

NEGOTIATIONS OF PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL  
IDENTITIES BY NEWLY-QUALIFIED EARLY  
CHILDHOOD TEACHERS THROUGH FACILITATED  
SELF-STUDY

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## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgments.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Glossary .....</b>	<b>viii</b>
Context of Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand.....	viii
Key Terms in this Thesis .....	x
<b>Chapter One: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction .....	1
Background to Research Study.....	2
Personal Interest .....	4
Topic and Research Questions.....	5
Theoretical Concepts .....	5
Methodology .....	7
Scope of my Research Study .....	8
Outline of Chapters.....	8
<b>Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Introduction .....	10
Modernist and Postmodernist Approaches to Identity.....	10
Discourses and Subjectivities .....	12
Foucault and Power/Knowledge .....	14
Authoring Selves and Interpretive Practice .....	17
Institutions.....	18
Teacher Professionalism .....	19
Professional Identities and Personal Professional Identities .....	22

Poststructural Approach to Methodology .....	24
Identity Work .....	25
Reflection .....	27
Self-Study.....	30
Conclusion .....	32
<b>Chapter Three: Literature Review.....</b>	<b>34</b>
Introduction.....	34
Professional identity: Research review.....	34
Themes in the Research Literature.....	35
Shaping of Identities and Subjectivities.....	35
Discourses .....	41
Identity Work.....	47
Conclusion .....	55
<b>Chapter Four: Methodology and Ethics.....</b>	<b>57</b>
Introduction.....	57
Methodology .....	57
Ethics .....	60
Relationships between Researcher and Participants .....	61
Ethical Processes and Safeguards.....	63
Methods .....	65
Participants .....	65
Data Collection .....	66
Data Analysis.....	72
Introduction to ‘Findings’ Chapters .....	78
Conclusion .....	79
<b>Chapter Five: Authority Discourse .....</b>	<b>80</b>
Overview of the Authority Discourse .....	80
Findings: Unpacking the Complexities .....	83

Discipline and Governmentality .....	83
Desire and Pleasure.....	87
Tensions, Resistances and Negotiations .....	91
Conclusion .....	94
<b>Chapter Six: Relational Professionalism Discourse .....</b>	<b>96</b>
Overview of the Relational Professionalism Discourse.....	96
Findings: Unpacking the Complexities .....	97
Discipline and Governmentality .....	97
Desire and Pleasure.....	100
Tensions, Resistances and Negotiations .....	103
Conclusion .....	104
<b>Chapter Seven: Identity Work Discourse.....</b>	<b>106</b>
Overview of Identity Work Discourse .....	106
Findings: Unpacking the Complexities .....	109
Discipline and Governmentality .....	109
Desire and Pleasure.....	112
Tensions, Resistances and Negotiations .....	117
Conclusion .....	122
<b>Chapter Eight: Discussion.....</b>	<b>124</b>
Introduction.....	124
Discussion: Research Questions .....	125
Research Question One: How do early childhood teachers negotiate their personal professional identities when engaged in a facilitated self- study process?.....	126
Research Question Two: How does institutionally-directed reflective writing contribute to teachers' negotiations of personal professional identities? .....	137
Conclusion .....	143

<b>Chapter Nine: Conclusion .....</b>	<b>145</b>
Introduction.....	145
Key Findings .....	146
Research Questions.....	147
Evaluating my Research Study .....	149
Implications for Early Childhood Teachers.....	151
Implications for Teacher Education .....	152
Future Research Directions .....	153
Final Comments.....	153
<b>Reference list.....</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>170</b>
A: Invitation Letter and Consent Form.....	170
B: Information Sheet.....	175
C. Transcriber’s Confidentiality Agreement.....	181
D. Pilot Study Outline .....	182
E. First Focus Group Discussion Outline .....	191
F. Self-Study Written Tasks: Instructions and Template .....	194
G. Individual Interview .....	197
H. Final Focus Group Discussion .....	199

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## **Abstract**

Early childhood teachers spend their professional lives in social interactions with children, families and colleagues. Social interactions shape how people understand themselves and each other through discourses. Teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand negotiate their subjectivities, or self-understandings, within initial teacher education (ITE), professional expectations, education and society. They are shaped by historical and contemporary discourses of early childhood teaching professionalism as they gain status as qualified and registered teachers. Early childhood teachers' understandings of their personal professional identities influence self-understandings of everyone they encounter professionally, especially young children.

