participants encounter both *familiarity* and *strangeness*, as well as a certain level of *alienation* and *misunderstanding*. On the surface, this might appear a strange concept when compared to popular understanding of the field of early education and the language of attachment and intimacy that it shares.

However, the aspects of encounter, engagement and alienation in Ricoeur's philosophy are not particularly at odds with these other orders of language. Ricoeur adds a new dimension of antagonist engagement, respecting and ensuring that difference is neither overcome nor normalised, but that it remains an important part of human belonging. It is a recognition that authentic relationships exist in tensional spaces. In a Ricoeurian sense, then, the child is left to be, rather than appropriated and colonised by adult meaning. At the same time this distancing occurs, Ricoeur brings together and contemporises the abyss between child and adult. This configuring role (mimesis) is not in order to reach a final destination; it is to restore and reappropriate meaning and to reveal new modes of being through exposing ourselves to the text (of the child in this instance). The dialectical difficulty, which the theory attempts to work through, is that distancing and appropriating are integral to engagement in dialogue: disappropriating the self (adult) in order to let the matter of the child be. In this explanation, Ricoeur suggests that an essential feature of dialogue (and a necessary precondition of interpretation) is its ability to distance the subject from the production of the text so that it can be viewed anew and from different perspectives. It is in the moment text becomes distant, that its dialectical counterpart of appropriation comes into play. It is in the act of appropriation (keeping the text close) that we respond:

To appropriate is to make what is alien one's own. What is appropriated is indeed the matter of text. But the matter of the text becomes my own only if I disappropriate myself, in order to let the matter of the text be (PA 1, p. 37).

In this way, meaning is passed along, rather than construed or constructed. Meaning passes from one idea or meaning to another and allows for a new semantic possibility. Ricoeur's dialectic – a refusal of finality – involves an infinite play between self and other: between child and adult/family/community/culture/history. This is particularly relevant to the adult-child relation because it denies the possibility of objectivity exemplified in modernist theorising. Instead, a new space of meaning can be revealed and another opening made in the text, moving the text away from the originating author and into the world it discloses, where worlds and identities are in continual play and change. This relies on an active engagement based on situational, interpersonal encounters between child and teacher, where the child and the teacher embrace a dialogical relationship, rather than a documentary trail. The dialogical and contestable is inherent in narrative pedagogy and Ricoeur's understandings adding a critical dimension. His mimesis points to the need to understand the prefigured environment of the child, that is, those structures that figure before and within narrative. Mimesis also highlights the need to embrace multiple perspectives, contingency and non-specificity; to allow for new creative metaphors. An extended understanding of learning stories involves symbolic representation, emphasises oral dialogues, and appropriates written literacies as creative re-interpretations (rather than as documentary evidence), in order to further the metaphors of learning.

Community and 'just institutions'

The beginning of the thesis queried what sort of early childhood education we should want. In determining what early education should look like and what role it should play, this section embraces Ricoeur's understanding of ethics and what it means to be a good person leading a 'good life'. A good life, for Ricoeur, is created by individuals and communities through their social practices and political institutions. In chapter three, I discussed the way in which Ricoeur's philosophy saw a human aim was to live well, with and for others, within just institutions. Humans, Ricoeur maintained, while entirely fallible, can and do make moral judgments. He saw that the aim of human life as being to develop self-esteem within an interpretation of self mediated by an ethical evaluation of our actions. At the heart of Ricoeur's philosophy is a commitment to lead a moral life, to be true to one's self, to be fair

to others, and to live well within just institutions. Ricoeur defines institution in the following way:

By institution we are to understand the structure of living together as this belongs to a historical community – people, nation, region and so forth – a structure irreducible to interpersonal relations and yet bound up with these in a remarkable sense ... (OA, p. 194).

We therefore understand Ricoeur's notion of institution as 'members of a historical community who exercise in an indivisible manner their desire to live together' (OA, p. 305). For Ricoeur, one's identity is (narrative identity) directly tied to living in community with others:

It is within the *interesse* that the hope (*le souhait*) of living well achieves its goal. It is as citizens that we become human. The hope to live within just institutions means nothing else (PS, p. xv).

He sees praxis as 'aiming at the "good life" with and for others, in just institutions' (OA, p. 172), where he emphasises the necessity to see the self, the other, and institutions as intimately connected and necessary to answer the questions of how one is to act. It is inside of institutions that individuals and communities develop their identities and, for Ricoeur, in just institutions that identities are formed in shared and negotiated ways. Therefore, just institutions are places where dialogical and reciprocal relationships between adults and children are developed. Ricoeur's philosophy suggests that the process of self-identification is fluid, dynamic, and negotiable, based on interaction with the communities of which we are a part.

