Young children's creativity in dramatic play in the diverse context of Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

The topic of creativity has been of interest to researchers throughout time. Yet issues regarding the definition, genesis, assessment, and influential factors of creativity remain varied and controversial. Diverse experiences have been considered as one of the factors that has an influence on creativity. Although creativity in early childhood education [ECE] is perceived to be a widely recognised concept, few studies that relate directly to the influences which give rise to the genesis of children's creativity have been done in this field. This thesis explores the influence of diverse experiences on creativity as it pertains to children's everyday encounters with their environment, people and materials through investigating young children's engagement in dramatic play in early childhood settings. Diverse experiences contain a variety of aspects, including the social and cultural context of the educational environment, the teachers' background and ethos, as well as the materials provided in the physical settings. This research investigates how diverse experiences support the generation of young children's creativity as interpreted through their engagement in dramatic play, and what a learning environment might look like where young children's creativity is valued and encouraged. A sociocultural theoretical framework is selected to shift the location of creativity from the individual to the contextual factors such as interactions between self and others, and new and existing artefacts.

The focus of this research is addressed through observations of children from two ECE settings in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. An understanding of the context of the children's participation in dramatic play is supported through interviews with the parents and teachers. The conceptualisation of creativity in this research primarily draws on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of creativity. To reflect the nature of free play in New Zealand's ECE settings, young children's creativity was investigated through child-led dramatic play. Based on a sociocultural framework of distributed creativity, children's creativity in dramatic play was described as generated and enacted in relation to the sociocultural context through interactions with peers and adults, and with play materials and cultural artefacts. This thesis presents a rich description of children's creativity through dramatic play that critically illustrates how young children's creativity is influenced by the diverse experiences in their daily encounters with people, places, and things. This study also provides an insight into the ways teachers and parents create supportive early childhood environments for creativity to be cultivated, while taking into consideration the diverse experiences children may bring to their dramatic play. This opens up the possibility for further studies in other art forms such as visual arts, music, and dance, to provide empirical evidence about planning, assessment, and pedagogical practices that contribute to enhancing an understanding of children's creativity as it pertains to the diverse experiences children encounter in their everyday lives.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

An Overview

This research project explores the manifestation of creativity in young children's dramatic play at two early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand. The research seeks to understand how diverse experiences influence young children's creativity. As one of the key concepts of this research, the notion of creativity has fascinated humankind throughout time. This is reflected in the multiple attempts to conceptualise creativity in disciplines from philosophy to neuroscience, and in the modern belief in the value about creativity in technology, economy, and education (Jeffrey & Craft, 2001; Lombardo & Roddy, 2011). In all the relevant fields, significant debate surrounds almost every single aspect, especially the influential factors of creativity (Silvia et al., 2012). Diverse sociocultural and environmental factors, for example, are believed to have an influence on individuals' lived experiences, which in turn could influence their creativity (Oades-Sese et al., 2011). Thus, diverse experiences are often cited as educational goals in an increasingly globalised world characterised by socially and culturally diverse environments (Hämäläinen & Vähäsantanen, 2011).

To understand the role of diverse experiences in young children's creativity, this research was conducted in two early childhood settings in Auckland, New Zealand. These centres were selected due to their different populations and environments in order to understand potential influential factors of creativity as expressed through young children's dramatic play, and the ways in which diverse experiences in early childhood settings can contribute to young children's creativity.

This chapter lays the foundation for exploring and investigating children's creativity in the context of New Zealand. Additionally, the chapter also provides background information, including my role as the researcher and thus the reason for this research, the sociocultural makeup of early childhood education [ECE] in New Zealand, research questions and assumptions, and the rationale for and significance of this study.

My Role as the Researcher

The motivation for this study arose from my experience as a researcher in a study about children's art education and creativity in China. The research project sought to develop a new assessment of primary and secondary school students' performance and creativity in music and visual art education. It was the first nationwide arts assessment project in China's educational history; it was exciting and yet, at the same time, very difficult and quite daunting because of the immense size of the study.

One of my jobs was to write literature reviews related to international arts and creativity in education. In this process, New Zealand's emphasis and achievement in art education and creativity assessment attracted my attention. New Zealand was one of the first countries to conduct a national assessment of arts education and creativity, through the National Education Monitoring Project, started in 1995, which focused on the achievement in different curriculum and skills areas of a sample of students in Years 4 and 8 (Philips, 2000). In writing the literature review, I began to think of what features of New Zealand's social and educational environment helped the children's achievement in art and creativity.

My other task was conducting the pilot studies measuring visual art performance and creativity in some Chinese schools. The sample students chosen for the pilot study were from different provinces, ethnic groups and two different age groups, Year 4 (10 years old) and Year 8 (14 years old). While conducting the pilot assessment, I noticed that some students' performance in the visual arts was fascinating and imaginative in a way that I had never considered before. Meanwhile, some interesting observations regarding children's creativity also arose. For example, children from ethnic minority groups appeared to be more performative and creative in music and visual arts than the majority Han Chinese. Also, more Year 8 students than Year 4 students considered the creative test "too difficult," and the actual products made by Year 8 students seemed to be less creative and imaginative than the Year 4s. As a result, I began to question the nature of this assessment that consisted of more standardised questions and less performative tasks, which correlated with the Chinese context of gathering a huge sample size but may not have been effective enough to identify the students' authentic art performance and their levels of creativity. These observations piqued my curiosity related to other questions such as: What factors can increase children's creativity? Does age matter in the manifestation of creativity? If not, what happens during children's education that hinders their performative, imaginative and creative expression?

To answer these questions, I started to reflect on my own experience as a child within the educational environment in which I was raised. I began to wonder whether any educational experiences limited my exposure to the creative process and thus potential to be creative and expressive. This is when I recalled that during my time at kindergarten, my adventurous and playful nature as a child was considered divergent and rebellious by my teachers. As a young child, I was always keen to explore different environments or spaces to see if these spaces could be places for dramatic play or creating a fictional world. I recall that there was a little pond located within the grounds of my kindergarten, from which the children were told to keep away for safety reasons. It was like a mysterious world to me and I couldn't help imagining that another world might exist inside the pond. One winter day, the pond was drained to avoid freezing over. I was so excited! Together with two friends, we managed to sneak out during free-play time and slide down into the empty pond to explore the bottom where the mysterious world existed in my imagination. We pretended that the area at the bottom of the pond was an underwater environment in which we could dive into and swim around to discover mermaids and flee from monsters, until a teacher saw us playing and told us to get out. However, we were not able to climb back without help. Instead of pulling us out, a group of teachers simply stood at the edge of the pond and reprimanded us while watching us struggling to climb out. They even stopped other children from helping us. We were forced to stand at the bottom of the pond for half an hour under the teachers' surveillance as an example of bad role models to show other children how not to behave. Following this incident, my friends and I felt so embarrassed that we refused to go back to kindergarten for several days. Looking back on the incident, I felt that this was when I began to change from a child who liked to imagine and explore the world to a less adventurous adult, partly because of the attitudes and reactions of my kindergarten teachers during these formative years when my curiosity and imaginative spirit was at its peak.

As a result of my childhood experiences, coupled with my later experience as a researcher, I began to wonder what effect my educational and life experiences might have had in my development of creativity and imagination. This raised further questions for me to consider: What kind of education do young children need? What pedagogical knowledge will offer the best possible teaching and learning experiences? Is education, in conjunction with society, putting too much emphasis on safety and rules while restricting young children's opportunities to be playful and expressive? Does education do enough to encourage young children's imagination, curiosity and creativity, particularly within the diverse context children now experience? With these questions in mind, I was motivated to examine the possible genesis of young children's creativity and, more specifically, the influence of diverse experiences upon young children's creativity and how they shape or become expressed in their dramatic play. Considering my previous discovery pertaining to New Zealand's emphasis and achievement in art education and creativity assessment, I decided the context of Aotearoa New Zealand would be an ideal place to investigate these specific questions.

In addition, my background as a Chinese woman who grew up in China enabled me to bring a particular perspective to this research from a different standpoint within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. I cannot speak for Māori or Pākehā, but I bring a unique cultural viewpoint as well as my reflections and interpretations of young children's creativity to the context of ECE in New Zealand. The position, therefore, that I speak from is as a newcomer or visitor (manuhiri) who belongs to a third cultural group in a bicultural society: a former psychology student and teacher, a participant in a less flexible early education system, and a researcher who is interested in the arts and creativity.

Within the process of studying the relationship between diverse experiences and young children's creativity, I would also like to challenge the mainstream generalised perspective on creativity studies, which values creativity predominantly as a result of the creative outcome or product. Children's dramatic play, in sharp contrast, may not necessarily generate any concrete product, nor be of any conceivable economic value to society. However, I would argue that the creative sparks generated in play could benefit young children's development and, more importantly, guide teachers and others involved in education to support and provide for children's creativity while recognising the influence of the diverse experiences young children encounter in today's globally connected world as well as how these factors contribute to or are manifested in children's dramatic play.

The Context of Aotearoa New Zealand
Historical Context
Aotearoa New Zealand is a relatively small and isolated country in the South Pacific Ocean. The first arrivals on this piece of land came from East Polynesia in the late 13th century. The original Polynesian settlers, although now known as Māori, did not identify themselves by a collective name until the arrival of Europeans in 1642, when the name Māori, meaning "ordinary," was created to mark their distinctiveness (Wilson, 2020). The European settlers were called Pākehā, meaning "extraordinary and white" (H. May,

2002). The Māori lived largely undisturbed on this land, which they called Aotearoa, meaning "land of the long white cloud" (McLintock, 1966), until the arrival of James Cook in 1769, who claimed the land for the British Crown. Colonisation commenced with the arrival of missionaries in 1814, who started converting Māori to Christianity (Richardson, 2005). By 1840, The Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi) was signed between Māori and Pākehā and the country became a British colony.

The Treaty was intended to protect tinorangatiratanga (governance), taonga (treasured sites and objects) and land for Māori as British subjects in return for recognising the British crown as their sovereign. However, in the latter half of the 1800s, the Crown extended its power through the "acquisition, control and, ultimately, expropriation of land" (Walker, 1990, p. 98). Despite the intentions made in the Treaty, colonisation has largely focussed on settler interests, which has resulted in a dishonouring of Māori sovereignty in favour of colonial hegemony, thus entrenching long-lasting inequities in several important areas of life for the Māori people (Barnes & McCreanor, 2019). By 1940, Māori had little land left, with their population in decline and their health, welfare, language and culture all under threat (Simon, 1994).

The settlers in this nation had 25 years of provincial organisation after the signing of the Treaty (Stephenson, 2008). By the 1870s, as the land wars ended and British troops withdrew, a Pākehā-dominated, politically independent nation was emerging, and people were demanding education as a right of all citizens in the developing of a democratic nation. This was introduced with the Education Act of 1877 (Cumming & Cumming, 1978). Following the Education Act, a three-tiered administrative structure was created – a central Department of Education with the power to make regulations, 12 district education boards, and local school committees. The 1877 Education Act made primary-level education compulsory, free and secular for all New Zealanders. Thus, it has been hailed as establishing a foundation upon which could be built a just, egalitarian education system in New Zealand (Cumming & Cumming, 1978). Education was considered a right for all New Zealanders rather than a punishment for inappropriate behaviour or a way of compensating for inadequate parenting (Stephenson, 2008).

Starting from the 1900s, there was evidence of some changes in ECE (H. May, 2003). Although ECE in New Zealand was founded by missionaries as early as 1832, the main purpose of the early childhood schools was to "tam[e] the wild" Māori children (Duhn, 2009, p. 33). At that time, wives were left unsupported by their husbands, and young children were seen to be left alone during the day while their parents went out to work (H. May, 1997). The establishment of the first kindergarten in 1889 in Dunedin was a deliberate move to take so called waifs and strays off the city streets (Hill & Sansom, 2010). From then on kindergartens developed across the country, especially during the 1940s and 1950s. The first government subsidy for kindergartens began in 1904, but most of the kindergartens remained relatively small in numbers and as charitable organisations until the mid-20th century. In 1948, government policy shifted towards supporting the infrastructure and funding of a national kindergarten movement with a presence in all towns and suburbs (Ritchie & Veisson, 2018). Other early childhood services also developed, such as the Playcentre movement in 1941 and childcare centres in the early 1960s (Richardson, 2005). The development and current situation of these different types of ECE services is focused on further in the following section.

The momentum of services designed for young children's learning was developing before and during World War II (Stover, 2016). Elected in 1935 during the Great Depression, the first Labour government brought about sweeping changes to all education sectors in New Zealand. The Progressive Education Movement (Dewey, 1986) was embraced by the Minister of Education, Peter Fraser. During the latter half of the century, immigration to Aotearoa New Zealand accelerated and included more people from the Pacific Islands as well as, more recently, from the continents of Asia and Africa. Therefore, issues of biculturalism between Māori and Pākehā were exacerbated by the realities of multicultural diversity (A. B. Smith & May, 2006).

Demographic Context

Demographically, Aotearoa New Zealand is a good example of a diverse society. As described in the previous section, the first known settlers in this country were Māori, dating back to the 13th century. The Europeans came 350 years later. After the Treaty of Waitangi, more European immigrants entered the country in the 19th and 20th centuries (Tangaere, 1993). More recent immigrants are people from the Pacific Islands (from the 1950s) and Asia (mostly from the 1980s, with the exception of the Chinese migrants who came as early as the 1900s because of the gold rush and later creating the market gardens in New Zealand) (McKinnon, 1996). According to the results of the 2013 Census of Population and Dwellings, the number of ethnicities in New Zealand is more than the number of countries in the world, with 34% of the population identifying with at least one ethnicity other than European (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Meanwhile, New Zealand's Māori, Asian, and Pacific populations will continue to grow. It is predicted that by 2038, the Māori population will make up 19.5% of the total New Zealand population compared with 15.6% in 2013; the Asian population will make up 20.9%, compared with 12.2% in 2013; and the Pacific population will make up 10.9%, compared with 7.8% in 2013 (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). According to the National Ethnic Population Projections, the overall diversity of New Zealand will be higher in 2038 than in 2013, due to a slower population growth for the European group and higher levels of natural increase and migration for other ethnic groups (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). Auckland, the biggest city in New Zealand, is especially diverse in its ethnic demography, with 65.1% of New Zealand's Asian population and 65.9% of the Pacific people living in the Auckland region (Gomez et al., 2014).

Political Context

Alongside the changing demographic context of the society, the political context of early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand has also changed considerably over the past century (H. May, 2003; Mitchell, 2010). As previously discussed, ECE institutions were first established in Aotearoa New Zealand in the late 19th century, but the original goal was to provide care for young children rather than education. Initially, the government's interest was limited to the establishment of kindergartens, whose programmes contrasted with the rationales for emerging state investment and/or interventions in the lives of children such as moral reform and child health (H. May, 1997). The Playcentre movement, which was introduced by Susan Isaac into New Zealand in 1937, trained mothers to facilitate learning with their children, and, together with kindergartens, became the main early childhood providers (Mutch, 2013). However, prior to the 1970s, the

childcare services were side-lined and excluded from any substantive government funding and training (A. B. Smith & May, 2006).

World War II was a catalyst for changes to the state's role in ECE. The post-war years were characterized by the government's progressive education policies, as well as a huge growth in the early childhood sector (H. May, 2001). In the 1980s, an increasing politicisation of childcare workers came into being, and ongoing advocacy for the separation of childcare and ECE services. Between 1986 and 1989, New Zealand became the first country in the world to integrate early childhood services into the education system (Moss, 2000). Since then, the government has launched a series of reforms in the ECE system, including ECE placed under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education together with school education, providing professional training to ECE teachers, and requiring ECE services to hire more qualified teachers (H. May, 2001).

According to the Ministry of Education, ECE services in New Zealand are very diverse. They have a wide range of ownership and governance structures as well as different philosophies and operating models. The diverse range of services is a valued feature of early learning provision in New Zealand (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2017). The services include: kindergarten (some private programmes but most are administered by national and local kindergarten associations), Playcentre (run by parent collectives), childcare (community and private), family day-care, Kōhanga Reo (Māori immersion language nests), and Pacific Island language groups. In 2018, there were 4,532 licensed early childhood services throughout New Zealand, with education and care services dominating the ECE sector (65%). Kindergartens remain the next most prevalent ECE provider (15%), followed by Kōhanga Reo (10%). Overall, 65.5% of New Zealand children aged 0 to 4 years attended an ECE and care service in 2017, with the attending rate of 4-year-olds over 98% (MoE, 2018). Irrespective of the kind of service, each child enrolled receives an entitlement to a sessional grant based on age, and the requirements for quality standards and minimum regulations are the same across the different kinds of services (Carr & May, 1993).

Following the unification of care and education in early childhood into an integrated system in 1986, the absence of a shared theoretical basis for early childhood programmes became a major concern (Cullen, 1995). To address this issue, a national curriculum for ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand, *Te Whāriki*, was drafted and finalised in 1996 (MoE, 1996).

Te Whāriki – *The Early Childhood Curriculum in Aotearoa New Zealand*
Te Whāriki draws its name from the Māori word for a woven mat for all to stand on. A mat act as the central metaphor for the design of the curriculum: First, the principles, strands and goals are woven together, indicating a holistic view of children's development (May & Carr, 1997); second, *Te Whāriki* describes a "spider web" model of curriculum, in contrast to a "step" model (Eisner, 1985, p. 143); third, the curriculum seeks to encompass and celebrate the diversity of the ECE sector in New Zealand (Education Review Office [ERO], 2013). With its bicultural framing, *Te Whāriki* emphasises the bicultural foundation of New Zealand society, the multicultural present, and the shared future New Zealand is creating (MoE, 1996, 2017).

The four principles defined in *Te Whāriki* are Holistic Development (Kotahitanga), Empowerment (Whakamana), Family and Community (Whānau Tangata), and Relationships (Ngā Hononga). The whāriki is woven from these four principles and from the following five strands, or essential areas of learning and development, which arise from the principles: Wellbeing (Mana Atua), Belonging (Mana Whenua), Contribution (Mana Tangata), Communication (Mana Reo), and Exploration (Mana Aotūroa). The whāriki concept recognises the diversity of ECE in New Zealand, as different programmes, philosophies, structures and environments will contribute to the distinctive patterns of the whāriki (MoE, 1996).

The other important underpinning theory, besides the metaphor of the whāriki, is the theory of the ecology of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The learning environment is described as a nested arrangement of structures, referred to as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. Situating the curriculum within a sociocultural framework acknowledges that a child's learning environment "extends far beyond the immediate setting of the home or early childhood programmes beyond the home" (MoE, 1996, p. 19). *Te Whāriki* also regards play as "an important means by which children try out new roles and identities as they interact with others" (MoE, 2017, p. 61). The sociocultural emphasis that underpins *Te Whāriki* is also a reminder to policy makers and governments that what happens in the adult environment – poverty and inequality of opportunity in the wider society for example – influences the educational achievements of all learners (Lee et al., 2013).

The nature of *Te Whāriki* is integrated and non-prescriptive. It is designed as a non-content-specific guidance of what staff should do in early childhood services. Rather it serves as a signpost for services to develop their own curriculum woven through the process of talking, reflection, planning, evaluation and assessment (H. May, 2002). Therefore, the implementation of the document into daily practice is complex. The ERO, an independent government department that reviews the performance of New Zealand's schools and early childhood services, published a report in 2013 on the evaluation of the implementation of the early childhood curriculum. The review highlighted the lack of alignment in many services between *Te Whāriki* as a philosophical curriculum and what happens in practice (ERO, 2013). For example, the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* were often more explicit in assessment information and physical display (e.g., photo decoration on the wall) than in planning and teaching practices. Another example is the realisation of the bicultural nature of *Te Whāriki*. According to the ERO review, only a few services were able to realise the bicultural intent in practice by working in partnership with whānau which can include extended families with three or more generations (Walker, 1990).

As informed by the ERO 2013 report, a formal review and update of *Te Whāriki* was published by the Ministry of Education in April 2017. This revised edition reflects changes in the early learning context, including the diversity of New Zealand society today, and contemporary theories and pedagogies (MoE, 2017). As a result, the 2017 version of *Te Whāriki* became significantly different from the open and nonprescriptive 1996 version. It has a completely different layout, heavier use of photographs, and a more overt focus on learning outcomes (Farquhar & Sansom, 2017). Also, the revised curriculum includes a

stronger focus on bicultural practice, the importance of language, culture, and identity, and the inclusion of all children (McLachlan, 2018).

Rationale and Significance

The significance of this research is related to the reality of a rapidly changing world (Duffy, 2006). As technology continues to advance, children in the future will not need to memorise the basic content that has previously characterised traditional early education (K. Robinson, 2001). Therefore, the ability to think innovatively and critically becomes a survival skill for young people of this generation to adapt to the significant changes ahead (Lombardo & Roddy, 2011). Educators need to prepare young people to meet ongoing changes by providing opportunities for children to become more creative, enabling them to develop new and innovative products, extend current knowledge to new situations, and collaborate with different people (Duffy, 2006; P. May, 2009).

Creativity is of great importance in children's lives and development. Creativity is an indicator of the mental health and wellbeing of individuals (Cecil et al., 1985). Fostering creativity can help to increase flexibility and social adaptation (Mayesky, 2015) and boost self-esteem (Duffy, 2006). It is also viewed widely by parents and teachers as a favourable trait in children (Runco & Johnson, 2002). Early childhood educators in most Western countries come with expectations of the teaching and learning environments, which includes creative expression in young children's artworks (McArdle & Grieshaber, 2012).

In New Zealand, educational policies have attached importance to the concept of creativity. Children's holistic development is a key principle of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996, 2017). As an example of a holistic learning outcome, the curriculum states that children should develop the "ability to be creative and expressive through a variety of activities, such as pretend play, carpentry, storytelling, drama and making music" (MoE, 1996, p. 42). Recommendations in relation to creativity and the arts include statements such as "assist children to acquire the necessary skills for expressive activities" and "value the process and the experience, not just the product" (MoE, 1996, p. 96). It also suggests that teachers need to "encourage and help children to try things out" and "understand that creativity sometimes means 'breaking the rules'" (MoE, 1996, p. 96). In the 2017 version of *Te Whāriki*, the emphasis on creativity and expressiveness remains, with "visual arts activities" added, and "pretend play" changed to "imaginative play" (MoE, 2017, p. 42).

Children's creativity is naturally connected to their imaginative play or, as otherwise known, dramatic play (Hoffmann & Russ, 2012). One reason is that in dramatic play a child develops flexible and associative strategies that are prerequisites for creativity (Bretherton, 1989; Dansky, 1986; Fein, 1981). Dramatic play is considered by early childhood researchers as "the greatest incentive of the creative process" (Paley, 1991, p. 6), a state of mind that brings new energy and sparks creativity (Lee et al., 2013), and the best known and most obvious example of children's joint creativity (Farmer, 2010). Play is a powerful concept in learning, teaching, and psychological development in effective ECE (Moyles, 2014). Cognitively, play fosters imagination and creative problem solving; emotionally, play gives children a sense of pleasure, accomplishment and belonging (Elkind, 2007; Gore & Gore, 2002). Overall, play is a mechanism by which

children learn, practise, and internalise new ideas from the outside world (Paley, 2004). Young children's play is considered significant at policy level in New Zealand. According to the goals evident in the New Zealand early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki*, one of the learning goals is for children to experience "an environment where their play is valued as meaningful learning and the importance of spontaneous play is recognised" (MoE, 1996, p. 16). This belief is echoed in the revised edition of *Te Whāriki:* "Exploring, playing with ideas and materials and collaborating with others" are "important and valued ways of learning" (MoE, 2017, p. 47). Based on the academic and policy evidence above, dramatic play is considered suitable for manifesting children's creativity.

On the other hand, the development of children's creativity is dependent on the environment in which the children participate (Runco & Johnson, 2002). As Vygotsky (2004) suggested, the best way to stimulate creativity in children's lives is to organise the environment in which they participate to enrich experiences so that it leads to the need and ability to create. Therefore, it is essential for educators to consider creating a stimulating environment where creative thoughts are encouraged (Eckhoff & Urbach, 2008).

One way to foster creativity is to acknowledge diverse experiences in relation to the sociocultural environment (Godart et al., 2015). Entering the 21st century, ECE researchers have become more aware of the effects of diverse experiences, due to the interactivity of cultures brought about by a rise in globalisation and higher social mobility (Lubart & Georgsdottir, 2004). Globalisation has led to greater development of people's diverse experiences "stem[ming] from an awareness of their relation to the global culture" (Arnett, 2002, p. 777). The experiences give individuals a sense of belonging to a worldwide culture, especially for young people from non-Western cultures (Arnett, 2002). Schools and other educational settings, in particular, can provide children with diverse experiences: the various snacks children bring to school, the sound of different languages in the playground, the ideas about families and social relationships, special holidays they celebrate, and even the fashion they prefer (De Melendez & Beck, 2013). The potential influence of diverse experiences on children's creativity and, in turn, how to create an environment offering diverse experiences, is a focus of this thesis.

Research Questions and Key Assumptions

This study's research questions are grounded in several assumptions about creativity, as articulated in the previous sections: a) creativity in young children is different from that of adults (Russ, 2014); b) the environment in which children live and interact, be it physical, social or cultural, plays an important role in their development of creativity (Amabile, 1996); and c) having diverse lived experiences could enhance individual creativity (Gocłowska & Crisp, 2014).

The overarching research question is:

> In what ways do diverse experiences influence young children's creativity and if so, how is it manifested?

The related subquestions are:

> How is young children's creativity generated through dramatic play?

What role do diverse experiences play in the development of young children's creativity in ECE settings?

What role do teachers and parents play in providing a supportive environment to foster creativity?

Overview of the Chapters

This thesis consists of eight chapters. The current introductory chapter contextualises this study. Chapter 2 explores the literature about creativity and dramatic play and their relationship with diverse experiences. The theoretical framework used in this study is presented in Chapter 3, which is grounded in the concept of distributed creativity derived from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. Chapter 4 discusses the study in further detail by presenting an overview of the methodological underpinnings and the methods used in data collection and analysis. The findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6 are dramatic scenarios generated from observations and interviews with teachers and parents. The main discussion and analysis of the findings are presented in Chapter 7. The current situation related to the concept of creativity in education in New Zealand ECE settings is addressed, as well as the challenges and recommendations regarding the creation of environments to support children's creativity. The thesis concludes with a summary of the research, in Chapter 8. This final chapter consists of the major findings from the study, discusses the limitations of the findings, and offers reflections and implications for further research.

In the following chapter, which presents a review of literature, I present the theories and approaches pertaining to creativity and dramatic play.

Chapter 2 Framing the Concepts: Creativity, Dramatic Play and Diverse Experiences

As described in Chapter 1, this study aims to gain an understanding of young children's creativity in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand and to address ways environments foster creativity. This chapter provides a review of literature related to the key concepts of creativity, dramatic play and diverse experiences, and the associated philosophical, theoretical, and educational perspectives. The literature includes the definitions, widely used theories, issues under debate, and the possible relationships between each concept.

Section 1: Creativity: Definitions, Theories and Assessments

Creativity is an important key concept of this research. Conceptualising creativity in disciplines ranging from philosophy and theology to neuroscience had its origin in ancient times and has continued to this day. This section begins with two specific issues regarding the perceptions of creativity: the structure of creativity, and whether creativity is domain-general or domain-specific. Next, theories about creativity drawn from three different and comparative paradigms are discussed. Finally, ways to assess creativity based on the aforementioned research paradigms are presented.

Definitions of Creativity

The first issue under question is the definition of creativity. There is, so far, no universal agreement about the concept of creativity (Wallace, 1986). Definition criteria for creativity are vague. For example, one review suggested that only 38% of the articles published in two journals about creativity, the *Creativity Research Journal* (*CRJ*) and *Journal of Creative Behavior*, have explicitly defined creativity (Plucker et al., 2004), while the other review stated that nearly every article published in the CRJ offers brief definitions of creativity (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). It is broadly accepted that an established, precise, and universally accepted definition does not exist (Prentice, 2000; Torrance, 1988).

There are different aspects of the underlying structure of creativity, and one of the most well-known is Rhode's (1961) four Ps framework. Rhodes drew the conclusion that theory about creativity reflected four distinct strands (four Ps): person, process, product, and press (Rhodes, 1961) by analysing the content of more than 40 definitions of creativity. The creative product, which is one the most discussed aspects of creativity, is the actual artwork or scientific discovery that the field labels as being creative (Russ, 2014). The structure also includes the person who creates the product, the process involved in making the product, and the press, or environment, mostly social but not exclusively, in which the product occurs (Glăveanu, 2013).

Many definitions of creativity have been generated from the evaluation of creative products (Andreasen, 2005; Halpern, 2003), partly because products, such as paintings, inventions, mathematical demonstrations, and designer objects, are readily available for evaluation and even measurement (Glăveanu, 2011a). The two main features, which are essential to define a creative product, are originality and usefulness or appropriateness (e.g., Amabile, 1983; Brown, 1989; Kaufman & Glăveanu, 2021; R. E. Mayer, 1999; Runco

& Jaeger, 2012). These two criteria describe markedly different definitions of creativity (Glăveanu, 2018). For example, Bruner (1962) placed the emphasis on the element of originality. Amabile (1983), on the other hand, focused more on the useful or appropriate element, suggesting that a creative product "must also be appropriate, correct, useful, valuable or expressive of meaning" (p. 360). H. Gardner (1989) shared a similar view, stating that in order to be creative, the products have to be ultimately acceptable in a culture. Some researchers have suggested adding other criteria to this traditional view, such as good quality (Sternberg et al., 2002), heuristics (Amabile, 1996), purpose and duration (Gruber & Wallace, 1999), and the conscious intention of the creator (Craft, 2001). The definition of creativity based on the product, however, has some disadvantages. Restricting creativity to the conception of a product can lead to a product bias, which is the assumption that all creativity is only manifested in a tangible product (Runco, 2007). This view is biased against individuals who possess creative potential but do not yet express it in widely recognised ways (Runco, 2014). There is also a big limitation in applying this definition to young children's creativity, because what children do and say is often not captured in the form of tangible or permanent products (Glăveanu, 2011a).

To recognise and understand children's creativity, viewing creativity as a process is more fertile (Glăveanu, 2011a). Creativity in young children is different from that of adults, because although children can generate new and original ideas and make authentically pleasing artwork, they may lack the knowledge and sophistication to contribute to a field in a new way (Russ, 2014). The most critical criterion for acknowledging the creative potential in young children is originality, which is more valuable to the child than any other judgements (Mayesky, 2015; Tegano et al., 1991). It does not matter if the creativity leads to a product or remains as a process. One example illustrating this aspect was found in a study of 3- to 5-year-old children, where creativity was defined as either a process or a product, or as a form of expression of the children's personal qualities and their interpersonal and intrapersonal development where originality, high quality, and intrinsic importance have been depicted (Saracho, 2002). In the field of ECE, the interactive nature of creativity is often emphasised. For example, Malaguzzi (1998), the founder of the Reggio Emilia schools in Italy, claims that creativity is a holistic experience where the knowing finds connections with the expressing. Rinaldi (2006) reiterated that creativity is not the quality of individual thinking, but an interactive, relational, and social project.

One of the aims of this study is to examine young children's creative expression from a sociocultural perspective that focuses more on the creative processes and conditions. Under the sociocultural paradigm, creativity in young children is believed to be a basic human faculty that connects human beings with their social and physical environment (Anttila & Sansom, 2012). This view is far from the neoliberal discourse that considers creativity as a form of innovation and means of economic growth (Craft, 2005). Therefore, further discussion of young children's creativity in this thesis is based on a sociocultural perspective, which refers to all human activity that "results not in the reproduction of previously experienced impressions or actions but in the creation of new images or actions" (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 9). According to Vygotsky's definition, children's social practices that constitute everyday life, such as dramatic play, would be

considered as creative forms of expression (Vadeboncoeur et al., 2016). Within a Vygotskian developmental framework, creativity as a process includes children's play, imagination and fantasy (John-Steiner et al., 2010). In this sense, the expressiveness of children's play and the experiential aspects of being creative in adults are very similar to each other (Engel, 1993). The relationship between children's play and creativity is further discussed later in this chapter.

Creativity: Domain-General or Domain-Specific? Another debatable perspective found in contemporary research about creativity is the degree to which creativity is domain-general or domain-specific (Plucker, 1998). The term *domain* refers to "the set of representations that underlie and support thinking in a specific area of knowledge; also, any specific area of knowledge, such as art, literature, history, or astronomy" (Baer, 2011, p. 404). Some researchers argue that creativity is domain-general, or a generalised ability irrespective of the kind of discipline or subject matter involved. This supposition has guided the development of research on divergent thinking and creativity tests during the past 50 years (Guilford, 1967; Hocevar, 1980). Divergent thinking, as defined by Guilford (1968), is the thinking that generates a variety of ideas and solutions to a problem, which is believed by many cognitive psychologists to be one of the major cognitive processes in creativity (Russ & Kaugars, 2001). Other researchers have argued for the domain-specific characteristic of creativity, following the gradual objection to the heavy emphasis on standardised creativity measures and divergent-thinking tests, and suggested that creativity is a specific trait according to different domains or disciplines (Anastasi, 1985; Brown, 1989; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988a; Milgram, 1990; Runco & Nemiro, 1994). There are also researchers who have concurred with both views, such as Amabile (1996), who argued that creativity is the combination of general all-purpose creative thinking skills and traits, as well as domain-specific skills and traits.

The answer to whether creativity is domain-general or domain-specific depends on the aspect of creativity upon which the research focuses (Plucker, 2004, 2005; Silvia et al., 2009). If a study has focused on the creative person, creativity often appears domain-general. In contrast, if a study has focused on the creative product, then creativity often appears domain-specific (Baer, 1997).

The researchers with general or specific views about creativity have relied on different approaches to assess creativity (Kaufman & Baer, 2004). The domain-general view of creativity, which posits divergent thinking to be a general, domain-transcending skill applicable in all areas of creative endeavour (e.g., Baer, 2011), tends to rely on psychometric tests of creativity (e.g., Torrance, 1967; Wallach & Kogan, 1965). The domain-specific approach, on the other hand, is more associated with sociocultural (Sawyer, 2006) and problem-solving assessments (Weisberg, 2006).

The current study aligns with the domain-specific nature of creativity for several reasons. First, few eminent individuals have ever shown achievement in more than one domain, suggesting that creativity might be domain-specific (Weisberg, 1999). Second, there is also limited convincing evidence that children judged creative in one domain or discipline necessarily display strong divergent-thinking skills (H. Gardner, 1993). Finally, children's creativity is likely to be expressed in diverse ways. A domain-specific view of creativity

offers constructive knowledge about a child's strength rather than the domain-general view, which utilises divergent-thinking measures to identify a general capacity of creativity (Han, 2003).

Creativity Theories: The He-, I- and We-Paradigms

Although creativity is a well-established concept widely discussed within the philosophical classics, the study of creativity in a structured way is a relatively new field. From the 20th century, the overall trend of creativity studies has been a transition from the study of the gifted few, to the recognition of creativity in all individuals, to the further incorporation of the social and cultural elements. The creativity theories can be categorised into three paradigms: The He-paradigm, the I-paradigm, and the We-paradigm (Glăveanu, 2009).

The He-Paradigm: Study of the Genius. In the early studies about creativity, the researchers relied on philosophical speculation rather than empirical investigation. Creative traits have been seen as describing only a few chosen individuals, the genius, or those who were described as inherently highly talented (Glăveanu, 2009). This vision is referred to as the "He-paradigm," and the "He" is used here as a symbol of otherness as well as reference to the unbalanced gender focus of genius (Glăveanu, 2006). This perspective stemmed from the publication of the first scientific study of the creative genius by Galton (Simonton, 2003). Galton (1874) assumed that in developing creativity, when all conditions are equal, nature was certainly stronger than nurture. This was followed by the humanist ideas about creativity. Humanists believed that the inner conditions of creativity existed within a self-realisation framework of the gifted (Rogers, 1971), and creators shared a range of characteristics with self-actualisation as the highest level of personal achievement (Maslow, 1971).

The He-paradigm opened up the scientific studies of creativity by demystifying the concept of genius from the mists of the supernatural and giving it a solid foundation: human biology (Glăveanu, 2010a). Creativity in this paradigm referred strictly to the genius, the highest level of creativity (Boden, 1996; Fischer et al., 2005), and was rooted in the exceptional creative power of the male and adult creator (Sefton-Green, 2000). By relating creativity to the making of history by some godly, male, and powerful figures, this conceptualisation is ultimately used as a political tool to silence the claim for creativity and agency of marginalised or oppressed groups (Glăveanu & Sierra, 2015). It cut off common creative experiences from the study of creativity, detached the creator from the community, and excluded the role of co-creation or collaboration in the creative process (Barron, 1999). Moreover, as creativity in the He-paradigm is limited to the achievements of something remarkable and new, which "transforms and changes a field of endeavour in a significant way" (Feldman et al., 1994, p. 1), it excludes children from being the subjects of research about creativity. In contrast, this research project investigates young children's creativity in the context of education. This study, therefore, focuses on the everyday creative perspective, which can be incorporated into the process of learning, rather than applying the He-paradigm.

The I-Paradigm: The Little-c Creativity. A shift from the He-paradigm to the I-paradigm started when creativity studies replaced the genius with the general population and the creative pursuits evident in their daily lives, while preserving the individual as a unit of analysis (Glăveanu, 2010a). The shift started

when Guilford (1950) presented his historical American Psychological Association presidential address. While calling on psychologists to study the topic of creativity, he also claimed clearly that "creative acts can be expected, no matter how feeble or how infrequent, of almost all individuals" (p. 446). In this paradigm everyone is capable of being creative since it is no longer a capacity of the few chosen by God, biology or unique psychological features. Therefore, as every individual is creative, albeit to different degrees, this capacity can and should be considered as a process of learning (Glăveanu, 2011a).

The distinction between the revolutionary or life-changing creativity and the everyday resourcefulness to which we all have access is depicted as big-C Creativity and little-c creativity (Craft, 2002). Big-C Creativity refers to the ground-breaking major discoveries that transform the whole field (Russ, 2014), and the little-c creativity involves the novel and task-appropriate creative events that occur on a daily basis (Plucker et al., 2004). Even within the little-c creativity sphere, children's creativity is different from the adults'. As demonstrated in the previous section, adults' creativity is often related to the access and organisation of a relatively extensive knowledge base in a specific field. However, a child can be considered creative even without the relevant knowledge, by just viewing the world with fresh eyes, because it is the quality of the subjective experience that determines whether a person is creative, not the judgement from outside (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999).

While every individual has the capacity and potential to be creative, whether creativity actually results in creative products (e.g., artwork, scientific discovery) depends on many factors. In past decades researchers have looked intensively into the individual attributes and their links to creativity (Amabile, 1996; Runco, 2007). For example, intelligence is believed to be correlated with creativity, because the ability to think divergently is central to the cognitive process of creativity as well as intelligence (Guilford, 1986). But intelligence and creativity only overlap in some respects, and not in others (Eysenck, 1994). Some personality traits are believed to be conducive to creativity as well, such as openness to experience, an internal locus of evaluation, problem-solving skills, tolerance of ambiguity, unconventional values, independence of judgement, curiosity, preference for challenge and complexity, self-confidence, and propensity for risk taking, to name a few (Barron & Harrington, 1981; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; McCrae, 1987; Rogers, 1971; Stein, 1953). Among all the traits, openness to experience is believed to be the best personality predictor of divergent thinking and creativity (Furnham et al., 2009). In general, most of the approaches within the I-paradigm attempt to relate creativity to something from within the psychology of the person.

Although it shifted creativity studies from the genius in the He-paradigm to all people, the I-paradigm failed to recognise the aspect of socialising and maintained the research focus on individuals (Glăveanu, 2009). These individualistic paradigms of attributing creativity to creators' internal dispositions largely ignored the social and cultural factors in the creative process (Kasof, 1999). Therefore, to explore the influence of diverse experiences on young children's creativity, a sociocultural paradigm needs to be adopted.

The We-Paradigm: The Sociocultural Approach. From the 1950s, a trend for addressing the social factors as they pertained to creativity was initiated, which instigated the We-paradigm of creativity research (Amabile, 1983; Simonton, 1975). The We-paradigm claimed the relationship between creativity and the social context is that "creativity takes place within, is constituted and influenced by, and has consequences for, a social context" (Westwood & Low, 2003, p. 236). From this viewpoint, the creativity of individuals occurs and is judged in relation to other individuals (Glăveanu, 2009). For example, Amabile (1996) extensively investigated social factors and their roles on creative performance. The social factors include choice and constraints, reward, competition, modelling, stimulation, evaluation, peer pressure, and surveillance. Among these factors, intrinsic motivation, or doing something for its own sake, is one component in Amabile's componential model of creativity, which comprises domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant skills, and task motivation as the three main components (Amabile, 1996; Hennessey, 2003). However, investigation of social and environmental conditions that can positively or negatively influence creativity does not abandon the understanding of creativity as an individual-level phenomenon (Glăveanu, 2010a).

Other accounts studying influential factors depart from studies of individuals by focusing on a larger societal context. For example, using a historiometric methodology, Simonton (1975, 1999) addressed how sociocultural, political and economic factors impact creativity. Although sharing a similar methodology with Galton and the He-paradigm, the work of Simonton combined the He-paradigm and the I-paradigm into a We-paradigm through studying history and quantified aspects of the social context (Amabile, 1996). The same feature appears in the systemic model of creativity developed by Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1999). Although its attention is mostly on the Big-C creativity, rather than creativity on a daily basis, this model is essential for the development of the We-paradigm as it recognises the interconnectedness and the relationship between the self and the environment (Glăveanu, 2010b).

Based on the studies pertaining to the social context of creativity, the cross-cultural investigations went a step further in acknowledging the contextual expression of creativity (Glăveanu, 2009). The cross-cultural researchers aimed at clarifying the relationship between culture and creativity by comparing creativity test results between different groups of people. For example, researchers compared children from Japan and China, to children from Western societies, such as the United States, who often performed at a higher level in creative tests and divergent-thinking tasks (Mok & Morris, 2010; Ng, 2001). Researchers found that Western and Eastern societies placed emphases on different aspects of creativity: Western cultures focused on the creative product whereas Eastern cultures focused less on the personal fulfilment of creators and more on creativity as a form of revelation (Westwood & Low, 2003). Thus, the perspective attributing creativity to solely personal factors is far less common in Eastern societies, where creativity is attributed more to social forces (Ludwig, 1995). By and large, these studies indicate that although creativity is valued in almost all cultures, there are major differences in conceptualising creativity in different cultural contexts (Glăveanu, 2010b).

However, the cross-cultural methodology sometimes generates contradictory results in making comparisons between creativity in different cultures. For example, in a US–Hong Kong comparative study using Torrance's Creativity Test, the result illustrated how the Americans scored consistently higher than the Chinese across all age groups and on all three divergent-thinking abilities (Jaquish & Ripple, 1985). However, in another study involving the same cultures using a different variation of Torrance's Test, which asked children to create a figure using a set of circles, the Chinese children scored higher than the children in the US (Rudowicz et al., 1995). One possible explanation for the contradictory results is that experience with Chinese characters could have helped the Chinese children in the specific task in the latter study, but not the former one (Rudowicz, 2004). These results shed doubt on the validity of divergent-thinking tasks, as well as revealing the predominant individualistic Western approach to creativity studies, which prevented researchers from studying the sociocultural nature of the creative process (Montuori & Purser, 1995).

Based on this evidence, the sociocultural researchers argued that discussing creativity cross-culturally without considering the specific cultural context can be misleading in many respects (Glăveanu, 2018). For example, the personal value of openness and self-reliance is believed to be associated with creativity from a Western perspective, whereas people from East Asian societies with characteristics such as interdependence and avoidance of uncertainty formed by Confucian traditions, are more likely to be considered to lack creativity (Ng, 2001). Another example is the culturally different value of tolerance for deviance (Gelfand et al., 2011), which is believed to be positively correlated with creativity. This is because creativity requires originality, but original things are mostly unusual, sometimes even deviant (Plucker et al., 1999). Thus, a culture more tolerant of deviance might encourage creativity. In Western cultures with a salient individualistic norm, societies are more likely to encourage unique and original ideas that distinguish a person from others, whereas Eastern cultures with a collectivist norm require individuals to conform to the group and maintain social harmony (Mok & Morris, 2010; Morris & Leung, 2010). Therefore, people in Eastern societies are not used to sharing their creative performances. This does not necessarily mean that Easterners are less creative than the Westerners, but rather that they are creative in different ways (Glăveanu, 2018).