This poststructural qualitative collective case study investigates five newly-qualified early childhood teachers' negotiations of their personal professional identities. My research study is based in postmodern understandings of identities as multiple, complex and dynamic, and subjectivities as self-understandings formed within discourses. In contrast, institutionally-directed reflective writing in early childhood ITE can reflect modernist perspectives that assume essentialist, knowable identities. Tensions exist between my postmodern theoretical framework and my data collection strategy of facilitated self-study, an approach that is usually based on the modernist assumption that there is a self to investigate and know. My participants explored their subjectivities through focus group discussions, individual interviews, and reflective writing, including institutionally-directed reflective writing.

Three dominant discourses of early childhood education emerged from data analysis that drew on Foucault's theoretical ideas: the authority discourse, the relational professionalism discourse and the identity work discourse.

Positioned in these discourses, all participants regarded themselves as qualified and knowledgeable, skilled at professional relationships and as reflective practitioners. They actively negotiated tensions between professional expectations and understandings of their multiple, complex and changing identities. I concluded that these participants negotiated understandings of their personal professional identities within three dominant discourses through discursive practices of discipline and governmentality, seeking pleasurable subject positions, and agentic negotiation of tensions and contradictions between available subjectivities.



## **Glossary**

### **Context of Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand**

Aotearoa New Zealand: indigenous Māori and English names for the country.

*Code of Ethics for Registered Teachers*: set by New Zealand Teachers Council as a guide to ethical behaviour for registered teachers.

Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education): benchmark qualification for early childhood teachers. By 2011, most ITE providers offered a degree qualification.

Early childhood education: non-compulsory sector for children under compulsory school age of six years. However, most children start school on their fifth birthday.

Early childhood services: early childhood education centres and other services such as home-based early childhood education. All licensed early childhood services receive government funding.

Education Review Office: Government agency responsible for quality reviews of early childhood, primary and secondary education services.

Field-based ITE: ITE combining classroom tutorials with centre-based practice.

*Graduating Teacher Standards*: standards set by New Zealand Teachers Council as criteria for graduates from approved ITE courses.

ITE: initial teacher education that qualifies practitioners as teachers. Although sometimes also known as pre-service teacher education, my participants were practitioners in early childhood settings while student teachers.

Kindergarten: early childhood centres for children aged between two and school age that have been historically associated with state recognition and funding.

Māori: indigenous ethnicity of Aotearoa New Zealand.

New Zealand Qualifications Authority: Government agency that oversees qualifications, including assessing whether overseas qualifications are approved in Aotearoa New Zealand.

New Zealand Teachers Council: an independent body which regulates ITE qualifications through *Graduating Teacher Standards*, and the teacher registration process through *Registered Teacher Criteria* and *Code of Ethics for Registered Teachers*.

Pākehā: New Zealand person of non-Māori ethnicity. Most Pākehā are of European ethnicity, which forms the dominant societal culture.

*Registered Teacher Criteria*: Criteria set by New Zealand Teachers Council that must be met for teachers to achieve full teacher registration.

*Te Whāriki*: translated from Māori as ‘the woven mat’; early childhood curriculum which consists of principles, goals and strands from which services ‘weave’ their own programmes (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Teacher: a qualified and registered practitioner in early childhood, primary or secondary education sectors.

Teacher educator: a tertiary level teacher in an ITE setting.