Seen in this way then, education and its institutions are uniquely involved in the identity of individuals and communities, and educators are automatically involved with the development of selfhood. There is a requirement, then, to question the aims, values and interdependent relationships that shape the process of self-formation. This emphasises the ethical commitment to be undertaken when thinking about and planning for institutions (early childhood centres) that house human subjects. Inside these institutions, humans are involved in a myriad of practices whose rules are socially constituted and established. Their practices rely upon traditions and rules that are communicated and shared; subject to comparison and to standards of excellence that act as both self-appraisal and potential norms, and that provide a basis for further communication. Within these practices, we develop our personal identities,

our identifications and evaluations of what we see to be good and just in relations with others. What becomes valued is embodied in the narratives and the narrating of discourses.

In Ricoeur's view, narrative is the way we form new understandings of society and forms of living together, a view that corresponds with a free subject with individual rights. Ricoeur's emphasis on response and responsibility, self and other, and his understanding of the importance of dialogue and reciprocity within just institutions, all highlight the need for educators to show the ethical significance of every choice made, and to establish goals to allow for the greatest possible participation in discussion and decision-making.

I argued earlier in the thesis and in discussion of the child-teacher relationship, that there must be a willingness (a 'curiosity') to understand what might appear at first as strange and odd. In 'The Masked Philosopher' Foucault (1994, pp. 325-326) wrote:

I dream of a new age of curiosity. We have the technical means; the desire is there; there is an infinity of things to know; the people capable of doing such work exist. So what is our problem? Too little: channels of communication that are too narrow, almost monopolistic, inadequate. We mustn't adopt a protectionist attitude, to stop 'bad' information from invading and stifling the 'good'. Rather, we must increase the possibility for movement backward and forward. This would not lead, as people often fear, to uniformity and levelling-down, but, on the contrary, to simultaneous existence and differentiation of these various networks.

Curriculum and scholarship point to the importance of prioritising community, negotiation and power sharing, a view consistent with a socio-cultural theory but contrasting strongly with the current political emphasis on privatisation of early childhood education. Not only in terms of how we conceptualise institutions of care for young children as either private or public forums but also in the exclusive focus on the childcare centre as the site of education. In doing so, we ignore the idea that education takes place in many other sites: family/whānau, the media, the internet, churches, and the press. Our experience of the world is now mediated through new informational and electronic technologies that define knowledge in the broader society. Giroux (2003) suggests that we have limited ourselves to narrow margins of education and tended to devalue 'other' alternative educational possibilities, in particular other cultural and social sites. It is possible that boundaries may need to be extended in conceptualising early childhood, positioning institutions to engage in continued community reconstruction and development where dialogical approaches to early education need to be strengthened.

The fundamental question in Ricoeur's ethics is 'How shall I live?' For Ricoeur, ethics comes down to a question of care: without care or concern, human action would not be possible. As Moss (2007) argues, childcare now has high public exposure with 'an increase in investment, an expansion of services and an assertion of the importance of early childhood education for economic and social goals' (p. 229). However, little consideration has been given to an understanding of the complexity of the discourses involved in care. Current practice privileges 'instrumental rationality and technical practice' with a distinct language figures prominently – 'development', 'quality', 'readiness for school', 'best practice', 'benchmarks', and 'outcomes' (ibid). Vincent & Ball (2006) argue similarly that policy makers are more concerned with the regulation and commodification of care through regulatory criteria of quality than they are about engaging with a 'pedagogy of care' (ibid). The focus on regulating for 'quality' rather than engaging with care places a veneer over the practical, ethical and social issues, masking a myriad of concerns, including the question 'Who should care?' In this way, childcare has become not so much a site of democracy, as a site of economic regulation with some related assumptions: 'that children are the *private* responsibility of parents; that children are *passive* dependants; and that parents are *consumers* of marketised services for children' (Moss & Petrie, 2002, p. 5). This arrangement assures a regulatory service provider arrangement, but does not focus attention on the importance of care and education. The capacity to care and to be concerned about children is not compatible with reducing care to a set of quality indicators (Moss 2007, Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Gibbons, 2007a).

Ricoeur's focus on the 'good life' is bounded by an ethical commitment to what we determine to be good and to be valued. The aim is to balance technicity and universalism with cultural particularity. This is an instructive use of Ricoeur's semantic innovation in terms of being a political educator. Ricoeur's caution about the totality of the economic points to the peril of skewing historical and cultural horizons of such documents like *Te Whāriki* in order to assure accountability and performance in an increasingly audit society. The non-dialogical nature of a predominantly economic policy agenda excludes cultural and social differences in our increasingly multicultural society, and marginalises the differences inherent in particular cultural works.