Summary. Theories of creativity have undergone a series of paradigms. At first, creativity studies focused on clarifying why and how some people displayed a form of genius and made ground-breaking contributions to certain fields, called the He-paradigm. This led researchers to focus on biological and/or personality traits related to the genesis of creativity. Later, when psychologists started to confirm that creativity is something every individual possesses, the I-paradigm became prominent and the study on creativity pertaining to each and every individual, or little-c creativity, prevailed. With the development of social and cultural psychology, the sociocultural context was seen as inseparable from the development of people's creativity. Hence, the We-paradigm evolved where creativity was believed to exist only when individuals were around other individuals. However, even within the We-paradigm, different perspectives and approaches existed. The social psychological perspective of creativity in terms of social factors conditioned individual creative expressions. The cross-cultural perspective compared different populations or

cultures using similar definitions and measurements to see whether and why people living in Western or Eastern cultures were more creative (see Ng, 2001, for example). The sociocultural perspective, on the other hand, sought to develop, in research and in education, a local understanding of creativity based on a specific sociocultural context (Glăveanu & Sierra, 2015). It critiqued the comparison of creativity between cultures and the overall Westernised approach, and asked questions like

> what type of creativity has been actually studied and how? How did the definition and measurement tool respect (or ignore) local understandings and practices? Are we here simply judging all creativity based on Western standards and, if so, what does this do to people living in other cultures? (Glăveanu, 2018, p. 30)

Based on these questions, the sociocultural perspective of creativity repudiates a universalistic claim on definition and models of creativity and promotes the contextual and situated study of creative acts, people, and communities (Glăveanu, 2010a).

The linear organisation of this section does not imply that creativity studies have moved gradually from one paradigm to the next. In fact, all three paradigms have coexisted across history, and they continue to do so today. Each of the paradigms is useful depending on certain contexts (Glăveanu, 2018). This aspect is relevant in the current research project related to the culturally diverse context of Aotearoa New Zealand. Therefore, a sociocultural approach following the We-paradigm is selected. The sociocultural approach, together with the associated distributed creativity framework are further discussed in Chapter 3.

Creativity Assessments

Although researchers have disagreed on many aspects regarding creativity, they do agree on some things, and one is that measuring creativity is hard (Silvia et al., 2012). The different beliefs about creativity shape the assessment tools used to measure creativity (Glăveanu, 2018). The three paradigms have led to different approaches to assess creativity, which can be roughly categorised according to several standards: assessing the creativity of historical figures, the genius, or the everyday individuals; assessing general or domain-specific creativity; creativity assessed by others or the creator themselves. Four approaches regarding these categories are introduced in this section respectively: the historiometric approach, the creativity test, the subjective assessment and the self-report approach. These approaches are not specific to one certain paradigm but are applied flexibly across the field of creativity studies.

The Historiometric Approach. Despite the limitations of the He-paradigm, the method developed by Galton is still widely adopted in current scientific studies of creativity. One assessment tool is the historiometric approach outlined and demonstrated by Simonton (1994) as a useful method to study the personal as well as social factors that influence creativity.

The historiometric approach is a "scientific discipline in which nomothetic hypotheses about human behaviour are tested by applying quantitative analyses to data concerning historical individuals" (Simonton, 1990, p. 3). In this approach, historical data on the lives of eminent individuals are analysed using scientific methodology and statistics (Kaufman, 2001). The database concerning the historic subjects is compiled from

various archival sources, such as histories, biographical dictionaries, encyclopaedias, anthologies, and collections (Simonton, 2011). This approach includes three main components: First, the purpose is to develop general laws on human creativity that go beyond the historical individuals, time and events. Second, the subjects are historical individuals, namely the creative genius. Third, this approach involves the quantification of historical factors into precise and clear numerical measurements on well-defined variables (Simonton, 1999). Differing from the earlier idiosyncratic methodologies of the He-paradigm, the historiometric approach claimed to be nomothetic, which means it aims to unravel general patterns and correlations between factors. Therefore, the sample size must be respectably large.

Historiometry has been around for over 100 years, and it is still the most used method in studying history-making creativity with inferential rigour and quantitative precision (Simonton, 2011). However, the nature of the historiometric approach has limited application in educational research, because children and young people were rarely considered genius on a historical scale. There are two other types of creativity assessment that are commonly used in education: the creativity test, and the subjective creativity assessment.

Creativity Tests. In contrast to the methodology of the historiometric approach, the vast majority of creativity studies rely on experimental techniques, mainly standardised creativity tests, which are usually similar in form and administration to conventional intelligence tests (Amabile, 1982). The psychological study of creativity was first launched by Guilford (1950), who suggested that divergent-thinking factors are the keys to the creative thinking process. Divergent thinking, including "thinking in different directions, sometimes searching, sometimes seeking variety" (Guilford, 1959, p. 470), is believed by psychologists to be one of the key cognitive elements important for creativity (Guilford, 1968; Runco, 1991). There are three divergent-thinking abilities that Guilford (1967) believed to be significant in creativity, namely fluency, flexibility, and originality.

Guilford's study initiated multiple further creativity studies that attempted to test and measure creativity by adapting his divergent-thinking tests (e.g., Christensen et al. 1960; Wallach & Kogan, 1965). The most widely used is the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT; Torrance, 1962, 1974). There are two versions, TTCT-Verbal ("Thinking Creatively with Words") and TTCT-Figural ("Thinking Creatively with Pictures"). Each version has two forms (Form A and Form B) and has been translated into more than 35 languages (Millar, 2002). The TTCT-Verbal consists of five activities: ask and guess, product improvement, unusual uses, unusual questions, and just suppose. For example, one unusual-uses activity asks test-takers to list as many unusual uses as they can think of for a cardboard box. The stimulus for each task includes a picture to which people respond in writing. The TTCT-Figural consists of three activities: picture construction, picture completion, and repeated figures of lines or circles. Each activity requires 10 minutes of completion time. Responses are scored for fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. Fluency is determined by the sheer quantity of responses; flexibility is shown in the number of different categories the responses locate; originality refers to the relative uniqueness of the response to other responses; and elaboration is determined by the details given in the responses (Hickey, 2001). TTCT is the most common measure of creativity used in psychology (Kaufman et al., 2013; Sternberg, 2006), and the most carefully

studied creativity-assessment tool in educational settings around the world (Kaufman et al., 2008). TTCT has also been the prototype for many other tests, as other creativity tests are similar to the TTCT in form, content, administration, or scoring (Guilford, 1967; Wallach & Kogan, 1965).

Decades later, the divergent-thinking tests offered strong evidence of predictive validity, both in correlational experiments (Kim, 2008), and longitudinal studies of creative achievement (Cramond et al., 2005; Runco et al., 2010). Their use is not without criticism, especially about the relationship between divergent thinking and creativity (Kaufman et al., 2008; Plucker & Makel, 2010). One conceptual problem is that creativity tests are not clearly tied to an operational definition of creativity (Amabile, 1982). As introduced in the previous section, most definitions of creativity propose that the general qualities of novelty and appropriateness differentiate creative from uncreative products (e.g., Bruner, 1962; Newell et al., 1962; Stein, 1974). None of the creativity tests were developed to measure novelty or appropriateness. In TTCT, for example, the emphasis is on fluency, one of the key components of the creative process, which is related to neither novelty nor appropriateness (Plucker & Renzulli, 1999). The creativity tests and the studies operate in a definitional void (Amabile, 1982). Although they are supposedly objective in nature, the scoring system of these standardised tests is subject to the judgement of the psychometricians who devised the subtasks or the raters who score them (Amabile, 1982).

Subjective Assessment. Within the experimental category, there is another less common approach, the subjective creativity assessment that provides subjective ratings of the creativity of products or persons (MacKinnon, 1962; Sobel & Rothenberg, 1980). Unlike creativity tests, subjective assessments do not seek to measure individual differences in creativity, but to correlate creativity with social and environmental factors to determine the factors that influence creativity.

In the subjective assessment approach, subjects with special expertise or experience in a certain field or domain are selected as judges to rate the creativity of products created by the participants (Amabile, 1982). The judges are asked to rate the creativity of a product using their own subjective definition and criterion rather than any given objective checklists (Amabile, 1983, 1996), and to compare products to each other instead of an absolute ideal (Reiter-Palmon et al., 2012). For instance, a consensual assessment item for rating the creativity of a painting might read: "On a scale of 1 to 5, and using your own subjective definition of creativity, rate the degree to which the painting is creative" (Hickey, 2001, p. 235). Different items can be used to judge different subdimensions of creativity. For example, Brinkman (1999) used a three-item (originality, craftsmanship, and aesthetic value) form of consensual assessment technique to rate high school instrumental students' melodies. Subjective creativity measurements can be used to measure all kinds of creative products, from artistic ones such as dramatic performance (Myford, 1989), poetry (Kaufman et al., 2008), and music composition (Hickey, 2001), to scientific questions and mathematical problems (Baer, 1997; Kaufman et al., 2010).

There are several advantages of using subjective ways to assess creativity. First, the assessment is meant to measure the creativity of certain real-life products, which is more realistic than tasks developed by

psychometricians. Second, the judging criteria such as originality and appropriateness used in the subjective assessment are based on the definition of creativity, which gives it a solid theoretical base (Amabile, 1982).

Questions also arise about the subjectivity of this assessment approach, particularly around the selection of judges or raters. Who are the most appropriate judges for a certain creativity product, for example, children's painting? Are professional painters, teachers, or visual arts university students appropriate to rate children's art works? The research findings regarding these questions are still controversial. The biggest downside that limits the application of subjective assessment is the time needed for the measurement to take place. Choosing the appropriate task and selecting the judges can be extremely time consuming, as can the judging process and the statistical data analyses (Hennessey et al., 2011).

Self-Report Approach. One approach that involves extreme subjectivity is rating a person's creativity by self-reporting. Self-report assessments use checklists of achievements in science, art, literature, and music to ask the participants to report their interests or actual achievements in creative activities as indicators of creativity with some success (Reiter-Palmon et al., 2012). The first self-report assessment was developed by Torrance (1962). In this scale he presented students with a list of 100 creative activities and asked them to "include only the things you have done on your own, not the things you have been assigned or made to do" (p. 251). Building on Torrance's work, Hocevar (1979) developed the Creative Behavior Inventory (CBI) with 90 items categorised into six subscales: creativity in the fine arts, crafts, literature, music, performing arts, and maths/science. Typically, respondents indicate whether the participants have won awards in science fairs; have exhibited or performed works of art; have had poems, stories or articles published; or have had roles or leads in plays. The total creativity score is based on the number of activities checked or listed, or the reported frequency of each activity (O'Quin & Besemer, 2011). With no indication of how truthful the respondents are in their self-reports, the self-report scales were found to be correlated with other creativity assessments, such as the consensual assessment (Dollinger, 2007), and the divergent-thinking tests (Silvia & Kimbrel, 2010). Research using self-report scales supports the domain specificity of creativity, because when individuals are asked to rate their creativity across various domains, the levels of creativity they report in the various domains tend to be moderately correlated (Baer, 2011).

The advantage of the self-report approach compared to the subjective assessment is that self-reporting is very easy and quick to finish and avoids the time and expense of finding and training raters. There are also limitations because the use of self-report measures is based on two assumptions: the participants need to be aware of what creativity is; and the participants need to be willing to report accurately (Bing et al., 2007). Concerns about score distortion due to levels of honesty and social desirability have been raised with many self-report approaches (Heidemeier & Moser, 2009).

Summary. Researchers using different paradigms to study creativity apply diverse assessment approaches. The historiometric approach assesses big-C Creativity, or the historical genius. It quantifies the historical factors around the genius and uses statistical methods to generate patterns or laws around their creativity. The creativity tests, as the most widely used creativity assessment on little-c creativity, use

standardised cognitive performance tasks to test an individual's divergent-thinking ability, namely cognitive fluency, originality, and flexibility. The subjective assessment focuses on actual creativity products, recruiting judges from a certain professional field to rate creative products or persons using subjective criteria. The self-report assessment is different from all three approaches above, because the individuals are not assessed or judged by others but are self-assessed and reported.

From a sociocultural perspective, the methodology of creativity assessment needs to look at what people actually do when they create in real time in a certain cultural context, rather than their general performance on standardised tasks (Glăveanu, 2018). Ideally, creativity assessment techniques could be used not only to evaluate, but also to foster creativity. One example is the improvised assessment and collaboration between jazz and theatre (Sawyer, 2000). These techniques require interaction between people and within material performances, rather than focusing on developing the thinking of isolated individuals. It is in line with the notion of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) of scaffolding each other's creativity development through collaboration and resources of a shared culture (Vygotsky, 1987).

Creativity Studies in Early Childhood Education

Although it has been recognised that the early years, especially between 4 and 6 years of age, are the prime time for children's creativity to develop (H. Gardner, 1982), research about young children's creativity is still limited (Leggett, 2017). Among the relatively small number of creativity studies in the ECE field, most research has focused on the influential factors of creativity, and how to detect and foster children's creativity both at home and in early educational settings.

Children's creative potential and ability are influenced by their dispositions. Children's age and gender, for example, are widely believed to be related to their performance in creativity assessments. In general, older children (aged 5 or 6) obtain higher scores in divergent-thinking tests than that of the 3- and 4-year-olds (Diener et al., 2016; Prieto et al., 2006; Vong et al., 2020). Boys are believed to be more creative than girls under various conditions (Ai, 1999; Baer, 1997; Lau & Cheung, 2010). There are also researchers who have argued for a different analytical perspective. Studies using domain-specific creativity inventory assessment, instead of creativity tests, showed that the creative potential of boys and girls is equally sensitive to the nature of the domains they are exposed to (Furnham & Buchanan, 2005). Children with different temperaments perform differently in creativity assessments. Children high on self-assertion and low on compliance demonstrate more creative potentials (Wang & Dong, 2019). Other positive temperaments, such as low distractibility and high adaptability, high self-esteem and low shyness, are also related to creativity (Bomba & Moran, 1988; Kemple et al., 1996). Creativity can also be influenced by emotions and moods in play (Russ & Kaugars, 2001; Yeh & Li, 2008).

The environmental factors in early childhood settings, including physical settings, pedagogical environments such as the teacher's role, and peer social interactions, can generate implicit and explicit messages that impact creativity (Apps & MacDonald, 2012). For example, physical education programmes have proven to be effective in promoting children's creativity (Zachopoulou et al., 2006). The teacher's role, on the other

hand, is more complex in promoting creativity. Teachers' personality traits are believed to have significant influence on children's creativity. Preservice and in-service teachers with higher scores for openness in personality assessments have advanced beliefs about teaching practices to support creativity (Lee & Kemple, 2014), and are more likely to engage in creativity-enhancing behaviours and pedagogies (Cheung & Mok, 2018). Other research has focused on teachers' implicit perceptions and beliefs about creativity-related issues, which reflect and influence their pedagogy (Cropley, 1997; Konstantinidou et al., 2014; Runco, 2004). The teachers' beliefs about creative students develop based on their own individual experiences and interpretations, which are referred to as implicit theories compared with the explicit theory formulated by researchers (Runco & Johnson, 2002). Teachers' implicit creativity theories can be limited, biased, or in conflict with scientific research outcomes (Saracho, 2012), but at the same time can help researchers teach individuals to understand and value styles of creativity that are remote from a particular situation, culture, or era (De Sousa, 2008). As previous research has suggested, both preservice and in-service teachers believe in and value the creative thinking abilities of young children (Ucus & Acar, 2019). There are still obstacles and concerns teachers face in fostering children's creativity. For preservice ECE teachers, the most stated inadequacies related to creativity are lack of understanding and knowledge and experiences (Ata-Akturk & Sevimli-Celik, 2020; Cheung & Leung, 2013; Eckhoff, 2011). For in-service teachers, the barriers include the pressure of parents' outcome expectations, school boards' focus on end products, and strict rules (Alkuş, & Olgan, 2014; Ata-Akturk & Sevimli-Celik, 2020).

From the brief review above, research about creativity in ECE involves only adults' perspectives such as teachers and parents, while young children's participation is ignored or marginalised (Blaisdell et al., 2019). This may be because they are viewed as too innocent and/or immature to participate meaningfully (MacNaughton et al., 2007). The influential factors in the environment are mostly treated as external factors independently affecting children's creativity. From a sociocultural perspective, creativity cannot be separated from the context in which it takes place.

Section 2: Dramatic Play: Definition and Research

The second key concept explored in this research is dramatic play. Dramatic play was chosen as a manifestation of young children's creativity from both theoretical and methodological perspectives. In this section, the definition of dramatic play, its characteristics, influence on children's learning and development and, specifically, the influence on creativity, are reviewed. Before conceptualising dramatic play, the definition and function of the umbrella term *play* are also provided.

Definition of Dramatic Play

The definitions of play are embedded in the particular theories (Sherrod & Singer, 1989). Cognitive psychologists such as Piaget (1962) defined play as activities that assimilate the external world with the children's internal world. Sociocultural researchers such as Vygotsky (1977) considered play as a behaviour that serves an adaptive function of coping with the frustration of daily life. More recent scholars developed specific criteria to distinguish play from other developmental behaviours. For example, there are four

components in Krasnor and Pepler's (1980) play model: non-literality, positive effect, intrinsic motivation, and flexibility. Young children's play is symbolic, meaningful, active, pleasurable, voluntary and intrinsically motivated, as well as rule-governed and episodic (Russ et al., 2011). It serves as "a foil to parry with the various theoretical perspectives" (Fromberg, 1999, p. 28). Play is an activity that is not limited to childhood. In a scholarly view of educational research, Sutton-Smith (2001) described many different forms of play and play contexts that are embedded across the lifespan, such as carnivals and circuses, extreme sports such as bungee jumping, theatrical performances, and mind play.

Dramatic play is one category of play that involves the pretend use of ideas or objects. According to Piaget (1962), dramatic play belongs to the third stage in children's play development: from practice play (sensorimotor play), to constructive play (added by Smilansky, 1990, as a fourth category because of its dominance in early childhood), to dramatic play (or imaginative, pretend, or fantasy play) and games with rules. As detailed by Piaget (1962), dramatic play involves several processes: projecting symbolic actions onto new objects, identification of one object with another, and symbolic combinations (Silverman, 2016). In this categorisation of dramatic play, children take a role and enter a world they create. The role could be either an object in a small world (microdramatic play) or pretending to be someone/something else (macrodramatic play).

The most widely used definition of dramatic play is symbolic behaviour involving fantasy, make-believe, and the playful use of one object "as if it were something else" (Fein, 1987, p. 282). Dramatic play involves "pretending to be someone else, role taking, imitating a person's speech actions and patterns, using real and imagined props, using first- and second-hand experience and knowledge of characters and situations" (Wood, 2014, p. 27). For example, a child might pretend that a triangular block is a car. Vygotsky (1978) suggested that two elements distinguish dramatic play from other childhood activities: first, an imaginary situation helps children separate mental representations from real objects and events; second, dramatic play is actually rule-based play since children continuously devise and follow social rules in pretence.

Characterised by the use of pretence and fantasy, this kind of children's play was also called, by various researchers, fantasy, thematic-fantasy, make-believe, pretend, imaginative, or sociodramatic play (Whitebread & O'Sullivan, 2012). Although these terms reflect slightly different values or foci, they tend to be used interchangeably (Hutt et al., 1989). Among all the terms, dramatic play is believed to have a better coverage, as it emphasises a close relationship between play in childhood and drama as an art form in adult life (Eisner, 1990). In dramatic play, children adopt a range of elements in drama and theatre, including role play, voice, tones with expressive phonology, expressive gestures and dramatisation (Sutton-Smith & Magee, 1989). Thus, dramatic play is adopted to refer to children's pretend activities and play in this thesis.

Characteristics of Dramatic Play

Dramatic play emerges at the age of 2 and peaks during preschool years (Singer & Singer, 1990). Before the age of 2, children tend to engage in functional and exploratory play that links to the real world and tangible objects (Piaget, 1962). By 12 months of age, children may already show evidence of symbolic or dramatic

play behaviour, such as drinking from an empty cup or pretending to sleep (Piaget, 1962). At the age of 3 or 4, when children begin to distinguish reality from appearance, play starts to shift from functional to symbolic or dramatic play, with nonliteral use of objects or objects that are not present in reality (Flavell et al., 1987). The time children engage in dramatic play increases significantly between 1 and 4 years of age (Haight & Miller, 1993). Initially, dramatic play is directed internally and is solitary (e.g., the child places a play cell phone to her ear) (Fein, 1981) and there is a similarity between a play object and its dramatic play function (e.g., using a toy hammer to hit a wooden peg board) (Jent et al., 2011). As play continues to develop, children start to incorporate toys that represent animate objects in their play (e.g., taking one's toy dog for a walk) and play begins to be symbolic in nature (B. P. Gardner & Bergen, 2006). When children grow older, their dramatic play becomes increasingly social, as positive social interactions between children during dramatic play such as laughing, verbalisation, smiling, sharing, and eye contact increase between 20 and 24 months (B. P. Gardner & Bergen, 2006). During the early childhood stage, dramatic play is parallel rather than interactive (Jent et al., 2011); and the characteristic progression of children's dramatic play varies based on individual differences (Morelock et al., 2003; Morrissey, 2014).

Dramatic play flourishes when children have at least five cognitive abilities (Sherrod & Singer, 1989): 1) the ability to form images; 2) the skills in storing and retrieving the images already formed; 3) the quantity and quality of storage of images; 4) the skills in recombining, integrating, and employing images and distinguishing them from reality; and 5) the reinforcement of the cognitive process above.

There are five criteria to define children's dramatic play (Fein, 1981; Kaugars, 2011; Singer & Singer, 1990). First, a child may perform a familiar activity in dramatic play without necessary material or social context. Second, the activities performed may not reach their logical outcomes. Third, a child may treat an inanimate object as animate. Fourth, a child may substitute one object or gesture for another. Fifth, a child may carry out an activity not typically expected of a child.

Dramatic Play and Development

Play has long been regarded as the window into and a contributing force to the literacy, cognitive, emotional, and social development of children (Singer & Singer, 1990). According to Piaget (1962), dramatic play allows children to assimilate new experiences into their existing knowledge schemes by using internal representation and symbolism, thus they can develop a sense of understanding and mastery. Vygotsky (1978b) regarded dramatic play as a form of behaviour liberating children from the constraints and limitations of their experiences and abilities within that reality in which a child can "become taller than himself" (p. 102).

In more recent studies, play is considered a primary action of learning for young children (Smidt, 2015). Play is where children's development starts, including the development of narrative understanding and expression (Gajdamaschko, 2006; Nicolopoulou et al., 2006), the development of self-regulation (Berk et al., 2006) and imagination (Vadeboncoeur et al., 2016). Dramatic play, in particular, is considered related to cognitive,

social, and emotional developmental outcomes, such as creativity, problem solving, emotional regulation, and general adjustment (Fehr, 2014; Hurwitz, 2002; Russ, 2004).

The effect of dramatic play on cognitive development has been validated. On one hand, dramatic play provides the most effective context to stimulate a young child's cognitive development because symbols are used in communicating meaning to other players (Berk & Winsler, 1995). On the other hand, the process of dramatic play displays metacognitive features, a higher level of cognitive ability (Göncü et al., 2002). Dias and Harris (1988) used syllogism to test 4-, 5- and 6-year-old children's deductive reasoning, and found out that children's answers were more accurate with question presentation within a make-believe context than in a verbal mode of asking questions. Athey (1988) stated that dramatic play contributes to a wide range of cognitive processes, such as association, hypothesis testing, generation, and abstraction.

Dramatic play also assists young children's social and emotional development. In dramatic play, children demonstrate perceptions of themselves and others (Fein, 1984), their senses of goodness and badness, their own feelings and those of others (Hartley et al., 1952), and develop cooperative reciprocal relationships and prosocial behaviours (Kagan, 1990). In general, high-level dramatic play produces documented cognitive, social, and emotional benefits (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). It is related to children's performance in perspective-taking tasks (Astington & Jenkins, 1995) and the quality of fantasy in their dramatic play is related to self-reported empathy in children (Niec & Russ, 2002).

Dramatic Play and Creativity

The creativity young children possess often rises to the surface in free play (Hopkins, 1995). Therefore, "any approach to language and thought that eliminates dramatic play…ignores the greatest incentive of the creative process" (Paley, 1991, p. 6). There are reliable studies that support dramatic play as facilitating the development of imagination and creativity (Dansky, 1986; Russ, 2004). For example, Sawyer (1997) conceptualised children's pretend play as improvised, which is a critical part of adult creativity. Saracho (2002) suggested that dramatic play is a domain through which creative expression is encouraged. However, no conclusion that dramatic play would inevitably lead to creativity could be made (Lillard et al., 2013).

The key to grasping most of the previous studies linking creativity with dramatic play is the study of divergent thinking, the core competence serving creativity in the I-paradigm approaches. Divergent thinking refers to the ability to generate as many diverse responses to one open-ended question that goes in many different directions (Guilford, 1950, 1968). The connection between creativity and dramatic play is manifested in several ways: (1) acting out roles of various characters and taking the perspectives of different roles, (2) applying different solutions to the challenging situations in play, or (3) using a wide range of play props to represent different things (Chylińska & Gut, 2020). In an early study, Li (1978) found that children engaging in adult-directed make-believe group play performed better in tasks of naming diverse uses of a novel object, which is a typical way to test divergent-thinking ability. Pepler and Ross (1981) got a similar result with an experiment in a kindergarten. They arranged the participant children into three different groups. The experimental group was asked to play freely with blocks, the other group with problem-solving

games like puzzles, and the control group reading books with the experimenters. The result indicated that children from the free-play group performed better than the other two groups in divergent tasks and used more divergent solving methods after playing. Dansky (1980) also found that preschool children provided with a play period prior to the task were able to identify more uses of the objects than children without a play period. A more recent study found that dramatic play in early childhood could even predict divergent thinking over a 4-year period (Wallace, 2013), which is consistent with the research findings of Russ et al. (1999), and Hoffmann and Russ (2012).

Besides divergent thinking, there are other ways of linking creativity with dramatic play. Experiencing affect and emotions is believed to be of great value for creativity (Baas et al., 2008). By giving children opportunities to experience and express emotions, dramatic play can lead to higher levels of creativity. The relationship between dramatic play and creativity originates from Russ's (1993) integrated model of cognitive and affective processes of play. According to Russ (2003), dramatic play involves the use of fantasy and symbolism that fosters the development of cognitive and affective processes, which are important in creative acts. Russ (2014) postulated 10 processes involved in creativity as well as in dramatic play. Some of these cognitive processes include divergent thinking, broad associations, and cognitive flexibility. Others are affective processes such as emotional expression, joy in pretending, and affect themes and symbols. This model, which assists understanding of the relationship between creativity and dramatic play, is detailed in Chapter 4.

A new approach to connecting creativity and dramatic play focuses on children's exploratory actions in play. According to the GenePlore model of creative processes (Finke et al., 1992), creativity consists of two processes: the generation of ideas (Gene), and the subsequent exploration, development, and modifications of these ideas (Plore). Since children in dramatic play are sensitive to the others, and are able to use objects and adjust their behaviours to the ongoing happenings around them, the creative process of exploration is clearly manifested in children's dramatic play (Harris, 2000). Dramatic play is itself creative, and children's pretend performances in dramatic play can be viewed as genuine manifestations of their creativity (Chylińska & Gut, 2020). Given that dramatic play is a creative action, an evaluation of dramatic play can be used as an indirect measure of creative ability (Saracho, 1992).

Section 3: Diverse Experience

Diverse experience is the third key concept explored in this study. Researchers have long believed that educational contexts play a crucial role in children's social, cognitive and emotional development (Hebert, 1998). In a country with high ethnic and demographic diversity like Aotearoa New Zealand, the influence of diverse experiences needs to be central in research about children's creativity.

In this study, the concept of experience is seen as physical action and the consequences of that action, combined with the judgment of the consequences of that action (motivations) (Dewey, 1916). According to Dewey, diversity is an important aspect of a true educational experience, because it is the disturbed equilibrium in an individual's experience that drives exploration of new ideas, which leads to creative

processes. Vygotsky also posits diversity of experiences as the centre of creativity, because "the richer a person's experience, the richer is the material his imagination has access to. All else being equal, the more a child sees, hears, and experiences, the more he knows and assimilates, the more elements of reality he will have in his experience, and the more productive will be the operation of his imagination" (Vygotsky, 2004, *pp.* 14-15).

The diverse experience referred to in my study is a term I use to define a broad and holistic concept. From a social perspective, there are a variety of social factors that either singly or interactively influence an individual's behaviour (De Melendez & Beck, 2013). Some of these key social factors are nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, and age. These factors all contribute to the experiences of individuals. For young children, their access to diverse experiences come from various sources: home and community; early childhood centres; and at a broader level, travelling, which could provide direct experiences, and social and mass media which provide indirect experiences.

Figure 1

Sources of diverse experiences
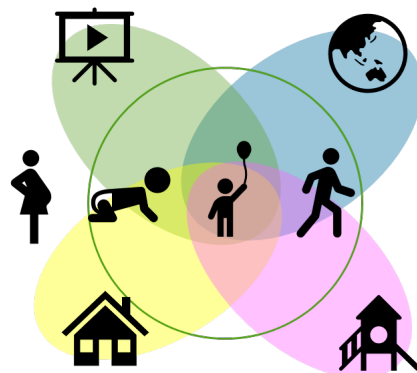
While diverse experiences have always been present in just about all societies, their impact on teaching and learning has not always been acknowledged or understood (Smyth, 2014). In early childhood services, despite the consensus in law and policy, there are concerns about whether and how to respect diverse experiences in practice (Ebbeck & Prasad, 2000; Sims & Hutchins, 2001). An exploratory study conducted in Australia found that many early childhood teachers were experiencing a mismatch between social expectations that teachers should encourage children to increase their diverse experiences, and teachers' practice (MacNaughton & Hughes, 2007).

Diverse Experiences in New Zealand's ECE Settings

As defined in the previous section, diverse experience is not one singular concept and non-dimensional. It is a complex compound with multiple dimensions intertwining with the reality of children, young people, and their families engaged in education today (Green & Cherrington, 2010). Typically, discussion about the New Zealand ECE sector focuses on its diverse services (Cherrington & Shuker, 2012). As illustrated in Chapter 1, the New Zealand ECE sector is recognised for the numerous services available, including kindergartens, Playcentre, education and care centres, and Kōhanga Reo (Shuker & Cherrington, 2016). Children attending

EC services are from diverse backgrounds. As Aotearoa New Zealand is becoming one of the few culturally and linguistically superdiverse countries in the world (Royal Society of New Zealand, 2013), ECE services show significant increases in enrolments for children from Asian (61.3%), Pasifika (32%) and Māori (26.5%) ethnicities (Chan & Ritchie, 2020). Similarly, increased representation of children from immigrant and refugee families, single-parent, two-parent, gay- and lesbian-parent families, and extended families, is also evident in national demographic data (Rosewarne & Shuker, 2010).

In contrast to the diverse experiences of children and families attending ECE centres, diverse experiences amongst ECE educators highlights a different set of issues. There is a well-recognised lack of diversity amongst ECE practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand, such as the gender imbalance (Farquhar, 2008). Less obvious issues include limited international experience, with nearly three quarters of practitioners second- or third-generation New Zealanders, with only 40% having experienced living overseas (Cherrington & Shuker, 2012). Languages other than English and Māori are found to have relatively low use, disproportionate to the numbers of practitioners of either Pasifika or Asian origins (Cherrington & Shuker, 2012). These findings suggested that dealing with issues regarding diverse experiences in New Zealand ECE settings is challenging.

An important role of teachers is to develop responsive and reciprocal teacher–parent communication and teacher–student relationships (Cornelius-White, 2007). Teachers with a monocultural background from the dominant culture may fail to understand the rich knowledge brought by children from minority groups from their participation in the cultural activities of their families (Simon, 1990). In *Te Whāriki,* Family and Community – Whānau Tangata is one of the four foundational principles in order to promote family participation and partnership between teachers and parents (MoE, 1996, 2017). In early childhood centres in Auckland, finding ways for teachers to act with cultural efficacy is an especially important aspect of supporting children and families with diverse backgrounds (Hedges & Lee, 2010). To honour the diverse experiences of each child, instead of retreating into habitual practices of "treating all children the same" (Chan & Ritchie, 2016, p. 300), teachers are challenged to interrogate their practices in proactively generating genuine and dialogical relationships with parents from all participating families, especially those from diverse backgrounds.

Another important approach to address the learning needs of children from diverse background is teachers' attitudes and beliefs. Teacher beliefs are well demonstrated in the literature as a powerful basis of teacher decision making and action (Pajares, 1992; Raths, 2001). Teacher beliefs play a determining role on practices and the engagement they undertake with families when building a partnership with underrepresented groups (Hedges & Lee, 2010). Also, through daily discourses that teachers make available, and those that they silence, teachers can have an influence on children's awareness of differences (K. H. Robinson, 2002). In Aotearoa New Zealand, educators' attitudes towards diverse experience influence whether they perceive working with diverse children and families positively or as a challenge (Shuker & Cherrington, 2016). Differences in educators' perceptions could shape their curriculum practices and, in turn, their relationships with children and families (Loveridge et al., 2012).

The importance of addressing children's diverse learning needs is also highlighted in *Te Whāriki.* The reality of adapting to a diverse environment, as well as incorporating diverse experiences into everyday pedagogical practices, is still challenging for practitioners in New Zealand EC services.

Diverse Experiences and Creativity

When confronting the existential threats and benefits of globalisation, the study of creativity together with diverse experience is challenging (Duffy, 2006). Many studies have supported the idea that diverse experiences enhance individual creativity (Gocłowska & Crisp, 2014; Steffens et al., 2016). For instance, children raised in families where their parents' cultural backgrounds are different from each other have been found to show more creativity than children from less culturally differentiated families (Chang et al., 2015). Research with MBA students in the USA found that time abroad had a positive influence on individuals' performance in creative solution tasks (Maddux & Galinsky, 2009). Further studies found that three dimensions of foreign professional experiences, namely breadth, depth, and cultural distance (the difference between the original culture and the foreign culture), predicted the creativity rating of film directors' innovations (Godart et al., 2015). More evidence comes from an empirical study on expatriate Australians and New Zealanders living in Asia, Africa, or the Pacific. Their performances on overall creativity and thinking flexibility tests 12 months after departure showed a significant increase compared to their performance before departure (Fee & Gray, 2012).

Other research has found that diverse identities developed from diverse experiences foster individual creativity. Among individuals living abroad, those who identify with both their home culture and host culture (i.e., bicultural) tend to have more fluency, flexibility, and novelty on a creative task, and are innovative at work (Tadmor et al., 2012). Similar research conducted by the same research group later found that multicultural engagement, i.e., the extent to which MBA students adapt to and learn from a new culture, helps open their minds, which, in turn, predicts their job market success (Maddux et al., 2014). Another example is diverse racial identities. A recent research project found that priming individuals with their own multiracial identities (by asking the participants to write about their multiracial living experiences) can induce creativity (Gaither et al., 2015). Finally, ethnic bilingual individuals (e.g., Russian/English speakers) were found to score higher than monolinguals in creativity tests (Gocłowska & Crisp, 2014). A similar result was found in ECE, where in a Hebrew monolingual kindergarten, children with balanced bilingualism performed better in creativity tasks and assessments (Leikin & Tovli, 2014).

Personal backgrounds, especially diverse demographic backgrounds, can also influence creativity. Gender heterogeneity and diverse nationalities are believed to have positive effects on group creativity (Schruijer & Mostert, 1997) and creativity in collaborative learning (Pluut & Curşeu, 2013). A team of people with diverse ages, genders, and nationalities, is beneficial for team creativity (Curşeu, 2010; Nieuwboer & Stol, 2005). Last but not least, the relationship between creativity and diverse experience might not be one-way. A recent study (Groyecka et al., 2020) showed that by engaging in creative experiences, school children showed more openness towards other people from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds, and an increase in their intercultural sensitivities. This indicates that the positive link between diverse experiences and

creativity could be reciprocal, meaning that fostering creative abilities might make people more receptive to others from diverse backgrounds and welcome and embrace diverse experiences.

In reality, children from immigrant backgrounds or minority groups are more likely to be disadvantaged in creativity education, since teachers and adults do not equitably recognise immigrant and minority children's creativity. One study showed that 4- and 5- year-old children from migrant families in Germany scored significantly lower on creativity tests than the German children (von Steinbüchel et al., 2018). Even when there is no significant difference between ethnic groups, the teachers' rating of the play experiences of children of colour was associated with more negative ratings of being prepared for school, less peer acceptance, and more teacher–child conflict than those children who were White (Yates & Marcelo, 2014).

Although having diverse experience is believed to have a positive influence on an individual's creativity, the relationship between diverse experience and young children's creativity is still controversial. Therefore, in this research, one of the aims is to untangle the intertwined relationship and investigate the impact of diverse experiences on young children's creativity, and in turn create an environment to support creativity, particularly for children, and their families, from diverse backgrounds.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced literature about definitions, theories, research findings and relationships pertaining to the concepts of creativity, dramatic play and diverse experiences. The key concept of creativity was introduced in Section 1. Creativity is considered such a complex concept that an established, precise, and universally accepted definition does not exist (Prentice, 2000). To study young children's creativity within a certain context, this thesis adopts a broad sociocultural definition referring to creativity as any activity that results in the creation of new images or actions (Vygotsky, 2004). This definition leads to corresponding theories and assessments of creativity from a sociocultural perspective, which is different from historical or widely accepted testing approaches. Although studies on creativity are abundant, the number of research studies on young children's creativity is still limited (Leggett, 2017). Most of the literature about young children's creativity has drawn from adults' perspectives, exploring the influence of teachers' and parents' attitudes and characteristics on children's creative behaviours. Additionally, most research has assessed young children's creativity using divergent-thinking tasks and creativity tests, leading to a lack of systematic evaluation of young children's creativity within certain sociocultural contexts.

Section 2 introduced the notion of dramatic play. Dramatic play can be found wherever young children are (Phelps, 1984). The term refers to a symbolic behaviour involving fantasy, make-believe, and the playful use of one object as if it were something else (Fein, 1987). Engaging in dramatic play offers a range of positive influences for children's development. The symbolic nature of dramatic play is a natural vehicle for children to express their creativity. Thus, I chose to observe children's dramatic play as evidence of their creativity in my study.

The last key concept introduced in this chapter is diverse experience. Diverse experience is referred to as the richness and variety of a child's lived experiences in his/her whole life, because the sociocultural perspective

I adopt suggests that all human behaviours are generated within a certain social and cultural context. This study takes part in the diverse sociocultural environment of Aotearoa New Zealand. Section 3 is organised around the issues regarding diverse experience from different dimensions in New Zealand ECE settings, as well as the influence of diverse experience evident in previous literature about creativity. A sociocultural framework of distributed creativity is selected as the theoretical framework guiding this research. This framework is introduced in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework selected for this study. After reviewing the context-specific literature and drawing from my own stance and orientation as a researcher presented in Chapter 1, I chose to apply a sociocultural-psychological theoretical framework of distributed creativity to guide the research design, data collection, and interpretation. Based on a sociocultural approach but further extended to suit researching with young children, this framework aligns with the research questions and the ECE context. This chapter begins with an overview of the distributed creativity theory, connection it to and distinction it from other theories of creativity elements, basic principles, and structures. Next, the theory is considered from a diverse global perspective by summarising the application in different fields. The chapter concludes with the applicability of this theory in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Section 1: Distributed Creativity Framework

This section introduces the distributed creativity framework. First, it presents the origins of this model in the theoretical spectrum of creativity studies. Next, it describes the structure of creativity consisting of the Five As: actor, audience, action, artefacts and affordance. The basic principles of this model guiding the application of the theory follow. To conclude, it provides a comprehensive description of the three lines along which the creativity distributed.

Theoretical Basis

As indicated in Chapter 2, one dilemma in research about creativity is the dichotomy that exists between the two dominant perspectives in the field (Boden, 2004), what Arieti (1976) referred to as the "individual-psychological versus the sociocultural origin of creativity" (p. 303). Researchers using the individual-psychological perspective view creative individuals as somewhat independent of the context – as somehow inherently different from other individuals (H. Gardner, 1989; Guilford, 1959; Obler & Fein, 1988). It is largely because modern approaches to research about creativity started from and were based on Guilford's (1950, 1959, 1967) theoretical contribution of identifying divergent thinking as the core cognitive ability in creativity. Guilford was an expert in studying human cognition and intelligence. Although he claimed that divergent thinking was something different from what intelligence tests measured, he still viewed creativity under a similar assumption of human intelligence – that is, as a complex web of personal traits and cognitive processes independent from situational factors. In this sense, creativity was viewed more as individual differences. The sociocultural perspective, on the other hand, emphasised the broader social and cultural changes in the environment that afforded or constrained creativity (Amabile, 1996; Matuga, 2004). Thus, the sociocultural researchers examining creativity took a more holistic and systemic standpoint (Purser & Montuori, 2000). They believed that "creativity takes place within, is constituted and influenced by, and has consequences for, a social context" (Westwood & Low, 2003, p. 236).

In the debate pertaining to the individual-psychological and sociocultural accounts of creativity, both extremes have proven to be unproductive (Simonton, 2003). Based on a thorough study of both perspectives, Glăveanu (2010a) developed a sociocultural-psychological approach to study creativity, in which he argued

that these two seemingly opposing perspectives were not isolated but "elements that co-constitute each other" (p. 84). The theory is well-founded and has further developed sociocultural theories, such as notions of artefacts (Cole, 1996), the symbolic nature of social exchange and learning (Vygotsky, 1967), and a social and systemic model of creativity (Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Concomitantly, this approach has extended the application of sociocultural theories into wider educational fields.

As one of the theoretical bases of this framework, Csikszentmihalyi's (1988) systemic model provides a sociocultural way to define social roles within the process of creativity. The systemic model consists of three interrelated factors: 1) the field, made up of experts and what he called gatekeepers, who select from what the individual produces and judge the outcomes worth preserving; 2) the domain, or the culture that the creative outcomes come from and contribute to; and 3) the individual who brings about change within the cultural domain and who is validated as creative. By continuous interactions between these three factors, creativity becomes possible (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999).

The systemic beliefs are intrinsic to the distributed creativity framework in which actors create in relation to audiences and they are both embedded within culture (Glăveanu, 2014a). Glăveanu did not agree entirely with the systemic model, however, or at least in its ultimate form, where the denial of children's creativity was premised on there being no field or domain to judge children's artistic performances (Sawyer et al., 2003). When talking about young children's creativity, experts or gatekeepers are instead actors, be it co-players or adults, who identify possible new artefacts in children's performances, interpret and use them. Therefore, social recognition of young children's creativity requires their expressions in the creative process to be honoured rather than the quality of the creative products being assessed by art critics (Glăveanu, 2014a). The creative value generated in children's performances is not determined by the teachers or researchers, but remains negotiated at the more microlevels of social interaction among the performers, which is evident in the findings chapter.

Structure of Creativity: The Five As

Based on the theoretical exploration of the literature about creativity, Glăveanu (2011a) went one step further to refine his definition of creativity as a phenomenon, by readapting the canonical four Ps construct of creativity: product, process, person and press (Rhodes, 1961). These four distinct strands, described in Chapter 2 as the basic construct of creativity, were recognised by Runco (2004) as "probably the most often-used structure for creativity studies" (p. 661). A multitude of existing literature has used the four Ps of creativity to structure their literature reviews (Cropley & Cropley, 2009; Tegano et al., 1991). A limitation of this framework is the strict separation of the four elements and oversimplification of the creative activity (Barron, 1995). In order to shift the research focus from the elements themselves to the dynamics of the elements (S. Moran, 2009), Glăveanu (2013) reconfigured the four Ps framework into a five As framework: person becomes actor, process becomes action, product becomes artefact, and press is divided into two forms – audience refers to the social press and affordances refers to the material press (see Table 1).

Table 1

Comparing the Four Ps and the Five As Frameworks

The four Ps of creativity			The five As of creativity
focus on:			*focus on:*
Internal attributes of the person	Person ⟶	Actor	Personal attributes in relation to a societal context
Primarily cognitive mechanisms	Process ⟶	Action	Coordinated psychological and behavioural manifestation
Features of products or consensus around them	Product ⟶	Artefact	Cultural context of artefact production and evaluation
The social as an external set of variables conditioning creativity	Press ⟶	Audience Affordance	The interdependence between creators and a social and material world

Note. This table is adapted from "Rewriting the Language of Creativity: The Five As Framework," by V. P. Glăveanu, 2013, *Review of General Psychology, 17*(1), p. 71. Copyright 2012 by the American Psychological Association.