Teacher registration: a process whereby teachers apply to become provisionally registered on completion of approved ITE qualifications, and undergo two years of supervised and documented teaching practice. On completion of this, with evidence of having achieved the *Registered Teacher Criteria*, teachers apply to become fully registered. Registration must be renewed every three years.

### **Key Terms in this Thesis**

These terms will be described in the body of the thesis. A list of brief descriptions is provided here for quick reference.

Discourses: socially negotiated frameworks for thought and actions.

Discursive practices: ways in which individuals within discourses act and interact that reflect values, beliefs and assumptions of discourses.

Identities: a term that is variously defined depending on theoretical perspective. In modernist terms, identity is regarded as an individual's essentialist true self. In postmodernist terms, identities are complex, multiple, dynamic perceptions that cannot be defined or known. Postmodern identities are negotiated in social interactions.

Modernism: belief in a predictable, ordered world and universal knowledge.

Personal professional identities: answers to the question 'Who am I as a teacher?' which reflect individuals' subjectivities.

Postmodernism: belief in a fundamentally incoherent world and socially-constructed, context-specific and value-laden knowledge linked to power relations.

Self-study: a research approach where individuals reflect critically and collaboratively on their teaching practice, with the intention of making findings public.

Subject positions: subjectivities made available within discourses.

Subjectivities: the ways individuals understand themselves to be.

## Chapter One: Introduction

### Introduction

‘Who am I as a teacher?’ is a question faced by early childhood practitioners becoming teachers through initial teacher education (ITE) and teacher registration in Aotearoa New Zealand. Professionalization of early childhood teaching has been accompanied by targets for proportions of qualified and registered teachers in early childhood education and care services, and by professional standards for teachers across early childhood, primary and secondary school sectors. Professional standards are contained in the *Graduating Teacher Standards* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007), *Registered Teacher Criteria* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009a) and *Code of Ethics for Registered Teachers* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2004). These standards reflect the assertion that “teaching is a highly complex activity, drawing on repertoires of knowledge, practices, professional attributes and values to facilitate academic, social and cultural learning for diverse education settings” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009a, p. 1). Teaching is also a highly complex activity because it is based in human social interactions that shape identities of everyone in education settings.

My research study investigated newly-qualified early childhood teachers’ negotiations of their personal professional identities as they engaged in facilitated self-study and institutionally-directed reflective writing. My postmodern theoretical framework shaped my understandings of: discourses as frameworks for thought and action in social settings; identities as multiple, complex, dynamic and shaped in social interactions; and subjectivities as self-understandings within discourses. I designed a collective case study within a

qualitative poststructural paradigm, with a facilitated self-study approach to data collection. The five participants were recent graduates from a field-based ITE course where I was a teacher educator. Data analysis was informed by theories of French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926 – 1984).

I explored how several dominant discourses influenced shaping of participants' subjectivities. I was particularly interested in how my participants negotiated their subjectivities when engaged in facilitated self-study and how institutionally-directed reflective writing influenced negotiation of their subjectivities.

### **Background to Research Study**

Early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand is characterised by variety of service provision and high participation of children in the years before compulsory school attendance. In 2010 94.9% of year one primary school children had participated in some form of early childhood education (Education Counts, 2011). Kindergartens and early childhood education and care (childcare) centres accounted for 78% of enrolments in 2010 (Education Counts, 2011). Other early childhood education services include parent-cooperative Playcentres, home-based early childhood services, Ngā Kohanga Reo (early childhood education with an intergenerational focus on the Māori language) and 'language nests' for a variety of cultures, mainly from the Pacific Islands.

Early childhood teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand has become increasingly professionalised and centrally regulated since the mid-1980s. In 1986 all government administration and funding of early childhood education was moved into the Department of Education. In 1988 ITE for early childhood teachers in kindergartens and education and care centres was integrated into

one qualification (Duncan, 2008). Subsequent developments have included: the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), regulations governing early childhood education and funding (Ministry of Education, 2009; New Zealand Government, 2008), inclusion of early childhood teachers in teacher registration (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011) and a ten-year strategic plan aimed at increasing participation, improving quality and encouraging collaborative relationships (Ministry of Education, 2002).