In *Political Essays* (PS), Ricoeur calls for a recovery of traditions in globalised market economies, claiming that the expansion of global capitalism has resulted in 'anonymity,' 'dehumanisation,' 'barbaric forms of urbanism,' and 'totalitarian peril'. The struggles of

decolonisation and liberation are, he says, ‘marked by the double necessity of entering into the global technical society and being rooted in the cultural past’ (PS, p. 292). Ricoeur appears to be calling here for a recovery of history. Certainly, this is the case in *Memory, History and Forgetting* (MHF). What emerges is a call for a political role, a mediation of the inevitable pull toward consumer society by recovering past and living traditions that help resist the effects of a global capitalism. Ricoeur emphasises the importance of ‘a just political memory’. Here he balances an official memory that is often ideologically motivated, with the testimony of witnesses. Ricoeur’s concern is with the way official history has a penchant for either too much memory or too much forgetting: ‘In some places we could say that there is too much memory, but in other places not enough. Likewise, there is sometimes not enough forgetting, and at other times too much forgetting. How is it possible to graft these misuses upon the capacity to memorise?’ (Ricoeur, 1998, p. 6).

Te Whāriki sought to provide a community-inspired focus to early childhood education in the neoliberal 1990s. It needs to be remembered that the capture of early childhood within education at this time also meant being caught within a strong market-based private lobby that dominates much of the early childhood sector in the early twenty-first century. Growth in private and corporate early childhood education services amplifies this focus. Although the strength of the curriculum and the advocacy of the community sector have continued to assure a strong, independent, community-inspired focus, further vigilance is needed. It is now more important than ever to reinvolve history, to ask critical questions, to debate and contest what is good education for young children and to problematise the sorts of institutions that should be provided for the increasing numbers of infants, toddlers and young children in institutionalised care.

Educationalisation, professionalisation and regulation of the sector has brought about increased understanding of early education as a unique area of education and care, along with rapid changes like the imperative for highly educated teachers (equivalent degree status to that of the compulsory sector). *Te Whāriki* offers a Treaty-based model of bicultural partnership of national and international significance with an enlightened conceptual framework based on the cultural and political beliefs of the minority indigenous people. An even better result could have been achieved if the Meade Report, *Education To Be More* (Department of Education, 1988a) had been acted upon instead of placed in a ‘drawer’ for most of the 1990s (May, 1990b).

The relationships between child, family and community, highly valued in *Te Whāriki*, are impoverished by the impact of economic policy on families and communities. The way that curriculum documents are used in the framing of regulatory requirements undermines the democratic, negotiated, non-prescriptive philosophy that underpins *Te Whāriki* and *Kei Tua o te Pae*. According to the curriculum documents, an open, participatory and equitable environment for all players within the sector is critical. The use of these documents as accountability mechanisms within a marketplace rationale militates against the spirit of open dialogue and debate at their very heart. The rearrangement of learning into commodified, standardised packages, although providing an easy fit with audit and accountability requirements, fails to treat young children with dignity and respect by aligning them not only with managerial practices of business, but with a developmental continuum. This situation has the potential for colonising early childhood with ‘schoolified’ logics where prescriptive outcomes and performance standards, becomes the order of the day for children at a younger and younger age. This ‘schoolification’ or ‘push-down’ curriculum has been the fear of many in the early childhood sector. One of the arguments against the centralisation and regulation of early childhood in the 1980s and 1990s was the potential for early childhood education to be treated merely as a preparatory phase for primary school. The concern was that if the emphasis for young children was on learning outcomes rather than play, an academic focus would replace the curriculum orientation of children under five, in effect, instrumentalising early childhood education.

In current policy, there is an increasing push for a seamless education system. In this system early childhood care and education is seen as a first step along a developmental continuum of lifelong learning. In some senses, this is appealing and good common sense. After all, who wouldn’t want an easy transition between the various education sectors? However, the appeal to logic and order, to common sense and to the narrative of lifelong learning masks what should remain as contestable arguments about curriculum. The policy environment, while coherent and organised and in which early childhood education has now become established, fails to address some vital issues in early childhood education. For example, there is little debate about private vs. public good in early childhood education, even though the recent OECD report (2006) points to the need for countries like New Zealand to address this issue. Moves to revitalise the public and community-based sector go largely undebated, operating within a policy framework that focuses on regulating the sector. The net effect is that opportunity for argument and contestation is limited – to the detriment of democratic curriculum process. There is an occasional breakthrough – notably, a recent ‘state of the

nation' report by the Salvation Army, *What does it profit us?* (Johnson, 2008), calling for a change of priorities, to refocus on some compelling moral questions:

What priority have we given to families and to the poor? In particular how have our personal behaviours and public policies nurtured family life and the ability of families to care for themselves? Furthermore, how have our public policies addressed the apparently widening gap in New Zealand between the rich and poor? (ibid, p. 3).