The five As framework not only indicates the change of language so that the description of creativity elements fit the sociocultural approach, but also emphasises the interdependence between the five elements. Actors need the audiences to exist, and actions result in artefacts and utilise environmental affordances. Another factor distinguishing the five As framework from the four Ps is the separation of social press and material press into audience and affordances. As such, Glăveanu (2013) acknowledged that creativity was not only a psychological process, but also a form of interaction deeply embedded in the material world, and that material objects both constrain and allow creative actions.

The five As framework of creativity relates to notions from previous social, cultural, psychological and educational studies of creativity, yet it conveys more meanings and integrates into a comprehensive system. For all five elements, the actor is the creative person or the performer of creativity, and the action is the actual behaviour that leads to certain creative performances or products. These are the common elements existing across most of the creativity structures. The other three elements, the audience, affordances and artefacts, are further explained as follows.

     Audience. Audience is something unique to the sociocultural paradigm of creativity studies, reflecting the social nature of creativity. Unlike the traditional understanding of creativity occurring within the creator's mind, sociocultural researchers placed creativity in the relational space created by the person's encounter with the social environment (Glăveanu, 2014b). This sociocultural element links with Kaupapa Māori as a relational theory/practice. Csikszentmihalyi (1988) referred to the relativity of creativity as guided by a gatekeeper, who selects and judges the outcomes of creativeness. The difference in Glăveanu's model is that the audience does not need to judge if the product is creative, but rather becomes part of the environment in which the actor performs creatively by socially interacting with the audience (Glăveanu, 2012).

For researchers who position creativity inside a certain social context, creativity is often generated from a network of people. Within this collaborative activity of creativity, there will always be a person that is the "artist," who gets credited as the author of the actual creative products, as well as a multitude of other people who are the "support personnel" (Becker, 2008, p.13). Glăveanu was against the dichotomy of setting fixed boundaries between the roles of actors and audiences within the creative network. Instead, he believed that creators and audiences are both simultaneously agents and observers in creative actions (Glăveanu, 2014a).

   Artefact. Artefact is a defining notion in a sociocultural framework of creativity. An artefact can be either material or conceptual, or sometimes even in the form of performance, ranging from objects to language and symbols, representation, schemas, scripts, models, values, and algorithms (Cole, 1996). An artefact is a result of communication between self and others (persons, groups or societies) (Glăveanu, 2010a; Sawyer, 1997). A group of artefacts accumulated together can form a system known as a culture (Cole, 1996). In this context, creativity both relies on the enrichment of artefacts in a culture and adds to the culture through the generation of new artefacts. As such, sociocultural researchers, represented by Vygotsky, built their creativity definitions around experience-based meanings and cognitive symbols embodied in cultural artefacts (S. Moran & John-Steiner, 2003). Aligning with a sociocultural perspective, Glăveanu (2010a) defined creativity as "a complex socio-cultural-psychological process that through working with 'culturally-impregnated' materials within an intersubjective space, leads to the generation of artefacts that are evaluated as new and significant by one or more persons or communities at a given time" (p. 87). To illustrate, Glăveanu has put creativity in the centre of a tetradic framework consisting of both new and existing artefacts (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

A Proposed Cultural Framework of Creativity
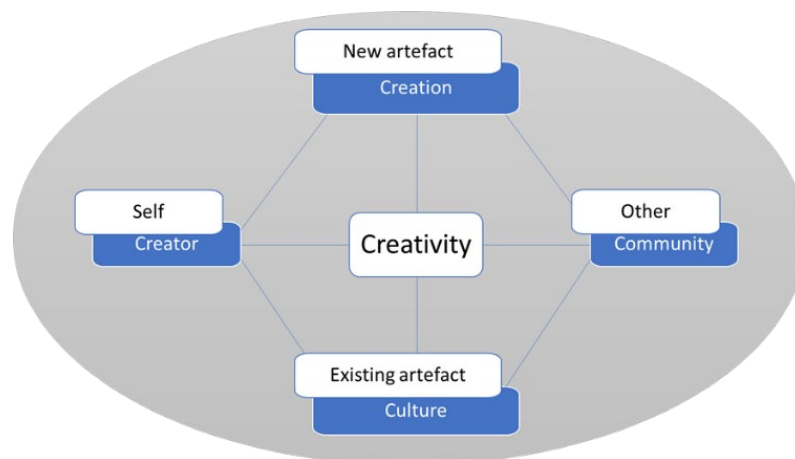
Adapted from "Paradigms in the Study of Creativity: Introducing the Perspective of Cultural Psychology," by V. P. Glăveanu, 2010, *New Ideas in Psychology*, *28*(1), p. 87. Copyright 2009 by Elsevier.

In this framework, creativity is placed at the centre of interaction between self and others, and new and existing artefacts. A similar emphasis on interaction was expressed by John Dewey (1934) in his discussion

about human experience in art. For Dewey, every experience is constituted by the interaction between "subject" and "object," between self and world, reflecting the generative nature of creativity (p. 256). New artefacts are seen as emerging within the relationship between self and others, and all three are immersed in dialogue with "an existing body of cultural artefacts, symbols and established norms" (Glăveanu, 2010a, p. 87).

Affordance. The notion of affordance in the five As model refers to "what the environment offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill" (Gibson, 1986, p. 127). The concept of affordances is a theory of what the environment offers to the creator, and how it guides, facilitates, and also constrains human activity (Glăveanu, 2012). By introducing the notion of affordance, the distributed creativity model emphasises the importance of interaction between the actor and the material world and the objects in it. Based on the notion of affordance, the tetradic creativity framework becomes more integrated and dynamic (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Integrating the Five As of Creativity
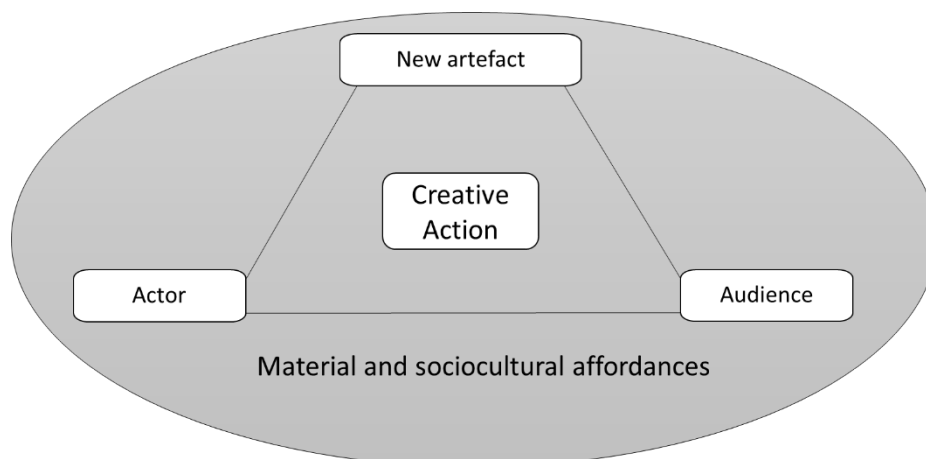
Adapted from "Rewriting the Language of Creativity: The Five As Framework," by V. P. Glăveanu, 2013, *Review of General Psychology*, *17*(1), p. 72. Copyright 2012 by the American Psychological Association.

In educational research, the concept of affordance is commonly referred to as resources or aspects of an educational design (Gee, 2008). As defined by Barab and Roth (2006), an affordance network is the "collection of facts, concepts, tools, methods, practices, agendas, commitments, and even people… that are distributed across time and space and are viewed as necessary for the satisfaction of particular goal sets" (p. 5). This definition has addressed learning as not only a "relational matter" (Lave, 1996, p. 149) between the actor and the situation, but also as a space situated "in the middle" (Wertsch, 1998, p. 65) between the individual and the context focusing on the action mediated by cultural tools. The concept of affordance links to research by Carr et al. (2010) conducted in New Zealand with young children as a way of studying the relationship between learning dispositions and pedagogical design. Following a similar assumption, my study investigates the question regarding the relationship between children's creativity and the physical and cultural environment where creativity takes place. Therefore, the context of the sociocultural model, which is

the material and sociocultural affordance that generates creativity, becomes one key research focus of the current study.

The Basic Principles

There are five principles guiding the sociocultural investigation of creativity (Glăveanu, 2010b):

1) Taking a contextual understanding of creativity. As the traditional definition of creativity includes novelty and appropriateness (Amabile, 1996), the meaning of these two characteristics can be problematic: novel compared to what? Appropriate to what standard? Thus, something can only be conceived as creative in relation to a certain time and a group of references. It is therefore important to contextualise creativity in a particular context.

2) Embracing a generative understanding of creativity. Because it has long been accepted that creativity does not come from nowhere, but uses the existing and available materials and changes it in unpredictable ways (Arieti, 1976).

3) Taking a meaning-oriented understanding of creativity. To evaluate a creative work, the researchers primarily take into account the perspective of the creators and "significant others" introduced to or affected by the creation (different groups or communities) (Glăveanu, 2010b, p. 154), rather than the experts from external groups. In this sense, how the actors make sense of their own creativity is valued.

4) Taking a genetic understanding of creativity. Creativity does not originate in adulthood, but in most of the theories about creativity, children's creativity is dismissed. It is partly because of the assumption that only when the children are mature enough will their creativity become socially appropriate (Glăveanu, 2009). However, ignoring the problem of genesis, or the birth and development of creativity, only furthers the artificial gap between the child and adult creativity. Consequently, this is an important point related to my research about young children's creativity.

5) Taking an ecological research methodology. This means that the sociocultural creativity framework adopts an approach against empirical ways of testing creativity. The traditional creativity tests had very limited ecological validity, as they were performed in artificial settings using artificial tasks. In contrast, using qualitative methods can foster an in-depth situational understanding of creativity where a preference is given to process-observation to gather information about the circumstances and context of the creative act (Glăveanu, 2010b).

The Distribution of Creativity

As described earlier in this chapter, the sociocultural approach to studying creativity is a combination of the study of individual-psychological processes and sociocultural factors in the environment. The question remains, however, how, in particular, are the individual mind and collective culture integrated within a broader system? To answer this question, Glăveanu has incorporated the *distributed theory of cognition* developed by cognitive scientist Edwin Hutchins (1995) into the study of creativity. Hutchins' ethnographic

study of navigation on a US Navy ship captured the nature of cognitive tasks that are never performed by individuals in isolation but in relation to other people and close interaction with the material world. This is called the "social distribution of cognitive labour" (p. 228). Hutchins found three kinds of distribution of cognitive process in his observation of human activity: cognitive processes may be distributed across the members of a social group, distributed through coordination between internal and external (material and environmental) structures, and distributed through time (Hutchins, 2000). A similar idea has been referred to by others within the sociocultural tradition (Cole & Engeström, 1993). These three types of distribution were captured in the sociocultural model of creativity through the interrelation between actors and audiences (social distribution), by the use of affordances and cultural resources to generate new artefacts (material distribution), and by the time dimension inscribed into creative work (temporal distribution) respectively (Glăveanu, 2014a, p. 28). The depiction of distributed creativity in the model is proposed in Figure 4.

Figure 4

A Framework of Distributed Creativity
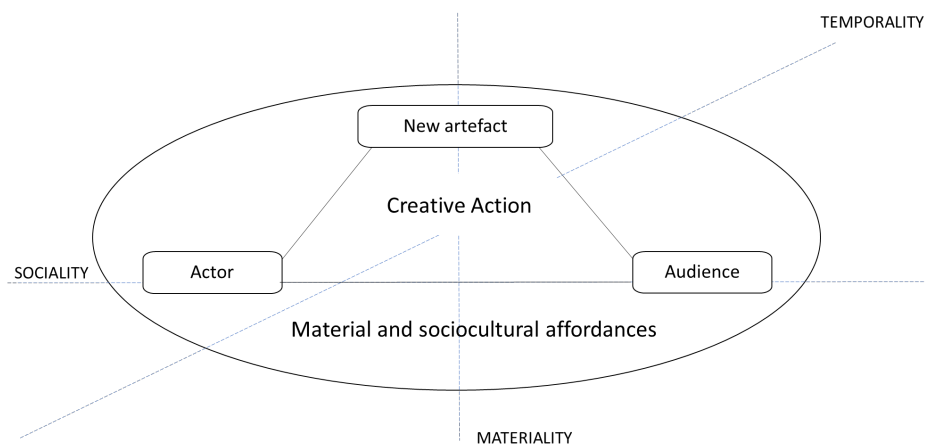
Adapted from *Distributed Creativity: Thinking Outside the Box of the Creative Individual* (p. 27), by V. P. Glăveanu, 2014a, Springer. Copyright 2014 by Vlad Petre Glăveanu.

According to the distributed framework, creativity simultaneously distributes along three lines, namely, material, social and temporal distributions. The social distribution of creativity is defined by the interaction between actor and audience. Because creativity is dynamic and social in nature, it must be placed within a larger field of cultural production so that every creative work "is made twice by the originator and by the beholder, or rather, by the society to which the beholder belongs" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 224). Creativity also happens within a certain material world based on the existing material and sociocultural affordances. For example, art is a creative process of making and giving a material form to ideas (Dewey, 1934). Finally, creative actions occur in time (Gruber & Davis, 1988). Any creative action needs to take into account what has already been done, how what is done now builds on the past, and how it can continue into the future. Taking a temporal trajectory also helps to study creativity on a developmental basis. In a sociocultural framework, creativity is regarded as a developmental phenomenon, which is a self-organising system rather than an object (Valsiner, 2011). The uniqueness of a developmental phenomenon, according to Valsiner, is

its "permanent exchange relationship with the environment" (p. 214). Therefore, to study the influence of the diverse experiences on children's creativity, this research embraces the developing nature of children's creativity by emphasising its temporal distribution.

Section 2: Implications and Applications of the Theoretical Framework

Distributed creativity theory is relatively new. However, the framework and the sociocultural paradigm behind it have been applied in studying creativity around the world, especially in contexts that are distant from the mainstream European-dominant culture. In general, adopting a sociocultural perspective brings numerous theoretical and practical implications related to creativity pertaining to developmental psychology and education.

Implications of the Sociocultural Framework

To recap, the current mainstream view of creativity was built upon Western (primarily American) historical and intellectual movements that reflected a Eurocentric narrative. To help understand the non-European narratives, Glăveanu (2018) developed the distributed creativity theory and approaches to reflect the definition of creativity in different cultural contexts. To study creativity in a certain context, it is important to develop a local way of understanding creativity instead of importing theories and models developed in other geographical and cultural locations (Glăveanu & Sierra, 2015). The sociocultural approach makes it possible to study creativity with its local meanings and practices. In Kaupapa Māori for example, what the children bring to the educational setting is highly recognised in their learning and development. This includes not only their inherent strengths but also their traditions and history, their whanau (family), and their whakapapa (genealogy) (Hemara, 2000). Therefore, taking into consideration the context of New Zealand as a bicultural nation, the sociocultural approach is appropriate in the study of children's creativity.

One implication of the sociocultural framework is the development of innovative creativity assessment and enhancement techniques. This understanding of creativity incorporates the cultural context into its definition, which alters the approach of assessing creativity using standardised questions to measure the creative potential for everyone, including young children. A sociocultural approach to creativity is manifested in the process of being developed through constant interaction (Glăveanu, 2018). For this reason, it requires methodological innovation in recognising creativity. The analysis process, from a sociocultural perspective, is able to serve the function of fostering creativity at the same time (Sawyer, 2000).

From a sociocultural perspective, teachers can be reflexive when using definitions, theories or assessment tools for creativity (Glăveanu, 2018). From a traditional creativity approach, students who do not fit into the typical creativity models might be seen as less creative or need special training. Conversely, teachers who have a sociocultural understanding of creativity are sensitive to the multifaceted nature of creativity, and are more inclined to offer each child different tools and support to develop their own style of creativity (Glăveanu, 2018).

International Applications

One premise of sociocultural creativity studies is that creativity cannot necessarily be seen as a universal concept equally applicable and relevant to diverse contexts (Craft, 2003). Different methodologies, research designs, and analytical approaches have been applied in different cultural contexts under the guidance of the sociocultural paradigm of distributed creativity. This framework is especially useful in studying the creativity of the general population, and their everyday activities, in all cultures.

One application of the theory was the study concerning the creative craft of Easter-egg decoration in Romania (Glăveanu, 2013). This study provided the empirical basis from which Glăveanu (2013) developed the sociocultural framework of distributed creativity. In this study, Glăveanu applied an exploratory and action methodology to answer the question of what makes a traditional craft activity creative. This study expanded the application of an interpretive approach using observations and interviews to research creativity. The findings of the study suggested a possible emphasis on the dynamics of the interaction between the creators and the social and material environment (Glăveanu, 2013). This research further indicated a shift to domain-specific phenomena in the context and process of creative actions.

A distributed creativity framework is applicable in studying other art forms such as music (Keller & Lazzarini, 2017). One example is a project in Brazil studying ubiquitous music, the everyday creative activity in music, as music not only belongs to the well-trained professionals, but also serves the purpose of community development, fostering individual wellbeing, and aesthetic education (De Lima et al., 2017). In this research project, Glăveanu's (2013) sociocultural creativity model was applied to challenge the instrumentally oriented and individualistic approaches that view music as an individual endeavour executed outside the composer's head (Keller & Lazzarini, 2017). The application of the distributed creativity framework is useful in meeting the need of new trends in music design and composition by finding a balance between bottom-up and top-down strategies. Diverse approaches are also suggested based on the interpretive nature of the framework, such as involving audiences as active creative partners and participants of the creative process, and engaging local material resources and socially shared knowledge to foster distributed creativity in music.

As discussed earlier, the distributed creativity framework encourages and enables development of diverse approaches and research designs in accessing the elements of creativity, especially the creative process (Glăveanu, 2013). To study the dynamic process of ideas developing and emerging, Tanggaard and Beghetto (2015) introduced a new methodological-material approach based on the sociocultural distribution of creativity model. The authors viewed creative ideas from a sociocultural perspective rather than from traditional approaches, which tend to view ideas as the outcome of an individual's hidden divergent-thinking process (Glăveanu, 2014a). They asserted that creative ideas are not generated simply from human minds, but move along a dynamic trajectory in temporal and spatial dimensions through constant sociocultural interactions (Tanggaard & Beghetto, 2015). By introducing the new methodological approach of ideational pathway diagrams, the authors provided a jumping off point for further methodological development,

analysis, theory building and theory testing in creativity studies, and pushed current research into a more integrated and process-oriented approach (Beghetto, 2014).

One major advantage of the sociocultural paradigm is the need to go beyond studies on individual creators' inner capacities, and to expand the focus of analysis to social interactions (Glăveanu, 2014b). For example, in an empirical study with 60 professionals working in science and creative industries in France, the authors applied the sociocultural framework to explore the questions of (a) who has a significant impact on a creative professional's activity and (b) what contributions can others make to creative outcomes (Glăveanu & Lubart, 2014). In another example, a similar application explored how social essence and interactions with others shape the development of creative processes (Elisondo, 2016). The author conducted two studies in Argentina, one on the general population's creativity during their leisure-time activities, the other on renowned scientific and artistic figures. The results demonstrated five social factors that influence creative processes: other people's influence on generating ideas, different roles of people in different contexts, the role of places, the generative function of creative groups, and the social influence in evaluation of creative products (Elisondo, 2016).

Besides studying creative actions and processes, the distributed creativity framework is also suitable in studying the identities of actors who conduct creative behaviours. Creative identity is conceptualised as when, how, and with what consequences people build their identities as creators (Glăveanu & Tanggaard, 2014). Through interviews with recognised creators in Denmark and Romania, the authors critiqued the person-centric formulation that disconnects the creator from the wider environment. The research discovered three types of creative identities depicted by the creators, namely the promoted creative identity, the denied identity, and the problematic identity. The findings offer a sociocultural perspective on creative identity, emphasising the role of others in constructing a sense of the self in creative activities (Glăveanu & Tanggaard, 2014).

Section 3: Applicability of the Theoretical Framework to the Current Research

The current study, with an interactive and distributed nature, is well-placed in a sociocultural framework of creativity for three reasons.

First and foremost, this framework shares the same underlying theoretical assumption as ECE in New Zealand. Sociocultural theories from theorists such as Bruner, Bronfenbrenner and Vygotsky had an in-depth and strong influence on early childhood pedagogy in New Zealand (H. May, 1997; A. B. Smith et al., 2000). A prominent application and influence of the sociocultural theory in New Zealand's ECE is the ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which underpinned the development of *Te Whāriki,* the early childhood curriculum of New Zealand (MoE, 1996, 2017).

Furthermore, the distributed creativity framework aligns with the research questions of this study. The main research question is about the influence of diverse experiences on young children's creativity. To answer this question, creativity needs to be viewed within certain environments that provide diverse experiences. The basic premise of sociocultural theory is the interdependence and interaction between human beings and their

sociocultural environment (Glăveanu et al., 2013). Thus, to observe and analyse children's creativity in dramatic play in a sociocultural context, my research focus is not on the individual or environment as two separate entities, but on the interaction that defines both of them and generates a symbolic world (Zittoun, 2007).

Third, the sociocultural approach is especially suitable for studying creativity in a range of art forms. According to Dewey (1934), creative art is a kind of human experience developed by doing and acting as a conduit between the creative self and the outside world. Drawing extensively from the work of Dewey (1934) on art as experiences, Glăveanu and Lahlou (2012) viewed artistic creativity as an integrating framework of cognitive, emotional, motivational and contextual elements. Therefore, this framework is applicable to the current study, where children's creativity is depicted in their dramatic play, which is a complex combination of cognition, emotion, and the environment.

Instead of the traditional foci on genius or the great creators, the sociocultural approach aims to challenge the dichotomies between being creative and uncreative (or creativity and noncreativity), extraordinary and ordinary, art or science and everyday life (Glăveanu, 2011b). On this basis, the sociocultural researchers argued for the existence of creativity in children and the educational benefit of creativity studies (Boden, 1996). Ontologically, it makes this framework suitable for the current research of young children.

Last but not least, the methods used in sociocultural research are typically qualitative, usually involving the combination of several methods such as observations and interviews (Glăveanu, 2014a). Using video recording to facilitate the research is also recommended and practised in a sociocultural approach, to capture most of the creative process. Although recommended, the use of the camera in collecting data could have a possible influence on children's play. In sociocultural research, this could be considered as part of the sociocultural context. Therefore, methodologically, these methods were applicable to study young children, who were the participants in this research.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the overarching theoretical framework that guides the research. The sociocultural theoretical decision was based on the We-paradigm of creativity, describing creativity as happening when individuals interact with each other or with the sociocultural environment, instead of existing only in the mind. It reflects the assumption that social and cultural factors in the environment have a significant influence on children's creativity. Therefore, a framework of distributed creativity was selected to guide this research.

This chapter has introduced the sociocultural framework of distributed creativity regarding the structure of creativity, the principles underpinning this theory, and the actual model of how creativity is distributed. The implications and applications of this theoretical framework related to studying creativity globally, especially in those non-Western and diverse cultural contexts, were then addressed. Finally, the applicability of this framework in the current research of young children in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand was explained.

To conclude, the three lines of distribution of young children's creativity in dramatic play are: how creativity distributes between children and their peers/teachers/parents (perspectives of self and other); how creativity develops under the influence of material and diverse sociocultural environments (objects and their meaning); and how creativity may be influenced by past experience and how artefacts that existed in the past, can exist in the present and can potentially be developed and used in the future (Glăveanu et al., 2014). Based on these theoretical decisions, this study adopted a qualitative methodology and research design, which is introduced in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 Methodology and Methods

This chapter discusses the methodological underpinnings of this study. The chapter begins with the rationale for selecting a qualitative approach to counteract a reliance on creativity tests, which have been used to assess children's creativity. Next, the overall rationale and process for the research design is presented. This includes the criteria used for the selection of the research sites, observation guide, site access, sampling, participant information and consent, the conducting of the research, and ethical considerations.

Section 1: Research Methodology

(Over)Reliance on Creativity Tests

As observed by Long (2014), there is a tendency towards an overreliance on creativity tests in research about creativity. Long's (2014) review of research methodologies in creativity studies demonstrated that an overwhelming majority (83%) of the empirical studies about creativity published between 2003 and 2012 in the key creativity journals were empirical, mainly psychometric and experimental, quantitative studies. In contrast, only 13% were qualitative studies.

The empirical tendency to use a quantitative methodology to research creativity is useful in studying the relationship between creativity and objective and universal factors such as personal characteristics, parenting styles, and teachers' perspectives. However, the assumptions underpinning empirical studies overlook the social and cultural context under which creativity is generated and assessed, therefore making empirical creativity studies subject to critique. First, testing all children with the same instrument regardless of their cultural background can be highly misleading (Guilmet, 1983). Even the definition of creativity – originality and appropriateness, which are both inextricably linked to the specific culture it is rooted in – is highly contested (Stein, 1953). Second, quantitative methods failed to take into account the process of concept generation, and works only on finished concepts (Sakharov, 1990). Third, the overreliance on quantitative and empirical methods may lead to unified and shallow understandings of creativity (Long, 2014). The creativity tests generated from the empirical research methodologies, related to the validity and applicability for children under 5, have all been critiqued (Kim, 2006).

Validity is a key source of controversy associated with creativity tests. Since many of the tests are validated against one another (Amabile, 1996), they are seldom validated against any external measure of actual creative productivity (Hickey, 2001). Creativity tests have been criticised for measuring creative potential (Healey & Rucklidge, 2005), or intelligence-related factors (Baer, 1997), rather than measuring creativity itself directly. Meanwhile, the tests sometimes do not test the factors they claim to assess. For example, in the "originality" subtest in the TTCT, the most widely used creativity test introduced in Chapter 2, participants are asked to generate as many uses of one object as possible within a limited period of time. Therefore, the "originality" score will be heavily influenced by participants' verbal fluency, as evident in some empirical studies (Dixon, 1979; Hocevar, 1979).

Creativity tests are also susceptible to situational or environmental factors. The tests are taken under an experimental environment in order to control irrelevant variables, which might make young children nervous or stressed and in turn affect their performances. Some studies also revealed that the creativity test results of young children were highly influenced when they were administered as serious tests rather than as fun activities (Iscoe & Pierce-Jones, 1964).

As addressed in Chapter 2, creativity tests were primarily developed as tools to assess personality, and thus designed to be sensitive to individual differences (Amabile, 1996). However, in this research about young children's creativity, personal traits and individual differences are minimised. The aim of this research is to identify and describe the diverse social and cultural contexts in which creativity is generated, therefore, the creativity tests are inappropriate for both theoretical and practical purposes.

Alternative Methodology to Study Creativity

To address the possible limitation of quantitative methodology for studying young children's creativity, this research takes an interpretative qualitative perspective. Within the sphere of social and cultural approaches in studying creativity, the methodology for investigating creativity in education has shifted from large-scale studies aiming to measure individual differences, toward a more ethnographic and qualitative approach focusing on the actual site of operations and practice (Craft, 2003). The qualitative methodology has been chosen as the most appropriate methodology, as it provides understanding of "how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon. This meaning is mediated through the researcher as instrument, the strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive" (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). Aligning with the premise of qualitative methodology, the aim of this research was to describe children's creativity in dramatic play in the diverse cultural context of New Zealand. Children's dramatic play was observed and interpreted by the researcher, who is the instrument, according to Merriam (2002).

One advantage of the interpretive approach is that it can be linked directly to the teachers' educational objectives and the curriculum (Wortham, 2008). This research explores the factors, including of the teachers' ethos, behaviours and a specific curriculum, that create a supportive environment for children's creativity to flourish. Thus, an interpretive qualitative methodology best aligns with investigating children's creativity in specific early childhood settings. An interpretive qualitative perspective also allows for consideration of children's growth and development in a complex social world, and the importance of observing children in situations that have emotional significance for them, instead of studying their responses to set experimental situations (Wortham, 2008).

Based on the theoretical and methodological foundations, a case study approach is used to interrogate the research questions. A case study, defined as "an investigation of an individual, a family, a group, an institution, a community, or even a resource, programme or intervention" (Greig et al., 2007, p. 145), can be used to study a child, a group of children, or an early childhood setting. It focuses on what is to be studied instead of the way in which the information will be gathered (Stake, 2000). Case study designs can be classified into single case studies or collective case studies according to the number of cases included in the

research. In collective case study design, the results are more likely to be generalised to a wider population that shares the characteristics of the cases (Mukherji & Albon, 2010). Instead of gaining a deeper understanding of a single case, collective case studies emphasise the instrumental value of the case, to help the researcher understand a general phenomenon (Stake, 2000). Considering the nature and the research question of the current study, I decided to conduct the research related to multiple cases in two different early childhood settings.

There are several reasons for choosing a case study approach in this research: First, a case study allows for an in-depth examination for a researcher with limited resources (Blaxter et al., 2010). Second, unlike ethnographic approaches, a case study does expect the researcher to participate, or become immersed in the life of the setting or community being studied (Mukherji & Albon, 2010). This is because the design, compared to a subjective ethnographic approach, increases the generalisation of the findings. On the other hand, it could also affect the depth and quality of the data that can be obtained, which Johnson and Christensen (2008) called the depth versus breadth trade-off.

Section 2: Research Design

As an interpretive qualitative case study, the research method is a combination of observations of child-led dramatic play and semistructured interviews with teachers and parents. Collecting data from multiple sources using different methods strengthens the research through triangulation of data and thus addresses potential critiques of the research (Mukherji & Albon, 2010). The data were collected at two early childhood centres in Auckland, New Zealand. The same research method was applied in both centres. This section provides a three-fold rationale for employing the research method and procedure. The rationale for choosing observations together with interviews is provided, followed by the rationale of why and how the participating sites were selected. This is followed by an explanation of how the data collection was conducted.

Method Rationale

A combination of observations of child-led dramatic play and semistructured interviews with teachers and parents was chosen as the research method for theoretical, ethical, and methodological reasons. A method is a far from neutral tool but is a link between concrete working practices and theoretical ideas (Jordan & Henderson, 1995). A sociocultural theoretical framework informed the study design and methods, which emphasise the influence of social and cultural context and diverse perspectives.

In this research, child-led dramatic play was chosen as a conduit for creativity. Dramatic play is an activity children engage in frequently in ECE settings, and provides access to a range of data. As reviewed in Chapter 2, because dramatic play is not simply a reproduction of what children experience, but a creative reworking of the impressions acquired, it is the best-known manifestation and most obvious example of young children's creativity (Farmer, 2010). In dramatic play, children depict the ability "to combine elements to produce a structure, to combine the old in new ways that is the basis of creativity" (Vygotsky, 1967, pp. 10–11). Observing children's dramatic play in an ECE setting offers the researcher the potential to gather rich data.

Ethically, observation is the most suitable way to reveal dispositions like creativity in young children. There is always a huge disparity between the power of the researcher and the subject, especially when it is children who are being researched (Valentine, 1999). Children have minimal power and influence in comparison with adults, due to their perceived limitations of knowledge and physical stature (von Benzon, 2015). When conducting research with young children, the researcher needs to take into consideration the ethics regarding power and powerlessness and to choose the method that minimises harm and control in the research process (O'Grady, 2004). To rectify the imbalance, this research includes natural observation of child-led dramatic play as the main research method. Being involved in natural observation provides children a means to develop ideas and express themselves without a reliance on conversation or other "adult" methods of communication (Pimlott-Wilson, 2012). By conducting observations in an environment with which children are familiar, and on a target action (dramatic play) that children initiate, this research attempts to identify children's disposition of creativity in addition to the adults' understandings and conceptions of childhood creativity (Collins, 2006).

Methodologically, conducting child-led observation, as a research method, with children under 5, instead of researcher-led methods such as tests, interviews or experiments, endorses children's autonomy. A lot of the researcher-led research relies on participants acting under the researcher's directions or instructions. Young children's language comprehension development varies, as do their abilities to understand and follow verbal directions and instructions. Difficulties in following research directions may lead to less successful data gathering, as well as possible emotional effects on young children. Applying child-led observation can avoid this potential problem by endorsing subjectivity and putting children in a leading position in research-data collection.

Another methodological concern is the possible over interpretation of a single source of data. To balance the highly subjective nature of the interpretation of children's dispositions, the research triangulated the data source by interviewing the teachers at the centres, who spent a lot of time with the children. The family environment and parents' and caregivers' understandings and attitude about creativity can also have a great influence on children's creativity. Their knowledge was explored through semistructured interviews and added to the data pool. Thus, multiple data sources increase the validity by minimising bias and potential errors (Greene, 2007). The selection of two ECE services also added to the validity of the research by multiplying the data source.

Site Selection

The research was conducted in early childhood settings in Auckland, the biggest city in New Zealand, for several reasons: first, more than half of all ECE services provided in New Zealand are located within the Auckland region (ERO, 2014), making Auckland the biggest and a more preferable data pool. Second, Auckland has the highest level of demographic diversity within New Zealand (Gomez et al., 2014), which makes it suitable to research the diverse influential factors regarding children's creativity, especially for children from immigrant families and/or minority groups.

Site selection was carefully considered in order to maximise demographic diversity in the centre environment, which meets this study's objective of exploring the influence of diverse experiences relating to children's creativity. The participating centres were purposefully selected to reflect the diverse context of ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand within the Auckland region through the inclusion of different service types and communities. The selection of specific sites strengthens the validity of the research data to reflect the diverse social and educational context, which is a key focus of the study, as well as increase the representative value of the research results.

The two ECE services that participated in this research are from geographically and demographically different communities. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of the participating centres. The first community is located in a North Auckland coastal area called "The Bay" for the purpose of this research. According to the 2013 New Zealand Census, demographically, the ethnic composition of The Bay is 84.4% European, 5.1% Māori, 1.2% Pacific peoples, 12.8% Asian, and 2.7% others (including Middle Eastern, Latin American and African [MELAA]) (Statistics New Zealand, 2014), which is similar to the national demographic landscape. The Bay has a number of South African families who attend the centre, with Afrikaans being the second most common language spoken in the community after English. The second community is located in Central Auckland. This community is called "The Mountain." The majority (49.2%) of the local population work in education and training industries (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). The demographic composition of The Mountain is different from The Bay, as identified in Table 2, and Auckland's demographics, with more than half of the population (57.1%) identified as Asian (Statistics New Zealand, 2014).

These two communities were chosen to align with the research aims and purpose. First and foremost, these two communities had the desired ethnic diversity to allow for an investigation of diverse experiences and creativity. Secondly, I was very familiar with the differences between the two centres in terms of physical environment, demographic composition and lived experience. This enabled me to have an in-depth understanding of the participating services.

Table 2

Comparison between Two Communities and Auckland as a Whole

	The Bay	**The Mountain**	**Auckland**
Location	North Auckland Coastal area	Central Auckland	-
Ethnic groups	84.4% European 5.1% Māori 1.2% Pacific peoples 12.8% Asian 2.7% others (MELAA)	40.4% European 3% Māori 2.3% Pacific peoples 57.1% Asian 2.4% others (MELAA)	59.3% European 10.7% Māori 14.6% Pacific peoples 23.1% Asian 2.4% others (MELAA)
Second most common language	Afrikaans	Northern Chinese	Samoan

There are three kinds or types of ECE services in New Zealand: teacher led, whānau (family) led, and parent led (MoE, 2017). Teacher-led services include kindergartens, education and care services, home-based

education and care, and Te Kura (the Correspondence School). Whānau-led services include Te Kōhanga Reo and Māori-medium centres offering a Māori environment for tamariki (children) and their whānau. Parent-led services include Playcentres and Playgroups. In teacher-led and whānau-led services, both teachers and parents are involved, while in parent-led services, all work, including education, caring, and administration, is executed by the parents. There are six ECE service providers in The Bay district and six ECE service providers in The Mountain district. The participating centres were selected from the list of these 12 providers.

Data Collection Rationale – Observational Guide

As discussed in Section 1 of this chapter, children's creativity in this study was examined using an interpretative qualitative approach to observation. The purpose of the observation was to distinguish and demonstrate young children's creativity through the vehicle of dramatic play. Thus, the question regarding the reliability and effectiveness of observation is "what to observe," or how to categorise and identify children's creativity in dramatic play (P. K. Smith, 1995). To address this concern, I employed Russ's (2014) Model of Creativity and Pretend Play. This model was selected for three reasons. First, it is a model that links dramatic play and creativity directly by describing the shared process. Second, it provides an operational guide with which dramatic play moves become more closely related to creativity. Third, the creativity and pretend play model shares the same theoretical basis with the distribution of creativity framework, as both models embrace a sociocultural paradigm and are both in line with a Vygotskian approach (Connery, 2010).

There are six cognitive processes and four emotional processes in children's dramatic play, in Russ's (2014) model, that fit the definition of creativity. A detailed description of the 10 creative processes is shown in Table 3. In the observations, children's dramatic play could be in any form: it could happen when the child is playing alone, or could be shared in a group of children. It could be a complete story plot, a short dramatic scene, or simply pretend behaviour (e.g., putting on a superman cape and playing a role). It could involve language, for example, "let's pretend we are sisters," or no language at all.

Table 3

Observation Aspects and Examples in Dramatic Play

Creative processes in dramatic play	Examples
Divergent thinking	Block transformations Different story ideas and elements
Broad associations	Wild fantasy and remote images
Cognitive flexibility/recombining ideas	Using toys in different ways Manipulating story elements Loosening of time and space
Insight and problem solving	Building novel objects Playing with mechanical objects
Perspective taking	Role playing; Pretending to be different characters
Narrative development	Story plots and sequences
Affect themes and symbols	Monsters; cops and robbers; yummy food
Emotional expression	Dolls fighting; dolls hugging

Creative processes in dramatic play	Examples
Joy in pretending	Pleasure and absorption in the play
Integration of affect/affect themes	Placing emotion in an appropriate narrative

Section 3: Research Procedure

Four steps were taken to implement the research design: 1) approval to access the sites, 2) participant recruitment, 3) observations, and 4) interviewing teachers and parents. This section outlines each of the four steps in greater detail. The section concludes with an examination of the ethical considerations.

Site Access

Site access was the first step in the application of research methods. The initial request for site access to children, parents and teachers was sent to the centre managers through email invitations. A list of all ECE service providers in the selected communities was made. Emails were sent to one centre from each selected district at a time, to avoid the possibility that more than two centres agreed to participate at the same time. The emailing order was random. The content of the email included an introduction to the researcher and the research project, the ethics approval and the Centre Manager Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix A). If the research request was rejected, or there was no response after 2 weeks, a new request was sent to another ECE centre in the same community. The first two centres both rejected the research request because they had other research projects occurring at that time. The second round of research invitations were both accepted by the two centre managers. For the purpose of anonymity, the two ECE centres were given the pseudonyms "The Bay" and "The Mountain" to reflect the locations. The Bay can accept up to 40 children aged 2 to 5, while The Mountain can accept up to 45 children aged 0 to 5, including up to 15 babies and toddlers under 2 years old.

Following this, the procedures were making appointments with the managers to organise initial visits to the centres, inviting the managers to sign the consent form, and gathering consents from teachers and parents. Meanwhile, assurance was obtained from the centre managers that teachers, parents, and children's participation or nonparticipation in this research would neither affect the employment of the teachers nor the teachers, parents or children's relationship with the centre in any way.

Sampling

The sampling procedure at both centres consisted of four criteria: 1) Age. The compulsory school age in New Zealand is 6, but most children start school on their 5th birthday. Therefore, the target group of the research was children of 3–5 years of age, which covers the majority of children attending ECE settings. In order to get more potential participants, I included all children who were born before December 2015 (30 months or older when the observation started). 2) The time the children spent at the centres. I excluded the children who would leave the centre to go to school within my data collection period, and those who had spent less than 2 months at the centres and had not yet settled. 3) The chances of interacting with the researcher. Typically, I visited the centres 3 days a week, limiting my interaction with the children who only attended the centre on the other days of the week. 4) Centre manager's suggestions. Before participant

recruiting, the centre managers initiated their support by providing me with a list of children and parents who they believed were suitable to participate in this study based on their experiences of interacting with the parents. Following the sampling procedure, 34 out of 40 children at The Bay and 25 out of 45 children at The Mountain were chosen as potential participants.

One significant feature of the parent sample was that all but one parent had teaching backgrounds. The reasons are: first, the Mountain is an ECE centre located in a university campus providing a service for the teachers and students, so most parents from the centre had a teaching background; second, the centre managers suggested parents who they believed could have more thoughts about the topic of dramatic play and creativity, which indicated they were more likely to have some experiences in education.

Information and Consent

At The Bay, emails introducing the researcher and the project were sent to the parents through the centre manager, and a hardcopy about the research was displayed in the information area of The Bay. Hard copies of the parent participant information sheet (see Appendix B) and consent form (CF) (see Appendix C and D) were distributed by the researcher directly to the parents and caregivers on site when they came to drop off or pick up their children. Parents and caregivers had the opportunity to discuss the research purpose and process with the researcher and their questions were answered. They were also told that their participation or nonparticipation would not affect their place at or relationship with the centre in any way. Parents and caregivers were asked to sign the CFs and to help their children to sign the assent form (AF) (see Appendix E). In total, 29 children (nine girls and 20 boys) and their parents agreed to participate in the research.

The consent gathering at The Mountain was similar to The Bay. The information about the research was uploaded onto the centre's online platform, which is the common communication method used between whānau, the teachers and the centre. Some parents and caregivers signed the CFs, as well as helping their children to sign the AFs, and sent them back to the centre manager online. Participant consents from eight whānau were collected in this way. I was also present at the centre for face-to-face on-site consent collection at The Mountain during the familiarisation period, following the centre manager's advice. Parents were introduced to the research when they came to pick up or drop off their children. They were given the opportunity to ask questions about the research. They were also told that their participation or non-participation would not affect their place at or relationship with the centre in any way. A further nine parents signed CFs for their children's participation, and helped their children to sign AFs on site. In total, 17 children (eight girls and nine boys) and their parents agreed to participate in the research (see Table 4 for centres and participants' information).

Table 4

Centres and Participants' Information

	The Bay	**The Mountain**
Service type	Teacher led	Whānau led
Number of participants	29 (9 girls and 20 boys)	17 (8 girls and 9 boys)
Consent gathering	On-site face-to-face communication between researcher and parents	Face-to-face gathering and Gathering through online platform
Teachers	N = 3 (Rose, Amy, and Olena)	N = 3 (Belle, Airini, and Liz)
Parents	N = 4 (Sasha, Lisa, Olivia, and Eric)	N = 2 (Tiago and Emma)

Conducting the Research

The research was conducted in the order of observations, teacher interviews and parent interviews. A total of 80 hours of observation, 240 minutes of teacher interviews, and 280 minutes of parent interviews were conducted at the two centres (see Table 5). The observations took place three times a week at each centre, each time for 2 to 3 hours, usually either between morning tea and lunch, or just after lunch time, which were the main times for free play (see Appendix F). Strategies for the observations were guided by Russ's framework of creativity and dramatic play as previously described, and was aided by a portable camera provided by the centres to take pictures or videos. Field notes were also taken on site.

Interviews with teachers at both centres were conducted as a supplementary data source. Teachers were asked to read the teacher PIS and sign the teacher CFs (see Appendices G and H) before the interviews. Teacher interviews are valued for answering the research question about the role teachers play in providing a supportive environment to foster creativity. Parent interviews offer a direct passage for the researcher to communicate with parents, at the same time providing information about how a supportive environment is created at home for children's creative exploration.

At The Bay the interviews took place 4 weeks after the observations started. There were three teachers, three mothers, and one father who participated in the interviews. Parent interviewees were selected based on two criteria: the observation findings, and the teachers' recommendations. The parent interviews took place at the centre when parents came to pick up their children. Three out of four parent interviews were conducted using English, and one parent interview was in Mandarin Chinese, which is the mother tongue of both the researcher and the parent participant, which increased the efficiency of communication. At The Mountain, the interviews took place 3 weeks after the observations started. There were three teachers, one mother, and one father participating in the interviews. The teacher interviews took place in a locality outside The Mountain. The interviews were from 30 to 50 minutes long, and were recorded using a voice recorder with the consent of the interviewees. All interviews were transcribed by the researcher. The transcripts were sent back to the interviewees to review.

Table 5

Conducting Research at Two Centres

	The Bay	The Mountain
Observation time	9 weeks (April 30–June 22, 2018)	9 weeks (June 8–August 2, 2018)
Total time observing	41 hours	39 hours
Interviews	3 teachers, 4 parents	3 teachers, 2 parents
Total time interviewing	300 minutes	220 minutes

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues permeate all aspects of researching with children under 5. Research with young children requires close attention to decision making during the research and the choice of methodology, methods, and dissemination of findings (Cullen et al., 2009). Before conducting observations, careful consideration of the children's right to participate or not should be made (Palaiologou, 2012). During the data collection, participants' right to withdraw was well considered and protected. After the data collection, the centres own the right to use the original copies of the visual data, as well as to know the findings drawn from the research data.