Early childhood practitioners are encouraged to become qualified and registered (Ministry of Education, 2002). The ten-year strategic plan aimed for 100% qualified and registered teachers in early childhood centres by 2012, a target reduced to 80% by government in 2009 (Ministry of Education, 2011). In 2010 67% of practitioners in working in early childhood centres met this standard (Education Counts, 2011). In 2007 the New Zealand Teachers Council introduced the *Graduating Teacher Standards* as a basis for ITE programmes in early childhood, primary and secondary education sectors. The seven *Graduating Teacher Standards* are divided into three broad categories: professional knowledge, professional practice, and professional values and relationships. Newly-qualified teachers become provisionally registered, and engage in a documented and supervised two-year process to become fully registered. Registered teachers must show that their teaching practice meets the *Registered Teacher Criteria*. *Registered Teacher Criteria* include requirements such as engagement in effective professional relationships and commitment to ongoing professional learning. Registration must be renewed every three years throughout a teacher's career.

## **Personal Interest**

My involvement in early childhood education began in the mid-1980s with our family involvement with the parent-cooperative Playcentre movement. Twice-weekly excursions to a rural Playcentre shaped our children's earliest years. Later I became a visiting teacher in the home-based early childhood education sector. My ITE experience started with Playcentre parent education and was completed by distance University study. In 2008 I became an early childhood teacher educator with a field-based Diploma ITE provider. My interest in teachers' varied life and professional experiences led to this research into early childhood teachers' identities.

The participants in my research study were recent graduates from a three-year field-based Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) course in early childhood education. The participants were employed or volunteered in early childhood education centres for at least 15 hours each week during their ITE course and attended weekly classroom tutorials. Academic written work and teaching practice was formally assessed. Assessed reflective writing was incorporated into essays, reports and portfolio entries. Portfolio entries over three years included 45 reflective journal entries in a Schön (1983) format, 16 reflections on teaching practice, a statement of values and beliefs, and two philosophy statements.

As a teacher educator, I became interested in how institutionally-directed reflective writing shaped negotiations of student teachers' understandings of their personal professional identities. I intended to facilitate my participants' engagement in self-study as they considered the questions: 'Who am I as a teacher and how did I come to be this way?' I intended that findings from this



research could inform debate among teacher educators about what and how we are teaching.

### **Topic and Research Questions**

The topic of this research project is early childhood teachers' negotiations of personal professional identities. I described 'personal professional identities' as answers that teachers would give to the question "Who am I as a teacher?" I intended to use Foucault's theories to investigate how dominant discourses shaped participants' subjectivities, or self-understandings. My interest in how teachers negotiated their subjectivities when engaged in self-study and institutionally-directed reflective writing led me to compose the research questions:

1. How do early childhood teachers negotiate their personal professional identities when engaged in a facilitated self-study process?
2. How does institutionally-directed reflective writing contribute to teachers' negotiations of personal professional identities?

### **Theoretical Concepts**

A postmodern worldview underpins the theoretical framework of this research study. In contrast to a modernist view of knowledge as absolute truth, postmodern perspectives maintain there is no absolute knowledge and reality waiting to be discovered. Postmodern identities are understood as multiple, complex and changing (Grieshaber, 2001), and cannot be known or defined. Individuals perceive themselves and others in ways that are shaped and negotiated in social settings.