The report claimed that the availability of early childhood education opportunities appears to be heavily biased against poorer urban communities, with the availability of places in 'poor urban suburbs being almost half the national average. These statistics spotlight lingering inequality of access for 'poor and generally brown children' (ibid, p. 6). Although there was a 25% increase in the numbers of licensed early childhood centres between 2001 and 2006, these increases have almost entirely been in the for-profit sector, while the not-for-profit and community sectors have lost ground with the numbers of kindergartens, playcentres, and kōhanga reo actually falling (ibid, p. 5). Playcentres and kindergartens, joined later by kōhanga reo and Pacific Island language nests, were once unique forms of community-based, free or affordable, early childhood provision. In particular, they provided education for poorer communities. Their demise over the last decade is perhaps morally questionable. The report criticises the government's 'working for families' policy with its focus on encouraging single parents with dependent children to take up work. The report also questions who is looking after children given that early childhood education facilities are 'least common in low-income communities where single parents and welfare beneficiaries most commonly live' (ibid, p. 18). This situation suggests that the current provision of early childhood education is not meeting the needs of communities.

It is doubtful that the market place and the early childhood institutions registered on the Stock exchange are able to provide for Ricoeur's just institutions, in particular, when a business orientation requires, first and foremost, a regulatory, business, managerial and audit focus. Such a focus is neither dialogical, nor intersubjective; nor for that matter, is it pedagogical in its orientation. The current market orientation in early childhood policy is at odds with what (in Ricoeurian terms) I would call the *historical horizons* of early childhood. Reading *Te Whāriki* as historical, bicultural, non-prescriptive, feminist and political rather than part of an increasing regulatory framing up of children's lives, I believe that there is a unique and generous invitation to enable the play of difference which is currently at risk. The unique historical horizon of *Te Whāriki* enables and promotes this play within new semantic spaces.

The types of spaces increasingly occupied by critical pedagogy and poststructural critique include Moss's agonistic pluralism (2007) drawing upon the work of Chantal Mouffe; Borgnon (2007) and Mozère's (2006; 2007) re-territorialising identities and of course the loosely affiliated reconceptualising group (including, for example, Dahlberg, Bloch, Cannella and Swadener). In New Zealand, relatively recent scholarship includes White & Nuttall's (2007) dialogism; Gibbons (2007b) Foucauldian examinations of play, technology and care; Duhn's (2006) discussions of cosmopolitanism in *Te Whāriki*; and Sellars (2005) rhizomatic conceptualisations of curriculum; as well as critical commentary from Nuttall (2003) and Scrivens (2002). These scholars are developing quite different (from each other and from the mainstream) critical conversations about the state of early childhood. They also offer new visions and possibilities for child-adult relations and the way in which we develop education.

However, despite these creative conceptualisations and ethical commitments to the possibilities for childhood education, more powerful political texts, such as OECD policy documents, promote an essentialised view of the child, emphasising control over authority; quality over creativity; and regulation over difference. There are obvious tensions here, not the least of which is making a profitable return for shareholders in the corporate sector. Government surveillance and the technicising of education obscure real social issues and limits care and education. In particular, the research that underpins it is prescribed by a government-funding scheme heavily prescribed by global authorities that rely upon a particularly mechanistic selection of 'evidence-informed' research.

It is still possible to structure education around elements like creativity and difference, in order to create new authorities and meanings. In mapping the landscape of the child at the turn of the twenty-first century, May (1999) discussed the 'shifting landscapes' involved in both the politics and pedagogy of early childhood. She suggests that the challenge is to be active in constructing the future for children. Questioning whose blueprint will guide the future, she suggests that it is

important to be active not passive in the construction of this blueprint because the lesson of history is that the new century's 'before five' childhood is likely to be considerably different from the childhood of 2000 (May, 1999, p. 130).

Moss argues that the care and education of young children is a deeply engaging emotion/idea that confronts and challenges rationalist, abstract, and impersonal systems of thought, with far-reaching social, political and ethical implications. Further consideration needs to be paid to the importance of the human psyche and altruism in our service to humanity at the earliest

stages of a human's life. The tasks before us are hermeneutical: to reinterpret and to more fully understand the complexity and the history of early education and care; to enter into contemporary dialogue with texts and with the thinkers who have made early childhood education central to their work; and to engage in mutually constitutive and reciprocal ways within institutions and institutional frameworks that engender a community praxis. Moss & Petrie (2002) have argued that children's services should be conceptualised as community institutions – public places where children and adults engage with a variety of projects. They argue that 'community cannot be recreated from the top' rather it must be 'negotiated, justified and experienced' (ibid, p. 40). In promoting their concept of a 'children's space' they promote a revitalisation of democracy. For them, spaces (rather than services) carry greater possibilities:

a *cultural* space, where values, rights and cultures are created; and a *discursive* space for differing perspectives and forms of expression, where there is room for dialogue, confrontation...deliberation and critical thinking, where children and others can speak and be heard. In this sense, the concept of 'children's space' implies possibilities for children and adults to contest understandings, values, practices and knowledges (ibid, p. 9).