Anonymity and confidentiality are reflected in the research design and implementation. To protect participant anonymity, the transcription of observations uses pseudonyms to refer to participants, including children, teachers, and parents. The identity of the child participants was treated with the utmost care and respect in the selection of photos and videos of children. I did my best to exclude any nonparticipant in the video by turning the camera away as soon as any nonparticipants entered the observed location being videoed. If the participants engaged in playing with nonparticipants, no photos or videos were taken and only the field notes of the play were used to record the play scenario, in order to protect the privacy of the nonparticipants. Every attempt was made to protect the participants' identity; however, because the participants are known to me as the researcher, I cannot ensure anonymity and because of the small sample, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Protecting the confidentiality of research data, especially visual data of young children, was crucial. All participants (including the parents and the children) in the observations were informed before signing the CFs that visual data (i.e., pictures and videos) of children's play would be taken during the observations. Some of the parents had concerns about visual data being uploaded to social media, and they were guaranteed that all visual data would be kept by the researcher and the centre, and only be used for academic purposes by the researcher, including academic publications and conference presentations. One parent agreed to participate, but did not want to have their child's picture or video taken during the observations. This concern was marked on the consent form and was kept in mind. Sometimes during observations, children expressed their denial or concern about the camera being used, by verbal responses such as saying "no" to me, or by nonverbal actions such as trying to push the camera away. At those times I stopped filming

immediately. I was sensitive to the children's emotional reactions at all times to identify any ethical issues and to ensure that children's wellbeing was put first.

In the observations, all photos and videos were taken using the centres' digital cameras, to ensure the original copies of the data were kept by the centre. The centre's staff can use the photos or videos in their learning stories or portfolios as they choose. A copy of the visual data was made immediately after each observation and was transferred to the researcher's password-protected computer via a specific USB-drive, which was used solely for the sake of this research. Once the research is completed, participants will be offered a summary of the results.

Section 4: Cases and Their Environment

One primary objective of this research was to capture children's creativity in their dramatic play within a certain context, in order to understand how a supportive environment encourages creativity. The early childhood environment, including the physical space, personal space, and relationships that affect the children and the teachers, has a powerful influence on children's thinking, behaviour, and feelings (Isenberg & Durham, 2015). Practically speaking, the centres' environments also influenced my observations because children's dramatic play depends on the access and availability of play sites and play materials. Therefore, a detailed description of the two centres' environments, including physical settings and centre curricula and pedagogies, is provided in this section as part of the research context.

Centres' Physical Environments

The physical setting of The Bay is a large building divided into several areas by low shelves and cabinets: the dining room, a set of art and craft tables, the block corner, family and story corner, a separate room for group activities, and one room for sleeping. In the middle of the room is a big tank with turtles. Children are not allowed to touch them for safety reasons, but are encouraged to observe them. There are drawings of Māori gods on the wall as decorations, under photos of all the families as well as the teachers. The outside area consists of a relatively small playground with a slide and monkey bars, a sandpit, and a slope between the playground and the sandpit used to play with cars, bikes or trolleys; there is a water trough beside the sandpit and a small "wild garden" behind the main building. The access to the garden is through a gate that can only be opened from the top. This means children need permission and the help of an adult to enter the garden. In most cases there would be a dedicated period of time for a teacher to accompany those children who would like to play in the garden and explore the trail together. There is a sheltered deck between the inside and outside areas, with a carpentry bench and several tables and chairs for table-top games. The younger and older children at The Bay often play together, but there are some times when they are separated for special programmes, such as the transition to school programme. This programme is called "Koru" (meaning "coiled" or "folded" in te reo Māori), signifying the children's potential being unfolded in the process of getting ready for school. The Koru Group takes about half an hour every day before lunch. Only the 4-year-olds join the Koru Group. Children are taught to sing the national anthem, as well as some behavioural protocols that are suitable in classrooms during Koru time.

The Mountain has a smaller indoor space and larger outdoor area compared to The Bay. The outdoor area was designed to have different views of the maunga (mountain) that overlooks the centre (Pohio et al., 2015). There are two sandpits, one with a carpentry bench. Both of the sandpits have water taps nearby, which children can operate easily. In the middle of the outside area is a playground with big boxes, slides and climbing ropes, and several swings hanging from the trees. A track was built around the playground for the bikes, trucks and trolleys. In the indoor area there is a room with dining tables, a family corner, art tables with coloured pencils and paper always available. In the middle of the room there is a big carpet for mat-time and block play. The walls are decorated by photos of the children, teachers and their whānau doing activities together. There are sheets demonstrating basic vocabulary in te reo Māori evident in many places on the wall. Under the awning between the building and playground there is a craft table and other equipment used for climbing. The babies and toddlers at The Mountain have their own indoor space for sleeping and eating, but sometimes they play together with the older children.

Centres' Curricula and Pedagogies

An overview of the centres' curricula and pedagogies draws information from different sources: the centre's official websites, interviews with teachers, and each centre's ERO report. The ERO is an external evaluation agency that provides the New Zealand government with assessment reports on the quality and effectiveness of schools and early childhood services. Early childhood services are reviewed once every 3 to 5 years. The frequency of reviewing by ERO depends on the performance of a school or centre. For a school or centre with a stable reporting history, that demonstrates good self-review processes and use of information from ERO reports, the reviewing frequency is lower (ERO, 2013).

The Bay is a branch of a nationwide ECE group. It has served the community for more than 20 years. It is a Reggio-Emilio-inspired centre, where the emphasis is on providing an environment that encourages children to experience, investigate, question, and discover the world around them. The Bay follows *Te Whāriki* as the guiding tool of their curriculum, which recognises New Zealand as a multicultural society, respecting, acknowledging, and enjoying the ethnic and cultural diversity of all children and their whānau. The staff at The Bay believe in learning through play, and fostering a sense of belonging and a feeling of home away from home. The Bay continues to strengthen bicultural practices, and help parents appreciate the value of play-based education.

The Mountain is a Māori-medium early childhood centre. At The Mountain, children are immersed in te reo Māori and tikanga (culture). Daily educational instructions are delivered mostly in both English and te reo Māori, but as proudly reiterated by teachers, children are encouraged to use their first languages (e.g., Spanish, Portuguese) to communicate as well. The centre honours Māori whakapapa [the genealogy of a person] and Māori tikanga, and the beliefs in Māori ways of being and knowing permeate throughout the curriculum. Nature, as a critical source of energy in Māori culture, is central to The Mountain's philosophy. Nature is "something that can stimulate imagination and develop creativity" (Pohio et al., 2015). As The Mountain is located near a volcanic mountain, they have developed a special relationship with the maunga. The maunga has a spiritual meaning and is the protector or guardian of the centre from a Māori perspective.

To honour the relationship with the maunga, the children and teachers go for a hikoi (walk) to the maunga fortnightly. I was fortunate to join the hikoi during data collection. All the children aged between 3 to 5 years walked from the centre to the mountain top, had their lunch, played freely for a while, then walked back. The hikoi, together with the activities that occur on the hikoi, becomes a ritual of thanks to the maunga and a part of the centre's bicultural pedagogy of place.

Section 5: Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section outlines the analytic techniques used in this research. The observational data were transcribed and analysed under the guidance of the interaction analysis method. The teacher and parent interviews were transcribed and analysed using a thematic analysis technique, which is open to imaginative interpretation as well as being cognisant of findings from previous literature (Charmaz, 2006). The interview findings were also linked to findings from the observations. Criteria for judging the validity and credibility of data analysis and possible limitation of the selected methods are also introduced at the end of this section.

Introduction of Interaction Analysis and Thematic Analysis

This research adopts two methods to analyse research data from different sources: interaction analysis for analysing observational data, and thematic analysis to analyse the interviews with teachers and parents.

Interaction analysis is an interdisciplinary method of empirical investigation of the interaction of human beings with others and with objects in their environment (Jordan & Henderson, 1995). Its roots lie in ethnography and conversation analysis. However, interaction analysis is more than conversation analysis, as it also investigates nonverbal interactions and the use of artefacts aided by technologies. The accumulation of artefacts becomes the environment where interactions take place, and the technologies, such as video recordings, aids the analysis process by enabling replay. There are three reasons for selecting interaction analysis as the main method to analyse observational data in this study. First, it aligns with the theoretical assumptions of the sociocultural framework. Glăveanu (2014b) proposed six key ideas to develop sociocultural perspectives in studying creativity. One of them is to broaden the traditional units of analysis of centring on individuals to incorporate perspectives that study the interactions between subjects in particular contexts (Elisondo, 2016). Interaction analysis shares a similar premise with the theoretical framework of this study that a social field is set up by a series of artefacts within which certain activities become very likely and others not very likely or even impossible. The goal of interaction analysis is to identify the ways in which participants utilise the material and social resources in the environment, which, in the distributed creativity theory, is named *affordance* and treated as a critical element and basic context in human creativity. Second, interaction analysis sits comfortably with the distributed creativity framework. Interaction analysis studies see learning as a distributed and ongoing social process that occurs only when the process is collaboratively recognised by all the people involved (Garfinkel, 1967). Thus, analysing interaction data can better capture the distributed nature of creativity in the current study. Third, interaction analysis is especially suitable for analysing complex visual data. It closely interrogates the interaction between members of a particular community and requires repeated replaying of a sequence of interaction. The technological aid of

video recordings contains very complex information, including speech, body movement, facial expressions, gazes, emotional reactions, and the use of props or assistance from adults. Based on these three characteristics, interaction analysis was selected as the analysis method used for observational data in this study.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) inductively from text data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As an analytical tool, thematic analysis organises and describes a data set in rich detail, and at the same time interprets various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis is similar to but also different from other qualitative methods that seek to describe patterns, such as content analysis. Content analysis often includes frequency counts and allows for quantitative analyses of initially qualitative data (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). However, in thematic analysis, key themes do not necessarily have high frequency, or might appear even relatively infrequently in a data set, but are determined by whether they capture something important in relation to the overall research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Also, the interview is a supplementary data source in this study providing additional information regarding children's dramatic play and creativity development. This goal of analysing interview data does not align with that of content analysis that is developing a fully worked-up theory of the phenomena that is grounded in the data (McLeod, 2001). Because this study aims to search across a set of data (i.e., a number of interviews or a range of texts) for patterns of meaning, it is easier for thematic analysis to highlight similarities and differences across the data set and to compare themes generated from different sources (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Observational Data-Analysis Process

Before the analysis stage, videos were broken down into clips and transcribed into dramatic play scenarios following a three-step procedure: First, content logs were made and formed into a list. The content log of a videotaped episode has a heading that gives identifying information such as the time and place where the video was taken, followed by a rough summary of events that happened in the episode. Content logs are useful for providing a quick overview of the video clip, locating particular sequences and issues, and as a basis for doing full transcripts of particularly interesting segments (Jordan & Henderson, 1995). Separate video clips shot of the same dramatic scenario were grouped together at this stage. The next step was to review each episode. I re-watched each episode to determine the basic structure, a process qualitative researchers refer to as identifying the ethnographic behaviour chunks. This involved looking for important boundaries that articulated observable phases or chunks within the continuing course of participants' activities (Bamberger & Schön, 1983). The structure of an episode includes the beginning and ending, segmentation, and transition between the segments. Third, particular video segments emerged as significant, and content logs were expanded into transcriptions. It is important to note that not every interaction was transcribed (e.g., such things as a very quick glance around, babbling, repeatedly examining the materials, etc.) because this would have made the presentation of findings and the flow of the scenarios incomprehensible (Glăveanu, 2012).

Data analysis started from three initial broad codes: doing (actions of the creator), material relation (relation with objects), and social relation (relation with other people) guided by the distributed creativity framework (Glăveanu, 2012). The basic unit for coding is interaction, either with materials or with other children or teachers. After reviewing the initial codes, reflections on each scenario regarding the interaction, and the relationship between different interactions, were generated. The reflections are important records of my thoughts about the reason for the development and interpretation of each code. The researcher's reflections assist in maintaining consistent application of codes across the data. Finally, the reflections were connected back to the original video clips and reviewed again.

The last stage of the analysis process was grouping the codes and reflections according to the theoretical framework guidance. In this process, six processes of creativity were generated as research findings from the observations, which is presented in the following chapter.

Interview Data-Analysis Process

Analysis of the interview data followed a different process from the observational data. Thematic analysis of interview data consists of creating a three-step coding process to search for themes, reviewing themes, and finally leads back to comparing and cross-referencing with findings from the observation.

The coding followed a three-step coding process: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. In open coding, I read the data word by word to derive codes and capture key thoughts or concepts (Huberman & Miles, 1994). I deconstructed the text of the interviews into separate sentences, phrases, or words. Each data item was given equal attention in coding but only the units relevant to the research questions and key concepts were maintained. Then units with the same connotations were organised into meaningful groups to generate the initial codes (Tuckett, 2005). The second step was axial coding, where codes were sorted into categories based on how different codes were related and linked (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Codes identified in previous steps were organised and grouped into meaningful units, which formed the origin of potential themes. Through this process, the scattered phrases and sentences were collected and linked to each other, laying a foundation for searching and reviewing the themes. In my research, the axial coding process was also directed by the findings from observations. In the final phase of the selective coding process, core units were selected and collated into themes. Selective coding is also called theoretical coding, as it informs the application of the selected theoretical framework in coding and developing ideas. The themes regarding the research question of what role teachers and parents play in providing a supportive environment to foster creativity were organised along three lines adapted from the theoretical framework, namely social, material and temporal. Overall, the coding and theme generating process provided a supplementary source and a comprehensive understanding of how teachers and parents engage with children's dramatic play and creativity in ECE.

Along with coding, written reflections reviewing data, codes, themes, and connections between different data sources, are integral to the analysis process. Reflections serve the purpose of documenting the coding process, jotting down ideas and potential coding schemes, and assisting consistency of coding. The reflective

nature of the written notes can also help link findings between teacher and parent interviews, and back to the observation data. The data-analysis process concluded with cross-referencing the interview data with the observation data under the guidance of the same theoretical framework to discover new links between codes and themes.

Ensuring Rigour and Reliability

Issues of validity and reliability are always heavily debated in association with qualitative methodology (Mutch, 2013). Some researchers believe that rigid criteria for conducting qualitative research might limit freedom and stifle methodological development (Elliott et al., 1999). Nevertheless, although flexible, there are still criteria for conducting good qualitative research. Some of the issues were addressed in this study through research methods. For example, the dependability of the research method leading to credible findings was addressed by collecting data from different sources, which provides different entry points to investigate the same controversial issue (Tatebe, 2014). Meanwhile, a different data analysis technique was applied to different data types to avoid the potential negative impact of generating biased findings by using one single method.

As Reicher and Taylor (2005) suggested, "rigour lies in devising a systematic method whose assumptions are congruent with the way one conceptualises the subject matter" (p. 549). In this research, rigour was ensured by matching up what the study was actually doing with the research question that the study wanted to answer clearly and explicitly. In this sense, the theory of distributed creativity was applied rigorously throughout the research design, study, and data analysis. Consistency was enhanced by strict adherence to the methodological assumptions and theoretical standpoint throughout the research process, as well as constantly revisiting the analysing reflections.

Limitations

While significant efforts were made to ensure trustworthiness of the research findings, this research is still susceptible to potential limitations. The possible limitations regarding the reliability of the data are associated with the research design of using visual data and videotapes as the main data source. Subjectivity is especially explicit when the observer chooses where to point the camera, whether to zoom or not, and how big the focus should be. For example, at The Mountain in particular, as nonparticipant children outnumbered participant children, the video recording sometimes had to stop when nonparticipant children entered into the camera focus, leaving the scenarios less complete. On the other hand, the technology of video recording itself is inherently more restricted in information processing than human sensory apparatus. What can be seen or heard by a human observer's peripheral attention may be altogether off screen in a video recording. Thus, the observer is very likely to have missed some details when studying the video record. One strategy was the use of on-site observation notes as an additional data source. Despite the main data source of videos and photos, field notes were also used in data analysis especially with sociodramatic play scenarios with nonparticipants in the group.

Another concern was the extent to which the children's actions were being influenced by the mere presence of the camera. This was an empirical question concerning all research using visual data, which needed to be investigated on each practical occasion when using the camera. Evidence from previous research has shown that participants adapt to the presence of a camera surprisingly quickly, especially when they are intensely involved in what they are doing (Roschelle et al., 1991). My experiences from this study also demonstrated a similar situation. For example, signs of rejection of the camera were found occasionally at the beginning of the observation at The Mountain, where some children said "no" and tried to push the camera away. However, from the second week of observation, most of the children could continue their dramatic play with hardly a glance at the camera I was holding. So their initial rejection during the transition period subsided after becoming familiar with the researcher and research process.

The third concern could relate to the potential generalisation of the research data. I acknowledge that the two centres selected are in Auckland in arguably mid-high socioeconomic areas; however, there are quite a few lower income rental housing blocks located around one centre. Also, as one centre is situated within a university campus, quite a few students send their children to the centre, and as a general rule, they are not from high social and economic backgrounds. The possible restriction regarding the sampling of parents is the limitation and thus generalisation of the findings to parents with no teaching background. However, the purpose of the research is not to generalise the findings to a broad-spectrum of parents, but to focus on the implications of setting up supportive environments for children's dramatic play and creativity.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the methodological decisions of this research. Following the sociocultural orientation of the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 3, this study advocates a qualitative interpretative methodology to study children's creativity instead of the commonly used creativity tests. The research design was influenced by the methodological decision, adopting a combination of observation of child-led play and interviews with teachers and parents to collect data from different sources. In turn, the inclusion of multiple data sources and data collection tools set the premise for multiple data-analysis techniques. To ensure the consistency between the research questions and the specific approaches of the study design, data collection, and analysis, the research questions were reiterated in each process to guide the selection of methodology, data collection tools, and interpretations of the data. In the next two chapters, study findings generated from observations and interviews are presented respectively.

Chapter 5 Findings from Observations

Introduction

The following two chapters (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6) present the key findings from the observations of children's dramatic play, and teacher and parent interviews from the two Auckland ECE centres as described in Chapter 4. For purposes of anonymity, the ECE settings are named The Bay and The Mountain in relation to their different geographical locations. The findings evident in this chapter are selected from the observations of 14 children from The Bay, and nine children from The Mountain during their engagement in child-led dramatic play. For purposes of anonymity, pseudonyms are used for all participants. The pseudonyms for the children are listed in Table 6.

Table 6

Participants' Details – Children

	The Bay	**The Mountain**
Children	N = 14 Aaron, Aiden, Bianca, Brian, Connor, Daniel, Harriet, Harry, Hudson, Jaxon, Julian, Tessa, Theo, Tiantian	N = 9 Amelia, Ava, Kauri, Lyla, Myka, Navarro, Rene, Todd, Westin

Chapter 5 presents a series of scenarios from the observations of children at The Bay and The Mountain over a 6-week data-collection period. Field notes and video recordings were employed to assist data collection. The content of the observations is child-led, spontaneous dramatic play scenarios, involving either one child or a group of children.

As described in Chapter 4, The Bay belongs to a nationwide ECE organisation. There were 29 children (nine girls and 20 boys) from 3 to 5 years of age who participated in the research. The observations occurred between April and June 2018. During this period, I visited The Bay three times a week for 6 consecutive weeks. A total of 41 hours' observation and 61 scenarios were transcribed. The Mountain is a Māori-medium early childhood centre. There were 17 children (eight girls and nine boys) from 3 to 5 years of age who participated in the research. The observations took place between June and August 2018. I also visited The Mountain three times a week for 6 consecutive weeks. A total of 39 hours of observation were conducted and 50 scenarios transcribed from observations.

The subquestion guiding this chapter is: How is young children's creativity generated through dramatic play? In response to the question, selected scenarios from observations were analysed using the interaction analysis method. Six sets of processes emerged across the key scenarios: 1) generating and sustaining narratives, 2) communicating narratives, 3) adults' influence on children's agency, 4) problem solving, 5) functions of play materials, and 6) affective expression. Each process comprises several examples of scenarios from observations at both centres, followed by the researcher's reflections containing some background information about each scenario, and how it relates to the creative processes documented in previous studies. The length of the scenarios varies, from a couple of minutes to half an hour. In response to the subquestion

about young children's creativity being generated through dramatic play, these observational findings achieve three outcomes: They 1) deepen the understandings of the creative processes in children's dramatic play, 2) answer the overall research question pertaining to the ways diverse experiences influence young children's creativity, and; 3) provide guidance on how an environment is created that values and encourages creativity and dramatic play.

Finding 1: Generating and Sustaining Narratives

Children generate ideas and lead their own narratives by maintaining their interest, focus, and ownership in the evolution of their dramatic narratives. The following two scenarios, one from each centre, show how children responded, looking for and finding new ideas in materials, reacting to the provocations and to one another, and connecting to materials and other children involved with their own ideas for narratives (Craft et al., 2012).

Scenario 1: The Bay – Brian and the Animals

Brian was sitting beside a table with pieces of wood, grass pads, glossy blue paper, and a variety of toy animals. He picked up a toy cicada, pretending it was walking across a wooden trunk and climbing onto its branch. The cicada landed on a polar bear's back and the bear got angry and roared at the cicada. The bear and the bug then went behind the wooden trunk. Then the cicada came out to hide under the glossy blue paper. But the polar bear followed it out and found it and stomped on the cicada. Then the cicada flew away, but came back with a mantis, and together they stomped on the bear. This time the bear could not compete and escaped.

Then Brian put some other toy bugs on the piece of wood, but the polar bear came back and saw all the bugs. The bugs slid down the wooden trunk through a tunnel, but the bear slid down through the tunnel to chase them. Then a huge ladybug slid down the tunnel and landed on the polar bear. The bear cried "Ouch."

(People were talking in the distance and Brian paused, listened, and then went away. A few minutes later he came back)

Brian randomly piled the animals together and then separated them. He repeated this several times, paused and thought for a while. Then he let the cicada fly cross the wooden branch and took away the little goat. Then the polar bear came along the same route but fell down off the wooden branch.

Then Brian let the polar bear fall on the pile of toy bugs and exclaimed "Ah!" and the huge ladybug fell on top of the polar bear and he cried out again, "Ah!" Then Brian let all the animals fall down. All the animals landed on the wooden trunk again, and then fell down again.

These actions were repeated several times.

Finding analysis 1: The Bay – Brian and the Animals

Scenario 1 reflects how a creative narrative is generated and sustained in solitary pretend play. Brian, 3-and-half years old, is one of the boys who regularly engaged in dramatic and sociodramatic play. In the first half of this episode, we can see clearly his creativity throughout the plots and tension generated by the actors. However, the ensuing part of the episode was mostly a replay and repetition of the dramatic play he had already created, which was fragmentised and lacked continuity compared to the initial dramatic scenario. The second part could be seen as Brian's reflection, practice, or rehearsal of his initial dramatic creation.

This scenario demonstrates the dynamic actor–audience relationship in solitary dramatic play and how creativity is generated from this dyad. According to Dewey (1934), a piece of art is recreated each time it is experienced. The creators themselves are typically the first to confront their own product, and this gives them the unique position of being the actor and the audience at the same time (Dewey, 1934). Thus, creativity distributed along the actor–audience line allows the actor to appreciate and review his/her own play as an audience in order to maintain the creative process, or generate new ideas (Glăveanu, 2014a). By being both the actor and the audience of his own creation, and switching between the two identities, Brian was experiencing, rehearsing and recreating his own dramatic play. The piling and moving of the toy animals helped Brian to speculate and appreciate his own creative product.

Scenario 2: The Mountain – Prison Break

Westin and Amelia were playing with wooden blocks. They built a square frame on the ground with four long blocks connected to one another. Westin called it a "home for my bunny" and put his toy bunny in the middle of the frame. Then they started to build walls by piling the blocks up.

Westin asked Amelia, "What about I go to jail?" Then he jumped in the middle of the wooden block frame and Amelia started building walls around him. Westin asked, "Remember I told you that I was the bad guy and I stole the toy?" Amelia answered, "Yes, you stole my toy." Westin seemed reluctant, "Uh... no, I stole someone else's toy." Amelia answered, "Okay." And went on building the walls to the height of Westin's waist.

Westin then tried to jump out of the jail, but when he touched the walls, the blocks started to collapse. He tried several times but the construction was too loose to hold. He stopped and pondered a bit. Then he took a toy turtle out of his pocket, pretending it was the turtle trying to break the jail. Amelia also took her bunny out and helped to break the jail. When all the walls broke down, Westin jumped out and claimed, "I'm out of jail now!"

Finding analysis 2: The Mountain – Prison Break

Scenario 2 represents the narrative development evident through the process of dramatic play. Sometimes the pretend themes are not determined prior to the dramatic play but develop as the play progresses. Sometimes the children may only know the theme when they are doing it. So the subject of play may change as the play develops.

As evident in this scenario, the children were initially building the block frame. Before this scenario, Westin was enjoying piling the blocks. Then he put the toy in the frame, discovering that it could be the "bunny home." As they built the walls higher, the play about the jail unfolded, and the theme of the play changed. When he tried but failed to get out of jail without breaking the walls his friend built, he pretended it was the turtle who broke the jail. And his friend followed suit.

Scenarios 1 and 2 show the processes of how creative narratives are generated alongside dramatic play. They manifest the role of time for children's creativity to unfold in dramatic play. For example, by repeating the animal fighting theme, Brian was cognitively speculating on his own dramatic play. By continuing the block building actions, Amelia and Westin were able to transform their imagined dramatic themes into real creations. In this sense, Process 1 aligns the temporal dimension of the distributed creativity framework.

Finding 2: Communicating Narratives

As the above two scenarios suggest, children not only generate and sustain social dramatic play but also constantly exchange ideas and give verbal or nonverbal feedback on each other's narratives through embodied action and expressions. Most of the time the communication is achieved through repeating others' utterances. This indicates agreement to the others' narratives, as well as laying a foundation for the children's own interpretation or modification of the narratives, which includes creative sparks. Scenarios 3, 4, 5, and 6 demonstrate how children keep their ownership of the narratives of the play, to collaborate in building narratives with others, as well as their commitment to a shared dramatic story.

Scenario 3: The Bay – Diving

> Three boys, Jaxon, Brian and Connor, were standing on the sofa in the family corner.
>
> Jaxon said, "We are diving into the water!" and hopped down from the sofa. He lay on the carpet on his belly, paddling with his arms and legs as if swimming. Brian followed Jaxon and jumped down and pretended to swim on the carpet.
>
> Jaxon cried out, "Oh!", and pretended to pick up something from the ground, "Here I found a bug in the water." Connor was still on the sofa. This morning he brought in his swimming goggles, a snorkel and a pair of gloves from home. Connor put the goggles on his face, and the gloves on his feet as flippers. When he heard about the bug, Connor showed a disgusted face; "Ew, I'm not going into that water!" he said.
>
> Jaxon and Brian continued swimming on the carpet. Then Brian found a piece of popped red balloon under the sofa. He raised it up and exclaimed happily, "Look! It's Nemo!"
>
> Then Jaxon shouted, "The shark is coming! Oh no!" He started paddling in the water faster and faster pretending to escape from the shark. Connor had finished putting on all his equipment. He asked, "Where's the shark? I'm coming."

Finding analysis 3: The Bay – Diving

Scenario 3 is an example of how children play together exploring the same dramatic theme. For instance, Brian was swimming and exploring the ocean, Jaxon introduced the bug and the shark into the play, and Connor was on the shore preparing to dive. The children created "the ocean" play scene collectively to play together. Meanwhile, they each picked a different role but at the same time maintained some connections between their roles, e.g., Brian followed Jaxon jumping into the ocean and exploring the imagined scenario, and Connor accepted Jaxon's shark narrative into his play. They each contributed their own imagination and understandings of the ocean into one dramatic play scenario. In this sense, creativity was distributed among them through their collective dramatic experiences.

Diving or swimming in the ocean was a popular dramatic theme in children's dramatic play at The Bay. It might be because of The Bay's location, with many of the children living near the beaches with easy access to the ocean. Jaxon's play in particular included many references to incorporate the topic of water. For example, he once put the base charger of a toy cell phone beside his ear pretending it was a seashell to listen to the sound of ocean.

All three participants contributed to the development of the joint narrative of diving into and exploring the ocean. They all generated original narratives and reacted to the others' narratives in their own ways. The dramatic play thus became a new artefact jointly created by all the actors who participated in it, while, at the same time, they each interpreted it from an original perspective. Therefore, in this scenario, none of the boys can be considered as the owner of the play as proposed by Becker (2008), neither are they the gatekeepers to select and judge each other's dramatic play outcomes. Therefore Csikszentmihalyi's (1988) notion of field did not exist. The one-way communication of creativity from the actor to the audience was replaced by a more interchangeable relationship between the maker and perceiver.

Scenario 4: The Bay – Moana, Jessie and Teddy Bear

> *Bianca and Harriet were sitting on the carpet. Harriet was playing with a toy called Moana and a teddy bear, and Bianca with a toy called Jessie, a character from the movie* Toy Story*.*

> *Bianca said to Harriet, "Hey Moana, I'll come and visit you." She put Jessie next to Moana. Harriet answered, "Yes. Do you want to hear a song?" Bianca said yes. So Harriet started singing the theme song of the movie Moana.*

> *Bianca put a bamboo percussion instrument close to Moana and asked, "How do you do that Moana?" Harriet put Moana on the instrument as if she was sitting in a canoe. But Bianca took the instrument away and said, "You hold it with your arms (attaching Jessie's arms to it) and you push down and push up. (Pretending that Jessie was weight lifting) Like this." Then she handed it back to Harriet. Harriet smiled at Bianca but did not take the instrument. So Bianca smiled back and put Jessie into a paper bag. Then Harriet took Jessie out of the bag. Seeing Jessie, Bianca said, "I'm not playing with Jessie anymore." Harriet asked, "You want to play with Moana?" and handed Moana over to Bianca. Bianca took Moana, winding the doll's arms, "I'm gonna push up and push down."*

Harriet asked, "How about Moana be the mother and Jessie be the baby and Teddy be the dad?" Bianca said, "Yay. Dad here you go." She handed the instrument over to Teddy Bear, "Push up and push down." Harriet pretended to talk using Teddy Bear's voice, "Mum, look after the baby and give her afternoon tea?" Bianca put Jessie between Moana's arms. Harriet continued, "...and give her sunblock. Bye-bye (Teddy Bear waving his hand). Let's pretend baby cries when Daddy leaves" and Teddy Bear walked away. At the same time, Bianca rummaged in the paper bag and found an empty cereal box, "Do you want this? Do you want me to put it in a bowl?" she pretended to pour the cereal into a basket.

Finding analysis 4: The Bay – Moana, Jessie and Teddy Bear

Bianca and Harriet were both 4 years old. The two girls hang out with each other a lot. Bianca's mother, Olivia, participated in the parent interview. In this scenario, both girls were actively generating their own narratives, yet at the same time trying to communicate their narratives to form a comprehensive dramatic theme. At first, Bianca was pretending to be Jessie, and Harriet Moana. The approach Bianca used to incorporate her friend into her play was by stating "*Hey Moana I'll come and visit you*." Then Bianca introduced a new play prop, the percussion instrument, which led to the emergence of new narratives. Harriet pretended the instrument was a canoe for Moana, but Bianca tried to illustrate to her friend the function of it as a barbell. Afterwards Harriet suggested a new play theme of playing mum, dad and the baby. At first Bianca tried to maintain the weight-lifting theme, but the way Harriet introduced the family theme was very comprehensive and life-like, as she changed her voice into Teddy Bear's voice and gave clear instructions ("*Mum, look after the baby and give her afternoon tea and sunblock*"). So Bianca put aside her theme to join Harriet's family play.

Family play was one of the easiest themes for children to project their emotions. In this case, it was Harriet's pretending that the baby cried when Daddy left home. It was actually one of the rituals for Harriet almost every morning because she would cry when her father dropped her off. In her dramatic play, she became the daddy that walked away, and Jessie became the baby who cried when Daddy left.

This scenario demonstrates three ways social interactions in dramatic play foster creativity: First, through social interaction, children are able to incorporate their dramatic play themes into one complicated dramatic scenario. Second, being the actor and the audience at the same time, children demonstrate different uses of the same play prop to each other in social dramatic play. To use toys in different ways is a symbol of cognitive flexibility and an important aspect in the divergent-thinking process, one of the cognitive processes of creativity (Russ, 2014). Third, dramatic play enables children to feel safe to enact and deal with their emotions. By setting the scene of the baby crying when Daddy left, Harriet re-enacted her own departure anxiety with her father at drop-off times. The affect theme and symbols are not only the affective process of creativity, but also an approach for children to go back and revisit their feelings.

Scenario 5: The Mountain – Grandma and the Wicked Witch

> *Rene walked around the carpet like an old lady using a rainbow-coloured stick as a cane. She told*
> *her friend Ava, "Pretend I'm the grandma. And you the baby." She pointed at Ava on her belly with*
> *the stick. Ava burst into laughter. Rene continued, "Baby, go to your room." She pointed at the other*
> *end of the carpet. Ava went to the direction, "Here?" Rene tapped the ground with the stick and said*
> *with an old lady's voice, "Get up, right over here." Ava went to the spot and sat down.*

> *Rene was walking as grandma when a girl came asking to join the play. Rene shouted at the girl*
> *with her old lady's voice, "Get out of here! Shoo away!" Ava also shouted, "Shoo, shoo." Rene*
> *came up with another idea. She said to Ava, "Pretend you want me to [be] a wicked witch." Then*
> *Rene pointed the stick to the air, laughing wickedly, "Hahaha! Bibbidibobbidi boo. Turn Diana (the*
> *girl) into a butterfly." Hearing this, Ava smiled at the girl, "You are a butterfly now." Rene said to*
> *the girl, "You have to flap ... [she flapped her arms] when you are a butterfly."*

> *Rene continued, "Bibbidibobbidi boo. Turn Diana into that whaea" and pointed at me. So I said,*
> *"Now you are me." Rene and Ava both laughed out loud. They started rolling around while*
> *laughing happily. Rene touched Ava's hair with the stick and chanted, "Bibbidibobbidi boo. Turn*
> *Ava into me. Bibbidibobbidi boo. Turn me into Ava. I'm being turned into Ava. I turn myself into*
> *Ava. And I turned him [her] into me." Then Ava put a blanket over her head and hopped. They*
> *laughed out loud. Rene beat her own head with the stick and cried out, "Ouch, ouch." Both girls*
> *burst into laughter rolling on the floor. After a few minutes laughing, Rene claimed, "Now let's play*
> *baby and grandma." And she stood up and walked like grandma with the stick again.*

Finding analysis 5: The Mountain – Grandma and Wicked Witch

Scenario 5 is one of the longest, richest and most engaged dramatic play scenarios observed at The
Mountain. Rene was four and Ava was 3-and-half years old. This play scenario happened during a lunch
break time when almost all the other children were out on a trip with most of the teachers and only a few of
the children had stayed at the centre. In this scenario, children used diverse ways to communicate their
narratives. For example, when they pretended to be different characters such as the old lady or the witch,
Rene used different voices to represent her roles.

Scenario 5 presents two aspects of creativity when the children generate and communicate narratives in
dramatic play: divergent thinking and perspective taking. First, the divergent-thinking process was
represented through different uses of the same prop. Rene, for example, used the same rainbow coloured
stick first as an old lady's walking stick, then as the wicked witch's magic wand. These dramatic scenes have
clear start points, such as "pretend you want me to [be] a wicked witch," or "pretend I'm the grandma and
you are the baby." One of the reasons why this scenario included a prominent level of involvement and high
quality of flow was because it was easier to set the dramatic scene using words (e.g., pretend) so that other
children could join and contribute to the play. The use of verbal and nonverbal approaches to set the dramatic
scenarios and invite others to join is further discussed in Chapter 7.

Second, the children demonstrated the ability to take various perspectives. In the scene of using the magic wand, when being turned into something else, the children knew they needed to perform according to their new identities ("*You need to flap your arms like this*"). When being turned into their friend, one could take the other child's perspective. For instance, when being turned into Ava by herself, Rene started hitting her own head, as if she was beating Ava for fun.

Scenario 6: The Mountain – Movie, Rain and Fire

> *Ava, Navarro and Diana were playing in the kitchen corner. Ava called out "Movie time! Movie time!" Navarro also shouted "Movie time." They each took two trays from the kitchen and ran to the carpet. They connected the trays along the longer edge and set them up as laptops. They laid face down on the carpet pretending to watch movies on the laptop. Navarro seemed to enjoy the movie very much. He claimed, "My one is so cool!"*

> *After a minute or two, Navarro suddenly cried out, "Oh! It's raining!" He stood up, grabbed the trays and held them over his head like an umbrella. His friends also stood up and held the trays over their heads. Then Ava cried out loudly, "Stop raining! Stop it!" She seemed a little upset. Navarro explained gently, "But it is raining." Ava reached out her hand pretending to feel the rain, and responded, "No, I can't feel any raindrops." The other two children also reached out their hands trying to feel the raindrops. Then Ava said, "I think we gotta run! Otherwise the fire will get us." So she started running away from the carpet. She ran to the kitchen, put away her trays, found a big blanket and hid herself under it. The other children followed her to go under the blanket. Another boy tried to join the play group under the blanket, but Navarro shouted, "The monster's coming! Run! Run!" so they all came out and ran away.*

Finding analysis 6: The Mountain – Movie, Rain and Fire

Scenario 6 illustrates how children seek power to dominate the play theme through creating and communicating narratives. Four children participated in this scenario, but only Ava and Navarro were at the centre of the play, and they were competing as well as co-operating to create this dramatic play episode.

At first the children were all enjoying their "movie time" suggested by Ava. Then Navarro started a new play scene and transformed the play prop (trays) into a new pretend object (umbrella) by calling out "It's raining." At this time, Navarro was the owner of the play narrative. In order not to lose control of the play, Ava first tried to deny the new story scene verbally (claiming "*Stop raining*"). But Navarro insisted his power of creating the story ("*Yes, it is raining*"). Then Ava tried out a new strategy using dramatic body movement (reaching out her hand to feel the raindrops). The body movement in this case was more concrete and easier for the other children to follow. Afterward Ava strengthened her control of the play by creating another scene (the fire and running away). As in the situation Margaret Carr (2001) described, Ava "repositioned herself from the periphery to the centre, and all the players appeared to enjoy the tension along the way." (p. 58). Moreover, to maintain the dramatic play, the needs and wishes of the players were negotiated. This dynamic process is similar to the flow state identified by Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1992),

where choice and control over activity are said to lead to deep concentration, pleasure, and satisfaction. Last, but not least, while the children were hiding under the blanket, pretending that the other child coming was a monster, Navarro started another play scene (running away from the monster). It is also a strategy to exclude someone from the play.

Scenarios 3, 4, 5, and 6 show the process of communicating narratives. In this process, creativity manifests in children's dramatic play through social interactions. Creativity is never a simple outcome, but the combination of several complex processes. From the observation of these scenarios, it is seen that children are able to communicate the narratives they create through many different approaches, with the social distribution of creativity is realised in this process.

Finding 3: Adults' Influence on Children's Agency

Besides interacting with peers, social interactions also happen between the children and the teachers. Some scenarios revealed ways in which adults were involved in children's engagement in dramatic play.

Scenarios 7, 8, and 9 demonstrate the adults' influence in enabling or hindering children's agency. Children's agency is enabled through ownership and control of the narratives in play, which are pivotal characteristics in creative learning (Jeffrey & Woods, 2003). According to Craft et al. (2014), there are three kinds of roles that adults take in children's agency development in play: 1) giving them time and space to play; 2) engaging in the play to support and extend the play story or the use of materials; and 3) intervening and managing the play, which could also effectively suspend play. The following scenarios were selected based on these three perspectives (Craft et al., 2014).

Scenario 7: The Bay – Car Prison

There was a tiny decorative statue on a shelf at The Bay. It consisted of several dancing figures hand in hand, forming a circle. Three boys were playing with toy cars nearby. They took the statue off the shelf, pretending that the circle in the middle of the dancers was a "car prison" and the dancing figures were the mountains. The children pretended that they had to fly the car over the mountains but must be very careful not to fall into the car prison. They kept on trying, driving the car up and down, producing sound effects of the cars flying or crashing, and shouting happily.

After a few minutes, one teacher came into the room and saw the boys playing. She immediately stopped them and said, "This is not a toy for you to play with." Then she asked the children to put the statue back on the shelf and the toy cars on the toy car track. But the boys seemed not to be interested in playing with the car track. They simply put the statue back, left their cars on the floor and went away.

Finding analysis 7: The Bay – Car Prison

This scenario describes an example of children's creativity demonstrated in the alternative use of materials in dramatic play, as well as how an adult's action interrupted the children's dramatic play flow. The boys were at first playing with the cars on the car track, but soon they found the statue on the shelf, and decided to use it

as a new and more exciting car track. The crater in the middle was the car prison, which they needed to avoid, and the dancing figures represented the mountains their cars need to overcome. This alternative use of the statue indicates their creativity and imagination, as using materials in different ways is by definition one aspect of the cognitive process of creativity.

Although the alternative use of play material in Scenario 7 is similar to what was observed in Scenarios 5 and 6, the play developed in a different direction. Unlike the other two, Scenario 7 ended unexpectedly because of teacher intervention. The teacher asked the children to "play with the cars on the car track," which is the standard use of the play material. The statue was not of cultural significance, nor delicate, but viewed as a miniature with artistic and aesthetic value. Her request for the children to stop playing with the statue reflected a belief which could be opposite to creative education recommendations – to encourage innovative thinking in different directions, searching and seeking varieties (Guilford, 1959). Also, this teacher believed that children should not play with items that are not considered "toys," the definition of which is something designed to be played with. However, it would be difficult for creativity to be cultivated if children are not allowed to drive cars anywhere but on car tracks even in dramatic play, as the core of creativity is to invite something new and surprising into the protocol (Bruner, 1962). As a result, this scenario ended up with children not continuing but abandoning the play theme completely, which goes against the idea of providing a supportive environment for dramatic play and creativity to flow.

Scenario 8: The Mountain – Blocks in the Kitchen Corner

> Children dumped a box of blocks on the ground of the kitchen corner and started putting them into the microwave, sink and washing machine one by one.

> The teacher's voice was heard from the other end of the room and the children suddenly paused their play, "I'm gonna count to 10, and all blocks are back into the box over there, 1, 2…"

> Children quickly collected the blocks, but one girl was reluctant to put back the blocks that were in the washing machine. When Westin wanted to collect them, she said "No" and tried to close the washing machine door. So Westin said to the teacher, "There's some more… She doesn't…" while the girl looked at the teacher (and me) anxiously.

> When children put the blocks back, the teacher told me, "Kitchen is for kitchen play. Blocks should be played [at] in the block area. Things should go to where [it] they should be."

Finding analysis 8: The Mountain – Blocks in the Kitchen Corner

Scenario 8 demonstrates a situation similar to Scenario 7. At The Mountain, blocks were stored in a separate room next to the carpet area. Each day the teachers would put out one or two types of blocks for children to play with on the carpet. Children could also ask the teacher for a specific kind of block if they wanted to. Therefore, the children's free choice of blocks was limited because not all the blocks were within their reach and for them to choose freely. Also, at The Mountain, the rule was to keep the play materials in the place

where they were set up, e.g., if some connecting blocks were set up on a certain table, the children should only play with them on this table and not to take them elsewhere.

In a similar way to the situation at The Bay, the flow of the children's play was sometimes interrupted by adults at The Mountain. The rule for children not to carry away the play materials, especially small pieces, was set not only to endorse the children's sense of belonging, but also to save teachers' time and energy to tidy up afterwards. However, the setting was in opposition to the nature of loose parts, which is about being able to be carried around freely (Nicholson, 1972). Loose-parts play, which involves the introduction of moveable materials and equipment in children's play spaces and inviting them to engage as they wish with little or no adult direction, is believed to have a positive influence on children's creative play (Gibson et al., 2017). Interestingly, loose parts were endorsed in teachers' interviews at The Bay as important for children's dramatic play and creativity. The inconsistency between the teachers' interview and the observations of children's play is further discussed in the next chapter.

Scenario 9: The Mountain – Tiger Eating Playdough

> Three children were playing with playdough around the table. A teacher was with them. A toy tiger was left on the table. The teacher asked, "There's a tiger on the playdough table. What's he doing here?"

> Todd quickly took the tiger and started using it to punch the playdough in front of a girl. The girl was shocked by Todd's action and started crying "No!" The teacher then asked the girl, "Look, is the tiger hungry?" Hearing this, the girl stopped crying, looked at the teacher and said: "Yes, because the tiger was eating." Then the teacher asked, "What does the tiger like to eat?" The girl said, "Playdough. Cos he ate a lot of playdough." Todd then started putting playdough around the tiger, until he almost wrapped it up, and said, "My tiger is getting stronger."