Subjectivities are described as “the ways we come to define ourselves” (Ryan, Ochsner, & Genishi, 2001, p. 51). Postmodern subjectivity highlights diversity and complexity, and contrasts with a modernist understanding of identity as an essentialist ‘true self’. Tensions exist between postmodern perspectives and the term ‘identity’, due to differing modernist and postmodernist interpretations. My participants’ discussions showed that ‘identity’ is a term both familiar and difficult to grasp. Societal and educational discourses reflected in professional standards value modernist understandings of identities and present normative images of ‘good teachers’. Teachers must reconcile their self-understandings or subjectivities with such normative images, and present themselves in documentation as ‘good teachers’. Reflective practice is a metacognitive strategy of ITE and teaching that can reflect modernist perspectives on self-knowledge and identities.

I used the term ‘subjectivities’ to theorise, analyse and discuss my research findings because ‘subjectivities’ encompasses postmodern complexity, uncertainty and change. However, I used the term ‘identities’ in the research questions and the data collection process. I believed that discussing a familiar yet confusing term like identity would give insight into complexity, instability and variety of participants’ perspectives. Using an unfamiliar term like ‘subjectivities’ would have required frequent explanations, imposed my postmodern worldview on participants and limited their freedom to express their own worldviews. However, I explained my theoretical stance and defined key concepts to participants at the beginning of data collection.

Consideration of socially negotiated subjectivities led me to the ideas of Foucault and concepts like discourse, power, positioning and agency. Discourses are frameworks for thought and actions in social settings. Discursive practices are ways that individuals within discourses act and

interact that reflect values, beliefs and assumptions of discourses. Discourses of professionalism that influence early childhood teachers include traditional functionalist professionalism associated with knowledge, qualifications and status, neo-liberal managerialism focused on efficiency and accountability, caring or relational professionalism and democratic or critical professionalism. As researcher, I was interested in how participants were shaped by dominant discourses and how they negotiated their subjectivities within discourses.

### **Methodology**

The methodological theoretical framework was based in a poststructuralist paradigm which recognises that teachers are situated within discourses and circulating power relations. I designed the research study as a qualitative collective case study. The data collection process comprised a facilitated self-study process which gave participants opportunities to reflect on their self-understandings as teachers and explore how these understandings have been shaped. Self-study involves reflecting on practice critically and collaboratively, and making the research public (Loughran, 2007).

Data consisted of transcripts of two focus group discussions and seven individual interviews, and self-study written tasks based on institutionally-directed reflective writing completed during the participants' ITE course. My data analysis drew on Foucault's theoretical ideas to describe how some dominant discourses shaped participants' subjectivities, and how participants negotiated their subjectivities within emergent dominant discourses. My findings about dominant discourses and discursive practices helped me answer my research questions about influences of facilitated self-study and institutionally-directed reflective writing on participants' negotiations of their personal professional identities.

## **Scope of my Research Study**

My research study was a small-scale qualitative investigation framed by a postmodern perspective. The five participants were purposefully chosen from a group of newly-qualified teachers on the basis of variety of life and work experiences and travel considerations for data collection. However, the uniform nature of the pool of possible participants restricted diversity. All participants were female and four of the five identified themselves as members of the dominant New Zealand-born European Pākehā culture. The fifth participant was a European immigrant. None of the participants described herself as indigenous Māori or person of colour.

Sampling limitations and my qualitative research approach meant the study could not be representative of early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand or represent a wide variety of perspectives. Qualitative research seeks exploration of participants' understandings rather than generalisation to universal realities. I aimed to explore participants' subjectivities, not explain what personal professional identities 'are'. My postmodern perspective meant I recognised circulating power relations amongst the group of participants and myself, and possible effects of these power relations on what participants said. I recognised that my data analysis was exploration of data informed by particular theoretical ideas, and that analysis from different perspectives would come to different conclusions.

## **Outline of Chapters**

This chapter introduced the topic of my investigation with a broad overview of my research study and early childhood teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand. Chapter Two will cover the theoretical framework underpinning my research, and Chapter Three will review literature informing my investigation. Research

design, data collection and analysis will be reported in Chapter Four: Methodology and Ethics. The following three chapters will report my findings in terms of three emergent dominant discourses. In Chapter Eight I will discuss my findings in relation to the research questions, theoretical framework and literature. Chapter Nine will summarise the thesis and provide concluding thoughts.