The concept of children's space is linked to an ethos constituted by a certain type of relationship between children and adults, which carries with it an engagement of mutuality between child and adult and raises the complex issues of how to work with 'diversity and complexity, uncertainty and plurality' in a democratic and ethical manner (ibid, p. 13). Issues such as care are frequently transformed into technical issues where the application of standardised criteria like 'quality' are applied or managerialised for effective control. Quick fix remedies represent a feature of economic totality that has no narrative space for other forms of belonging, play and creativity. Human relationships as key elements of the good life remain perhaps 'enticing possibilities in a culture that stresses, as its bottom line, an unlimited concern with productivity and progress' (Tronto, 1993, p. 2).

Although, as Moss (2007) points out, the 'prospect of engaging politically may be daunting and even a touch naïve, arriving at 'consensus without exclusion' is not the aim. Drawing upon Mouffe's *agonistic pluralism*, he argues that rather than domesticating difference and diffusing antagonism, a condition for democracy should be that it recognises and legitimates conflict and different perspectives without requiring domination. Moss contends that politicians, policy makers and the media should be left with 'no excuse for believing that

there is only one perspective on early childhood education, only one narrative to be told' (Moss, 2007, p. 237). Along similar lines, Giroux engages with a notion of *radical democracy* to promote a view of education as a new language of possibility:

one that engages what it would mean pedagogically and politically to provide the conditions for rethinking a new type of social agent, one that could individually and collectively imagine a global society that combines freedom and social justice modelled after the imperatives of a radical and inclusive democracy (Giroux, 2003, p. 58).

Narrative identity and new possibilities

We have already found that there is no one identity, that there are various ways that we tell stories about ourselves, and that there are various narratives and discourses we are both subject of and subject to. We have also seen a number of different narratives about the child that reveal particular understandings of childhood and the education of children. Some narratives involve power formations within social realms, providing little in the way of creativity and authentic experience in early childhood. Instead, they tend to shape and inform the culture of early childhood with little room for reciprocity and a limited sense of community. If we are to understand education as a production of identities in relation to specific forms of knowledge and power, we need to ask who the children are and what the purposes of education might be. Throughout the thesis, I have signalled a number of issues that current narratives are unable to attend to at a local community level. These issues include the continuing significance of the liberal subject in education, the capture of cultural difference within a monocultural framework, the emphasis on the market place to provide for early childhood education, the ambivalent site of family, and an impoverished sense of community.

It is to Ricoeur's narrative identity that we now turn for possible resolution. Ricoeur's selfhood is characterised primarily by making the agent responsible for his or her own initiative 'which effectively causes changes in the world' (OA, p. 109). Two human capabilities underline response/responsibility – action and imputation. Humans are capable of initiating some new action and what they do is imputable to them as their own freely chosen deed. This recognition of the imputability of action opens the way for consideration of the ethical and moral determinations of action. These determinations are subject to both individual and community evaluations through narrativisation of action. Although the

subjective experience is unique because of the singularity of the individual, it ‘becomes shared through history, through the publicity of language’ (Leonardo, 2003, p. 340).

Integral to Ricoeur’s narrative identity is the idea that self cannot be segregated from the social nexus in which the self figures; that is, there is no entity called *self*. Rather, the self is a mediated, embodied entity who is part of an intersubjective praxis. In terms of the issues outlined above, this recognition of the intersubjective self recognises that childhood and the adult-child relation is a form of cultural evolution. It opens up the possibilities where the child actively appropriates the cultural environment and where she is positioned as an agent of change, able to actively contribute to and negotiate her environment. In this interaction, the early childhood centre becomes a complicit institution sitting alongside the child. This understanding of intersubjective praxis holds significance for not only individual transformation but also for social transformation. This praxis is reliant upon not an individuated self but an intersubjective one, complicitly informed by dialogical community practices.

Ricoeur suggests that by leaving the manner of the text be, we may perhaps recognise difference as not needing to be normalised. The incommensurability of competing (or simply different) discourses may, through a Ricoeurian lens do more than recognise difference as simply that – difference; it may also bring to the text, to our actions, new semantic possibilities: new metaphors and new languages in which to read the familiar or the not so familiar. In a Ricoeurian worldview, to allow a multiplicity of action and language is to open up a world of difference. For example, rather than accepting liberalism as a colonising metaphor, we could perhaps extend the possibilities for engagement with a range of texts. Rather than relying on the narrativisation of text by liberal formations, we perhaps need to explore new semantic possibilities. In continuing to conceptualise our existence through the language of liberal reason, we perpetuate the marginalisation and violation of those people, cultures and language outside liberal rationality. The imperative to distance the *other* needs to be addressed as part of an ethical commitment to education.