Finding analysis 9: The Mountain – Tiger Eating Playdough

Scenario 9 illustrates another example of an adult's role in children's dramatic play, which is different from Scenarios 7 and 8. The adult and the girl in this scenario were visitors from another centre. Todd was a 4-year-old boy at The Mountain. The toy tiger was not supposed to be on the playdough table, just like the mini statue in Scenario 7 and blocks in the kitchen corner in Scenario 8. However, instead of asking the children to stop using the toy tiger and putting it away, as the teachers did in Scenarios 7 and 8, the teacher in Scenario 9 supported the children to incorporate the toy tiger in their playdough play. Moreover, when facing the possible social conflict caused by the misplaced toy tiger on the playdough table, the teacher chose not to interrupt but to model to the children how to solve the problems through dramatic play. The teacher asked open-ended questions ("*What's the tiger doing here?*" and "*What does the tiger like to eat?*"), which helps to solve the possible social conflict, as well as foster development of pretend narratives.

The contrast between Scenario 9, and Scenarios 7 and 8 illustrates a new perspective for teachers to consider in dealing with social conflicts among children. In addition to supervising, the adults' role in children-led dramatic play in ECE settings could be more active. The successful application of certain strategies would

help teachers in creating a supportive environment for creativity to distribute and develop. These strategies are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Finding 4: Problem Solving

Problem solving is the fourth example of creativity manifested in children's dramatic play. Problem solving is considered a salient part of creative learning (Gaither et al., 2015). Creative learning comprises a series of means such as questioning, inquiring, searching, experimenting, and exploring, which are shared by the problem-solving processes. Therefore, children's creativity could be manifested through their ways of solving problems in play, or using dramatic play to solve everyday problems.

Scenario 10: The Bay – Argument and Bears

> Aiden and Harry just had a fight so Aiden got upset and went over to the art table. Harry got a box of tiny toy bears. He showed the box to Aiden and said, "I'll play with these, okay?" Aiden did not look at Harry and replied "No." Harry picked out the biggest bear from the box, handed it over to Aiden and said, "You can have the papa bear and I have the babies, okay?"

> Aiden hesitated for a few seconds, then said "Yes," but did not take the bear and still did not look at Harry. Then Harry picked up a tiny bear from the box, holding it in his other hand and shouted, "Help, help! Papa bear help!"

> This time Aiden looked up at Harry and the bears. After Harry called for help several times, Aiden took the big bear and the box from Harry and said "I'm coming." Then they started playing with the baby bears falling down and papa bear rescuing them for a long time.

Finding analysis 10: The Bay – Argument and Bears

This scenario is an example of how children make use of dramatic play to solve social conflict. Aiden and Harry were friends who often played together at The Bay. Harry likes physical activities and it is difficult for him to sit still for a long time and engage in quieter activities. Harry's father, Eric, participated in the parents' interview for this research. Eric suggested that Harry was very energetic and not very emotional or sensitive. According to his father, Harry was not into dramatic play, especially family play, which Eric considered as "something only girls like to play." During the observations at The Bay, the teachers were completing a behavioural assessment for Harry as a document for school transition. One teacher came to me and asked for my impression of Harry, and she suggested that Harry was considered by most of the teachers as "difficult to tame" as he always engaged in conflicts with other children and "almost never listens to you." Disagreements occurring between Harry and Aiden were commonly seen during the observations, but this affective episode was not expected to happen. In contrast to what the teacher and his father believed, Harry did engage in family dramatic play and, even more, could successfully invite his argumentative friend to join him. This scenario shows how dramatic play provides a child who is perceived as "not very sensitive and emotional" with a way to solve arguments with his friend.

The communication skill Harry used to invite Aiden into the dramatic play demonstrates some unique features, unlike that used in Scenario 5 where dramatic themes were conveyed using explicit verbal approaches ("*Pretend I'm the grandma,*" "*Pretend you want me to be the wicked witch*"). Communication in this scenario has undergone a process from explicit to more implicit and nonverbal. At first Harry tried to invite Aiden into his dramatic play by saying, "*You can have the papa bear and I have the baby,*" but his invitation was rejected. Then Harry changed to a more implicit approach of pretending that the baby bear was falling and calling for help. This time Aiden became interested in the theme and agreed to participate. The communication skills of dramatic play have pedagogical implications, which are discussed further in Chapter 7.

Scenario 11: The Mountain – Calling the Police

> Two girls were driving trucks and running after Todd around the playground. Todd tried to stop them by calling out, "Stop please! Don't chase me!", but the girls did not listen to him and continued chasing and laughing.

> Todd came up with an idea. He shouted, "Stop! I'll call the police now." Then he pretended to talk on the phone, "Hi police, I got a sister driving too fast. Can you come and put them in jail?" While he was calling the police, the girls stopped running and listened to him carefully. Todd put the "phone" down and told the girls, "Now he's coming and you can't chase me anymore." Then he ran away, and the girls looked at each other and did not follow him anymore.

Finding analysis 11: The Mountain – Calling the Police

Scenario 11 is another scene of children practising problem solving in dramatic play. In this scenario, Todd wanted to play by himself and felt annoyed by the girls chasing him. However, instead of crying or seeking help from the teachers or even fighting with the girls, he used a very effective strategy – he "called the police" to stop the girls. The interesting part was that he did not report to the police that he was being chased. Instead, he reported another issue (speeding), which was relevant in this situation as the girls were chasing him with the trucks, but this was not directly targeted against the girls' actions.

The creativity in this scenario is manifested through transforming daily practices into pretend themes. Most of the children's dramatic play themes are drawn from their previous experiences observed at home and in the community, or in early childhood settings. However, instead of just copying what he saw from adults, Todd transformed the experiences into dramatic action. In this scenario, Todd's knowledge of speeding and making phone calls was processed and internalised from previous life experiences, and, in combination with the pretend play, it helped Todd to develop his strategy of problem solving. His creativity was shown in combining and creatively reworking elements of his past experiences and using them to generate new behaviours (Vygotsky, 2004).

These scenarios show effective ways of inviting others into dramatic play. When initiating a dramatic scenario, there are four approaches incorporating two categories that children could use: implicit or explicit, and verbal or nonverbal (Sawyer, 1997). These approaches are called metacommunication skills. Some

approaches have been demonstrated in previous scenarios, for example, in Scenario 5 Rene used an explicit verbal metacommunication approach by asking her friend to "*pretend you want me to be wicked witch*." Another example is from Scenario 10 where Harry used an implicit nonverbal approach of crying like a baby bear. In Scenario 11, Todd applied the implicit verbal approach, pretending to make a phone call to report a speeding case to the police and explaining the pretend situation to the girls. This metacommunication approach has proved to be effective in communicating dramatic narratives in this case. Thus, these scenarios have implications for teachers' pedagogical practices to foster dramatic play and creativity through encouraging, enabling, and acknowledging metacommunication skills in ECE settings.

Finding 5: Functions of Play Materials

Most of the dramatic play scenarios involve the use of play materials. The original and alternative ways children make use of play materials demonstrates their creativity. For example, sticks could become wands, ropes attached to poles could become fishing rods, and pies, cakes, and tea are served using sand and water in the sandpit. The ECE centre or setting can also be a resource for dramatic play. For example, the whole playground could become the ocean, where children become mermaids or fight crocodiles. According to the theoretical framework, constant interactions with play props show the material distribution that becomes manifested in children's creativity (Glăveanu, 2010a). Scenarios 12 and 13 are examples of how children use materials to achieve dramatic play goals creatively.

Scenario 12: The Bay – Zombie

> *The teacher took out a huge box of dress-up clothes. Hudson put on a pair of black ripped pants and claimed, "I got a zombie clothes." Hudson started walking with his hands stretched in front, tongue stuck out and big tip-toe steps just like a zombie. Aaron watched him laughing out loud. Hudson kept walking like a zombie after Bianca, and Bianca tried to run away while shrieking happily. Then Bianca tripped over a pile of clothes and knelt down on the carpet. Hudson came after and piggybacked her and they both fell down. Hudson then got up and zombie walked towards Aaron. Aaron waved a black jacket at Hudson, "Ah! Stay out!" Hudson jumped back as if being shocked, and quickly escaped through the door. Aaron started putting the jacket on.*

> *Hudson soon came back in, zombie walking. He picked up a cow's hat from the pile and asked "What's this hat?" and put the hat on. Aaron laughed out loud, "You look like a girl! I'm Spiderman" and started to spit out spider webs to attack the zombie. Hudson responded "No, I'm a cow, I'm a zombie cow." And started mooing.*

> *Hudson then took the hat off. He found the huge box that was used to store all the dress-up clothes. He claimed, "This is the zombie's hiding place." Aaron came from behind and disagreed, "No, that's my car" and jumped into the huge box and lay belly up.*

Finding analysis 12: The Bay – Zombie

Scenario 12 represents the function of play materials in children's dramatic play. The children who participated in this scenario were all 4 years old, and they were a group of friends who tended to play

together all the time. According to the teacher interviews, dress-up clothes are commonly used play materials evident in children's dramatic play scenarios. After dressing up, children transform themselves into new identities and thus perform completely different sets of actions. In this scenario, Hudson, wearing a pair of ripped pants, developed a range of zombie stories using his imagination. For example, he was walking like a zombie and pretending to attack others like a zombie. After being driven away by Spiderman, the zombie became a zombie cow. Finally, he found himself a zombie hiding place. In this case, a complicated and comprehensive story about zombies was developed around the play prop, a pair of ripped pants. The child's creativity is vividly demonstrated through constant interaction with the play materials, as well as the other children involved in the dramatic play.

Another aspect of creativity demonstrated in this scenario was the alternative use of play materials. A box for adults to store the dress-up clothes can be a zombie hiding place in a zombie story, or a car for the superhero. The box was not meant to be a toy, just like the mini statue in Scenario 7. Fortunately, this time there was no adult stopping the zombie from hiding in his place, or the super hero driving his car. This example also illustrates an environment that is valued as a place where children do not need to agree on a single "correct" use of one prop, but can decide on and maintain their own understandings of the material.

Scenario 13: The Mountain – Going Fishing

> Todd and Westin each had a long bamboo stick with a bucket tied to one end. Todd was standing at the entrance of the bridge. He used his stick to bar the way up the bridge. When Westin came Todd asked, "Do you have any fish?" Westin answered yes and handed over his bucket to Todd. Todd pretended to pick the "fish" out of Westin's bucket and said, "Oh, I'm gonna eat it!" so he pretended to put the fish in his mouth and swallowed. Westin asked, "Can I come in now?" Todd nodded and lifted the stick to let Westin pass. Westin then barred the bridge with his stick as Todd did before. So Todd pretended to hand something over to Westin and said, "Here's some ticket." So Westin took the "ticket" and let Todd in.

> Todd then suggested, "Hey, pretend that I'm the mother and you are the dad. Hey, Dad?" Westin answered, "Hey. Let's go fishing." He then sunk the bucket down under the bridge while holding the other end of the stick, pretending to fish. Todd followed him. Some other children were trying to snatch their buckets from under the bridge. Westin shouted out, "Give my fishy!" and pulled the stick up. Todd also called, "Give my fishy!" and helped Westin to get his bucket back. They changed to the other side of the bridge to fish, making noises of water splashing when Lyla came up on the bridge. Westin exclaimed, "No! The girl!" so the boys retreated to the other end of the bridge. Westin said, "We're going to find a new home!" Todd agreed, "I'm going to find a new home!"

> Westin slid down with his stick and Todd followed him. They tried to go somewhere else, but finally decided to climb up the slide again. Todd climbed up first and Westin handed over one end of his stick to Todd, "Hold on to this and pull me up."

Finding analysis 13: The Mountain – Going Fishing

Scenario 13 illustrates the distribution of creativity along both material and social lines. This scenario is a combination of and a transformation between several different play themes. The play materials in this scenario are two long bamboo sticks, each with a bucket tied to one end. At first the boys used the sticks to bar the bridge like a checkpoint. Then they used the props as fishing rods. At some point the props became a safety rope. In these pretend themes, both the boys took an active part in generating narratives and interacting with each other and with the play props. They took turns to suggest original ways of using the props to form new dramatic play themes, and put effort into maintaining and progressing each other's narratives.

The props used in this scenario were different from the ordinary toys. The props were made by the teachers by combining two materials together. By connecting two remotely related play materials, teachers create an innovative link suggesting new possibilities to children. In the distributed creativity framework, the material property can foster (or hinder) the distribution of creativity. Instead of stopping children from playing with what is not a toy such as in Scenario 7, teachers could offer children more choices by setting up or making more play props out of existing materials, such as illustrated in Scenario 13, by tying them together. The new presentations might be able to generate more creative opportunities in their dramatic play. The material property and its influence are further discussed in Chapter 7.

Finding 6: Affective Expression

Affective expressions were seen in many of the observations pertaining to children's dramatic play. Affect is one of the core concepts of creativity as expressed in the methodology chapter (Connery, 2010). The affective processes observed in this research include the projection of real-life emotions into dramatic play themes, and the emotions appropriately generated from dramatic scenarios, such as joy or fear. According to the creativity and dramatic play model, affective processes, together with cognitive processes, have a role to play in developing children's creativity (Russ, 2014). As shown in Scenarios 14, 15, and 16, appropriate affective expressions in dramatic play not only serve as a sign of creative expression, but also support healthy emotional development.

Scenario 14: The Bay – Hugging the Puppet

> *Tessa was 2 years and 10 months old. She had a baby sister who was sick at the time of the observation, so most of the time her mother had to stay home caring for the baby.*

> *Tessa was crying one morning, wanting to see her mum. I pretended to call her mum using a toy cell phone, and invited Tessa to talk to her mum on the phone. She accepted my pretend scene and talked to her mum on the phone several times before she stopped crying.*

> *At lunch time, Tessa seemed be in a bit of a hurry and left the table quickly. I was sitting on the carpet during their lunch time reading my field notes. Tessa came up to me directly from the lunch table holding a human figure puppet, and sat on my lap. Tessa showed me the puppet and said, "He*

was crying in the morning, because he missed his mum. But now he's okay, because he has me."
Then Tessa hugged the puppet and patted his back gently.

Finding analysis 14: The Bay – Hugging the Puppet

Scenario 14 demonstrates how children express real-life emotions in pretend scenarios to help themselves cope. In this scenario, Tessa had projected her emotions onto the puppet while giving herself a position as a caretaker. Because her mother needed to take care of the sick baby, Tessa might have felt a sense of separation and a need for parental care. Her crying in the morning showed her emotional state of being upset and anxious. Fortunately, Tessa was able to process and comprehend her emotional need, and generate a story from the situation. By hugging and patting the puppet who was "missing his mum" she realised the relief this gave her related to her own emotional needs.

This scenario also indicates the role of dramatic play in solving affective problems in development. It is similar to Scenario 4 where Harriet projected her separation anxiety onto the family dramatic play. As illustrated in Process 4, dramatic play assists cognitive problem solving. Cognitive and affective processes are two main components of human creativity, and dramatic play assists both aspects of development. Therefore, it is evident from the observation that children's creativity can distribute along both cognitive and affective lines through dramatic play.

Scenario 15: The Bay – Yummy Fish

Daniel and Tiantian were sitting beside the craft table. Tiantian collected a bunch of sea animal toys, and Daniel had a pair of tongs. Tiantian piled the animals in front of them. Daniel pointed to the fish and said, "I want to eat the fish." Tiantian took the tongs, "I will serve them for you. Do you want a big one?" Daniel nodded. Tiantian caught a whale toy and passed it to Daniel. Daniel said "Thank you" and pretended to eat happily. Tiantian then said "Give it to me when you finish" and took the whale away.

Daniel then said, "I want to eat that one." He pointed at another whale. Tiantian said "okay" and passed it to Daniel using the tongs. Daniel then pretended to eat carefully. After he finished Tiantian took it away again. Tiantian asked, "Which shell do you want to eat?" Daniel answered "This one" and pointed at the seal. Tiantian passed it to Daniel and Daniel pretended to eat. Then Tiantian took it away. They did the same action again and again several times before all the animals were put away. Daniel seemed satisfied and patted his tummy, "Now my belly is so fat." Tiantian then passed another shell to Daniel and said, "Now I'll give you chocolate."

Finding analysis 15: The Bay – Yummy Fish

Scenario 15 demonstrates another aspect of an affective process in children's dramatic play. Daniel and Tiantian were cousins of the same age. They tended to play with each other most of the time when they were at The Bay, and talked to each other in Chinese, their first language. Pretending to eat delicious food represents an important affective theme related to the processes of creativity in dramatic play (Russ, 2014).

In this scenario, the children engaged in a typical eating theme. They were fully immersed in the satisfaction of eating the fish, as well as the positive emotion of helping and serving others.

The main play props in this scenario, the plastic toy animals, are materials commonly offered by early childhood settings. During the observations, children from both centres were observed playing with them in various ways, but mostly during family play (mummy and baby shark), and adventurous play (animal hunting, fighting or war against each other). In this scenario, treating the toy animal as food is a different way of transforming the play materials, which could also be a symbol of the children's divergent-thinking abilities.

Scenario 15 was conducted using the children's first language from home. Daniel was observed to engage in more dramatic play with Tiantian than with any other children at The Bay. Some teachers expressed their concern about Daniel, wishing that he could spend more time with other children. However, it is inevitable for children from minority groups to play more confidently with someone who speaks the same language. The issue of diverse language experiences of children from immigrant or minority group families was also raised in the teachers and parents' interviews, and is further discussed in Chapter 7.

Scenario 16: The Mountain – Sword Fighting

Kauri, Lyla, and Westin were playing in the kitchen area. Westin and Lyla pretended to stab Kauri with an imaginary sword. Kauri tumbled around on the floor laughing out loud, and sometimes fought back. Lyla found a toy puppy so she pretended the dog was barking at and biting Kauri.

After rumbling and tumbling and laughing and screaming for several minutes, Kauri got up and ran away. Lyla cried out, "My sword! Go!" and ran after Kauri to the carpet area. Westin followed them trying to "stab" Kauri with his imaginary sword again. They constantly made noises of weapons fighting, and yelling at each other.

While they were playing and I was observing, they often paused and looked at me, as if checking whether their behaviours were permitted. After a few minutes, a teacher came and told the children, "I think you need to play outside if you play those games, ok?" Hearing the teacher, the children immediately stopped playing and walked away.

Finding analysis 16: The Mountain – Sword Fighting

Scenario 16 demonstrates the joy children gained from dramatic play, which is an indicator of absorption and creativity (Russ, 2014). Pretend fighting was one of the most common themes evident from the observations at both centres. During most of the time in this scenario, the children were playing with barely any props, except Lyla's toy puppy. All the stabbing and sword fighting were imagined using body movements and sound effects. The children were highly involved and gained pleasure from pretending, as well as being physically active.

This scenario was stopped by a teacher, reinforcing the rules of "no such play inside the room." Their joy in pretending ended as soon as they heard the teacher. It was also obvious that the children paid close attention

to an adult's presence during play, checking constantly on my reaction to see if their behaviours were allowed – even if I was the only adult around and I was neither a teacher nor had ever stopped them from playing before. Their reaction demonstrates the impact of the rules and adults' intervention in the free flow of children's dramatic play, which is also in line with Process 3 of the findings, adults' influence on children's agency.

Observation Summary

As presented in Chapter 4, the 16 scenarios discussed in this chapter were selected from observations at two early childhood centres. Some scenarios involved the pretend play of only one child, while other scenarios focused on sociodramatic play involving two or more children. The lengths of the scenarios vary from less than 1 minute to more than 10 minutes. All scenarios represent some aspects of creativity, both cognitively and affectively.

This chapter is organised around the research question related to how young children's creativity is generated through dramatic play. The observations covered six processes regarding creativity in children's dramatic play. The organisation of the processes aligns with the theoretical framework: Processes 1 to 4 demonstrate the roles of social interactions in dramatic play and creativity; Process 5 shows the function of materials in creativity distribution; Process 6 illustrates the importance of emotions, which although not included in the three dimensions of distribution, are considered a crucial element in creativity and development (Glăveanu, 2009). The third dimension, temporality, is also evident in many scenarios throughout all the processes. In sum, children's creativity is clearly illustrated and manifested in their dramatic play, through interactions with other children, the teacher, and through original uses of play materials.

The observations are complemented by interviews with the teachers and parents. Some interview questions are based on findings evident from the observations. A more direct link to the research question about the provision of a supportive environment to foster creativity in ECE settings is framed and developed with the analysis of the teacher and parent interviews in the following chapter.

Chapter 6 Findings from Interviews

Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings that emerged from interviews with teachers and parents. As described in Chapter 4, the interviews were semistructured, and conducted one on one at the two centres. The questions were designed based on the review of literature and primary findings generated from the observations (see Appendices I and J). Six teachers and six parents in total participated in the interviews, sharing their ideas, opinions and thoughts related to children's dramatic play, creativity, and diverse experiences. For purposes of anonymity, pseudonyms are given to all participants.

Section 1: Findings from teacher interviews

This section responds to the following research subquestion: What role do diverse experiences play in the development of young children's creativity in ECE settings? To answer the question, teachers' ideas are categorised into several aspects related to the environment and children's experiences: teachers' understanding of the concepts of dramatic play and creativity, family environment, materials and spaces, cross-generational differences in dramatic play, and teachers' understanding of diverse experiences and their influence. The findings of teacher interviews from the two centres are presented separately for further analysis.

The Bay

Three teachers at The Bay, Rose, Amy and Olena, participated in the teacher interviews. Rose is a Māori teacher who had been working in the ECE field for 6 years, and had been working at The Bay for 1 year. Amy started her career as an early childhood teacher at The Bay 5 years ago. Olena is from Europe, and had been living in New Zealand for 3 years. She had been working at The Bay for nearly 2 years.

Teachers' Understanding of the Concepts of Dramatic Play and Creativity. Teachers at The Bay agreed on some features about dramatic play, such as its imaginative nature and similarity with role play. For example, Olena explained that dramatic play is "how children express their wellbeing, their inside world … they create an imaginative world inside them, and they [create] different characters for themselves" (Q.2, see Appendix I for questions). Rose described dramatic play as children playing the role of something using dress-up costumes, or making their own costumes such as capes and masks with paper and Sellotape for their roles.

The teachers shared their own dramatic play experiences when they were children, which helped to define their views of dramatic play. Rose remembered playing shopkeepers and teachers, as well as themes from TV shows and movies. Olena liked to pretend to be the roles from fairy tales, especially animals such as the fox. Amy identified herself a builder, as her favourite form of dramatic play was building a pretend house in the garden.

Teachers at The Bay had specific opinions about creativity. On one hand, they saw creativity as a cognitive process of thinking outside the box. Olena suggested that creativity is something that "grows from within. Like when you are a child, you see the environment around you, and the feelings [of creating] … will just grow within [yourself]. Some people will at some stage lose it, but others [will not]" (Olena, Q.8). On the other hand, as Amy and Rose both indicated, creativity shows up when children make crafts using different materials. For example, when asked to provide an example of children's creativity, the two teachers both mentioned Christian, "the box king" (Amy, Q.8). He was "constantly making things with boxes and recycles and the big Sellotape. He will just constantly wrap it [things] around and around and around, but he was always aiming to make a tower or something" (Rose, Q.8). In this case, the child's creativity was illustrated in creating crafts with recycled materials, boxes, and tape.

Teachers' Roles in Dramatic Play. When asked what teachers can do to foster dramatic play, each teacher held a specific perspective. Olena argued that children's creativity is something that happens naturally, because "most of the times children are just spontaneously [creating], as you can see [creativity] coming out from the child" (Olena, Q.8). Therefore, to support dramatic play, it is important to support children's freedom of choice and expression. For example, Olena suggested that it is better for adults to stand back and observe children's play rather than getting into the play, unless invited by the children themselves. Rose agreed with this idea, stating that it is important "not pushing the children to do this or that, as it's their free choice" (Rose, Q.8) and "it's good for us to stand back and let the child do that [engage in her own form of dramatic play]" (Rose, Q.7).

However, Amy presented a slightly different perspective, indicating that creativity needs guidance to flourish. One approach for teachers to foster dramatic play or other creative activities is to ask open-ended questions. As Amy expressed, "it would help children to engage [in creative play] by asking them questions, like, what about this, what about that. Or let's go and grab a computer and research it" (Amy, Q.8).

Social Influence. According to teachers at The Bay, a broader social influence on children's dramatic play came from popular culture and a variety of media, including television shows, movies and cartoons, music, or videos from YouTube and Netflix. All the teachers responded with their observations of children playing the characters from popular movies, such as Frozen or Spiderman. Olena gave an example of how children like to ask her to play the song from the cartoon, *Madagascar*. When the children hear the song, "they create dramatic play… they imagine themselves being those creatures" (Olena, Q.3).

Family environment was considered an important source of dramatic play. Children's ideas for dramatic play arise from what they observe related to the adults around them or what other family members do. For example, Olena stated that children sometimes "want to do the same thing as we do, like imitating grown-ups" (Olena, Q.2). Rose explained that "you'll see all the girls working in the kitchen, maybe like their mums… Not only the environment here [at the centre], but also the environment at home. I guess that's where [creativity] starts" (Rose, Q.3, Q.8). Family structure, e.g., being the only child or having siblings,

could also influence what dramatic play the children choose. Regarding the case of a boy who loved gun play, Amy offered this reflection:

> It's part of his home culture [that] as the only child he's got a lot of resources … for his culture it's more likely to have … the plastic things … the more tangible … or life-like things to play with, [rather than] using a stick or using Lego or using a building block [as guns]. (Amy, Q.4)

The influence of peers was also obvious in teachers' reflection about children's dramatic play. Children add their imaginations to others' play so their play becomes more inclusive and creative. As one teacher explained, "they all influence each other" (Amy, Q.12).

Material Environment. The material conditions related to dramatic play discussed by teachers included three aspects: availability of resources, loose parts, and storytelling. The availability of resources has a great influence on dramatic play. Rose articulated that it's important "to have most props available, and the environment too. Within the centre, [creativity] is about making sure everything's available for them, resources, tools, props" (Rose, Q.2). For example, because she believed that family life has a huge influence on dramatic play, Rose stated that they were "try[ing] to make the family play area a home-like environment as much as we can" (Rose, Q.3), so that their family play could easily unfold. It suggested that teachers would consider a family environment to dictate the type of family play children engage in.

Even if children do not have all the play props needed, their creativity can still flourish by making their own play props out of unstructured materials, or loose parts. For example, when a child asked to be a Ninja Turtle, many other children wanted to join in. As the centre did not have enough Ninja Turtle dress-up costumes for everyone, Amy tried to guide them in making their own turtle costumes. Creativity in this case, as Amy stated, is about children making their own play props using available materials. She explained:

> [Children said] I want this, so Mum goes to buy the dress up for them. [Where's] the creativity in that? [Instead,] we just get a box over, chop it up, and make it into a turtle shell. Then what can we use as a mask? Would string work? No. Would paper work? Maybe. We just find some material and let's explore. (Amy, Q.8)

Providing loose parts, rather than ready-made toys, is believed by the teachers to have a positive influence on children's dramatic play and creativity. Rose suggested that children can choose from and use the loose parts freely and creatively to build something new. For instance, the centre has provided children with big pipes and tyres in the playground, and children often generate creative ideas using them. Rose observed, "You'll be surprised that they just take … what they need, and turn it into a big house or something. They are really the true leaders of their creative play" (Rose, Q.8).

Another key aspect of the material influence on children's dramatic play is storytelling. The teachers suggested two ways storytelling could foster children's dramatic play. One is to inspire their imagination, the other is to motivate them to create their own stories or dramatic play. Rose explained her understanding of creative storytelling and its role in generating dramatic play:

We do creative storytelling as well. We don't have to use a book; we can use our imagination … you have a whiteboard and a pen and then you might draw two people and you can tell the story. You can draw the roads or the houses. They are so engaged. They love to see what's going to come out ... In terms of catering [for] dramatic play, a lot of the storytelling is through books, inspirations [or] just having those available. (Rose, Q.3)

When teachers tell the stories to the children, they are actually encouraging and inspiring the children to tell, or create, their own stories (Olena, Q.11). One way of teachers' creative storytelling is mixing up different stories. Rose offered her practice of mixing up two stories as an example:

I did Goldilocks once, and I took her into the story of the three pigs and the wolf, while the kids were like, "no! That's not how it goes!" But then they were just so curious to see what's going to happen next. It really grabs their attention. (Rose, Q.11)

Children also actively participate in creative storytelling. They take up characters from the stories but assign them new roles and put them into a different theme of dramatic play. For example, after hearing the story of *The Three Little Pigs*, the boys incorporated the story into their superhero play. As Amy described, "the more active boys were running around being superheroes, saying that 'I'm gonna build a house of straw, I'm gonna build a house of brick'" (Amy, Q.2).

The stories of Māori gods and legends are a significant part of the stories told in the centre. As Amy stated, "the children got very immersed in … the Māori gods. They know who they are, what they do, their stories, … and they talk about them in their conversations" (Amy, Q.9). Rose also indicated that the Māori myths and legends are popular at The Bay. She suggested that "[the myths and legends] are a role play … [Children] like to be the most powerful god" (Rose, Q.3). Therefore, children incorporate the Māori gods and legends in their dramatic play. For example, Rose outlined one of her observations of a boy up on the big box on a windy day, pretending to be Tawhirimatea, the god of the winds, acting like a big superhero so that he can blow everyone away (Rose, Q.4).

Cross-Generational Comparison of Dramatic Play. The influence of time on dramatic play is illustrated in the comparison between dramatic play of different generations. All the teachers agreed that children today had wider ranges of materials and resources available to play with than previous generations, but the materials were more artificial. As Amy stated, "the ones we [the adults] had were a lot more natural, such as sticks and grass" (Amy, Q.10). Thus, she argued that today's children are losing the practical skills of problem solving. The example Amy offered was of a boy who loved gun play and always brought his toy guns from home:

It's like, [he said] "I want my gun." [And I asked] "could you use something else for a gun?" [He said] "no, no, no, I just want that one." [Then I said] "let's look around the centre to find something else that you could use for a gun." [He responded] "no, no. I don't want that." (Amy, Q.10)

Both Amy and Olena suggested that children today spend more time indoors with their electronic devices, such as computers and iPads, while the teachers remembered spending lots of time outside playing with each other (Olena, Q.10).

Teachers' Reflections on Diverse Experiences. When discussing diverse experiences with teachers at The Bay, they all acknowledged children's diverse cultural backgrounds. However, they preferred not to specifically identify the cultural differences but rather to form one universal culture at the centre. They believed that the children's cultural background does not play a crucial role in their play. For example, Rose suggested that children play together without considering the cultural differences:

> Four boys were a group, with Christian from Russia and Aaron who is South African, and Joshua and Hudson who are Chinese. It seems that their thinking for creative dramatic play is similar. It's not so much a cultural thing. They tend to gravitate to one another who are the same, who are just similar in behaviours or as people rather than [cultures]. (Rose, Q.9)

Olena expanded on Rose's idea. She believed that children do not understand cultural differences, but consider themselves from the same "one culture" (Olena, Q.9). Teachers need to cater for a specific culture at the centre that is inclusive to them all. This could be a reason why, when asked about play related to culture, Olena felt that it is less important to differentiate between cultures. She emphasised the importance of children's involvement and inclusiveness in the play rather than talking about cultural differences. To Olena, "it's very interesting how you think that [something] is just in your culture, but in fact it's not. We all share the same values and we all share the same interests" (Olena, Q.4).

Teachers' interviews also reflected the bicultural nature of New Zealand society. To Olena, who is a European immigrant, the children in New Zealand are born bicultural, with Māori culture part of their life, no matter who they are ethnically (Olena, Q.9). Amy held a different view that most of the children do not have a Māori cultural influence at home. She believed that it is the centre's responsibility to give them an opportunity to come to know the Māori culture so that when they go to school they can enjoy other culturally related activities, such as joining kapa haka groups, or learn Māori as a language (Amy, Q.9).

Another related influential factor was the stereotype associated with the role of gender. All three teachers believed that gender is one of the elements influencing children's dramatic play. Family play and superheroes were two play themes mostly discussed by teachers at The Bay. Superhero play was viewed by all the teachers as attractive to the boys because it contains a lot of action, whereas the girls mainly engage in family play, or playing "fairies and unicorns" (Amy, Q.2), which is "more subdued … and less violent" (Amy, Q.2). Rose also considered girls as the main players in the family corner, "all the girls working in the kitchen … like their mums" (Rose, Q.3). Amy suggested that girls tend to follow the rules more than the boys. For example, she explained that when the children were playing pretending to be ponies from the cartoon, the girls would follow the original plot of the cartoon, "No, the pony can only do this, must do that." In contrast, the boys' play was more negotiated, "Here's the pony, and here's the gun, and we've got the ponies over here [to fight]." As she argued, "Girls … tend to follow the programme … whereas the boys will

… be more outgoing" (Amy, Q.7). Olena agreed that "dramatic play for girls is being princesses, like Elsa and Anna, and for boys it's Batman and Captain America" (Olena, Q.2).

Language was another element of diverse experiences explored in this research. Teachers at The Bay believed that dramatic play is an approach to engage children who speak different languages other than English. Rose offered a case about a girl, Maisy, whose home language is not English. She had been attending the centre for weeks but had not yet settled:

> As teachers we tried to … help her but she doesn't like it … But we've noticed that when we stepped away … and observe from afar, we see that she slowly engaged in [play]. She likes to spend a lot of time in the family corner, so we engaged with her there ... slowly her play was taking place. (Rose, Q.7)

As Maisy did not fully understand English, she did not respond to the teachers' questions and refused to join the group times. At first, all the teachers at The Bay tried their best to help her. However, after observing her for some time, Rose realised that dramatic play could be a way to help Maisy. Encouraging children to participate in dramatic play could be a way to help them settle.

The Mountain

Three teachers at The Mountain, Belle, Airini, and Liz, participated in the teacher interviews. Belle started her training as an early childhood teacher 7 years ago and she had been working at The Mountain for 6 months. Airini is a Māori teacher with more than 10 years' experience in ECE, with 5 years at The Mountain. Liz had taught the longest of the three teachers, which was 18 years, and had started working at The Mountain 3 years ago.

Teachers' Understandings of the Concepts of Dramatic Play and Creativity. Similar to the teachers' perspectives at The Bay, family play and role-playing characters from the movies or other media were considered the most common themes of children's dramatic play at The Mountain. According to the teachers, dramatic play has two important elements: On one hand, dramatic play is about trying out something new. For example, Belle stated: "[dramatic play] is like you try a pair of new shoes, like you try on the role of Superman. You try to acquire that kind of essence, the ahu of that thing" (Belle, Q.2). On the other hand, dramatic play is about children replaying or re-enacting a situation they have seen and observed in real time (Liz, Q.2). For example, as expressed by Belle:

> [Dramatic play is children] playing with toys or objects and creat[ing] an imaginary environment. It can be on [their] own or it can be in conjunction with other people … and sometimes they figure out some situation they observed at home and they replay those through their dramatic play to make sense of it, or create their own working theories. (Belle, Q.2)

Besides children's spontaneous dramatic play, The Mountain had once organised a drama show for the children to perform. It was about a Māori legend, "Maui and the Sun." Rather than selecting children to perform the individual characters, all the children were involved. They dramatised the story of Maui pulling

the sun up and performed it on stage for parents. As Liz explained, "the group move[d] from one area to another where Maui went from pulling the sun, the action" (Liz, Q.2).

Teachers also described their own dramatic experiences when they were children to deepen understandings of dramatic play. Liz liked to pretend to be a secretary using a typewriter, which was made out of wrapping paper for chocolate. Airini liked to play a teacher or a nurse when she was young, teaching and treating her teddy bears. She also played "tomboy games" with her brothers, such as building forts in the bush, collecting natural materials such as acorns and rocks to fight each other (Airini, Q.5). A similar play theme was also reiterated by Belle, as she also grew up with boys. She expressed her dramatic play as collecting acorns and fighting acorn wars.

When asked about their understandings of children's creativity, Airini admitted that she must have missed a lot of children's creative moments. Because the centre has children under-2 and over-2 together, she believed that it is the teachers' default mind-set to focus on the safety of the babies and toddlers and it is easy to miss the play of the older ones. For Airini, most of creative dramatic play happened during their fortnightly hiking to the maunga, where there are trees and dark spaces and children are not limited by the setting, and can play without the props (Airini, Q.8).

Belle drew an analogy between creativity and a river:

> When you said you are comfortable, when you feel like you belong in that place, and you love what you see, you love what you hear, you love the people that are around you, the creativity flow[s] between the people in the space collectively, and eventually it flows … The creativity just flows like a river so that the child can engage. (Belle, Q.8)

In this quote, Belle expressed that it is crucial for children to feel comfortable in the environment so that their creativity can flow.

Teachers' Roles in Dramatic Play and Creativity. Similar to The Bay, when asked about what the teachers do to foster dramatic play, some teachers at The Mountain reiterated their view that the adults' role is to observe and not to interrupt the children's dramatic play. As Airini stated, "[dramatic play] happens when it happens, I tend not to step into their role plays" (Airini, Q.13). One teacher, however, held a different perspective that the teacher's authentic presence is the most important aspect to children's creative development:

> I like to be in the garden, so when I'm out digging in the garden some kids will come to me and want to dig in the garden too. So we've got that similarity and we're both present [with] each other and I'm authentic [because] I like doing this … what you're doing they want to learn about. (Belle, Q.12)

Belle believed that the teachers should not only set up the play area and props for children, but should also be present and playing with them. By being genuine and authentic as she described, teachers could offer the children the opportunity to feel the teacher's love and engagement so that children feel comfortable to join the play.

Material Environment. When asked about material determinants of children's dramatic play, all the teachers at The Mountain unanimously identified the natural environment. As described in Chapter 4, the concept of nature is a critical source of energy in Māori culture as well as the central philosophy of the ECE curriculum at The Mountain. One example was the centre's visit to the nearby maunga as part of their fortnightly programme, which was described in Chapter 4.

The natural environment on the maunga influenced children's dramatic play in three ways. First, the natural environment facilitates imagination and dramatic play. For example, when the movie *Frozen* first came out, it influenced the children to dramatise "How Elsa build[s] her glass castle" on the maunga while walking up the stairs on the hike (Airini, Q.12). Belle described the view on top of the maunga as "long-distance landscape of mountains and ocean," and playing on top of the maunga is like being part of nature and the landscape. In such an experience, children can express themselves freely and play in a way different from "just playing with the plastic food" (Belle, Q.2). As Belle explained:

> This experience [on the maunga] in a child is going to be part of what they download into their understanding or their imagination, [of] what they may replay in their dramatic play, or [what] they would recreate through [their] play collectively. (Belle, Q.2)

Second, nature provides unlimited space for children's imagination. According to the teachers' interviews, when playing indoors, children's movements are limited by the size of the room. While playing outdoors, the space becomes limitless so they can have enough freedom to experience and practise whatever and however they like. As Airini suggested, "because the space is dynamic [so] that you can move without restriction, … you are only limited by your imagination" (Airini, Q.7).

Nature also provides children with more opportunities to interact with natural materials. According to the teachers, playing with natural instead of artificial materials could help children develop their dramatic play. The following quote from Belle exemplified this contradiction between authenticity and pretend:

> Nature is always real. It's not made up. The plastic plant is kind of different. … Outside has got its own rules and authenticity. So it's an interesting one, the difference between authentic and pretend. Playing pretend with pretend, or playing pretend with authentic. (Belle, Q.2)

The Mountain's fortnightly trip up the maunga also reflected the influence of space in creativity. Unlike the play areas in the centres that were already set up, the natural environment on the maunga is organic and "things [like] trees look the same, so they (children) have to think about the space and how they are going to use it" (Airini, Q.12).

However, even when playing indoors, children can also enjoy provision of physical environments that foster dramatic play. For example, by creating a space that allows children to move freely:

> dramatic play move[s] from space to space, start[s] maybe in [the] mat corner, and they move like they're going shopping or they going to wherever they're going. The roles of playing move in different phases, and the dragon comes along, [and] the monster comes along, then it's all over the place. (Airini, Q.13)

All the teachers at The Mountain discussed the importance of having resources and play props ready, which is similar to the teachers' view at The Bay. When teachers observed that their children loved playing shops, the teachers supported that interest by setting up the shopping props for children to use whenever they chose. Liz stated: "we get the sign out, get the table out, have an area ready, and have their shop keeper ready, their paper money" (Liz, Q.7).

Cross-Generational Comparison of Dramatic Play. The teachers at The Mountain also made comparisons of dramatic play between the two generations. According to Liz, what remained unchanged across the two generations was the source of children's dramatic play, mainly everyday life observations. Both generations' dramatic play was influenced by what they observed and experienced in life, as well as media such as TV (Liz, Q.10). But for the younger generation, both Liz and Belle suggested that electronic devices and information technology had made a big difference in children's play today. As Belle articulated, "the screen time places a huge influence … because it closes them [the children], and they just stay like this rather than being connected to the other kids" (Belle, Q.10). Moreover, the pace of today is much faster than it was back then. As Liz suggested,

> everything was so laid back, [and] chill, because of [the] resources we had back then, like tape recorders, cassettes, radios, … TV sometimes, but that was only … limited from AM to PM. Now TV's 24/7, everything is on your phone and that creates a lot of popular culture for our young children. (Liz, Q.10)

Teachers' Reflections on Diverse Experiences. Diverse language experiences were identified by all the teachers at The Mountain as important to facilitating creativity amongst children. As almost all the teachers working at The Mountain are bilingual, some even trilingual, they were very proud of being able to "facilitate and help children with different words" (Airini, Q.9). Teachers tried to learn some basic language that children use at home, be it Spanish, Dutch, or Chinese, to enable immigrant children to feel safe at the centre. For Airini, learning some words from the children's mother tongue is "trying to support every child that comes in ... trying to make an effort to get the basic language so that there is communication, [because] without that I can't engage, I can't make them feel safe" (Airini, Q.4). Another rationale for cherishing children's diverse language experiences is that it is a way of recognising their home cultures:

> For children that come with another mother tongue, a language from their parents, that's a real gift to us that we're actually able to embrace another culture and recognise that, [because] it shows that we recognise and value your culture and where you come from, your identity. (Belle, Q.4)

As shown in the teacher interviews, for children speaking languages other than English, dramatic play acts as a pivotal point in fostering their diverse language experiences, learning, and development. Dramatic play can be used by teachers to communicate feelings and ideas to children, which is especially helpful for children who have not yet established language skills, or children from immigrant families who speak different languages. As indicated by Airini, dramatic play and body language "convey the same message across the board" (Airini, Q.2), regardless of language:

[Dramatic play] is a way of connecting with children using, [for example,] if I'm grumpy about…
my friends in the centre being hurt, I will use [a] grumpy face and body language to express and to
support what I'm saying. Also, happy, surprise … I think body language and the dramatics really
help with the children that don't understand my words. They can read my sad face; they can read my
happy face. (Airini, Q.2)

Liz responded with similar ideas that dramatic play helped to bond children and teachers without speaking,
and teachers could also learn languages from the children through dramatic play. An example was provided
by Liz: when a French girl was playing with an imaginative boat, she tried to communicate with her body
language, like a wavy gesture, while repeating the words in French. By communicating with the child using
dramatic play, the teacher was also learning new words.

Teachers at The Mountain also discussed storytelling in their interviews but emphasised its function in
teaching children about diverse cultural experiences. Airini offered an example of promoting cultural
understanding through dramatising stories from books; in the book *Princess Grace*, a book about a girl from
Kenya who wants to be the princess in a show, the girl Grace has a discussion with her grandma about their
princesses and their queen. To further children's understanding of the story and different cultures, Airini
stated:

I started talking about a Māori queen, a Māori princess, and looking at the differences between
[them]… I haven't got that far yet but, also looking at a Spanish queen, or an Indian queen. What
does that look like? So we started creating drama from the book .... And it was a really good cultural
[aspect] to talk about. (Airini, Q.9)

Cultural experiences featured prominently throughout the teachers' discussions about children's play and
creativity at The Mountain. For example, Airini stated that it's important for teachers to cater for and teach
children while bearing in mind that they are different, so that all children are treated differently according to
their own diverse background:

Because our whānau is diverse, we have to think in a diverse way. We can't be one particular way of
doing things. And we [are] multicultural…We are catering and teaching from a very … multi-
resourced way. So every child gets to use [a] different variety of resources. (Airini, Q.9)

The other teachers at The Mountain also talked about the importance of children's diverse cultural
experiences, and the Māori culture, throughout the interviews, which is in line with the nature of The
Mountain as a Māori-medium centre.