## **Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework**

### **Introduction**

My outline of the theoretical framework of my investigation into negotiations of teachers' personal professional identities will begin with comparisons of modernist and postmodernist perspectives on identity. My postmodernist perspective highlights complex social negotiation of subjectivities, which are ways individuals understand themselves. My substantive theoretical framework draws on discourse theories of Michel Foucault, the concept of 'authoring selves' through inner dialogue (Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998), and the concept of 'interpretive practice' which is interplay between discursive practices and discourses (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Discourses of teacher professionalism reflecting societal and institutional influences will be outlined. I will compare various interpretations of the term 'professional identity' with my understanding of 'personal professional identities'. This chapter will conclude with discussion of aspects of the methodological theoretical framework: identity work, reflection and self-study. I will suggest links between these aspects and teachers' understandings of their personal professional identities.

### **Modernist and Postmodernist Approaches to Identity**

Modernist thought perceives the world as predictable and ordered, with science and reason providing keys to progress (Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001a; Moss & Petrie, 2002). Modernist thought has had significant influence on early childhood education through the influence of developmental psychology, which uses measurements of individuals to establish norms and categories (Burman, 2008; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007; Grieshaber & Cannella,

2001a). A modernist identity understood as a constant essentialist 'true self' remains popular in Western cultures (Britzman, 2003; Dahlberg, et al., 2007; Gubrium & Holstein, 2001; Seifert, 2004). A modernist identity is a coherent distinctive entity that makes meaning and is responsible for decisions and actions (Holland, et al., 1998; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Modernist perceptions of professional identities are reflected in normative images of 'good teachers' such as those described in professional standards. Modernist thought also underpins reflective practice that is focused on self-awareness and improvement.

In contrast to modernism, postmodern perspectives maintain there is no absolute knowledge and reality waiting to be discovered. Instead, knowledge is understood to be socially constructed, context-specific, value-laden and always linked to power relations (Dahlberg, et al., 2007; Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001a; Moss & Petrie, 2002). Postmodern identities, like knowledge, cannot be defined and described in absolute terms. Postmodern identities are multifaceted and dynamic, reflecting diversity, complexity, and multiple social contexts and roles (Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001b; Holland, et al., 1998). Ybema, Keenoy, Oswick, Beverungen, Ellis and Sabelis (2009) described postmodern identity formation:

'[I]dentity formation' might be conceptualised as a complex, multifaceted process which produces a socially negotiated temporary outcome of the dynamic interplay between internal striving and external prescriptions, between self-presentation and labelling by others, between achievement and ascription and between regulation and resistance. (p. 301)

Postmodern identities are made up of perceptions negotiated in social interactions where individuals give and receive messages about themselves. According to postmodern perspectives, teachers' professional identities are

fluid and changing within professional social settings such as ITE institutions and early childhood centres. Postmodern identities have been described as self-understandings negotiated through social interactions (Alsup, 2006; Holland, et al., 1998; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Miller Marsh, 2003).

In postmodern perspectives, understandings of self are multiple and dynamic, and are termed 'subjectivities': "the ways we come to define ourselves" (Ryan, et al., 2001, p. 51). Subjectivities comprise "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (Weedon, cited in Duncan, 2005, p. 52). Postmodern thought describes individuals negotiating fluid and dynamic arrays of multiple subjectivities, which are "always positioned in relation to particular discourses and the practices produced by the discourses" (Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001a). Teachers negotiate positions in multiple discourses, developing multiple subjectivities. Critical reflection can reflect postmodern perspectives by questioning and deconstructing ways subjectivities are shaped.