Most importantly, Ricoeur’s intersubjectivity is not an individualistic, discrete centring of the individual. His notion of intersubjectivity does not simply rely upon the importance of the teacher or the child’s own personhood. Ricoeur’s narrative identity is concerned with the unique social formations and the culture of childhood in its historical forms. In this sense, then, Ricoeur’s intersubject signals the end of the discrete, individualised self. Instead, the narrative of the intersubject involves child and adult in continual process, in relationship to

historical narratives, fictional narratives, interdisciplinary formulations and continual boundary crossing in continuous dialectical transformation. Ricoeur's preoccupation with the self is a quest to find the path for a good life. His is a reflective philosophy of the subject – not an abstract, Cartesian subject, however, but a situated and embodied one. Ricoeur's subject is in the 'real' world – named, dated, physical and historical. For Ricoeur there is no metaphysical self – only *selfhood*, constituted by intersubjectivity, a self mediated by signs and symbols with a close connection between responding and taking responsibility for oneself and for others. This is a self constituted by intersecting narrative lines, intersecting in different ways, giving lives different meanings: 'numerous and irreducible', inextricably woven into our understanding of life as an unfolding story.

So who is the child of early childhood that I began my thesis with? As already argued, there is no one child, but various versions of the child emerging in different narratives. Ricoeur's discussion of personal identity (in terms of *idem* and *ipse*) argues for an understanding of identity as simultaneously constant and changing. While *idem* identity is accorded the qualitative, quantitative characteristics of a person, *ipseity* is accorded the innovative force where creative and moral decisions are made. Both forms of identity are important to self, as they reflexively reinforce each other through a process of innovation and sedimentation.

Ricoeur's dialogical approach suggests a reflexive process where the teacher-as-author enters the world of the child without needing to tell the child's story or to seek a final resolution. This ethical concern for the other decentres normalised accounts of children in favour of the interplay of other and a multiplicity of perspectives. Ricoeurian dialectic offers this dynamic way in which to view childhood. While Ricoeur insists upon freeing up the narrative space in order to explore the creative possibilities for ourselves, he also sees that this space is directly tied to an ethics of self. It is through narratives that we understand our own lives and it is through interpretation that we can be seen to reveal our lives to form a narrative unity. This narrative unity becomes what Ricoeur calls a narrative identity. He sees that human life has an aim: developing self-esteem within an interpretation of self mediated by the ethical evaluation of our actions. In developing one's identity, Ricoeur argues that there is a commitment to lead a moral life in which we need to be true to ourselves, fair to others and live well within just institutions.

The quest to seek new ways of being – new language to describe reality – must, in my reading of Ricoeur, be predicated on the text-in-play, inviting different readings and interpretations. As Fitzsimons and Smith (2000) point out, we need to 'think of vocabularies as instruments

for coping with things rather than representations of their intrinsic natures’ (p. 30). These positions recognise the impossibility of holding a position outside language. In terms of the language of the text, this engages us to follow the rules of a particular language game. However, it does not necessarily constrain us to the limits of a particular text or language, and it invites us to read and explore other texts and metaphors. To be interpretative is not about having ‘a special method but simply casting about for a vocabulary that might help’ (Rorty, 1989, p. 199). To follow Ricoeur, our identity is language textualised in the form of discourse as action. He sees that we have an important ethical consideration to make in terms of our self and our responsiveness to the other. This ethical responsibility turns the question *who* away from the self, and towards the Other, but without attempting to essentialise the other. Ironically, though, discussions of identity, otherness and culture tend to want to pin down characteristics – to fix meaning. For Ricoeur, asking ‘*who?*’ requires one to consider inhabiting a not-yet formulated response, while embracing the humanity and the history of the other. The question ‘*who?*’, therefore, is a strategy for deconstructing subjectivity and for creating conditions of openness by being receptive to the particular. This undermines the fundamental existence of the liberal subject where an identity is and always will be a unique and essential individual.

Although I have argued that institutional practices contain and constrain who the child may be, and that current policies and practices are seemingly uncommitted to democratic contest and debate, there are a number of challenges to this authority – including the politics of difference embedded in documents such as *Te Whāriki*. While perhaps overwhelmed by the prevailing policy direction, the cultural-historical horizon of this document is a pivotal source of ethical accountability and challenge. Such challenges admit to radical differences in ethics and politics. Ricoeur argues from the perspective of the need for stronger political democracy. His refusal to dilute difference is reminiscent of Deleuze & Guattari’s (1987) rhizome metaphor, in which the notion of a rhizome points us toward openings of new possibilities, multiple borders, the interstitial spaces, and the multiplicities of new spaces for different conceptions of childhood, for conduct, and for education and care – for self and other.