Teacher Interviews Summary

In this section, findings from interviews with teachers at the two centres have been presented and organised
in accordance with the research questions and the theoretical framework along three lines, namely the social,
material and temporal distribution of creativity. Because some interview questions were based on findings
from observations in the centre, and due to the semistructured nature of the interviews, the questions asked at
the two centres were slightly different. But the topics covered in the interviews at the two centres were the

same. Thus, key findings from interviews conducted at The Bay and The Mountain have similarities yet are also different.

The popular dramatic play themes at both centres were similar – mainly family play and characters from movies or other media. Some teachers from both centres believed that the best way for adults to foster creativity and dramatic play is to endorse children's freedom in play without intervention. However, other teachers suggested that teachers need to play an important role in scaffolding dramatic play, such as asking open-ended questions (The Bay) and playing together with the children (The Mountain).

Teachers articulated the influence of the material, temporal and social environment in young children's dramatic play and creativity. Teachers from both centres expressed the importance of the availability of play props and materials, as well as play spaces. The influence of the time was illustrated when comparing dramatic play between different generations. Teachers at both centres agreed that children of this generation have more play materials available than the last generation, but also sacrifice more time playing outdoors. Teachers at The Bay emphasised the social influence of dramatic play and creativity, with family background being one of the most influential factors. Teachers at The Mountain, however, paid more attention to the material environment, especially the role of nature.

Teachers at the two centres shared similar ideas about the function of dramatic play. For example, dramatic play was believed at both centres to be an efficient way of communication with children who speak a different language. The biggest difference between the two centres' teachers' reflections was their views of the children's diverse experiences. Teachers at The Bay believed in a unified culture in the centre for children to come together instead of identifying their individual cultural backgrounds, because they believed children do not understand cultural differences. Some teachers at The Bay also expressed certain stereotypes pertaining to the roles of gender in children's dramatic play, where they voiced their beliefs about the way boys and girls play differently. In contrast, teachers at The Mountain put great emphasis on children's diverse cultural and language experiences. They believed that especially for children from immigrant families who speak a different language, teachers are responsible for learning and respecting their languages and cultures in order to help them and their whānau to settle and flourish. Teachers at The Mountain also believed that dramatic play is one of the ways children's wellbeing and learning is fostered. These differences may be partly because The Mountain is a multilingual Māori-medium centre, so cultural diversity is central to the centre's curriculum.

Overall, the findings generated from the teacher interviews reflect the review of literature. However, there were also discrepancies between the teachers' beliefs expressed, and their practices as seen in the observations, which are further discussed in Chapter 7. In the next section, the parents' responses to similar questions are presented, with a focus on the ways the family environment might influence children's dramatic play and creativity.

Section 2: Findings from Parent Interviews

The parent interviews at The Bay took place at the centre. At The Mountain, the parent interviews were conducted in a place of their choosing. This section answers the last subquestion of this research – What role do teachers and parents play in providing a supportive environment to foster creativity in ECE settings? The organisation of this section follows the preceding research questions regarding creativity, dramatic play, and diverse experiences. The findings from parent interviews at the two centres are presented separately.

The Bay

Four parents at The Bay, Sasha, Lisa, Olivia, and Eric, participated in the parent interviews. The average age of their children was 4 years. Sasha has two daughters, Anita and Ella, aged 6 and 5; Lisa has one daughter, Amber, who was 5, and one son, Dylan, who was 4; Olivia has six children but only her youngest daughter, 4-year-old Bianca, was of early childhood age; Eric has one son, Harry, attending the ECE centre, and a younger son who will attend The Bay in a few months.

At the time of the interviews, Olivia was an ECE teacher working in a different centre, Sasha was a student teacher doing her practicum, Lisa was a former ECE teacher but was currently involved in her own home business, and Eric worked in product research and development.

> **Parents' Understandings of Dramatic Play and Creativity.** When asked about their understandings of young children's dramatic play, parents answered from three perspectives: First, dramatic play is role play in which children re-enact and test out what they see in life (Olivia, Q.4). For example, mum and baby play, shop keeper and customers, or pretending to go on holidays. Second, in dramatic play children make use of everyday materials using their imagination. For example, they make potions or "soup" while having a bath. Third, children are able to create their own dramatic scenarios, such as building train tracks and driving the train through viaducts and volcanoes, or loading up cargo on the truck.

Some parents expressed expectations about the influence of dramatic play on learning. For example, Lisa suggested providing items representing what they use in daily lives to help children learn more life skills in dramatic play. As she said, "We always have real stuff at home to play with. Real clothing, real dress-up stuff, not just a pretty princess dress" (Lisa, Q.4). When role playing being shopkeepers and customers with her children, Lisa would try to teach her children to sort the money out and learn basic counting. She stated, "We [the parents] were more focused on the money sort of things, like, ok $2, I'll give you a $5 [bill or note], so tell me how much change you want to give me" (Lisa, Q.5).

Although when asked about children's creativity, all parents gave different definitions as well as examples of their own children's creativity, the basic ideas were the same as the teachers'. Eric believed creativity is "having their own understandings of something" (Eric, Q.12). The example Eric offered was his child occupying the whole room with his train tracks, with trains carrying Lego pieces as ore and going through volcanoes. Lisa identified the conditions under which creativity appears, which is giving children access to materials and time without setting any boundaries. As she expressed, "I don't rush them so they can just take their time and know that they can come back to finish it later" (Lisa, Q.12). Olivia focused on the process of

creating rather than the actual product. She stated that it is important for children "to really enjoy the process than actually creating anything in particular at the stage" (Olivia, Q.12). Sasha described creativity as the unusual ways of making use of play props. For example:

> Once my daughter asked to play with the slime, so I gave her the slime and a tray and nothing else. But she will do something more. She will go get a spoon and go and get her little LOL doll. She will be putting the spoon in, and the LOL doll into the slime so they will be playing together. That's her creativity... because she is resourcing her own little toys for her play. (Sasha, Q.12)

In this case, Sasha described her daughter's creativity as being able to use different and mostly unrelated items to play and create new uses for the toys.

Social Influence. Children's dramatic play could be influenced by other family members, especially their parents. For instance, Lisa had lots of parcels delivered to her home every day for the home business, so "(the children play) delivery postman's here, and I have to go and collect a delivery and sign for them, then they run around the corner and they will come back and do it again and again" (Lisa, Q.2). Another example was Olivia's daughter who was breastfed until 2 years of age. She always pretended to breastfeed the baby dolls rather than giving them milk bottles.

Dramatic play is also influenced by the broader social contexts outside families. Sasha considered educational settings a prominent source of children's dramatic play. For example, she once saw her child naming the dolls with the names of her friends at school, and "she will say things like, 'she's not being very nice to me' in her dramatic play" (Sasha, Q.4).

Media and technology were believed to play a role as well. Even if some parents did not like the idea of giving children access to the internet, they still admitted that its influence is inevitable, as children often simulate the videos or cartoons they have watched in their dramatic play. One interesting example was about Olivia's daughter who did not have an iPad but always wanted one. She pretended that a piece of wood was her iPad and she would sit there pretending to play with her "iPad" (Olivia, Q.11).

Material Environment. When discussing the role of materials and the environment, like the teachers, some parents also talked about the importance of loose parts. Loose parts can be used together or separately; and with children's choices, they can be whatever the children want them to be. By providing loose parts, such as tubes, sticks, pebbles, and pieces of wood, parents are "encouraging creativity and imagination right from the start" (Olivia, Q.12). Lisa also expressed a similar emphasis on the property of play materials. She refused to buy set toys, such as "the doctor's box [which could] only used for doctors, and princess box for princess" (Lisa, Q.10) because she believed that they are not useful for stimulating children's creativity. She stated that by providing children with open-ended play materials, parents could give them more choices.

Cross-Generational Comparison of Dramatic Play. In a similar way to the teachers, parents at The Bay also compared dramatic play between the two generations. Most parents responded that this generation's children's play is very different from their own with regard to economic, natural, and social

contexts. Economically, children today had more toys and play props to choose from. But the past generation had much more time and freedom to play outdoors. As Lisa expressed, "we are teaching our children to be a lot more cautious than what we were as a kid … it's much easier for parents to get scared now" (Lisa, Q.9). Social development has made today's generation more reliant on electronic devices, and children today spend much more time on screens than their parents' generation. For example, Olivia believed that encouraging children to play outdoors is a good way to balance out their screen time, because if children can amuse themselves and spend time outdoors, they will spend less time on the screen.

Some play materials, however, remained unchanged across generations. For example, children today are still fond of making play props using minimal items they have collected, such as "building something out of nothing, just like the generations before" (Sasha, Q.9).

Parents' Reflections on Diverse Experiences. Parents were also encouraged to share their reflections regarding the possible influence of diverse cultural experiences on children's play, as most of them proactively talked about their own cultural backgrounds and the context of New Zealand. Parents believed that dramatic play serves as a method of communication between children regardless of their cultural or language differences, which aligns with the findings from the teacher interviews. For example, Sasha shared her observation of her children playing with other children from different cultural backgrounds. As children play different games in different cultures, the situation can sometimes become awkward if one child does not know the game the others are playing. So when it happens, Sasha would suggest playing mother and baby because she believed that family play is universally shared by children from all backgrounds. She stated:

> If they come from a different culture, sometimes they will come and sit and we won't know what to do. So we kind of have to come and say, why don't you play with the babies … everyone knows about it, so everyone plays babies … even if there's a language barrier, that wouldn't be an issue. (Sasha, Q.7)

However, Sasha also considered different cultural backgrounds could be a barrier in children's play. Cultural traditions and lifestyles are sometimes reflected in children's dramatic play, e.g., how to serve dinner. When children with different cultural backgrounds play together, Sasha found the distinctions of traditions in daily routines "definitely creating a problem, and it doesn't fit in [their] play" (Sasha, Q.7).

Immigrant parents noticed the influence of different environments and cultures on their children's play. For example, Lisa found that children in South Africa can do all kinds of dramatic play in the trees because trees are much bigger back home than here in New Zealand. Also, because of their political standpoints, Lisa and her husband did not allow gunplay at home. They explained to their children that "we don't use guns, even if to pretend" (Lisa, Q.13). Another example is Eric from China. He found that the New Zealand education system allows children more freedom to be themselves than in Chinese culture. When his son Harry was 2 years old, his family went back to China and Harry spent 2 years in an ECE centre there. Eric felt that Harry was more willing to share and communicate with other children in an environment like New Zealand, than an environment in China that appeared to be less open and safe. But he was the only parent who stated that

he would tell his son, "You are Chinese, … and you are different from them [the New Zealand children]" (Eric, Q.13).

The parents at The Bay held different perspectives around gender-related dramatic play. Some parents would rather not assign children any stereotypical gender-specific roles and were happy to encourage boys to join family dramatic play. Because Lisa and her husband both believed that it is not the woman's job to do household chores, they were able to form a non-gendered stereotypical environment for their children's dramatic play. As a result, her son Dylan "loves pretending to bake … and he dressed up in an apron, and he will … pretend to vacuum" (Lisa, Q.13). In contrast, some parents expressed a different perspective. When talking about dramatic play, Eric treated it as family play and expressed a belief that family play is "something that only girls like to play" (Eric, Q.5), so his son was not interested in it. However, in observations I found that his son Harry not only participated in family play but also actively used it to solve problems. Further discussions pertaining to the role of gender are presented in Chapter 7.

The Mountain

Two parents at The Mountain, Emma and Tiago, participated in the parent interviews. Emma has one daughter, 3-year-old Ava, and one 10-month-old son, who both attended The Mountain. Tiago has one daughter, Sofia, and one son, Pedro, who were 5 and 3 respectively.

Parents' Understanding of Dramatic Play and Creativity. The parents at The Mountain believed that dramatic play is what children engage in every day to build on, reconstruct, and make sense of what they see and experience in society. In this process, "children get a more extensive and aesthetic [view]" (Emma, Q.4). Emma provided examples of her child's dramatic play, including wrapping up random objects such as a spoon or a pen with old wrapping paper and pretending they were birthday gifts, or packing up bags for camping. Tiago's child's dramatic play was described as very active, including pretending to be monsters, fighting with swords, or driving cars and trucks.

Creativity was also discussed by the parents at The Mountain. By definition, both parents agreed that children's creativity reflects how children see things differently from adults. For example, Emma's daughter could see a completely different story in a piece of stained glass from the way the adults see it. However, creativity is not always about an end product, but is also the process of how children are able to imagine something completely different (Emma, Q.12). Creativity also needs certain support to flourish, including freedom for children to express themselves and more chance to have contact with the outdoors, to give "them more information of the truth, [that is] not avoiding the truth" (Tiago, Q.12).

Social Influence. Both parents at The Mountain unanimously agreed about the influence and importance of the parents' role in encouraging and fostering children's play and creative expression. Both parents believed that when children show different behaviours, or do not follow the rules, parents need to listen to children before judging. By asking the right questions and giving them freedom to express themselves, parents have the opportunity to discover children's creativity in those situations. For example, when Tiago's daughter put her new Peppa Pig t-shirt on the ground, instead of telling her not to do so, Tiago

asked for her rationale. His daughter said, "Daddy, Peppa fall and she hits her knee on the ground." This was where Tiago recognised his daughter's creativity. He was pleased that he did not criticise her for putting the new shirt on the ground, because, as he stated,

> I would not be able to hear this if I just say, "hey, don't put the shirt on the ground." That's how we kill creativity. Because next time when she thinks about doing something creative, she's going to think, "oh am I allowed to do that?" (Tiago, Q.12)

Emma's approach to support creativity was to encourage children to think and look at the world around them from different perspectives. It aligns with the definition of creativity. To support the development of creativity, it is "the parents' and educators' responsibility to encourage [them] to see possibilities in the world rather than closing things down" (Emma, Q.12).

Material Environment. Both parents at The Mountain talked about the influence of the physical environment on children's creativity and dramatic play, including play materials, play spaces, and outdoor play. Emma indicated her preference for having open-ended materials. She reiterated that it is crucial for children to see and use materials and artefacts in different ways for different reasons, rather than using the items in their literal sense. Emma's view was similar to Lisa's at The Bay. They both preferred to provide their children with props that could be used in diverse ways. This perspective also corresponds with the viewpoint of the teachers, about offering children open-ended materials or loose parts that could be used in multiple ways. As Emma stated, "Having objects and allowing young children to use objects for things that they are not, that's a key part of drama[tic] play" (Emma, Q.10).

Space is another influential factor of dramatic play and creativity. Dramatic play is more likely to happen if the setting "allows children to move around and be in different kinds of spaces: closed spaces, open spaces, indoors and outdoors, and to be able to move that play around" (Emma, Q.10). One example of space was outdoors, such as up on the mountain, or in the woods, or in the swimming pool. In these environments, children could feel the wind or the water around their body. Tiago reiterated that a different environment "changes the perception of body. Because there is something fresh in your body so as soon as you have something different from the normal you are creating, you are already dramatising" (Tiago, Q.10).

One new element raised by both parents at The Mountain was the influence of emotions, especially fear. According to Emma, children like to develop play scenarios with scary elements such as monsters or bad wolves, to create a feeling of fear that they enjoy (Emma, Q.2). The feeling of fear could also help children create more complicated scenarios to help overcome current emotions and dangers they may encounter in life, and find a solution.

Cross-Generational Comparison of Dramatic Play. The parents at The Mountain were also asked to discuss the generational comparisons of dramatic play between their own experiences, and those of their children. According to Tiago, today's children still pretend to be in roles, similar to the previous generation. They still play hunting or war games, which involves moving around hiding, running, and tagging. But the generations are also different, because on the one hand they have different cultural references from media,

and on the other hand, today's children have more details about "the rules than my generation" (Tiago, Q.9). From Tiago's perspective, today's world is becoming more violent and dangerous, so people have become more careful about rules than before. As he stated:

> When I used to play, it was really basic, like "hey you run and I catch you." We might have some places that were safe. But nowadays it's like, "now we run and we have a green place that we're safe, and we have a red place [where] we can do this, and we cannot do that, and this person needs to go [along] one line." So it seems to me that they like to put more rules [on their play]. (Tiago, Q.9)

Emma responded regarding the influence of immigration on children's play. She believed that because her family moved to New Zealand from the UK, her child had less chance to play with children from her extended family. Therefore, almost all the friends Ava had were from the early childhood centre.

Parents' Reflection on Diverse Experiences. As both parents were not from New Zealand, they shared their understandings of the influence of their home culture and the diverse cultural context of New Zealand on children's play. For Emma, New Zealand culture emphasises children's rights to freedom and connections with the natural world, whereas in the UK there is a stronger emphasis on children's safety and minimising risks. Emma expressed:

> If you are in the public situation with children in the UK, say in church or community function, you as a parent will be expected to keep your child quiet, contained and sit still … whereas here in a lot of situations I feel like it's much more permissible for children to just do what children do. (Emma, Q.13)

The reason why Emma sent her child to a Māori-medium centre was because of her personal orientation – she cherished the bicultural and bilingual nature of New Zealand. She believed that having diverse experiences, such as "the opportunity to learn another language, and to be immersed in the culture is very valuable at a young age" (Emma, Q.7). She also stated that they would not send their children to a school where most students were European, "because to me that's not reflective of the kind of world she's going to grow up in" (Emma, Q.7).

Tiago is from Brazil. His son, Pedro, could not speak either English or Māori when he initially attended the centre. But Pedro still played happily with children at the centre every day. Therefore, Tiago believed that communication for children was not all about languages but also about other forms of expression that could be used in dramatic play, which had been reiterated by teachers at The Mountain. Tiago also expressed his interest in Māori culture:

> I really like the way they [the Māori people] see the world, with more freedom. They dramatise all the time. The way they use their hands, the way they use music, … [there is] a lot of drama in their culture. (Tiago, Q.12)

Both parents at The Mountain also talked about dramatic play related to the role of gender. They were both against the idea that certain gender roles are for specific kinds of dramatic play. For instance, when asked by Ava to play a mermaid, Emma responded, "okay I'll be a mermaid, but I will make myself do something

very non-typical for a mermaid. I'm going to be a very powerful mermaid who's going to go off and fight the sharks" (Emma, Q.5). By responding to gender-related questions about mermaids, Emma is attempting to break the gender stereotypes about mermaid play to encourage her daughter to have an open attitude.

Parent Interviews Summary

There were six parents who participated in the parent interviews. All but one had some experience in education or teaching. All parents had their own understandings of children's dramatic play and creativity, which were similar to those described in the literature review, as well as those provided by teachers, such as developing imagination, originality, freedom of expression and emotions. This demonstrates that parents understood the importance of young children's dramatic play and creativity. Some parents from both centres shared their expectations about the educational function of dramatic play, wanting to teach their child life skills, or to foster the development of cognitive and language ability through play.

All the parents shared their understandings of relationships as being influential factors in children's dramatic play and creativity. Social influence identified by parents at The Bay comprises three aspects: family, ECE settings, and mass media. This aligns with the underpinning theoretical framework of *Te Whāriki*, based on the ecology of human development theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For both parents from The Mountain, the focus was on parental behaviours, such as avoiding judgement and providing encouragement. As to the influence of the physical and material environment, parents at The Bay emphasised the importance of providing children with open-ended materials such as loose parts, whereas the parents at The Mountain acknowledged not only the play props, but also the play space, especially the outdoor environment, as well as emotions that relate to children's dramatic play and creativity. Parents also shared their own personal dramatic play experience to identify the comparisons between generations. The two temporal factors that made a difference, were parents' perspectives about the environment in general, and possible immigration status.

All the parents from both centres acknowledged that cultural experiences could influence children's play, learning and development, especially those from immigrant families. The difference was that the parents from The Bay identified the distinction between their home culture and that of New Zealand and its influence, whereas both parents from The Mountain placed a more in-depth emphasis on the influence of diverse experiences. Parents from both centres also addressed issues related to gender stereotypes and dramatic play. Some parents implicitly held stereotypical beliefs about dramatic play, while others expressed their willingness to counter possible gender-role stereotypes related to dramatic play in early childhood settings.

Conclusion

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 have presented findings from three sources of data: observations of children's dramatic play in ECE centres, interviews with teachers, and interviews with parents. These two chapters highlight the similarities and differences between different data sources, lay the foundation for further analysis and discussion, and enable a comparative analysis of the various data sources.

Findings from observations were transcribed into dramatic play scenarios. Findings from interviews were presented in accordance with the emerging themes from the observations, with reference to the research questions and the theoretical framework. One key finding of this study was how children's creativity is depicted in their dramatic play. In particular, children's creativity in dramatic play presents in three ways: generating and using artefacts such as narratives and props, affective expressions, and problem solving. The teachers' roles also emerged in observations, which led to the questions and findings in the teacher interviews. Another key finding was the teachers' understandings of the ways a supportive environment can be provided for children's creativity and dramatic play to thrive in ECE centres. The approaches include having play props available, providing open-ended materials, and endorsing children's freedom both physically and cognitively. The third key finding arose from the parent interviews, which depicted that parents' understandings of children's dramatic play and creativity is, to a certain degree, influenced by the teachers' ethos at the ECE centre their children attended.

When all three data sources were considered as a whole, the topic of creating a supportive environment for children with diverse experiences arose. Discrepancies also appeared between what teachers and parents believed and the experience observed. These issues are interpreted and analysed, guided by the theoretical framework of distributed creativity, in the next chapter.

Chapter 7 Discussion

The previous chapters presented findings of young children's creativity in dramatic play generated from the perspectives of children, teachers and parents. In this chapter, the distributed creativity theoretical framework (Chapter 3) draws these three perspectives together. The distributed creativity framework identifies three main types of creativity distribution: social, material, and temporal. These distributions are captured by inter-relational creative acts, interactions between creators and audiences, using affordances and cultural resources to generate new artefacts, and by the temporal dimension of creative work (Glăveanu, 2014a).

This chapter is presented in two sections: 1) the challenges and opportunities within early childhood settings to provide diverse experiences, and 2) the implications and recommendations for teachers' daily practice and parent/whānau relationships. Section 1 includes three parts. First, social distribution of creativity is presented in relation to children's interactions with peers, as well as teachers' or other adults' reactions to the children's narratives. Next, material distribution is discussed in regard to the children's use of resources, and the physical and sociocultural environment that enables their creative actions to happen. The third part analyses the temporal distribution of creativity, which is how creativity progresses through time, from the past, to the present and to the future. The social distribution of creativity is discussed in detail, because it is the very heart of dramatic play itself. The other two dimensions are also addressed in depth based on the findings but are secondary to the social distribution. Last but not least, a fourth element of affect is introduced to assist analysis of children's creativity in dramatic play. Section 2 explores the implications of the potential challenges and opportunities for creativity in ECE settings. This section responds to the research question about the ways in which diverse experiences influence young children's creativity. The approaches include building positive adult–child relationships, offering material and cultural artefacts, creating spaces for dramatic play, and allowing time for child-led play. Further recommendations from this study are offered in the conclusion chapter to guide parents and whānau on ways to create a supportive and responsive environment for creativity and dramatic play at home, as well as how to build meaningful relationships between whānau and kaiako (teachers).

Section 1: Challenges and Opportunities – Creativity in ECE Settings in Aotearoa New Zealand
Social Distribution of Creativity
Social interaction is the foundation for creativity because artistic and creative experiences are formed from interactions between subject and object, and between self and the world (Dewey, 1934). Like any art form, children's dramatic play requires certain social interactions (Glăveanu, 2014a). Social interactions in dramatic play follow particular patterns: Dramatic ideas can be generated by one child and communicated through verbal or nonverbal approaches to other children engaged in play. In response, the children receiving the ideas might follow the ideas, modify them, or create their own novel ideas (Dunn & Stinson, 2012). One child could respond to the ideas so that another interaction emerges. Vygotsky called this process the internalisation of social interactions, which he conceived as part of the creative process (Vygotsky, 1978).

In the social distribution of creativity, the boundary between actor and audience in a creative action is blurred, as suggested in Chapter 3. The actor–audience dyad is not a set pair, but a dynamic social relationship. To evaluate a creative work, the perspective of the creators themselves, or the "significant others," who are introduced to or affected by the creation, is primarily taken into account (Glăveanu, 2010b, p. 154). In cases of young children's dramatic play, each participant in the scenario would be both creator and the significant other who is involved in the creative act. This is evident in Scenario 4, where two girls were playing within two very different scenarios. However, instead of engaging in two parallel scenarios, their dramatic and creative actions were distributed through three types of social interactions between them: toy Jessie came to visit toy Moana and listened to her singing; the same play prop was used for different functions; and finally, the children found a way to include all the characters in a comprehensive dramatic play scenario of mummy, daddy and baby.

In the following section, this study explores the inter-relational and transformational construction of ideas and artefacts in children's creativity, rather than studying creativity as a structure that has been completed and stabilised. The social challenges discussed in this section focus on three topics: the trust relationship between teachers and children, possible gender stereotypical beliefs, and the safety rules within an ECE centre.

Trust in the Teacher-Child Relationship and its Influence on Creativity. One way to foster social distribution of creativity is to build relationships of trust between children and adults. To have trust in others means you are believing in the other person's capability and good intention and providing the person opportunities to act under their own will (R. C. Mayer et al., 1995). With trust from adults, children would be able to generate their own learning space and processes, and because the children have framed that learning in one area, they will use that area and the props they choose well (Griffiths, 2010). Also, it is important for adults to show trustworthiness to children in order to build a two-way trust relationship. Thus, trust between children and adults takes two forms: adults' trust in children to choose and make best use of the play materials and spaces; and, children's trust in adults to cherish and protect their precious creative products, whether they are real creations or imagined play scenarios. Examples of how to build this two-way trust relationship drawn from the findings of this study are provided below.

The overemphasis on rules may hinder children's development, agency and trust. One example is the sword fighting scenario observed at The Mountain (Scenario 16). Although in this episode the teacher only appeared at the end, the influence of the adult's surveillance was pervasive during the children's engagement in their pretend fighting. The children checked constantly on me, the only adult present during their play, even though I was not one of their teachers and had never intervened in their play. In this scenario, children appeared to start losing trust in themselves to fully control the dramatic scenarios they created.

Lack of trust in adult–child relationships is also reflected in the use of instructions in daily educational practices. Albeit many educators believe that teachers' instructions are an effective approach to stimulate a child's development (Hoogsteder et al., 1998), and that teachers need to interrupt if there is a safety concern,

it might still contradict the interactive and dynamic nature of creativity. In Scenario 8 in Chapter 5, for example, the teacher considered it inappropriate for children to bring the blocks to the kitchen corner because "blocks *should* be played [with]in the block corner." The teacher intervened by raising his voice to stop the children from continuing with their dramatic play. One possible consequence is that the children might feel they are not being trusted to handle the play materials they choose to manage. Thus, to avoid disrupting children's play, it is important for adults to listen carefully and strive to understand their ideas, if the aim is to stretch children's thinking in play and foster their play (Peters & Davis, 2011).

Establishing the adults' capability and willingness to trust and respect children's creativity is central to building a trustworthy relationship between adults and children (R. C. Mayer et al., 1995). In *Te Whāriki*, teachers/kaiako are asked to build relationships with children by "acknowledging [children's] feelings and individuality, explaining procedures, taking children's fears and concerns seriously, and responding sensitively" (MoE, 2017, p. 30). An example of establishing trustworthiness from the research findings is evident in a parent interview when Lisa, a mother from The Bay, offered her experience of playing with her son, Dylan. Dylan loved playing with Lego, but he sometimes got upset when he had to leave his Lego in the middle of play to do something else, such as going to the toilet. At that time Lisa would promise to take care of Dylan's creation, keeping it intact until he came back. By doing so, Lisa was helping her child to believe that his precious creations were safe, so that the child did not need to rush to complete the creative process because he could come back when he was ready to do so (Farmer, 2010).

The level of trust between adults and children results from healthy interactions and provides the foundation for a successful social distribution of creativity. Lack of trust between adults and children may result in a lack of support in spontaneous dramatic play and, in turn, in children's creative development. Building a trusting adult–child relationship in ECE settings is an important aspect of creating an encouraging environment for dramatic play and creativity to flourish. This section has analysed observations of children's dramatic play and teacher and parent interviews to further demonstrate how creativity is distributed socially among peers, and between children and adults. These social interactions illustrate how children's creativity can influence teachers' everyday pedagogical practice. Implications and recommendations regarding social interaction between adults and children are further discussed in Section 2.

      Gender Stereotypes. The role of gender is another important element of social interaction identified in this research. In ECE, children's early understandings of gender can influence their behaviour, academic performance, and self-esteem (Aina & Cameron, 2011). Gender identity starts to form at a very early stage of a child's life (Powell & Powell, 2016). Children as early as 13 months old start to construct a concept of gender through toy choices and form of play (Lloyd, 1987). In this research, children differentiated genders explicitly in dramatic play, as evident in the scenario describing the children's dramatic play about their war on the bridge where the boys formed an alliance among themselves to battle against the girls.

Gender roles are learned as part of the socialisation process and stereotypical gender roles can be a product of this process (Lewis, 1991). Gender stereotypes are not restricted to some cultural groups but pervasive

across different cultures and societies around the world (Aina & Cameron, 2011). For example, ECE educators report that there is strong representation of male dominance and female submissiveness in Latino and Asian cultures (Kulis et al., 2010; Xie, 2013). Gender norms can be strongly reflected by young children, so parents may strive to socialise their children in culturally and socially acceptable gender roles, e.g., girls are encouraged to play with dolls and boys to play with trains or trucks (Fine, 2010).

Gender stereotypes in early childhood settings are reflected in the teachers' ethos. Ethos in education refers to the perceived degree of character or credibility that a person believes exists in another person or object (Haskins, 2000). Although stereotypical gender roles may not necessarily transfer into action from adults to children, they could still affect the microenvironment on an unconscious level through the manner in which adults interact with and respond to the children (De Gioia, 2013). Children observe how teachers develop their ethos about gender difference and equality will play a significant role in children's attitude and behaviours in play. Miller et al. (1986) found that boys and girls act differently when facing conflict in social play; boys are more concerned with and more forceful in pursuing their own agenda; while girls are more concerned with maintaining interpersonal harmony, partly because cultural mandates of social talk are different based on gender in early childhood settings (Miller et al., 1986). A similar idea is reflected in the teacher interviews in this study. Two teachers from The Bay specifically noted the different levels of participation of boys and girls in dramatic play, where boys tended to play more actively outdoors, engaging in pretend games, and girls preferred to stay indoors painting and drawing. Although this does not necessarily mean that there is less opportunity for make-believe play to occur in drawing and painting, the distinctions made by the teachers can affect how they interact with children (Robson & Hargreaves, 2005). It means that teachers' supportive practices in fostering children's dramatic play can be influenced by their perceptions of the roles gender, because the stereotypical division made by the teachers about children's activity preferences may lead to unbalanced adult attention; active boys might receive more opportunities to interact with adults than girls engaging in drawing and other more sedate activities (Lewis, 1991). As previous research and current social movements have demonstrated (Sheldon, 1992), certain differences between genders are the result of internalised social-norm discourse. Teachers can influence children's awareness through "discourses that teachers make available to children and those that they silence, through their daily practices, pedagogies and curricula" (K. H. Robinson, 2002, p. 416). Discourses, however, can privilege dominant groups which creates frameworks that can control people's understandings of social phenomena (Cannella, 1999). Therefore, teachers, as well as other adults, involved in ECE need to be conscious of their own gender-related beliefs as products of dominant discourses that could, in turn, negatively impact their role in creating a diverse context and equal opportunities for all children.

In conclusion, teachers and parents' awareness of their own gender beliefs is necessary to avoid possible stereotypes and to value young children's creativity without bias. It is crucial for adults to challenge possible gender stereotypes that could hinder children's self-expression in their creative processes. Implications regarding the influence of social stereotypes on children's creativity in ECE settings is further discussed in Section 2 of this chapter.

Rules, Safety, and Conflict Avoidance. ECE stakeholders, particularly parents and government sectors, are becoming more concerned with minimising risk taking in children's play (Nedovic & Morrissey, 2013). While essential to children's welfare, this perspective of risk also implies that children's wellbeing is the sole responsibility of adults, who decide if it is safe for children to explore or take risks (Fassetta, 2014). For example, a teacher from The Bay reiterated "safety first" several times in the interview. Another teacher from The Mountain admitted that because she spent so much time ensuring children's safety, she might have missed a lot of the children's creative expressive moments. The emphasis on safety over exploration constructs images of fragile children, effectively becoming an example of age discrimination (Dahlberg et al., 1999; James & Prout, 2003; Woodhead, 1987).

The emphasis on safety also demonstrates a regulatory framework in ECE settings, as a result of power dynamics of child-adult relationships (Fenech & Sumsion, 2007). Power in ECE is not confined to being exercised by authority, but rather exercised in relations and interactions within the environment (Mills, 2003). To illustrate the effects of power relationships between adults and children I draw on my personal experience as a once-powerless young child. As expressed in Chapter 1 in My Role as the Researcher, the example of exploring the bottom of a pond with my friends during my early childhood years depicts how children can feel powerless under the dominant discourse and/or actions of the powerful group of adults. In my case, exploring the pond contradicted the adults' rules and was punished as misbehaviour, rather than being valued and encouraged as creative exploration of the environment. Similar cases emerged in this study. For example, in Scenario 7, the teacher asked the children to stop playing with the room decoration and put it back because "it was not a toy" (Chapter 5). In this situation, a similar limitation was applied to the children's enthusiasm in exploring and creating. This is particularly important given the difficulty these children experienced in returning to the same level of involvement after the play episode was interrupted, and its possible impact on the development of complexity in play skills (Robertson, 2016).

Conflict avoidance is another tendency reflected in teachers and parents' ethos towards children's dramatic play. One parent claimed that "playing together nicely is really impressive" in her description of her children's dramatic play scenario (Lisa, Q.4). However, conflicts, as a form of social interaction, create tension which is an inevitable part of drama and the creation of a dramatic scenario (Dunn & Stinson, 2012). Therefore, conflict and tension that can be transformed into dramatic scenarios may help problem solving such as in Scenario 11, where Todd successfully resolved a social conflict by pretending to call the police. Teachers can also assist children's social-conflict resolution strategies by scaffolding their dramatic play. For example, in Scenario 9, "Tiger Eating Playdough," the children were able to practise resolving the conflicting situations and generate creative ideas with the help of the teacher introducing a dramatic play theme using open-ended questions.

The challenges identified in observations, and the divergence between teachers' beliefs and their practice, have presented opportunities for areas of further improvement. Distrustful child-adult relationships, gender stereotypes, and the overemphasis on safety and rules, could be the possible consequences of social-interaction complications between children and teachers. The identification of these challenges provides

opportunities for practitioners to reflect on the elements involved in children's dramatic play and, in turn, adjust beliefs and practices to support an environment for children's creativity and development. There are several ways of supporting the social distribution of creativity in dramatic play, which are further discussed in Section 2.

Material Distribution of Creativity

Creativity has been too often conceptualised as a psychological phenomenon dependent on thinking skills, motivation, and personality traits in previous research, as described in the I-paradigm section in Chapter 2 (Glăveanu, 2014a). Conversely, the role of interactions between the creator and various materials, and cultural resources involved in the creativity process, have been consistently overlooked and remain largely unquestioned (Sutton-Smith, 1977). From some of the observations in this research, it is evident that creative performance and ideas do not merely reside in the individual mind but are shaped by distributed actions across people and artefacts, from materials and toys to the physical depiction of stories.

In this study's observations, a wide range of materials were used in young children's dramatic play. A common prop was the dress-up clothes, which can transform the child's identity into another character. The other space that is often related to dramatic play in ECE settings is the family corner, because, according to the teacher interviews, imitating what children see at home, such as cooking, eating and cuddling the baby, can be primary sources of dramatic play (Olena, Q.2). Blocks also provide platforms for dramatic play, where children can use their imagination to create a range of scenarios. Any items the children have access to at home or in an early childhood centre can become a facilitating material or tool for dramatic play. Sometimes children need no props but only a space for creativity to take place. These play props and materials are categorised as artefacts in the distributed creativity framework (see Chapter 3). Artefacts can be either material or conceptual, including objects as well as language and symbols, representation, and schemas (Cole, 1996). A group of accumulated artefacts forms the cultural context in which children's dramatic play and creativity take part, and at the same time their creativity adds to the culture through the generation of new artefacts (Glăveanu, 2010a).

This section has discussed the interactions between children and the artefacts, providing analysis of the generation of creative performance and ideas in children's dramatic play. By examining the roles of materials, space, and cultural representations in children's dramatic play and creativity, this section has explored: how materiality represents the affordance element of distributed creativity theory, materiality's role in the creative process (Glăveanu, 2014a), and how material interactions influence teachers' everyday pedagogical practices about the environments they create and the diverse experiences they provide (Parolin & Pellegrinelli, 2020). Section 2 builds on Section 1's discussion of these topics to offer suggestions on materials and physical space parameters that would facilitate a supportive space for diverse experiences and creativity development.

Material Properties. According to the definition of dramatic play employed in this thesis, by using materials as if they were something else, children change the meaning of the play materials, or add new

meanings to them in dramatic play. These meanings are not randomly attached to their material property but co-constructed by people in relation to the materiality of the environment (Glăveanu, 2014a). The materiality is related to the properties of material, which forms the elements of affordances in the distributed creativity framework (Gibson, 1986). Every material has its own specific nature, be it solid, liquid or gas; be it warm, cold or icy; be it soft, hard or crisp; flat, fluffy or pointy. The material properties, to a large extent, define the interaction between people and the materials (Glăveanu, 2014a). The way materiality influences dramatic play and creativity is evident when children are experimenting with materials, trying out different approaches to interact with the same material and making up different stories with different outcomes. The transformational use of materials, based on their properties, provides opportunities for creativity. This is evident in the parent interview with Tiago, a parent from The Mountain. He recognised the different ways children interact with certain materials. As a swimming coach, he viewed water as a magical material because he often saw children engaged in creative dramatic play in the swimming pool. He suggested that the feelings children experienced when they were surrounded by water could help generate original ideas, because it is "something fresh around your body that is different from the normal, and [it is where children] started creating" (Tiago, Q.10).

However, children's creative uses for material objects may not meet their intentions. This is evident in Scenario 2 where Westin and Lyla were building a prison using blocks. Because of the nature of blocks, the construction became less stable as it got higher. Therefore, as Westin was trying to jump out of the prison, the unstable nature of the block prison could not sustain his intended outcome of escape. After some trial and error, he realised a way to use the fragile nature of the structure and incorporate it into his new dramatic idea. His scenario ends with him pretending that his toy turtle broke the prison. In this regard, material property offers alternative approaches and changes the direction of the dramatic play. When the creator–play relationship is distributed between the children and the emerging artefact, the process may not be as smooth as the creators intend. The material–creator relationship actively shapes the creative process, revealing new action pathways while closing others (Glăveanu, 2014a). By modifying the play theme and incorporating unexpected results in a new idea or pattern, the children demonstrated their creative power in making use of the material in accordance with its nature.

One dramatic play resource frequently mentioned in teachers and parents' interviews is material that consists of loose parts. British architect Simon Nicholson (1972) referred to open-ended play materials as "loose parts" or those that allow children to use them in multiple ways. Loose parts do not have standard shapes and sizes, or form permanent connections with each other. They can be used separately or together. The value of loose parts, or open-ended materials, in fostering creativity and imagination is strongly supported by research (see Bagley & Klass, 1997; Sutton, 2011). The loose parts foster learning and creativity because they have a simple and flexible nature, which requires more imagination and creativity to play with them (Quayle, 2017). It is evident from the observations that the most engaging play scenarios all involved loose parts. For example, in Scenario 6, wooden boards became laptops and umbrellas, and in Scenario 5, a stick became a walking stick as well as a magic wand.

The use of loose parts concurs with the framework of materiality in distributed creativity. Children are able to interact with loose parts from different perspectives, and use them in divergent ways, which is essential in creative processes. For example, in Scenario 13, Going Fishing, the children used sticks and buckets to create a drama of fishing on a boat and saving each other from falling into the ocean. In Scenario 5, two girls could create several different story lines using one stick, including grandma walking with her stick, and a wicked witch using her wand to turn others into butterflies. Thus, having loose parts in an environment opens up an area of possibility for children to generate new outcomes, and forms the affordance for creativity to happen (Glăveanu, 2014a). Suggestions related to the use of materials in pedagogical practices for creativity are offered in Section Two.

Space to Play. This study's findings suggest that a centre's physical environment fundamentally influences children's dramatic play by providing a stimulating environment that fosters creative thinking. Physical environments, including interior design (e.g., room size, layout, furniture, lighting, sounds) and external spaces (e.g., outdoor spaces, nature, play equipment), influence children's learning and development in complex material and nonmaterial ways (Evans, 2006). How creativity is distributed spatially can be explained from the viewpoint of embodiment, where it is believed that embodied processes – sensations, perceptions, gestures and movements – connect human beings to the material and social world (Anttila & Sansom, 2012). From an embodied perspective, humans' perceptive and cognitive processing is strongly influenced by a change in the physical positions of their bodies (Needham & Libertus, 2011). Our brains are not isolated but rather connected to our bodies and the environment in which the body is located. One way that body awareness influences the function of the brain is through the perception of the spaces and how their bodies move within the spaces. Thus, creativity, as one of the cognitive processes, is influenced by children's movement within the early childhood settings.

The freedom of movement in a centre's environment plays an important role in the flow of creativity. Having opportunities and no limitations when playing in an open space are therefore pivotal to the material distribution of creativity in young children's dramatic play. Therefore, by providing children more opportunities to play in nature or other outdoor spaces, adults can help create a supportive environment for free movement and embodied creativity. As explained in Chapter 4, the ritual of the teachers and young children visiting a nearby mountain together every 2 weeks (if the weather permitted) was an important part of nature-related pedagogy of The Mountain, as well as part of their kaupapa Māori (a Māori way) philosophy and respect for the whenua (Pohio et al., 2015). When addressing children's creativity in the teacher interviews, all the teachers from The Mountain talked about the visits to the maunga, claiming that it was a perfect place for children's imagination to fly and the setting of nature itself provided a stage for children's dramatic play on the mountain top. As noted in the existing literature and the current interviews, children's freedom to move between spaces helps to sustain their involvement in dramatic play. Children experience fewer disruptions and more time in their dramatic play when play spaces are not crowded (Robertson et al., 2020). Moreover, most of the materials one can find in outdoor spaces belong to the category of loose parts. The free movement of the body can then embody or generate a similar mental

situation as playing with the loose parts: a seamless flow between different roles and activities in imaginary play due to the flexibility of children's imaginations (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Quayle, 2017).

The size of the space for children to enjoy outdoor dramatic play is partly determined by the location of the ECE setting. Some settings, located in a crowded or expensive neighbourhood such as The Bay, only possess a small piece of land and have to use most of the space for indoor facilities. To tackle the limitation posed by the physical space of the settings and foster distribution of creativity within the play space, the idea of forest kindergartens, or outdoor-based ECE programmes, is suggested in Section 2 of this chapter. A large open space allows freedom of movement and encourages creativity, but it is not the only way space influences play and creativity. For ECE settings with limited spaces, a careful design of the play space could also help create an environment which cultivates dramatic play. Intentional practice is needed in the design of the physical development to support children's dramatic play and creativity (Robertson et al., 2020). Scenario 13 is a great example of the role of space in dramatic play. Further implications and recommendations regarding the role of space and nature in creating a supportive and encouraging environment for young children's dramatic play and creativity are discussed in Section 2.

  The Cultural Life of Creativity – Cultural Knapsacks. The materiality of creativity also depicts its culturally specific nature, because every artefact used in creative actions, including solid material and creative thought, springs from a base of cultural knowledge and is therefore part of a cultural tradition (Feldman, 1974). The success of creative actors therefore depends on their abilities to discover, access and use the cultural stock (Glăveanu, 2014a). Culture exists at all levels in a society including the individual level, as individuals come from cultural milieus that they carry with them (Alegria et al., 2010). These cultural milieus are like an invisible weightless knapsack of beliefs, values, attitudes, routines and knowledge that allow individuals and groups to adapt and survive in an environment (Bruner, 1996; McIntosh, 2004). To discuss the influence of diverse experiences on children's dramatic play and creativity, the first task is to unpack the invisible knapsacks carried by both children and the adults who educate and care for them, so that the cultural artefacts become visible, and the social capital and sense of agency is strengthened, and to empower the practice of creating an environment that encourages the development of creativity in all individuals (Gallavan, 2005; McIntosh, 2004).