Postmodern 'identities' and 'subjectivities' have much in common: complexity, change and perceptions formed in social interactions. In my research study, I decided to use 'subjectivities' to describe ways participants understood their personal professional identities. This decision led to challenges when reviewing literature, as several writers with postmodern perspectives did not use the term 'subjectivities', but discussed 'identities' in ways consistent with postmodern concepts outlined in this chapter.

### **Discourses and Subjectivities**

Discourse theory provides understandings of how subjectivities are shaped through social interactions. Gee (1990) wrote from a social linguistic



perspective, and distinguished the ‘discourse’ of language interactions from ‘Discourse’, which describes all aspects of interaction and thought around human social situations:

A Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and ‘artefacts’ of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network’ or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful role. (Gee, 1990, p. 131)

Discourses are associated with belonging to social groups with particular ways of thinking, communicating and behaving. A dominant discourse asserts its perspective about the ‘right’ values, beliefs and attitudes, and dismisses other perspectives. Discourses act as powerful sets of rules and behaviours (Duncan, 2008), and make subject positions available to individuals that represent ways of being regarded as ‘normal’. For early childhood teachers, these rules and behaviours include regulations, ITE assessment and professional standards, as well as unspoken assumptions shaping ‘normality’. When people positioned in discourses use discursive practices such as language, symbolic expressions and artefacts of thinking (as described by Gee) that reflect values and beliefs of discourses, they create and maintain the discourse at the same time as the discourse shapes how they understand themselves. Subjectivities, or self-understandings, are formed when people negotiate subject positions within discourses:

ECEC [early childhood education and care] practitioners’ subjectivity or ‘way of being’ comes about from an active engagement and negotiation of the discourses through which they are shaped and in which they are positioned. (Osgood, 2006, p. 7)

People negotiate their subjectivities through discursive practices such as being assigned subject positions within discourses by positioning, and by exerting agency to accept, resist or reject positions and to improvise to create new positions (Davies & Harré, 1990). Osgood (2006) advocated early childhood teachers' awareness of discursive practices so they could critically reflect on discursive practices shaping their subjectivities and actively negotiate positions in discourses. The theories of French philosopher Michel Foucault describe how subjectivities are shaped by power circulating in discourses.

### **Foucault and Power/Knowledge**

Foucault focused on interrelated concepts of power, language, discourse and knowledge: "language and discourse are agents of knowledge, power produces knowledge, knowledge sustains power" (Moss & Petrie, 2002, p. 33). Power operates by circulating in social interactions and relationships. Foucault (1980a) described power as "an open, more-or-less coordinated (in the event, no doubt, ill-coordinated) cluster of relations" (p. 199). Discourses create reality through language: "Discourse puts words into action, constructs perceptions and formulates understanding" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000, p. 93). Dominant discourses or regimes of truth shape perceptions of truth and knowledge through power as they "make assumptions and values invisible, turn subjective perspectives and understandings into apparently objective truths, and determine some things are self-evident and realistic while others are dubious and impractical" (Moss & Petrie, 2002, p. 30). These truths maintain the power of the discourse: "'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it" (Foucault, 1980b, p. 133). When people engage in discursive practices that reflect values and beliefs of dominant discourses, they can exert power within their social setting, which in turn

reinforces assumptions of dominant discourses as knowledge and ‘truth’. Teachers acting in acceptable and ‘normal’ ways in their professional settings are viewed positively by others and gain credibility, status and power.

Discursive practices of discipline and governmentality modify individuals’ subjectivities and behaviour (which reflects subjectivities). These practices were described by Foucault as “continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviours” (Foucault, 1980c, p. 97). Foucault described ‘technologies of power’ by which the state or institutions dominate individuals, and ‘technologies of self’ by which individuals modify their “bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality” (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997, p. 225). Foucault used the term ‘governmentality’ to describe power through which individuals are controlled or control themselves to become “useful, docile, practical citizens” (Foucault, 1988, cited in Besley & Peters, 2007, p. 30).