One departure from the global focus on managerialism in education is in the now well-known early childhood centres of Reggio Emilia. The Reggio approach is founded on progressive education, constructivist psychologies and ‘*left-reform politics*’ along with ‘elements of past and present history and cultures’ ‘strong regional traditions of participatory democracy’ and bound by ‘social solidarity, reciprocity, and cooperation’ (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998,

p. 8). Here the child is envisaged as ‘a child of infinite capacities, a child born with a hundred languages; building a new pedagogical project, foregrounding relationships and encounters, dialogue and negotiation, reflection and critical thinking; border crossing disciplines and perspectives, replacing either/or positions with an and/also openness’ (Dahlberg, et.al., 1999, p. 122). This child can be seen here in romantic gesturing as the artist-creator; the philosopher-thinker; the scientist-discoverer.

Ricoeur argues that identity is not a given, that we make meaning and shape ourselves in response to and with others. Ricoeur insists that asking the question *who* is primarily a responding to the *other* (OA). Accordingly, the most important evaluation is one’s responsiveness to others. The responsibility for an action presupposes the capability of an agent to communicate, to enter into a dialogue with others and to give a response to the question ‘Who did this?’ Asking *who* requires one to consider the humanity of the *other* before one’s self. One makes sense of one’s self in and through involvement with others. The concept of narrative identity in terms of a delineation of childhood and education is a commitment to the embodied interconnectedness of text involved in a reciprocal, ethical engagement of self with other. This concept of the creative power of narratives is important to keep close. Through story – imagining and re-imagining – we keep at play infinite semantic differences and creativities that have the potential to reveal themselves through the multiplicity of ideas and storytelling.

Ensuring conditions for narrative play is important. Such conditions would need to involve an educational environment where the child is a participant, not an object, of social reproduction. In such an environment, the child’s project would be to master the world through play, or ‘playfully’. The child here would be in a space of play and creativity, where new cultural forms of negotiation are tried out. This space would valorise difference and foster the dialectic in order to assure that difference is not homogenised or made the same. A space of play would be akin to the archetypal artist’s studio or an eccentric scientist’s laboratory – representing a space where cultural life and art meet in the interests of individual, cultural and social transformation. Early childhood re-imagined in this way may cross the boundaries of the way in which existing institutions operate with young children. It would require an ongoing commitment to continually rethink our notions of childhood, to enter into dialogue with children, parents, families and schools, and to distantiate ourselves, in a Ricoeurian way, from early childhood organisations, employers, local councils and government in order to renegotiate the institutions that house our youngest human subjects.

Conclusion

The thesis has put forward that who we are, what we aspire to, how we educate and raise families, and how we enact social and cultural practices, is a result of the way we narrate stories about ourselves as both individuals and members of communities. These stories are integrally formed, told and redescribed within a social world. In the introduction to the thesis, I pointed out that from birth we are identified: named, tagged, and provided with birth certificates that record our parentage. Thus begins our understanding of our personal identity located in the social world. From our earliest beginnings, we are historically positioned: someone's daughter, granddaughter, and so forth. This is where we begin to belong (or not) to particular family, social and cultural histories, in which our subjectivities take shape. This beginning is perhaps one of the first cultural stories told about an individual. For very young children in Aotearoa New Zealand, it usually begins with parents and family members.

As children grow, they belong to a wider community, where specific social and moral codes are inscribed by peers, teachers and authorities. We become who we are through our social practices and the language that is available to inscribe these practices (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In developing our identifications, we are also engaged in a creative process of narrativisation. Our discourse draws upon our interpretation of social practices, actions, events and inter-relationships, all of which implicate us in a process of historical understanding and creative fiction-making about our own identities (Ricoeur, 1991b). Such story telling involves a plethora of affiliations that imbue us with a sense of understanding about who we are.

The thesis has argued twofold about the importance of narrative in identity formation. First, at the level of critique of particular narratives, it has argued that some narratives circulating in early childhood education require further consideration, in light of strong economic and technological imperatives that permeate the lives of children and families. The problem is that economic imperatives respond inadequately to human contingency and creativity. Their focus on rational efficiency, borne out in the language of business, has provided impoverished metaphors for human action and life, unable to foster individual, community and cultural differences. This is of particular importance to the current institutionalised focus of early childhood education. The targeting of childcare at 'failing' children and families can be interpreted as furthering economic ends within a human capital narrative. Economic

efficiencies (posing as political solutions) include providing ‘service’ responses to human issues, like work opportunities for women and institutional care facilities for children. Within the economic narrative de-familialisation can be seen as a cynical intervention strategy to ‘correct’ the market place. In this interpretation, availability of childcare is a thin disguise for encouraging workplace participation. It has been argued in the thesis that this is a deficient model that does not address structural issues around human belonging. In particular, I have argued that this policy response is based on the impoverished vocabulary of the marketplace and that a wider political and educational ethic is required, especially in regard to indigenous and other cultural positions. With that in mind, it is important to understand our roles in society.