Children's willingness and competence as contributors to the early childhood settings are shaped by their specific cultural knapsacks with diverse experiences in them from their families and communities (Farmer, 2010). One important element inside their cultural knapsacks is the meanings of the symbolic use of play props and materials in their dramatic play. With diverse experiences, children endorse the same kind of prop with different representations. For example, toy animals in Brian's pretend play engage in a fight (Scenario 1), while they can also become yummy food in Daniel and Tiantian's dramatic play (Scenario 15). In these two scenarios, similar artefacts were represented, interpreted and embodied in ways that are ultimately cultural in nature (Glăveanu, 2014a). Children are also active practitioners in incorporating existing cultural artefacts into their dramatic play. In Rose's teacher interview at The Bay, Julian pretended to be Tawhirimatea, the Māori god of wind, blowing the wind on the playground. Similar incorporations of stories

and legends with cultural elements included into dramatic play were often observed in this research. In this sense, children's dramatic play acquires a cultural life and becomes a cultural product of creativity (Glăveanu, 2014a).

Children also carry diverse language experiences in their cultural knapsacks. In their dramatic play, children speak different languages, sometimes even no verbal language at all. Language and communicative strategies they used in dramatic play observed in this study were consistent with the cultural norms of social behaviour and self-expression of a group (Kim & Choi, 2014). This is shown in the examples of delicious food play exhibited by Daniel and Tiantian (Scenario 15). Daniel and Tiantian were speaking their mother tongue, Chinese Mandarin, in this scenario. The children's thematic choices with toy animals were different from most of the animal play observed at The Bay, possibly because the thematic content and the communicative strategies used to structure and maintain dramatic play are influenced by their family culture (Farver & Shin, 1997). In this scenario, the collectivist orientation of East Asian culture emphasised relational modes of interaction and group interdependence, which could lead to more harmonious ways of communication and more cooperative interactions (Kim & Choi, 2014). According to the teacher interviews at The Mountain, in a good-quality early childhood programme, teachers should support children settling into the centre by learning and understanding their home language as well as their cultural backgrounds (Liz, Q.4). This is in line with the nature of The Mountain as a Māori-medium centre where two or more languages are used. According to the principles in *Te Whāriki,* learner identity is enhanced when children's home languages and cultures are valued in educational settings (MoE, 2017).

Teachers also have their own unique cultural knapsacks that they bring to the early childhood settings and share with children. Teachers' lived experience, including ethnic and socioeconomic background, gender, geographic location, religious upbringing, and life decisions, can affect their beliefs, which in turn affect how they teach (Kyles & Olafson, 2008; Richardson, 1996). Also, when partnering with children in their play, the teachers' cultural values influence the form and content of children's dramatic play (Farver & Howes, 1993). As evident from the teacher interviews, some teachers are aware of their own cultural standpoint, and curious about the children's different cultural and family traditions; but for some of the other teachers, the impact of their cultural knapsacks was less apparent. The influence of the teachers' cultural backgrounds on their attitudes and ethos aligns with what is termed the hidden curriculum (Eisner & Vallance, 1974). When teachers and children are from different cultural backgrounds, which is often the case in New Zealand, cultural discontinuity in the teaching and learning space is likely to occur (Savage, 2010). Teachers' different cultural backgrounds, for example Olena's background as a migrant from Europe, could be helpful for teachers to understand and appreciate diverse cultural experiences, but it could also hinder acceptance of a range of multicultural beliefs and practices. This was illustrated in the interview with Olena, a teacher from The Bay who is a European immigrant. She became one of the advocates for building one common culture at The Bay. This is possibly because before her identity as a teacher, she was an immigrant from a different culture who preferred to acculturate into the culture of New Zealand rather than become differentiated from it.

Diverse cultural experiences in a child's cultural knapsack have a significant impact on conceptualisation, definition and identification of creativity (Oades-Sese et al., 2011). Beliefs and expectations held by parents, teachers, schools and communities in their cultural knapsacks influence or even determine whether a particular behaviour or characteristic of children would be deemed creative, and therefore may elicit or inhibit certain creative behaviours (Runco, 2007). For example, a teacher from The Bay expressed in a personal conversation that she felt that when Tiantian was at school, Daniel would "stick to her too much." In contrast, when Tiantian was away on holiday, Daniel could play together with other children, which, according to the teacher, was "better for him than playing with Tiantian." During the observations, Daniel did engage in dramatic play with other children but the length and the completeness of the episodes did not appear to be at the same level of satisfaction as when he played with Tiantian. One possible explanation is the language experience. Because the two children share the same home language, it was easier for them to communicate and engage in sociodramatic play together. Therefore, the study findings indicate that if diverse language experience is encouraged in the centre, more engagement in dramatic play amongst children with a different home language could be expected. On the other hand, if ECE centres fail to support or encourage children to speak diverse languages, or they ignore the influence of different cultural backgrounds, they will likely discourage or even hinder dramatic play opportunities and children's creativity.

Temporal Distribution of Creativity

Creativity occurs throughout the lifespan (Vygotsky, 2004). All creative products have a temporal dimension because they are created through time (Dewey, 1934). Children's dramatic play also takes place in a time sequence, sometimes continuous and sometimes with large leaps (Smilansky & Shefatya, 1990). Thus, young children's creativity needs to be studied: not as a mature creative *product* ready to be appreciated, but as an unfolding continuous *process*.

Temporalities are not just about time, because the study of temporality sits in the social and economic order that produces them (C. Moran, 2015). The temporal distribution of children's creativity includes the social and material interactions children engage in during dramatic play, as well as contributing to the continuing and developing sense of creativity. The use of material in children's dramatic play is based on their past personal and observed experience. When a child transfers a part of their past into the present, the child must be cognisant of the adaptation required in order to make the behaviour fit that of the co-player; meanwhile, the child also needs to organise the dramatic play to fit future developments (Smilansky & Shefatya, 1990).

To study the distribution of creativity in the uninterrupted and irreversible flow of time, this section is organised within the following three strands of development adapted from Valsiner's (1997) temporality study of social behaviours: 1) sociogenesis, or the development on human society level; 2) ontogenesis, or the development on the individual across the lifespan; and 3) microgenesis, or the action within here-and-now contexts. These strands of development are not distinct levels but a continuous temporality with artificial boundaries imposed for analytical reasons. The imaginative examples from children's dramatic play discussed here are not meant to be interpreted as mature creativities, but rather some creative ideas that spark joy in one moment of the children's lives.

Sociogenesis: The Dynamics of Creativity within a Changing Sociocultural Milieu. The sociogenesis development of children's creativity is shown in this study as comparisons of dramatic play between the teachers and parents' generation and that of their children. The findings suggest that as a creative process, children's dramatic play, from a societal perspective, saw a dynamic development intertwined with other social and economic factors such as the development of technology, family structures and parental ethos. In teacher and parent interviews, 10 out of 12 teachers and parents stated that today's children engage less in dramatic play but more in screen time than their own generation. Half of the parents admitted that they had put too much pressure on their children to be safe and disciplined, whereas themselves were raised with more freedom. Creative experiences of the older generation in dramatic play, according to the teachers' and parents' interviews, were visible in topics such as hunting and war, with a bigger group of children from extended families and neighbourhoods, and involved more outdoor playing time in comparison to their children. In contrast, the younger generation's creativity was shown to happen on a relatively smaller scale, and related more to mass media and technology.

Teachers and parents are thus encouraged to view children's dramatic play as a dynamic and changing process rather than as a ready-made product. Children's dramatic play is inseparable from artefacts created by the past generations and the creators' own lived experiences. The dramatic process resembles a sociomaterial distribution of creative activities along a temporal line that incorporates, but also extends well beyond, the life of any single individual child (Glăveanu, 2014a). Therefore, to value children's creativity, teachers in ECE centres could support an enabling environment that reveals the sociomaterial influence of a certain period of time in history by continued provision of materials. The example of a large old cassette player in the family corner at The Bay reflects this dynamic perspective of creativity which values the trajectory of human action along the temporal line. For children of this generation who are used to listening to music from online streaming services via digital players, a cassette player is undoubtedly something unfamiliar. The objective of having a cassette player in the ECE centre was not about teaching the children any life skills. Instead, the appearance of the cassette player, an unfamiliar piece of technology, generates curiosity and novel ideas in young children's minds. More discussion regarding materials provided in ECE settings related to temporal distribution of creativity follows in Section 2 of this chapter.

Ontogenesis: The Transformation of Creativity Through Imitation. Children's dramatic play often begins with imitating the world in which they live. In their early lives, children observe parents' everyday activities and re-enact their observations in their dramatic play. Young children imitate parents cooking in the kitchen corner, or making cakes and cookies in the mud kitchen, feeding baby dolls with milk bottles and telling them stories. However, imitation is not just about copying others' actions. Scenario 11, in which Todd solved the conflict with his friends by pretending to call the police, demonstrated Todd's knowledge of speeding and the resulting dramatic play of making phone calls processed and internalised his previous life experiences and, in combination, fostered problem solving. Todd's play illustrates how children observe, select and transform ideas from those who are around them, as well as combining ideas, expressing and accentuating their original personality in dramatic play (Glăveanu, 2014a). From a historical perspective,

imitation and creativity are not opposite phenomena but synchronous with each other, since human innovation emerges from imitating others and becomes non-existent if not imitated by others (Hunter et al., 2008). Imitation and creativity work in tandem to support children's cultural learning, such as cultural norms and behaviours (Legare & Nielsen, 2015). Connecting creativity with imitation asks teachers and parents to create an environment where imitation is valued and encouraged. Adults' behaviours are also sources for imitation, providing ideas and resources for dramatic play. An example from Olivia's parent interview is that her daughter Bianca displayed more breast feeding in her dramatic play with the baby dolls rather than feeding them with milk bottles (Olivia, Q.4), since Bianca was breast fed until her 3rd birthday. This example shows that by role-modelling through their own behaviours, parents and teachers can foster children's dramatic play through encouraging imitation.

Understanding the relationship between imitation and creativity helps teachers and parents to understand the relationship between creativity and development. Children's creative expression could become more sophisticated as their observations and experience accumulate (Feldman, 1999). The reverse is also the case since creative learning is the main driver of children's development in many aspects (Glăveanu & Tanggaard, 2014). By pretending to make a phone call, Todd in Scenario 11 transforms a daily action into a successful practice of solving social conflict with peers. In this process, learning and development are achieved through transforming imitated actions into imaginative activities.

Microgenesis: Transitional Creativity within Dramatic Play Activities. Microgenesis of creativity refers to a discussion of creativity at different stages, from the emergence of action to the preparation–ideation–implementation process integrated within a unitary activity system (Glăveanu, 2014a). The creative process is complex occurring across several stages (Amabile, 1983; P. May, 2009; Vinacke, 1952). For adults, the preparation stage often requires the person to discuss ideas with other people, to read books, watch movies, experiment, make sketches or prototypes. For young children, the process could be the same, although children may spontaneously start putting their ideas into action, where the act of engaging thoroughly in dramatic play itself could lead to the transitional moment for their creativity to spark. For example, in the scenario of the prison break at The Mountain (Scenario 2), the creative trajectory was formed not prior to the play, but during the extending of the block building process. Connecting the blocks together was a play experience the children already possessed, but by doing something they were familiar with, such as building blocks, new dramatic ideas unfolded with the flow of time. The transitional nature of creativity means it needs time to unfold in dramatic play. It takes time and effort for a child to transition from the preparation stage to the creative stage of generating new dramatic ideas based on small insights and playfulness. Therefore, to answer the research question about the role of adults in providing a supportive environment to foster creativity in ECE settings, giving children enough time to be fully engaged in dramatic play scenarios is necessary for temporal distribution of creativity. More implications regarding the role of time in fostering dramatic play are discussed in Section 2 of this chapter.

Affective Process in Creativity

According to the distributed creativity theory, creativity is distributed through social, material and temporal interactions. Within this framework, young children are considered creative, not because creativity is instinctive, but because creativity emerges when children actively engage in interactions with other people, play materials, and the environment within time. However, the framework does not address another important source of creativity generation, an area that is often associated with young children: affect and emotion.

Emotion is placed at the heart of creative processes especially from a sociocultural approach (Connery, 2010). As articulated in the previous chapters, creativity includes cognitive and affective processes (Russ, 2014). However, in the distributed creativity framework, the affective process is not one of the foci (Glăveanu, 2013). Affects and emotions are considered personal features at the core of Glăveanu's (2009) I-paradigm, which he believed had an individualistic fallacy in understanding and theorising creativity. The affective process is an undeniably important element in children's dramatic-play process. A description of young children's creativity in dramatic play is incomplete if there is no direct emphasis on the affective processes. Based on the evidence, an affective element has been added into the framework based on the analysis of the findings of this research. This decision was made based on both evidence from literature and observation from this study.

First, the affective process helps children's development in general. Evidence from previous literature has suggested that in dramatic play children demonstrate and develop feelings of empathy, a sense of goodness and badness, and reflect on their own feelings and those of others (Hartley et al., 1952; Niec & Russ, 2002). Children dramatize and act out their emotional desires naturally in their play, which become an authentic artefact providing a meaningful way to help them problem solve a situation they otherwise may not be able to resolve (Russ & Kaugars, 2001). For example, in Scenario 4, Harriet used dramatic play to learn how to cope with problems in the real world. By setting the scene of baby Teddy bear crying when Daddy left, Harriet is re-enacting her own separation anxiety exhibited during drop-off times. The affect theme and symbols are not only important in the process of creativity, but also an approach for children to go back and revisit their feelings.

Second, the affective process is an inseparable part of children's creativity. Adding affects into the distributed creativity framework draws on theoretical evidence from Glăveanu's own work. During the early childhood stage, children experience care and separation constantly, which is the first sociopsychological context of infants' development (Jovchelovitch, 2007). The experience of separating oneself from the environment of the mother's body creates an intermediate area of intersubjectivity called potential space (Winnicott, 1971). According to Glăveanu (2009), since childhood cultural experiences and creative play are developed simultaneously, this potential space is the origin of creativity. Findings from this study also suggest that creativity is generated from the feeling of separation and the potential space. This is illustrated in Scenario 14 where Tessa's special attachment to her mother when facing a younger sibling was transferred into hugging a puppet. However, in this scenario, Tessa did not pretend to be the puppet's mother but

remained herself. It might indicate that Tessa also found a way for her own emotional relief of seeking companionship outside the mother–child link.

Children's dramatic play, just like other forms of art, is one of the many experiences that highlights the importance of emotions in creative processes. Children re-enact the emotions and affective needs they experience in life in their dramatic play, which gives them a different perspective in viewing their emotions. In these situations, emotion is the starting point from which creative dramatic play emerges.

Based on theoretical and observational evidence, it is important to draw on the affective process in young children's dramatic play and creativity. To answer the main research question – in what ways do diverse experiences influence young children's creativity, and, if so, how this is manifested? – it is clear that children's diverse experiences are manifested through affective expressions in their dramatic play. Therefore, children's freedom of emotional expression is an inseparable part of providing a supportive environment to foster creativity in ECE settings.

Section 2: Implications for Creativity in ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand

Strategies of how to create a supportive environment in ECE that values and encourages diverse experiences and creativity is the focus of the second half of this chapter. As stated in *Te Whāriki*, children develop holistically, so "every aspect of the context – physical surroundings, emotional state, relationships with others and immediate needs – will affect what children learn from any particular experience." (MoE, 2017, p. 19). To achieve holistic learning outcomes, the curriculum states that children develop the "ability to be creative and expressive through a variety of activities, such as pretend play" (MoE, 1996, p. 42). Therefore, based on the requirements of the curriculum and the findings from observation, this thesis offers some implications for teachers and ECE settings when considering creativity and holistic development through dramatic play. As the findings chapter suggests, most teachers at the two ECE centres valued children's creative dramatic expressions and understood the basic guidelines to foster children's creativity, such as standing back to let the child explore, designing nature-based activities, or providing opportunities for self-initiated activities (Cornelius & Casler, 1991; Eckhoff, 2011; Ucus & Acar, 2019). However, there were other needs demonstrated in observation that might benefit from more strategic teacher support, especially regarding the diverse experiences. As in the previous section, implications provided in this section are organised according to the theoretical framework of distributed creativity along three lines: social, material and temporal. Amongst these three lines, the social distribution of creativity is discussed related to building positive adult–child relationships, the material distribution is discussed related to creating a positive material and cultural environment, and temporal distribution addresses developmental considerations about creativity.

Implications for Building Positive Adult–Child Relationships

Findings from this study invite educators to consider how study findings of social distribution of creativity can be incorporated into their own pedagogical practice (Green & Cherrington, 2010). One primary focus of this research is social interaction and its influence on children's creativity and dramatic play. The findings suggest that creativity in children's dramatic play is socially interactive and dynamic in nature. A healthy and

positive adult–child relationship plays a key role in creating an empowering environment. In this section, ideas are provided to enrich children's diverse experiences through building a trusting relationship between teachers and children, scaffolding children's social skills, and fostering social distribution of creativity.

Teaching Metacommunication Skills in Dramatic Play. The progression of dramatic play can be disordered and unpredictable. As a consequence, participants in sociodramatic play may sometimes become confused by the regression of the play process and the play will come to a halt. Thus, certain skills are necessary for productive interaction and turn-taking negotiation among children in dramatic play. Learning these skills can foster interactions and communication among children. For example, in Scenario 3, three boys jointly contributed to the same dramatic theme of diving in the ocean. By contributing their own understanding, knowledge and imagination about the ocean to the dramatic play and creating a comprehensive scenario of diving, the children were actively involved in effective interaction and the process of creativity.

One of the practical skills in promoting productive interactions is metacommunication. Metacommunication in play is defined as the regulatory actions children perform during play that maintain, negotiate and direct the play activities (Garvey, 1974). It is a pivotal part of dramatic play because role enactment and assignment are critical to the initiation and maintenance of social dramatic play (Sawyer, 1997). Metacommunication can be categorised from two dimensions: explicit or implicit, and verbal or nonverbal communication. In explicit communication, children directly communicate narratives to others, for example, "Let's play mummy and baby." Implicit communication represents speaking as their play character, such as crying out using a baby voice, "Mummy I'm hungry" (Garvey & Berndt, 1975; Sawyer, 1997). Another dimension is verbal and nonverbal communications. For young children, nonverbal communication plays an important role in their play. Besides role setting, dramatic scenes also need the framing of concepts agreed by all participants, including transformations of objects, people, locations and events (Giffin, 1984). Once the frame is created, children can interact by acting both within the narrative in the roles they play (on the level of role-driven or real relationships, as in an event-driven play) or outside the narrative as themselves (Smirnova & Ryabkova, 2010).

Observational findings demonstrated the usage of different metacommunication strategies in different interactional contexts (see Scenario 6 and Scenario 10, for example), and suggested that implicit and nonverbal metacommunication strategies were more likely to transform dramatic intentions into play scenarios. A good example is Scenario 6 at The Mountain. The play themes changed several times within this scenario, from watching a movie on the laptop, to raining, to running away from the fire. The metacommunication demonstrated by Navarro in this process was very diverse, including both implicit verbal and nonverbal approaches. For example, instead of using an explicit invitation such as "Let's pretend we watch a movie," he used implicit verbal approach by calling out "movie time." He also used nonverbal communications, such as holding the "umbrella" over his head to simulate raining. In contrast, Ava, at first, did not appear to be used to the rapid transformation of play themes suggested by Navarro. She was trying to deny the fictional world by using reality speech, crying out "No! Stop!" as herself. However, by observing

and learning from Navarro's approaches, Ava managed to engage in the scenario by applying both implicit dramatic speech ("But I can't feel the raindrops") and nonverbal communication (stretching out her hand to feel the rain). Another example is Harry trying to invite his friend into dramatic play (Scenario 10). It demonstrates clearly the outcomes of using different communication strategies to aid the process of dramatic play. At first Harry was trying to use nondramatic speech to invite his friend into family play (showing Aiden the bears and asking, "I'll play with this, okay?"). His effort led to a rejection from Aiden, since they had just had an argument several minutes before the scenario. Then Harry tried the explicit director's speech of declaring, "You can be the papa bear and I be the baby bear," to which Aiden agreed but did not engage. When Harry tried the implicit dramatic speech combined with nonverbal dramatic acts by crying out "Papa bear, help me!" he finally succeeded in inviting his friend to join. In this sense, engaging in social dramatic play also fosters children's development of metacommunication.

In these scenarios, children implicitly and explicitly applied verbal and nonverbal metacommunication strategies to communicate changing play themes and to express their agency and desire to control the scenario. These strategies connected with the Vygotskian way of learning through creating a ZPD between the child's present level of achievement and a more competent future self (John-Steiner et al., 2010). Thus, teachers and kaiako can certainly guide children in learning more varieties of metacommunication strategies to help create this ZPD in dramatic play; however, even without scaffolding from adults, the children can learn from collaboration with each other through metacommunication skills in sociodramatic play (S. Moran & John-Steiner, 2003).

Using Dialogical Language to Encourage Multiple Voices. Children's conversation in their social dramatic play is dialogical in nature. Because of the social nature of humankind, the creative actors embody voices from their audiences to shape their own creative actions (Glăveanu, 2014a). Every utterance in sociodramatic play is generated by waiting for a response from play peers and anticipating future statements (A. Robinson, 2011). There are two primary ways young children respond to their peers in dramatic play: either by repeating or complementing the other children's utterances. These represent the two ways children can add their own voices to the dramatic play, by either acknowledging the partners' intentions or appropriately extending it in their own turn (Göncü, 1998). A good example is Scenario 6, when Navarro claimed "Oh it's raining," Ava disagreed by saying "No I don't feel any raindrops" while stretching out her hands as if to feel the rain. In this scenario, children's utterances are simultaneous yet with a combative quality, with the creative work constantly interacting with other voices and seeking to alter or inform it (Wertsch, 2009). Through recognition of the multiplicity of voices and using dialogical speech, adults could support creative utterances that emerge in dramatic play. Encouraging dialogical language use in dramatic play will increase the dynamic two-way relationship between the actor and the audience in the creative process, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Establishing a climate in early childhood settings that values children's subjectivity for creativity requires effective communication. Interactions between children and teachers are part of the hidden curriculum, which consists of the unstated norms, values, and beliefs about the social relations of school life that are

transmitted to students (Gollnick & Chinn, 2013). Adults' use of dialogical language can be used to maximise the dialogical nature of children's dramatic play and, in turn, enhance it. There are two aspects for which it is vital for adults to use language that is in line with the dialogical nature of dramatic play. First, to encourage creativity from children, interactive and open-ended language can be employed by practitioners. As expressed by Amy at The Bay, when children told her "I want to be a Ninja Turtle," rather than telling the children what to do, she asked questions such as "What do you think can be used to make a turtle shell?" (Amy, Q.8). Other language techniques that maximise multiple voices, revealed in the teacher interview, include admitting one's own ignorance as adults, and encouraging children to research or enquire (Amy, Q.8). Second, social conflicts that might arise during dramatic play, given its, at times, combative nature, can be left to evolve naturally without being resolved hastily by adults. What may be seen as social tension among children can also become the point where creativity emerges. Disagreement does not mean at least one person must be wrong. From a dialogical point of view, it is important to not only recognise differences in the same world, but also involve the distribution of incompatible elements within different perspectives of equal value (Folch-Serra, 1990). This is evident in the scenario of the tiger on the playdough table (Scenario 9). When Todd was using the tiger to punch the playdough in front of the girl, the girl got upset and almost cried. If the teacher, instead of using inquiry language ("Look, is the tiger hungry?"), had adopted a non-dialogical statement in order to stop any potential conflict from happening, a different outcome may have arisen in the dramatic play. Furthermore, non-dialogical language may not be able to resolve the situation smoothly, and it is more likely that the emergence of imaginative play would be reduced as a result.

Avoiding Adultcentrism in Child-Teacher Relationships. One method of building trust between teachers and children, as discussed in the first section of this chapter, is to transition from being adultcentric to becoming child focused, which refers to understanding the child's play from the child's own perspective. This implication is drawn from the findings where gaps between the adults' perception and children's play emerge (e.g., Eric saying his son does not engage in family play because it's a girl's game, and the reality that Henry enjoyed papa bear and baby bear play with his friend (Scenario 10). The term *adultcentrism* is used often in the social work profession, referring to the tendency of adults to view children and their problems from a biased, adult perspective, which leads to a complex set of attitudes, values, and behaviours (Goode, 1986). Adultcentrism can undermine practitioners' effectiveness, skew adult–child relationships and thus create barriers to effective educational practices (Petr, 1992). Adultcentric beliefs are like other kinds of social inequality where one side (the adults) have certain privilege and needs to relinquish some of their power in order to achieve a more equitable power relation (McIntosh, 2004). By doing so, adults can shift the focus away from adult-centred educational practices towards a more child-centred approach.

There are several ways adults can move towards a child-centred practice that will help build trusting adult–child relations. First, it is vital to look at the nature of these social relations critically, particularly in terms of power relations. It is important to note that "childhood" is not a homogeneous category but recognised as a socially constructed term located and understood in the geographic and historic context of social change (James & James, 2004). The concept of childhood intersects with other social categories (e.g., gender, race,

class, and ethnicity), hence making "children" a composite and diverse group (Fassetta, 2014, p. 108). Each person feels, thinks, perceives, and behaves, in part, based on the age group to which they belong (Gollnick & Chinn, 2013). In this sense, interactions between children and adults reflect on relations where children are deemed to be powerless within this dyad under the current adult-dominant discourse, which was developed around children's dependency on adults (K. H. Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006). Too often in education, teachers attempt to control the teacher–child relationship; with any child's contribution considered an interruption (Matusov, 1999). This form of power relation stifles learning and undercuts potential creative flow, as illustrated when the teachers interrupted the flow of children's dramatic play in Scenarios 7 and 8. Because the relationship between teachers and children determines the quality of education (Nieto, 2010), it is never enough for adults just to try to treat all children fairly and equitably, they also need to reconsider the adult–child power relations based on a multicultural and pluralistic viewpoint.

Holding a fluid and reflective understanding of power relations, especially when the children's actions do not align with the teachers' expectations, could help teachers to manage the learning areas in a supportive manner. In the adult–child power-relation dyad, the adults belong to the more powerful side, which means adults not only have the capacity to affect others, but also the capacity to be affected (Ho, 2020). For example, in Scenario 7 and Scenario 8, it would have been beneficial for teachers to reflect on the teacher–child(ren) power relations as a socially dynamic complexity rather than a unidirectional relationship (Sellers, 2013). This is how the unexpected acts of children playing with materials that "are not toys" (Scenario 7) and playing with blocks out of the block area (Scenario 8) could be viewed as positive expressions of children's imagination and creativity, instead of being judged as misbehaviour, or disruptive actions (Ho, 2020). The teacher–child relationship was also addressed in Vygotsky's (1978) cultural historical approach to creative education, which redefined the role of teachers and children. Teachers do not didactically "teach" topics or strategies; instead, they assist children in their attempts to learn by becoming familiar and addressing the unique needs of the children while creating environments that facilitate creative meaning making (John-Steiner, 2010, p. 223). In a supportive learning environment, children can decide their own play, including the setup of the spaces, choices of play materials, or the ideas they want to play with (Fassetta, 2014). This type of environment reduces the potential for interruptions and interventions in dramatic play such as witnessed in Scenario 7 and Scenario 8. Preparing activities and the environment in a way selected and preferred by children, rather than what educators consider to be beneficial from an adult's perspective, will help to develop children's creativity. This involves the set up and use of the material and physical environment, which is addressed in more detail in the following paragraphs regarding the implications of material support.

To truly treat children as egalitarian parties requires the adults to abandon the controlling or dominant position in communication, as well as giving up some of the adult power. The interaction techniques described in Section 1 of this chapter, such as using dialogical language, admitting one's own ignorance, and encouraging exploration and researching together with children, are also helpful in celebrating a diverse and egalitarian learning environment for creativity to thrive.

Implications for Creating a Supportive Environment for Creativity and Dramatic Play

Children's creativity is dependent on their environment (Runco & Johnson, 2002). A responsive and supportive environment encourages children to express their creative thoughts (Eckhoff & Urbach, 2008). Based on the discussion in the previous section about the role of materiality in children's creativity and dramatic play, some implications are provided on how this influences the ways in which teachers make use of materials, spaces and cultural symbols to promote diverse experiences when fostering children's dramatic play.

The Function of Toys and Tools. The environment and access to resources influences how children spend their time engaging in creative play (Tonyan & Howes, 2003). For young children, the most direct stimulus from the environment often comes from the manipulation of materials and objects (Prentice, 2000). Thus, educators and parents often want to know what kind of materials could better facilitate children's development. This study recommends the importance of the availability of and access to play props in an environment, rather than a particular type of material provision. Some teachers and parents raised the question of providing children with either toys or real items used in everyday situations; this included offering children real kitchen utensils instead of toy spoons and plates, and the use of New Zealand dollar play money, so that children could learn life skills and manage basic life concepts. However, learning is not all about knowing how to use a certain tool; it is also about knowing representatively how everything works around them (Vygotsky, 1978). As the observations revealed, children have the ability to make connections between different things using representation, demonstrated in their use of plastic replicas of animals in a range of imaginative ways rather than just their literal use. Scenario 1 and Scenario 15 offer good examples of the different uses of the same set of toys. In this case, toy animals can be used to form an army, or become food. In these scenarios, a transformed use of the toy was established to illustrate that creativity could be generated from any interactions between the children and the artefacts. Therefore, the key is not whether the material itself is a toy or a tool, but the way it is presented to the children.

This study recommends to the adults the provision of different combinations of materials or play props to foster children's dramatic play. Sparks of creative imagination appear when children play with single use toys, but it emerges more often when children play with improvised toys or a combination of different materials. For instance, in Scenario 13, where Westin and Todd went fishing on the bridge, their rods were toys made by teachers where a bucket was attached to one end of a long bamboo stick. The combination of the stick and bucket laid the foundation for the children to imagine the possible scenario. Besides the fishing rods, the toy also became bars that acted as barriers and life ropes in the same scenario. The same can be applied to other play materials, such as materials found in nature. Parents expressed that their children often collected leaves, seeds, branches or pebbles, but that most materials would end up being discarded. If parents creatively presented the materials the children collected, however, there was more likely to be more concentrated episodes of dramatic play demonstrated by the children. Sasha presented a good example of her daughter's creativity regarding the combination of different materials in play (Sasha, Q.12). Therefore, it is relevant for teachers and parents to consider the balance between providing natural resources and

manufactured toys (Quayle, 2017). The value of resources is not dependent on whether they are artificial or natural, but on how a resource inspires or supports children's dramatic play.

The materials provided in ECE settings also need to reflect the dynamic and changing nature of children's creativity. As discussed in the temporal distribution part of Section 1 in this chapter, materials and props have embodied societies' collective creativity of past generations, like the cassette player at The Bay. Its primary function does not exist anymore as it is no longer usable to play music, but the creativity embodied in this invention is able to be distributed across time and generations through the children's exploration and interaction with the cassette player. It became an unusual object because of time – the development along time makes it a rarity to this generation's children so it sparks curiosity, thus aiding creativity distribution temporally. Therefore, in a supportive environment, play materials, which connect past and present and possibly the future, can act as bridge between the generations.

Creating Opportunities to Play in Natural Outdoor Settings. To achieve holistic learning objectives as stated in *Te Whāriki*, places are as important as materials in building an image of the world (Lee et al., 2013). As discussed in Section 1 of this chapter, having an environment where children have access to a range of unprogrammed resources and spaces is essential in the material distribution of creativity. These types of environments help children to develop dramatic play and to practise independence (Kuh, 2014), while using their imagination. As reported in the interviews with teachers and parents, today's children appeared to spend less time outdoors than previous generations. Children are increasingly sheltered and constrained from running and jumping, climbing and falling, rolling and swinging, which are ways of fostering their embodied cognitive development (Anttila & Sansom, 2012). Dangers in neighbourhoods, more structured activities, parents' over-cautiousness, and increased use of technology all contribute to less time in outdoor play, and in turn more time viewing screens e.g., television, computers, video games, phones, or tablets (McClintic & Petty, 2015). Also, some mainstream ECE settings, such as The Bay, tended to have smaller spaces but often a larger number of structures such as sandpits, swings and climbing frames in their outdoor areas. This can result in children's actions encroaching on other children's spaces and play (Quayle, 2017). The physical limitations of the settings may affect children's cognition and emotions by impacting their attempts to create new play. Under such conditions it is vital for early childhood centres to provide opportunities for children to experience a range of outdoor play possibilities.

Fortunately, in the last decade, there has been growing interest in ECE settings in Aotearoa New Zealand around providing more opportunities for closer connections to nature (Kelly & White, 2013). Children and teachers regularly visit and spend time in natural outdoor environments outside the ECE centre, for example, in, a "forest-bush-park-farm outdoor space" called the forest kindergarten, "which becomes the early childhood setting" (Alcock & Ritchie, 2018, p. 81). The Mountain's regular visit to the nearby maunga belongs in this category of outdoor-based programmes. As discussed in the previous chapters, playing in the natural environment is essential for healthy child development, and provides more opportunities for creativity (Canning, 2010; Louv, 2008). The programmes of the forest kindergarten provide a form of learning and expression for children different from the outdoor spaces located within an ECE centre where

there may be concrete underfoot and half-covered areas designed to protect children from the sun (Alcock & Ritchie, 2018). Thus, a programme with regular visits to a natural setting outside could serve as a valuable source to promote young children's creativity, through fostering interaction between the creator and the environment, and the distribution of materiality (Glăveanu, 2014a).

Respecting Diverse Language and Cultural Experiences. As discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, the creative development of children who speak a different language from the main society is in danger of being supressed (see Yates & Marcelo, 2014, as an example). When young children who speak a home language other than English start in the ECE settings, they begin the process of learning an additional language in an unfamiliar environment. Unless educators know the incoming children's home language, social-class background and culture, and provide a supportive environment, these children may be marginalised and may experience feeling insecure and anxious (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke, 2000).

To respect the minority children's multilingual needs and development in a diverse environment like Aotearoa New Zealand, reciprocal and responsive relationships between the home and the centre become a significant prerequisite in order for the ECE teachers to learn from the child, the parents and the whānau as evident in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017). Honouring children's multilingual development contributes to the children's creativity, because being able to speak more than one language can offer children the opportunity to categorise and view the world in more than one way, which can increase their flexibility and divergent processes of thinking (Ghonsooly & Showqi, 2012; Lee & Kim, 2011; Milne & Clarke, 1993). These features are important to consider given the key role of cognitive ability pertaining to creativity (Guilford, 1986). Therefore, as stated in Chapter 5, adults are encouraged to respect and learn from the children about their own family cultures and languages, especially for children from minority groups, which could help them to settle and enable their creative expressions. Children from minority backgrounds could also benefit from teachers using their home language to further a dramatic play scenario, or encouraging them to play with other children using their home language to develop social distribution of creativity, as the example of the Chinese children has shown in Scenario 15.

Another reason to honour the creativity of children and whānau from minority groups is to respect diverse cultural experiences. What is considered creative varies from culture to culture (Oades-Sese et al., 2011; Westwood & Low, 2003). Young children's creativity also varies, because they come to the ECE settings with diverse cultural knapsacks. Failing to recognise the diverse cultures represented in children's dramatic play may lead to failure in detecting creative behaviours, let alone fostering creative development. If we simply judge all creativity based only on one universal standard, this biased understanding may not be able to respect (or ignore) local understandings and practices of teachers and parents (Glăveanu, 2018). Learning a foreign language and/or culture may be perceived as creating more work for already busy teachers in ECE settings. However, like the teachers from The Mountain, by learning new languages and cultures, in addition to helping the immigrant families and children to settle, teachers can also benefit from broadening their own understanding of diversity (e.g., Airini & Liz, Q.4).

Implications for Developmental Considerations

Creativity is a developmental matter (Feldman, 1999). Within the sociocultural developmental framework, Vygotsky defined creativity as a transformative activity in which emotion, meaning and cognitive symbols are synthesised (John-Steiner et al., 2010). Several implications related to this transformation generated from the research findings are discussed in this section, with regard to the temporality of creativity, and to support teacher's daily pedagogical practices.

      Allowing Time for Play. Ample time needs to be available for children to generate original ideas. The foundation for young children's creativity lies in the opportunities to continuously focus on their creative processes (J. D. Moran, 1988). This effect can be seen in Scenario 5 where most of the other children were off site visiting a nearby marae [the open space in front of the wharenui (meeting house)]. For this reason, as the few remaining older children, Ava and Rene could enjoy a long and uninterrupted time focusing on exploring the uses of a rainbow colour stick. The consistency of time enabled them to come up with as many creative ideas as possible stemming from using the stick in different ways. It is suggested that having consistent and uninterrupted time and opportunities to explore and experiment with the resources enables children to gain an in-depth understanding of the capabilities and potential of the resources (Knight, 2013).

Time in the busy atmosphere of ECE settings is characterised by set routines, which are the activities that occur daily at roughly the same time, or events such as meals, sleep and get-together times (Farquhar, 2016). As seen from the observations in this study, dramatic play scenarios were often interrupted by teachers directing children to eat or sleep. This research, however, is not suggesting the teachers abandon the routines or jettison the clock completely in ECE settings, which are impossible. However, time and temporality need to be reconsidered in an ECE setting, and not seen as a fixed existence structured by the institutional social practices that a person inhabits, since children's consideration of time is fundamentally different from that of adults (Farquhar, 2016). The research argues for teachers to recognise the unique subjectivity of each child and the difference between the perception of time for children and adults, to resist the discussed teacher–child power relations in which teachers control the time frame on behalf of children (Wien & Kirby-Smith, 1998). Visiting natural outdoor environments could be an option in offering time to honour children's experiences of temporalities. For teachers and children from The Mountain, for example, during their trips to the maunga, the children's rhythm is recognised and not governed by the adults. Because children are physically slower in walking and curious about everything on the way, the teachers tend to let the children chose the focus and set the pace while climbing the maunga. Also, the routine during the trip is different from when they are in the centre, so the teachers are inclined to slow down and be more flexible with time. The notion of connections in time, as evident in *Te Whāriki*, is integral to a Māori perspective of relationships. Thus, the realisation of creative distribution in time could be made via "connections through whakapapa to maunga, awa [river], moana [ocean], whenua [land] and marae" (MoE, 2017, p. 21). In this sense, a regular experience of engaging with natural outdoor environments arranged in ECE settings could be

considered as not only a recognition of kaitiakitanga (environmental guardianship), but also a useful means to foster young children's creativity.

Value Repetition and Consistency. The development of creativity is not a linear, progressive succession from one stage to the next (Glăveanu, 2014a). In young children's dramatic play in particular, the creative processes include repetitive cycles of experiences. Repetition refers to dramatic behaviours that often happen more than once in a scenario, sometimes consecutively, sometimes with long intervals between occurrences. Repetitions indicate that dramatic play is not a one-off activity randomly generated by the children's imagination, but represents a kind of learning and development that formulate some real-life plans and volitional motives (Vygotsky, 1978). For example, the repetition in the second half of Brian's animal play (Scenario 1) clearly showed that he consciously went through and repeatedly reflected on the cognitive and affective process involved in his animal dramatic play. The repetition of the fragments of the episode brought him the joy of pretending, which deeply benefits the affective creative process. In this process, the child was exploring the current play experience, as well as getting prepared for the next creative process. The intervals between the repetitions signify an incubation stage in the creative process (P. May, 2009). The repetition of dramatic play scenarios displays purposefulness and duration, which are the criteria for judging creative process (Gruber & Wallace, 1999).

Repetition is also related to the metacognition process. Metacognition, often simply defined as the "thinking about thinking," involves the active control and regulation of cognitive process engaged in learning (Livingston, 2003). Brian's regulation and control over his creative process are shown in the reflection on the dramatic activities through playing them repeatedly and each time making little modifications to the dramatic details. This is also a sign of Brian's learning to plan and monitor his own activities, and developing a greater awareness of himself as a learner (MoE, 2017). Metacognition skills link to intelligence and enable successful learning (Borkowski et al., 1987). One factor of metacognition development is the availability and consistency of play materials. In Brian's scenario, for example, he took time away to reflect on the previous dramatic play experience before coming back to play and reflection. The time between the two stages could be as long as several hours or even days. However, the availability of resources in ECE settings is often dependent on the activities that have been set up for that session. Therefore, the key to consistency in availability is the access to resources. Thus, this research affirms the significance of creating a supportive environment where repetitions in play are valued and consistent access to the same materials is available.

Conclusion

Analysis of the observations shows clear evidence that instead of being generated by individual minds and imaginations, young children's creativity in dramatic play distributes socially, materially and temporally through interactions with co-players and artefacts. Children also demonstrate cognitive and affective skills related to creativity in their dramatic play. Through comparing findings from observations with that of teacher and parent interviews, some discontinuity and conflicts emerge. The distributions of young children's creativity are influenced by several factors including adult–child relationships, physical and cultural

environments, and teachers' pedagogical practices. Some situations appeared to be challenging or even damaging to the distribution of creativity and development of dramatic play. Suggestions for ways to confront the challenges that could help support teachers' practices have also been provided based on the research findings.

The young children involved in this research have shown that they are sensitive to culture and language through incorporating cultural artefacts and using different languages in dramatic play. Their dramatic play, which is an expression of the creative process, as well as a reflection of their diverse experiences, demonstrates this exceptional ability to tune in to people and context (J. E. Smith, 2007).

As interactions proved to be of great importance in children's learning and development, appropriate child-teacher interactions should be considered as one of the primary sources to encourage dramatic play, to build the ZPD, and to foster creativity (Fisher, 2016). Although this thesis has demonstrated the influence of teacher interference in dramatic play, it does not mean to advocate leaving children to their own child-led free play without any interaction from adults (Blaisdell et al., 2019). The key to a balance between interacting and interfering, and free exploration and necessary scaffolding, lies in an in-depth understanding of the distributed nature of creativity, as well as motivations to respect diverse experiences of young children, treating children as equal agents, and applying appropriate communication techniques during interactions with young children. In the next and final chapter, a comprehensive conclusion regarding the theoretical beliefs, findings, recommendations for teachers and parents, limitations, and implications for future studies are provided.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate the genesis of young children's creativity in relation to the environment in which children live and interact, be it physical, social or cultural, and how this plays an important role in the development of creativity (Amabile, 1996). In

(Gocłowska & Crisp, 2014), as observed through the conduit of young children's dramatic play in two early childhood centres located in Aotearoa New Zealand. Findings were also drawn from interviews with early childhood educators and parents.

The concluding chapter presents the major findings of the study, the limitations, and recommendations for further research, and concluding thoughts and reflections in response to the main research question: "In what ways do diverse experiences influence young children's creativity and if so, how is it manifested?"

The related subquestions are:

How is young children's creativity generated through dramatic play?

What role do diverse experiences play in the development of young children's creativity in ECE settings?

What role do teachers and parents play in providing a supportive environment to foster creativity?

Major Findings

The major findings of this study include: 1) the key features and challenges pertaining to the provision of dramatic play and creativity in early childhood settings in New Zealand as drawn from this study; and 2) the implications for teachers, children and parents. The key findings are organised using the framework of distributed creativity (Glăveanu, 2014a) incorporating the three categories: social, material and temporal regarding young children's creativity. These categories of creativity align with the theoretical framework, and with the addition of the affective process, which is considered as a significant element in the genesis of creativity.

The social distribution of creativity describes the interaction between the creators (the children) and the audience (other children or adults). From a critical perspective, this research supports existing calls within *Te Whāriki* and progressive educational views in general towards the redefining of power structures to emphasise a child-centred approach to learning in ECE settings. This involves the development of reciprocal relationships and trust between the children and teachers during the children's engagement in their dramatic play. As observed at both centres, evidence of the development of a trusting and reciprocal relationship between the teachers and the children was achieved when props and other toys were able to be freely accessed and used by the children in a variety of areas. As sometimes observed, the flow of children's self-initiated dramatic play was sometimes interrupted when access to certain materials was limited or restricted to their original and intended location. Young children's dramatic play, and, as a consequence, the development of their creativity, was enhanced when they were able to choose their play materials and use

them in a variety of different areas. Concomitantly, the gender roles the children chose in their dramatic play were not necessarily limited by societal norms, which illustrated their freedom to choose and challenge gender stereotypes. Young children's dramatic play can sometimes challenge adults' beliefs while, at the same time, providing the opportunity to consider alternative ways for children to access a range of materials, some of which may be non-gender-specific, to support their imaginative ideas. These challenges may also extend to a focus on safety and rules, which, while being important for young children's wellbeing, can also become restrictive as risk taking becomes limited. To enable young children's freedom of expression, the potential of risk taking is inevitable, but is also an area where collaboration and co-operation between children can be experienced, which is an example of the social distribution of creativity which occurs through interactions.

The material distribution of young children's creativity is realised through interacting with the artefacts in the environment, such as physical materials and/or cultural concepts. Opportunities for the distribution of materials were demonstrated through a wide range of materials, including spaces to play and the multitude of cultural artefacts that are part of children's and teachers' lived experiences. A specific example of the value of the role of materials and the physical space, as a contributor to creativity, is the opportunity for the children to move freely between spaces in order to sustain their involvement in dramatic play, which is especially obvious in outdoor spaces, such as the regular visits to the nearby maunga. These regular excursions to the maunga not only created opportunities for the young children's interaction and creative exploration of the environment, but also honoured their cultural heritage.

There are three temporal levels identified in relation to creativity: the sociogenesis or social level, the ontogenesis or individual level, and the microgenesis or level of creative actions. Within a changing sociocultural milieu, children's dramatic play today is different from the previous generation. From an individual perspective, creativity is generated from imitating what children observe from those around them. Dramatic play enables children to combine previous experience and knowledge with what they have observed, and create new and imaginative situations. Creativity also needs time to unfold. Children develop creative ideas through interacting with their friends and a variety of props, such as toys, dress-ups, and other resources including outdoor equipment, which require time for exploration. However, as suggested in the literature, in the busy atmosphere of an early childhood centre, time, as an important driver of pedagogy, can sometimes dictate what occurs in an early childhood setting (Farquhar, 2016). Thus, one of the implications that arose from this study was the need to provide ample time together with space for children in ECE settings to fully engage in dramatic play.

As described earlier in this chapter, the affective process plays an important role in young children's dramatic play and creativity (Russ, 2014). The affective process in dramatic play is not only an inseparable part of creativity, but also helps children's development in general. Therefore, when working to create an encouraging and supportive environment for dramatic play and creativity, children's freedom to express how they are feeling is an important aspect to consider.

These key findings lead to some implications that can be considered further for pedagogical practice. Building a trusting relationship with children, applying some helpful techniques, such as metacommunication skills, use of dialogical languages, and being child centred, as illustrated above, can nurture the development of children's creativity. As identified in this research, the provision of supportive play materials, such as the use of loose parts, together with the combination of other materials such as cultural artefacts also contribute to generating meaningful creative ideas as manifested in young children's dramatic play. The outdoor space also proved to be pivotal for the genesis of creativity. To support the children's creative engagement in their dramatic play, a recognition of their diverse cultural and linguistic experiences and family backgrounds would provide opportunities for a variety of imaginative ideas to be explored, while honouring their cultural heritage. When consideration is given to providing children with ample time to play, this can contribute to ongoing engagement, repetition and consistency, which is a valuable component regarding the development of creativity in young children's dramatic play.

Recommendations for Parents and Whānau – Creating a Supportive Environment and Encouraging Diverse Experiences at Home

Children learn and develop best when the people in their lives help them to make connections across settings (MoE, 2017), such as between the early childhood centre and home. Parents and whānau can be invited to participate in and contribute to the curriculum, which develops a reciprocal partnership between parents and staff. This enables the sharing of information, responsibility, expectations and accountability (Pugh & De'Ath, 1989). An important aspect of developing a reciprocal partnership is to invite the parents' involvement and thus participation in the early childhood programme (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke, 2000). As suggested by Chan and Ritchie (2016), when families' cultures and practices are recognised in ECE settings, children's learning and development is fostered. The research suggested the importance of having direct dialogue with parents to understand their attitudes and points of view about their children's dramatic play, creativity and the diversity of their experiences that contributes to young children's creativity. The potential for mirroring the same supportive environment for dramatic play and children's creativity at home as a result of a reciprocal centre–home relationship is a desirable outcome based on this study's key findings

Parents' Educational Expectations of Children's Dramatic Play

One of the distinctions between parents and teachers' understandings of children's dramatic play is that while teachers praise and value dramatic play in itself, some parents may hold a pragmatic view that is attuned to the possible educational outcomes of dramatic play. According to the findings of this research, parents from both centres mentioned how they made use of dramatic play at home to meet the need of regularity in daily routines or to teach children skills or knowledge through play. These findings suggest that parents had specific educational expectations for children's dramatic play. Sometimes, parents may intervene in their children's dramatic play to teach literacy or numeracy skills based on the educational potential they perceive in children's dramatic play. However, these interventions may lead to adults interrupting the flow of the children's dramatic play and children abandoning their play scenarios.

Findings from this research suggest the promotion of broadening parents' expectations of dramatic play as a strategy to enhance cognitive growth and academic success. Implicit in this redefining of parents' expectations is an emphasis on dramatic play as a child-centric activity. By engaging in dramatic play, children are practising metacommunication and metacognitive skills, enhancing their sociocultural dispositions, and coping with affective needs. Children also demonstrate joy in the development of their dramatic play, as witnessed in the observations conducted during this research. According to Russ (2014), children's enjoyable engagement in their dramatic play nurtures their creativity. By recognising the distributive nature of children's creativity and the role that diverse experiences play in young children's social and emotional development, parents and whānau play an important part in fostering and scaffolding children's play, especially child-led, spontaneous dramatic play.

Extending Traditional Gender Perspectives

The ongoing role of gender has been addressed from a range of perspectives (Rački, 2015; Vong et al., 2020). Families are primarily the starting point and the most significant agent for gender-role socialisation (Maccoby, 2002). Children are born male or female but are taught how to behave in masculine or feminine ways from parents, siblings and society, both explicitly or implicitly (Wood, 2001). For example, some boys may avoid dress-up play or doll play at the early childhood centres because they are told at home that boys do not dress up or play with dolls (Cherney & Dempsey, 2010). As illustrated in this thesis, an adult's viewpoint about the role of gender may create or lead to a form of exclusion and influence the development of children's creativity. For example, Eric's viewpoint about his son's involvement in dramatic play was gender-biased and negative (see p. 95). Thus, to create a supportive environment at home, this study argues for the provision of dramatic play opportunities that offer a range of diverse experiences and themes where children can explore a range of female or male roles.

As illustrated in this study, two parents explicitly expressed their resistance to specified gender roles in dramatic play, such as girls playing princesses and mermaids and boys playing superheroes, and offered alternative perspectives such as encouraging boys as well as girls to help with household chores, which were not defined as gender specific. In this sense, parents and whānau can facilitate creativity by supporting and encouraging a range of gender roles in children's dramatic play.

Actively Promoting Children's Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Experiences

Families have different expectations regarding their child's upbringing (Liang, Li, & Chik, 2020). When children enter ECE settings, they bring their own unique characteristics influenced by the home environment and the cultural and linguistic values held by their families. The differences between family values and the educational settings may become more marked if the children are from minority ethnic groups or immigrant families. As some researchers (e.g., Derman-Sparks, 1992; Lubeck, 1996; Fleer, 2020) have argued, the dominant culture of the European-centred classroom may be at odds with the learning styles and practices of minority ethnic children. Therefore, when discrepancies between the expectations of parents and of teachers arise, conflicts may be faced by young children, which may affect their learning and development, including the development of their creativity. This has implications regarding the ways both parents and teachers can

build reciprocal relationships, and thus partnerships, to support the communication and co-operation between the home and centre.

For parents from culturally and linguistically diverse groups, their active engagement is pivotal in building a meaningful relationship between whānau and kaiako. Parents and whānau can be assured that they can "trust that their ECE service will provide an environment where respectful relationships, encouragement, warmth and acceptance are the norm." (MoE, 2017, p. 21). Through active engagement in interaction and communication with the ECE settings, parents, especially those from cultural and ethnic minority groups, can share their knowledge and experiences of the children's home culture to enrich the centre and kaiako's understanding of the family's specific culture.

Research has shown that home language and culture play a critical role in young children's socialisation experiences which, in turn, result in different paths to second-language learning (Clarke, 1999; Temiz, 2022). For this reason, it would be beneficial for parents to participate in their children's education and contribute to the early childhood programme to not only share their home language but also to be actively engaged in the children's acquisition of English, which can be used in the ECE setting and at home (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke, 2000). With reference to supporting young children's creativity, parents play an active role in fostering children's dramatic play by providing children with an environment that includes a wide range of resources and opportunities to engage with important cultural artefacts, including their home language, which serves as a bridge between the home and the centre. By delving into children's diverse cultural and linguistic experiences, this research critically engages with the unique cultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand which is also reflected in the ECE curriculum, *Te Whāriki*. In acknowledging the diverse cultural backgrounds of some of the families attending the two centres, this research provides social commentary on the power dynamics of the dominant Western European (Pākehā) group's perspectives and the nation's bicultural heritage.

Recommendations for Further Research

As a contribution to the studies on young children's creativity in ECE settings in Aotearoa New Zealand, this study can be used as a springboard for further research. The key findings from the current research include: the role of dramatic play in the development of young children's creativity, the application of the distributed creativity theory in broader contexts, the practicality of the implications that arose in this research, and the role of teacher-initiated activities or structured dramatic play in supporting young children's creativity.

Dramatic play, as evident in the literature review and substantiated by the findings of this research, can be a powerful vehicle in the development of creativity in ECE. Based on the observations of children's dramatic play (Russ, 2014), as evident in this study, and from the interviews with both the teachers and parents, young children's dramatic play can become a means to foster creativity and, thus, become incorporated into practitioners' pedagogical planning and practice (Dansky, 1980; Glăveanu, 2018) as a viable area of learning.

The theoretical framework and the interaction-focused methodology applied in this research were drawn from empirical studies on an art form of crafting Easter-egg decoration in Romania and were subsequently applied in this research about dramatic play in New Zealand, albeit with some adaptations. The framework is relatively new, but has further applicability in other fields of research, including other art forms such as visual arts, music and dance. The application of this methodology in other art forms, or in a range of activities related to creativity in different sociocultural contexts, would help further develop this emerging theory.

Recommendations for further research related to the findings from this study are to explore the applicability of the implications made in this research in other ECE centres in Aotearoa New Zealand. Given that this study was confined to two centres within the region of Auckland, studies in other areas of Aotearoa New Zealand could offer a wider range of demographics and ethnic or cultural diversity. An increase in the sample size of participants beyond the numbers involved in this study would also be advised to gain a broader perspective of both the development of young children's creativity and the role of dramatic play in early childhood settings. This would add the viewpoints of other practitioners in the field of ECE related to their understandings of children's creativity drawn from daily practice, together with observations of children's dramatic play in different ECE settings.

Drawing from a wider range of ECE settings would further support children, parents and whānau, and teachers to accommodate the increasingly diverse context of ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand, and address the influence of diverse linguistic and cultural experiences as they pertain to young children's development of creativity. These recommendations could further support the practices of teachers and families within the diverse educational contexts in the early years, while making a meaningful contribution to the field of ECE.

Research Limitations

This research adopted an interpretive qualitative narrative methodology, which was prone to the bias of selecting important markers using one's own judgement due to the use of a phenomenological approach (Cohen et al., 2011). This could lead to ascribing the researcher's own views and understandings to the teachers, parents, and even the children (Eaude, 2005). However, according to Gadamer (2000), neutrality is impossible within the interpretative tradition, since we will always anticipate meaning based on prior assumptions. Bias and projection cannot be avoided but can be minimised. These limitations were addressed through triangulation and demonstrating the links between the data sources, providing detailed descriptions of the relevant evidence, and demonstrating reflexivity and responsiveness to the field (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Due to the limited number of cases selected in this study, its validity and trustworthiness might be questioned. The generalisations drawn from the field work might not be applicable to other settings, but the findings and reflections could inspire readers to understand how these may be applied in similar research settings and events (J. E. Smith, 2007).

Because the research settings were purposively, rather than randomly selected, to include a range of diverse contexts so that they were illustrative but not representative, this might raise questions about the validity of

the findings. This research's data-collection sites were located in Auckland, specifically chosen to reflect the diverse context of New Zealand since over 40% of the nation's ECE settings are located in the greater Auckland area (ERO, 2000). However, the findings of the research, pertaining to the cultural and linguistically diverse nature of the settings, could be perceived as less relevant to teachers and families in different educational environments and not representative of ECE settings in other parts of New Zealand. Moreover, as this research was conducted in two specific demographic locations within one larger geographic area of Auckland, all participants were from ECE settings in the biggest city of Aotearoa New Zealand. Although the participants involved in this study represented an ethnically diverse population, most of the dramatic play observed in this research included children from middle- and high-socioeconomic backgrounds. These children are believed to engage in highly elaborative levels of dramatic play according to previous studies (Marshall & Hahn, 1967; Smilansky & Shefatya, 1990). For children of lower socioeconomic backgrounds, there might be a risk of devaluing or underestimating their level of creativity as they may have less opportunity to engage in dramatic play. Thus, further research is recommended to study the creativity of children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

The researcher's stance could also be seen to affect the findings in so far as they were perceived, analysed, and reported from a specific subjective lens. The researcher's role as an outsider from a different cultural background, speaking a different language, and with some different educational experiences, could on one hand offer a fresh and relatively nonbiased perspective to the field, but on the other hand, limit the trust relationship and bond built between the researcher and the participants. The adult participants might not be comfortable enough to offer their true thinking to someone outside their culture or community, and could provide socially desired answers rather than their true thoughts or feelings.

Regarding the observations, which were used as part of the data-gathering process, the primary focus was on the verbalisation used in dramatic play episodes, which could lead to dismissing or overlooking dramatic play episodes which did not include verbal communication. This could be another limitation of the research, as well as a recommendation for further research to ensure that nonverbal as well as verbal data sources are gathered. In addition, as the research progressed, the ability to improve or adapt both the observational skills and interview techniques when conducting data collection, could result in slightly different responses and thus the depth or richness of the data. As the research continued, the conceptualisation of the research questions changed slightly, so the focus of data collection differed at the second centre, The Mountain, which could lead to the perceived subjective differences between the two centres, rather than reflecting the actual distinctions.

Concluding Thoughts and Reflections

This study investigated young children's creativity as manifested in their dramatic play in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand. Although this research identified some challenges regarding the current situation pertaining to valuing the development of creativity in the field of ECE, it is hoped that the findings can offer recommendations of ways to provide a supportive environment in early childhood settings to foster

creativity and dramatic play and, in particular, address the creative requirements of children from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, this study addressed some of the realities regarding teacher–child communication, teachers' ethos, parents and whānau's perspectives of dramatic play, the selection of materials, and the implications of providing space and time for dramatic play. While challenges have been raised, implications and recommendations are also offered related to the provision of young children's dramatic play in early childhood settings and how these findings may further support early childhood practitioners and parents in order to contribute to the genesis of creativity through the conduit of young children's dramatic play.

This research has provided a rich description of the young child's imaginative world, imbued with fantasies and possibilities. Young children attending ECE settings in Aotearoa New Zealand engage regularly in dramatic play as part of their everyday programme. Dramatic play enables young children to express their creativity in a variety of ways and acts as a beneficial avenue for children to make meaning of the world in which they live. There are also passionate and responsible teachers in the field of ECE who support the children's freedom of expression and imagination, which is clearly evident in their dramatic play.

From a personal perspective, this research enabled the researcher to enjoy the privilege of being able to participate in and pay close attention to the young children's natural expressions of joy as witnessed when they were creating their fantasy and imaginative worlds. In addition, the findings of the study provided further insights into the teachers and parents' ethos and practices regarding the valuing and encouraging of children's creativity and dramatic play. The research revealed that to truly acknowledge children's creativity and the role of dramatic play in ECE, it is important to acknowledge the young child as competent and thus capable of using their agency to make choices about the type of dramatic play they wish to explore.

Although this research has identified and clarified some concerns and made recommendations about young children's creative development, because of the small sampling, the descriptions and implications that have arisen from this study cannot be generalised. Consequently, the implications and recommendations arising from this study offer possibilities of ways to further explore the field of creativity, and to sustain a meaningful focus on developing supportive ECE environments for creativity to flourish as manifested through dramatic play.

As advocated by Paley (1991), dramatic play, together with imagination, is vital for the genesis of creativity to enable children to express their thoughts and feelings through their interactions with peers and adults. Dramatic play offers children the opportunity to show their understanding of the world in which they live, to encounter different points of view and discover those places where there is common ground and understanding. When they are able to exercise their agency and make choices about the types of dramatic play they would like to create, young children are afforded the potential to develop a culture of their own.

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Appendices

Appendix A Participant Information Sheet (Centre Manager)

Project Title: Dramatic play in the lives of young children from multicultural backgrounds in Aotearoa New Zealand: A study of creativity and cultural diversity

Name of researcher: Ruijie Xu
Name of Supervisor(s): Dr Adrienne Sansom and Dr Jennifer Tatebe

Manager: _____
Date: ____/_____/_____

Research Introduction
My name is Ray (Ruijie) Xu and I am conducting a research project "Dramatic play in the lives of young children from multicultural backgrounds in Aotearoa New Zealand: A study of creativity and cultural diversity" as part of the requirements for my PhD degree at the Faculty of Education and Social Work, the University of Auckland under the supervision of Dr Adrienne Sansom and Dr Jennifer Tatebe.

Rationale and aims
The aim of this enquiry is to understand the way young children from multicultural backgrounds attending early childhood centres in Aotearoa New Zealand engage in dramatic play. This study seeks to examine how environmental diversity in young children's lived and educational experiences contributes to their creativity during dramatic play in early childhood centres.

Project Description and Procedures
The study involves observations of children, aged three to five years, and semi-structured interviews with at least two of the teachers and three to five parents from your early childhood centre.

Observation is a necessary part of the project and the intended observation methods are video recording, photography, digital audio recording and note taking. Children will be recorded on different days TBA beginning March 1st 2018. Each observation will be up to three hours' duration and this will be completed within 6 weeks. If I perceive that any of the children does not wish to be observed or recorded at any given time I will cease recording. Teachers and other adults may be incidentally video recorded during the recording of children. However, I will make every effort to turn the video recorder off before non-participating children or adults move into the frame. I will provide a notice to put up on the front/main door of the early childhood centre to advise any visitors that recording is taking place.

The teachers will be invited to share their perspectives and understanding of children's diversity, dramatic play and creativity through their participation in an individual semi-structured interview during non-contact hours. I will digitally audio record this interview for the purpose of transcribing the dialogue. I will transcribe all data.

I have attached the participant information sheets, consent and assent forms. Teachers, and parents/guardians of the children will be asked to sign a consent form if they agree to be part of the study and for their child to be part of this study. There is an assent form to be completed by children with the assistance of their parent/guardian. I would ask you to give the participant information sheets, consent and assent forms to the teachers, and parents/guardians of the children.

Data Storage, Retention, Destruction and Future Use
For this research I require approval to use digital photographs, video and digital audio recordings of the children to transcribe data (including children's actions, facial expressions, voices) and to store photographs and video clips on DVD for the purpose of disseminating the findings of the research. The edited DVD collection will be prepared in collaboration with my supervisors Dr Adrienne Sansom and Dr Jennifer Tatebe. These examples may be included in the Doctoral thesis and in academic publications, at presentations and education conferences. Visual images and audio recordings of teachers will not be published.

In the research report all information will be presented objectively. Children's first names or a pseudonym of their choice will be used, teachers will be represented by a pseudonym of their choice and parents/guardians will be represented as the "parent/guardian of…" the child's first name or pseudonym. The identity of the child participants will be treated with utmost care and respect in the selection of images of children.

Selected written/printed/visual images and video recordings on DVD will be kept for six years and will be stored securely in my supervisor's office at The University of Auckland and will then be destroyed.

Participants' Rights to Withdraw

The participation of the children, teachers and parents is voluntary. Teachers and parents who are participating in the interview will be advised that they may leave the room where the interview is taking place or ask for the audio-recorder to be switched off at any time during the interview (if they do not want to be audio recorded), without giving a reason, or if they choose to withdraw from the study. Parents/guardians and child participants have the right to withdraw from this research at any time, or withdraw information that has been provided up until the end of observation and interviews without giving a reason. I anticipate this will be on __/__/ 2018. Parents/guardians will receive the selected visual images and video clips after the data collection period, and they will have the opportunity to edit or withdraw the selected photos and video clips of their children within a two-week timeframe after receiving the visual data without giving a reason. Teachers will receive a transcript of the interview after the data collection period, and they will have the opportunity to edit or withdraw data within a two-week timeframe after receiving the transcript, without giving a reason. I anticipate this will be on __/__/ 2018.

I will make changes accordingly.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

To protect the identity of participants, consent forms and transcriptions will be stored separately and securely in a locked cabinet in my main supervisor's office at The University of Auckland for six years. Electronic data will be stored confidentially on the researcher's password-protected computer, for six years. After six years, written/visual printed data will be shredded and video/digital audio recording data will be erased from all electronic devices. Every attempt will be made to protect the identity of your centre although anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

To facilitate my research:

I also seek your assurance that the teachers' and parent/guardians' decisions to participate or not in this research will not affect the teachers' employment status or parent/guardians' or child's relationship with yourself as the manager. At the completion of the study all participants will receive a summary (by e-mail as indicated on the Consent Form) of the main findings. As the researcher I will retain ownership of all of the collected data. If you have any further queries please contact me or my supervisors. I do hope you will agree to your centre participating in this research. If so, I would appreciate you signing the Consent Form and returning it to me.

Yours sincerely,

Ruijie Xu

My contact details are:

Email: ruijie.xu@auckland.ac.nz

The contact details of my research supervisors and Head of School are as follows:

Main Supervisor	**Co-supervisor**	**Head of School**
Dr Adrienne Sansom	Dr Jennifer Tatebe	Associate Professor Helen Hedges
Senior Lecturer	Lecturer	School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy	School of Critical Studies in Education	Faculty of Education and Social Work
Faculty of Education and Social Work	Faculty of Education and Social Work	The University of Auckland
The University of Auckland	The University of Auckland	Private Bag 92601
Private Bag 92601	Private Bag 92601	Symonds Street
Symonds Street	Symonds Street	Auckland 1150
Auckland 1150	Auckland 1150	Email: h.hedges@auckland.ac.nz
Email: a.sansom@auckland.ac.nz	Email: j.tatebe@auckland.ac.nz	Phone: (09) 623 8899 extn. 48606
Phone: (09) 623 8899 extn.48400	Phone: (09) 623 8899 extn. 87906	

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz .

Approved by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on …for three years,
Reference Number **020289**

Appendix B Participant Information Sheet (Parent)

Project Title: Dramatic play in the lives of young children from multicultural backgrounds in Aotearoa New Zealand: A study of creativity and cultural diversity

Name of researcher: Ruijie Xu
Name of Supervisor(s): Dr Adrienne Sansom and Dr Jennifer Tatebe
Date: _____/_____/_____

Research Introduction

My name is Ray (Ruijie) Xu and I am conducting a research project "Dramatic play in the lives of young children from multicultural backgrounds in Aotearoa New Zealand: A study of creativity and cultural diversity" as part of the requirements for my PhD degree at the Faculty of Education and Social Work, the University of Auckland under the supervision of Dr Adrienne Sansom and Dr Jennifer Tatebe.

Rationale and aims

The aim of this enquiry is to understand the way young children from multicultural backgrounds attending early childhood centres in Aotearoa New Zealand engage in dramatic play. This study seeks to examine how environmental diversity in young children's lived and educational experiences contributes to their creativity during dramatic play in early childhood centres.

Project description and procedures

The study involves observations of children, aged three to five years, and semi-structured interviews with at least two of the teachers and three to five parents from the early childhood centre that your child is attending.

Observation of your child playing is a necessary part of the project and the intended observation methods are video recording, photography, digital audio recording and note taking. Your child will be recorded on different days TBA, beginning March 1st 2018. Each observation will be 2-3 hours' duration, 1 to 2 times a week, and the total observation process will last for 3 to 4 weeks. If I perceive that your child does not wish to be observed or recorded at any given time I will cease recording. If you or your child do not agree to participate in the research, I will make every effort to turn the video recorder off before your child moves into the frame.

Invitation to (let your child) Participate in the Observation

Your child is invited to participate in the dramatic play observation, because his/her participation can contribute to the understanding of child's dramatic play and creativity. Your child's participation is voluntary and both you and your child are free to decline this invitation. The participation of your child is voluntary. The manager has given assurance that your child's participation, non-participation or withdrawal will not affect your or your child's relationship with the manager and the teachers. I, the researcher, will conduct, video- and audio-record and transcribe all data.

I have attached the Consent Form for you and Assent Form for your child. You will be asked to sign a Consent Form if you agree to let your child be part of the study. There is an Assent Form to be completed by your child with the assistance of you or other parent/guardian.

Invitation to Participate in the Interview

If you would like to share your perspectives and understanding of your child's dramatic play and creativity you are invited to participate in an individual semi-structured interview at a time of your convenience. Your participation is voluntary. The manager has given assurance that your participation, non-participation or withdrawal will not affect your relationship with the manager and the teachers. I will digitally audio record this interview for the purpose of transcribing the dialogue. I will transcribe all data.

Please indicate your interest to participate in a semi-structured interview by finishing the Consent form for interviews on the other side of the Consent Form.

Data Storage, Retention, Destruction and Future Use

For this research I require approval to use digital photographs, video and digital audio recordings of the children to transcribe data (including children's actions, facial expressions, voices) and to store photographs and video clips on DVD for the purpose of disseminating the findings of the research. The edited DVD collection will be prepared in collaboration with my supervisors Dr Adrienne Sansom and Dr Jennifer Tatebe. These examples may be included in my Doctoral thesis and in academic publications, at presentations and education conferences. Visual images and audio recordings of you will not be published.

In the research report all information will be presented objectively. Your child's first names or a pseudonym of his/her choice will be used, and you will be represented as the "parent/guardian of (the child's first name or pseudonym)." The

identity of the child participants will be treated with utmost care and respect in the selection of images of children.

Selected data from the interviews will be included in my Doctoral thesis and, may be used in academic publications and conference presentations.

Selected written/printed/visual images and video recordings on DVD will be kept for six years and will be stored securely in my supervisor's office at The University of Auckland and will then be destroyed.

Participants' Rights to Withdraw

You and your child have the right to withdraw from this research at any time, or withdraw information that has been provided up until data collection ceases, without giving a reason. I anticipate this will be on __/__/ 2018.

You will receive the selected visual images and video clips after the data collection period, and they will have the opportunity to edit or withdraw the selected photos and video clips of your child within a two-week timeframe after receiving the visual data without giving a reason. I anticipate this will be on __/__/ 2018.

If you choose to participate in the interview you will be advised that you may leave the room where the interview is taking place or ask for the audio-recorder to be switched off at any time during the interview (if you do not want to be audio recorded), without giving a reason, or if you choose to withdraw from the study. You will receive a transcript of the interview and will have the opportunity to edit or withdraw data within a two-week timeframe after you receive the transcript. I anticipate this will be on __/__/ 2018.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

To protect the identity of you and your child, Consent Forms and transcription of your interview will be stored separately and securely in a locked cabinet in my main supervisor's office at The University of Auckland. Electronic data will be backed up and stored confidentially on the researcher's password-protected computer provided by the University of Auckland server, for 6 years. After six years, written/visual printed data will be shredded and video/digital audio recording data will be erased from all electronic devices. After that time all hard copy data will be shredded and the digital files will be erased from all electronic devices. Every attempt will be made to protect the identity of you and your child although anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

As the researcher I will retain ownership of all of the collected data. Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you have any further queries please contact me or my supervisors. I do hope you will agree to participate in this research. If so, I would appreciate you signing the attached Consent Form and help your child to sign the Assent Form, and put them into the drop-box, which will be placed in your centre. If you also wish to receive a summary of the findings please indicate this on the Consent Form.

Contact details:

Ruijie Xu
PhD student in the School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Faculty of Education and Social Work
University of Auckland
Email: ruijie.xu@auckland.ac.nz

The contact details of my research supervisors and Head of School are as follows:

Main Supervisor	**Co-supervisor**	**Head of School**
Dr Adrienne Sansom	Dr Jennifer Tatebe	Associate Professor Helen Hedges
Senior Lecturer	Lecturer	School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy	School of Critical Studies in Education	Faculty of Education and Social Work
Faculty of Education and Social Work	Faculty of Education and Social Work	The University of Auckland
The University of Auckland	The University of Auckland	Private Bag 92601
Private Bag 92601	Private Bag 92601	Symonds Street
Symonds Street	Symonds Street	Auckland 1150
Auckland 1150	Auckland 1150	Email: h.hedges@auckland.ac.nz
Email: a.sansom@auckland.ac.nz	Email: j.tatebe@auckland.ac.nz	Phone: (09) 623 8899 extn. 48606
Phone: (09) 623 8899 extn.48400	Phone: (09) 623 8899 extn. 87906	

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz .

Approved by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on …for three years,
Reference Number **020289**

Appendix C Consent Form – Parent (Observations of Children)

This form will be held for a period of six years

Project Title of Research: Dramatic play in the lives of young children from multicultural backgrounds in Aotearoa New Zealand: A study of creativity and cultural diversity

Name of researcher: Ruijie Xu

Name of Supervisor(s): Dr Adrienne Sansom and Dr Jennifer Tatebe

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and I have understood the nature of the research and why my child has been invited to participate in this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to let my child participate in the research.
- I agree that my child be observed for the research.
- I understand that my child's participation is voluntary.
- I understand that the Manager of Early Childhood Education Service has given the assurance that my child's participation, non-participation or withdrawal will have no effects on his/her relationship with the centre.
- I understand that the observation will be conducted using photos, video, digital audio and field notes.
- I understand that my child will be asked to complete an Assent Form with the assistance of me or his/her other parent/guardian, and may request the observations and recording to be stopped anytime without having to give any reasons.
- I understand that the researcher will conduct and transcribe the video recording.
- I understand that my child's first names or a pseudonym of his/her choice will be used in the research, which can only be known to the researcher.
- I understand that both my child and I have the right to withdraw without giving any reasons before data collection ceases on __/__/2018.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw any video clips or photographs without giving any reasons within up to two weeks after I receive them.
- I understand that the data collected from the research will be used for the researcher's PhD thesis, and may be used for academic publications and conference presentations.
- I understand that the collected my Consent Form, my child's Assent Form and hard copy data will be securely stored in a locked cabinet at The University of Auckland whilst the research is undertaken. All of them will then be securely stored in a locked cabinet in the main supervisor's office at The University of Auckland after data collection, and electronic data will be stored confidentially on a password protected computer. I understand that all of the data will be kept for 6 years, after which they will be destroyed.
- I understand that selected video clips and photographs of my child will be used to transcribe data (including child's actions, facial expressions, and voices), and will be stored on DVD for the purpose of disseminating the findings of the research.
- I understand that no identifying information will be disclosed to a third party or the public.

   I wish to receive a summary of findings, which can be emailed to me at this email address:

   _____.

I agree to participate in this research project

Parent's name …..
Signature…..
Date…...

Approved by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on …for three years, Reference Number **020289**

Appendix D Consent Form – Parent (Interviews)

This form will be held for a period of six years

Project Title of Research: Dramatic play in the lives of young children from multicultural backgrounds in Aotearoa New Zealand: A study of creativity and cultural diversity

Name of researcher: Ruijie Xu

Name of Supervisor(s): Dr Adrienne Sansom and Dr Jennifer Tatebe

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and I have understood the nature of the research and why I have been invited to participate in this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to participate in an individual semi-structure interview.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary.
- I understand that the Manager of Early Childhood Education Service has given the assurance that my participation, non-participation or withdrawal will have no effect on my relationship with the centre.
- I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded individually.
- I understand that I can refuse to answer any questions, and may request the recording to be stopped anytime without having to give any reasons.
- I understand that the researcher will conduct and transcribe the audio-recording individually, and a copy of the transcript will be provided to me for review, edit, and amend.
- I understand that I will be asked to use a pseudonym, which can only be known to the researcher.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw either myself or any data provided by me without giving any reasons within up to two weeks after I receive the transcription of my interview.
- I understand that the data collected from the research will be used for the researcher's PhD thesis, and may be used for academic publications and conference presentations.
- I understand that the collected Consent Forms and hard copy data will be securely stored in a locked cabinet at The University of Auckland whilst the research is undertaken. All of them will then be securely stored in a locked cabinet in the main supervisor's office at The University of Auckland after data collection, and electronic data will be stored confidentially on a password protected computer. I understand that all of the data will be kept for 6 years, after which they will be destroyed.

   I wish to receive a summary of findings, which can be emailed to me at this email address: _____.

I agree to participate in this research project

Parent's name …..
Signature…...
Date…...

Approved by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on …for three years, Reference Number
020289

Appendix E Assent Form – Child

This form will be held for a period of six years

Child/Service : .... at ....

Parent/Guardian: ....

Researcher:

Title of research: Dramatic play in the lives of young children from multicultural backgrounds in Aotearoa

New Zealand: A study of creativity and cultural diversity

Date: __/__/2017

Something I want to say to you:

Hi, I'm the person in the photo, Ray, and I will be coming to (name of early childhood education centre) to watch you play. Sometimes I will make video recordings of you playing, sometimes I will take photographs of you, and sometimes I will take notes. In the videos and photographs, you will be represented by your real name, or you can choose your own name. You can ask me to stop at any time if you don't want to be watched or recorded. Just tell me or any adults nearby that you want me to stop. Thank you very much for helping my research.

- I understand that Ray will photograph and video record what I am doing and also record what I say when she comes to the centre.
- I understand that Ray will keep photos and videos of what I do at the centre.
- I understand that my name, or a name that I choose, will be written next to the photos and video of me.
- I understand that these pictures, videos and sounds will be shown to other teachers that I don't know.
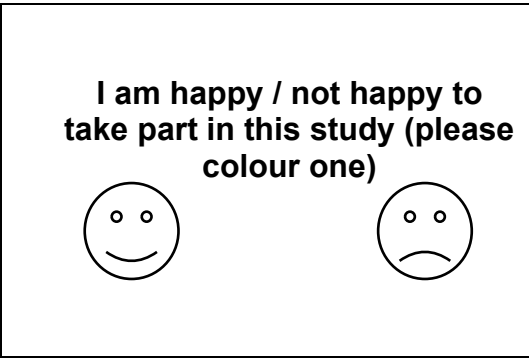
Child's name..

Parent's/Guardian's name ....

Parent's/Guardian's signature..

Date..

I have read out to the child what the research is about and my signature is the record of the child's agreement to participate in the research.

Researcher's name...

Researcher's signature...

Approved by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on …for three years, Reference Number **020289**

Appendix F Observation Schedule

2018	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Apr	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
		THE BAY familiarising			**THE BAY** familiarising		
May	30	1	2	3	4	5	6
	THE BAY familiarising	**THE BAY** familiarising					
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	THE BAY	**THE BAY**			**THE BAY**		
	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	THE BAY	**THE BAY**			**THE BAY**		
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
	THE BAY	**THE BAY**			**THE BAY**		
June	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
	THE BAY	**THE BAY**			**THE BAY**		
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		THE BAY	**THE BAY**				
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
		THE BAY	**THE BAY**				
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		THE BAY		**THE MOUNTAIN** familiarising			
July	25	26	27	28	29	30	1
		THE MOUNTAIN familiarising		**THE MOUNTAIN** familiarising			
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

		THE MOUNTAIN		**THE MOUNTAIN**			
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
		THE MOUNTAIN	**THE MOUNTAIN**	**THE MOUNTAIN**	**THE MOUNTAIN**		
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
		THE MOUNTAIN	**THE MOUNTAIN**	**THE MOUNTAIN**			
	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
		THE MOUNTAIN	**THE MOUNTAIN**	**THE MOUNTAIN**			
Aug	30	31	1	2	3	4	5
		THE MOUNTAIN		**THE MOUNTAIN**			
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
		THE MOUNTAIN		**THE MOUNTAIN**			

Appendix G Participant Information Sheet (Teacher)

Project Title: Dramatic play in the lives of young children from multicultural backgrounds in Aotearoa New Zealand: A study of creativity and cultural diversity

Name of researcher: Ruijie Xu
Name of Supervisor(s): Dr Adrienne Sansom and Dr Jennifer Tatebe

Centre: _____
Date: _____/_____/_____

Research Introduction

My name is Ray (Ruijie) Xu and I am conducting a research project "Dramatic play in the lives of young children from multicultural backgrounds in Aotearoa New Zealand: A study of creativity and cultural diversity" as part of the requirements for my PhD degree at the Faculty of Education and Social Work, the University of Auckland under the supervision of Dr Adrienne Sansom and Dr Jennifer Tatebe.

Rationale and aims

The aim of this enquiry is to understand the way young children from multicultural backgrounds attending early childhood centres in Aotearoa New Zealand engage in dramatic play. This study seeks to examine how environmental diversity in young children's lived and educational experiences contributes to their creativity during dramatic play in early childhood centres.

Project Description and Procedures

The study involves observations of children, aged three to five years, and semi-structured interviews with at least two of the teachers and three to five parents from the early childhood centre where you work.

Observation is a necessary part of the project and the intended observation methods are video recording, photography, digital audio recording and note taking. Children will be recorded on different days TBA beginning March 1st 2018. Each observation will be 2-3 hours' duration, 1 to 2 times a week, and the total observation process will last for 3 to 4 weeks. If I perceive that any of the children does not wish to be observed or recorded at any given time I will cease recording. Teachers and other adults may be incidentally video recorded during the recording of children. However, I will make every effort to turn the video recorder off before non-participating children or adults move into the frame. I will provide a notice to put up on the front/main door of the early childhood centre to advise any visitors that recording is taking place.

Invitation to Participate

Following the observations, you are invited to share your perspective and understandings of children's diversity, dramatic play and creativity through your participation in an individual semi-structured interview during non-contact hours. The interview will be approximately 45 to 60 minutes and will occur in the centre, at a time suitable for you. Your participation is voluntary. Your centre manager has provided an assurance that your participation, non-participation or withdrawal will not affect your employment status with the centre. I will digitally audio record this interview for the purpose of transcribing the dialogue. I will transcribe all data.

I have attached the Consent Form for you to sign if you agree to participate in the study.

Data Storage, Retention, Destruction and Future Use

For this research I require approval to use digital photographs, video and digital audio recordings of the children to transcribe data (including children's actions, facial expressions, voices) and to store photographs and video clips on DVD for the purpose of disseminating the findings of the research. The edited DVD collection will be prepared in collaboration with my supervisors Dr Adrienne Sansom and Dr Jennifer Tatebe. These examples may be included in my Doctoral thesis and in academic publications, at presentations and education conferences. Visual images and audio recordings of you will not be published.

In the research report all information will be presented objectively. You will be represented by a pseudonym of your choice. Children's first names or a pseudonym of their choice will be used, and parents/guardians will be represented as the "parent/guardian of…" the child's first name or pseudonym. The identity of the child participants will be treated with utmost care and respect in the selection of images of children.

Selected data from the interviews will be included in my Doctoral thesis and, may be used in academic publications and conference presentations.

Selected written/printed/visual images and video recordings on DVD will be kept for six years and will be stored securely in my supervisor's office at The University of Auckland and will then be destroyed.

Participants' Rights to Withdraw

If you choose to participate in the interview you will be advised that you may leave the room where the interview is taking

place or ask for the audio-recorder to be switched off at any time during the interview (if you do not want to be audio recorded), without giving a reason, or if you choose to withdraw from the study. You will receive a transcript of the interview after the data collection period, and you will have the opportunity to edit or withdraw data within a two-week timeframe after you receive the transcript, without giving a reason. I anticipate this will be on __/__/ 2018.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

To protect the identity of you, the Consent Forms and transcription of your interview will be stored in a locked cabinet in my main supervisor's office at The University of Auckland after data collection. Electronic data will be backed up and stored confidentially on the researcher's password-protected computer provided by the University of Auckland server, for 6 years. After that time all hard copy data will be shredded and the digital files will be erased from all electronic devices. Every attempt will be made to protect your identity and the identity of the centre where you work although anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

As the researcher I will retain ownership of all of the collected data. Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you have any further queries please contact me or my supervisors. I do hope you will agree to participate in this research. If so, please sign the attached Consent Form and put it in the drop-box, which will be placed in your centre. If you also wish to receive a summary of the findings please indicate this on the Consent Form.

Contact details:

Ruijie Xu
PhD student in the School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Faculty of Education and Social Work
University of Auckland
Email: ruijie.xu@auckland.ac.nz

The contact details of my research supervisors and Head of School are as follows:

Main Supervisor	**Co-supervisor**	**Head of School**
Dr Adrienne Sansom	Dr Jennifer Tatebe	Associate Professor Helen Hedges
Senior Lecturer	Lecturer	School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy	School of Critical Studies in Education	Faculty of Education and Social Work
Faculty of Education and Social Work	Faculty of Education and Social Work	The University of Auckland
The University of Auckland	The University of Auckland	Private Bag 92601
Private Bag 92601	Private Bag 92601	Symonds Street
Symonds Street	Symonds Street	Auckland 1150
Auckland 1150	Auckland 1150	Email: h.hedges@auckland.ac.nz
Email: a.sansom@auckland.ac.nz	Email: j.tatebe@auckland.ac.nz	Phone: (09) 623 8899 extn. 48606
Phone: (09) 623 8899 extn.48400	Phone: (09) 623 8899 extn. 87906	

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz .

Approved by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on …for three years,
Reference Number **020289**

Appendix H Consent Form – Teacher

This form will be held for a period of six years

Project Title of Research: Dramatic play in the lives of young children from multicultural backgrounds in Aotearoa New Zealand: A study of creativity and cultural diversity

Researcher: Ruijie Xu

Name of Supervisor(s): Dr Adrienne Sansom and Dr Jennifer Tatebe

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and I have understood the nature of the research and why I have been invited to participate in this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to participate in the research.
- I agree to be interviewed for the research.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary.
- I understand that the Manager of Early Childhood Education Service has given the assurance that my participation, non-participation or withdrawal will have no effects on my employment status or relationship with the centre.
- I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded individually.
- I understand that I can refuse to answer any questions, and may request the recording to be stopped anytime without having to give any reasons.
- I understand that the researcher will conduct and transcribe the audio-recording individually, and a copy of the transcript will be provided to me for review, edit, and amend.
- I understand that I will be asked to use a pseudonym, which can only be known to the researcher.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw either myself or any data provided by me without giving any reasons within up to two weeks after I receive the transcription of my interview.
- I understand that the data collected from the research will be used for the researcher's PhD thesis, and may be used for academic publications and conference presentations.
- I understand that the collected Consent Forms and hard copy data will be securely stored in a locked cabinet at The University of Auckland whilst the research is undertaken. All of them will then be securely stored in a locked cabinet in the main supervisor's office at The University of Auckland after data collection, and electronic data will be stored confidentially on a password protected computer. I understand that all of the data will be kept for 6 years, after which they will be destroyed.
- I understand that no identifying information will be disclosed to a third party or the public.
  I wish to receive a summary of findings, which can be emailed to me at this email address:

  _____.

I agree to participate in this research project

Teacher's name …..
Signature…..
Date…..

Approved by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on …for three years, Reference Number **020289**

Appendix I Interview Questions (Teachers)

What is your understandings about children's dramatic play?

What dramatic play activities have you planned for the children in the centre?

What examples of children's spontaneous dramatic play have you observed in the centre?

How do you think the children's diverse backgrounds or experience might be reflected in their dramatic play?

Are there any culturally-specific play experiences the children engage in? And if so, what and how are these experiences manifested?

What elements in children's dramatic play do you think are similar between the children today and when you were a child? Are there any differences between the generations?

What are your understandings about the influence of popular culture on children's play? E.g. mass media such as TV, cartoons and movies, pop music?

What sort of examples of creativity have you observed in the centre? Were there any creative behaviours evident in the children's dramatic play that impressed / and, surprised you? If so, how were these examples of creativity illustrated?

Do you think having a diverse background or range of experiences has anything to do with children's creativity and if so, in what way? What other variables do you think might influence children's creativity?

Appendix J Interview Questions (Parents)

Could you tell me your understandings about dramatic play?

Do you do dramatic play with your child? How often?

What's his/her favourite dramatic play theme? E.g., what does he/she usually pretend to be?

Can you think of any culture-related examples of dramatic play that you have observed on your child at home?

In your view, what influences your child's dramatic play?

Perhaps you remember what kind of games you played as a child.

What is similar or what's different between dramatic play of this generation's young children and that of your time?

Do you see the influence of popular culture on children's dramatic play today? E.g., mass media like TV, cartoons, movies, pop music?

Can you describe your child's play in outdoor settings? E.g., backyard, parks, away from the city.

Are there anything that your child did in nature that impressed you?

Now let's imagine some play situation your child may engage in.

Let's say that your child comes home and says, "Let's play shop". What would you do? How would you respond?

Let's say that your child comes home and says that he/she is a princess or a robot. What would you do? How would you respond?

Let's say that your child comes home and says that she/he is a dog. What would you do? How would you respond?

As a parent, what does the concept of children's creativity mean to you?

Are there any creative behaviours your child performed at home that impressed you?

Do you think having a diverse background has anything to do with children's creativity and if so, in what way?