The second importance attached to narrative is at the level of method and curriculum. I have argued that an understanding of narrative and its potential creative possibilities allows us to articulate and create new possibilities for narrative pedagogies that underpin learning and teaching in early childhood. This is not to divorce narrative from the level of critique, as narratives are inherently grounded in social and political practices. In fact, the reflexivity of Ricoeur’s narrative theory would see the wider political sphere as part of the curriculum process. This orientation, therefore, emphasises the reflexivity of narrative at all levels of belonging: individual, interpersonal, social, communal and cultural. Such a rich multilevel perspective has direct relevance to the educational context. A narrative pedagogy aligned with Ricoeur’s narrative identity and ethics would assume a highly creative position. Ricoeur’s mimesis and metaphor emphasise the power of creating new semantic understandings of self, other and community, through an understanding of personal identity as embodied, reflective creative and necessarily political. This orientation is in keeping with the current direction of narrative pedagogies suggested by Bishop & Glyn in their *kaupapa* processes, and in the learning stories approach to planning and assessment in early childhood.

Ricoeur’s hermeneutic position brings together narrative, ethics and identity. Rather than an individual aspiring to a particular endpoint or pre-defined position, Ricoeur’s subject is contingent, changeable and inconstant. A person’s *ipseity*, for Ricoeur, incorporates human ability to make moral decisions, and engage in a continuous process of creation and re-creation. Ricoeur’s intersubjective self requires the commitment of one’s self to another to perform a duty to care: to reciprocate, to respond and to be responsive. This Ricoeurian understanding of identity and narrative is one emanating from the bottom up – from social

and cultural practices that can be examined, re-interpreted and re-inscribed with new meanings. His focus on practices and responsiveness to others' requirements is located historically, temporally and contingently through narrative.

The thesis has argued that current liberal and neoliberal understandings of identity do not provide enough scope for individual creativity and for fulsome accounts of family, community and culture. While Ricoeur's notion of 'good' and 'just' might sound similar to some of the core values of liberal autonomy, his narrative identity provides a framework for going beyond previous theoretical paradigms. He stresses the importance of the hermeneutical circle of narrative. The dialectic struggle in narrative, between an opening up to difference and a temporal, embodied self, is more conducive to understandings of particularities of culture rather than specific political forms. By way of example, the spiritual *tangata whenua* perspectives that are constrained within other liberal methodologies can be better understood, legitimated and valued as community culture rather than global political rationality.

By engaging with ideas of Ricoeur, and to a lesser extent Foucault and Lyotard, the thesis has positioned particular rationalities that form the basis for an educational ethics. Ricoeur's critique of the economic in narratives was argued as an important point in the examination of governing rationalities. Various rationalities compete for ascendancy as ethical positions or as incontrovertible truth in our identity formation. These include the economic, the liberal, the neoliberal, the scientific, and the social, most of which have been explored in the thesis. Any claim to certainty or closure has been contrasted in the thesis with a narrative analysis, which relies on a rich understanding of narrative knowledge, and which refuses to accept the limitation of universal truth in relation to a metaphysical view of ethics. Ricoeur's insistence on interrogating narratives and his refusal to take a final position are seen in the thesis as a basis for educational ethics and a challenge to the closure of truth claims. The challenge for early childhood education is, I believe, to re-invoke history and to embrace criticality, difference, contestability and argumentation in order to participate in a democratic process of negotiating what are 'good' spaces for children.

I have argued that Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy is primarily engaged with an ethical commitment to self and other. The interpretive basis of narrative identity involves a dialectic of sameness (*idem*) and selfhood (*ipseity*), mediating between action theory and moral theory. Ricoeur asks, 'In what way is narrative the first laboratory of moral judgment?' (OA, p. 141). The dialectic of *idem* and *ipse* identity requires an extension of the practical field of *Te*

Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) if the action described within it is to match the action that is currently in narration. Although *Te Whāriki* has indeed been extended into the field of policy, its influence has been ring-fenced by the prevailing policy regime. In terms of a normative early childhood identity, the thesis has argued that both liberal and neoliberal narratives fall short, leaving a need to find new narratives (Rorty, 1989). What is needed in particular are narratives that might accommodate various perspectives and desires – of children and families, Māori communities, new immigrant families and communities, and those different to ourselves in ways we do not yet understand.

I have argued that there is no *one* child. The thesis developed the idea that discourse is informed by social practices and that the way we narrativise these practices informs who we are. While it was determined that one's identity is not only a collection of narratives, and that there other ways in which to see oneself, it was also established that narratives are an important means by which we come to belong. How we inform our practices, and integrate narratives about ourselves, our communities and histories, is therefore of vital importance to the individuals and communities that emerge. Ricoeur argues that humans have agency to create new meanings and new understandings of our selves. He also argues that the totality of the economic must be challenged so that narrative space is open for the creation of new metaphors – new spaces of meaning. It is important, therefore, to disrupt the tired metaphors currently circulating, to open up spaces for thinking differently, and to engage hermeneutically and creatively in exploring current and newly emerging texts.

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