Disciplinary and governmental discursive practices are subtle rather than overt or violent. They “coerce individuals into behaving in a way that has been classified by any given society at any time as ‘normal’” (Duncan, 2008, p. 88). Gore (1998, cited in MacNaughton, 2005) identified eight micropractices of disciplinary power, including surveillance (being, or expecting to be, observed), normalisation (judging on the basis of a discursive standard), exclusion (establishing the boundaries between normal and abnormal), classification (differentiating between groups or individuals) and regulation (invoking rules and limiting behaviours). Disciplinary practices can be identified in regulations framing the early childhood teaching profession,

institutional ITE observation and assessment practices, documentation, and supervision of provisionally-registered teachers.

Power is not only repressive, as discursive practices of discipline and governmentality might suggest. Instead power is diffuse, and present in every social relationship, “circulating in a capillary fashion” (MacLure, 2003, p. 176) as individuals both exert and are subject to power. Power produces subjectivity, agency, knowledge and action (MacLure, 2003). Individuals are motivated by desire for pleasure and power, as well as disciplined by repressive forms of power relations:

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. (Foucault, 1980b, p. 119)

Early childhood teachers work collaboratively in teams, and are engaged in circulating power relations. Knowledge and skills enable teachers to claim positions in discourses that hold power and provide pleasure.

By exposing how power operates through discursive practices, Foucault showed that knowledge and truth are not absolute but contested. This insight allowed alternative discourses to become visible: “it is through the reappearance of this knowledge, of these local popular knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its work” (Foucault, 1980c, p. 82). MacNaughton (2005) advocated parrhesia, the practice of free speech “producing new truths that make relations of domination and inequity reversible” (p. 44). Deconstruction and critical reflection can enable resistance

to power and knowledge within discourses, can empower individuals to negotiate subjectivities, and even change discourses (MacNaughton, 2005).

Foucault showed that power, knowledge, language and discourse are closely interconnected and play a crucial role in shaping subjectivities. The external social world is incorporated into the inner psychological world as subjectivities are negotiated.

### **Authoring Selves and Interpretive Practice**

The concepts of authoring selves and interpretive practice are important to my theoretical framework because they foreground teachers' active roles in negotiating their subjectivities while acknowledging formative influences of social interactions in discourses. Authoring selves is described as a dialogic process between multiple voices within an individual's consciousness, whereby subjectivities are negotiated (Holland, et al., 1998). The voices originate in the social world, and may represent people or discourses. Individuals address and answer these voices in self-authoring and negotiate subjectivities. The concept of self-authoring is informed by the theories of Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1896-1934) and Russian philosopher of language Bakhtin (1895–1975). Vygotsky theorised that all learning first happens between people interpsychologically then within individuals intrapsychologically. Bakhtin suggested that selves are in dialogue with the social world. Using these theoretical approaches, Holland et al. (1998) developed a view of active selves positioned and actively engaged in social settings, forming subjectivities that speak to and reply to their sociocultural worlds. Teachers author themselves when they consider various influences on their subjectivities from their personal and professional experiences, and make decisions about how to engage in and respond to discursive practices.

Like self-authoring, 'interpretive practice' describes ways individuals actively negotiate subjectivities (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000), within limits imposed by discourses. Interpretive practice attends to discourses-in-practice, described as "discursive possibilities for, and resources of, self construction at particular times and places" (p. 94), as well as agentic ways individuals use discursive practices, or the "the conversational machinery involved in interactionally storying the self" (p. 94). Teachers actively engage in discursive practices to negotiate their subjectivities within limits imposed by discourses in their professional settings.

Some voices that individuals engage with in inner dialogue are more authoritative than others, reflecting power relations in dominant discourses-in-practice. Some of these voices originate in powerful social settings such as institutions.

### **Institutions**

Power and knowledge interplay where human beings interact and negotiate their subjectivities in social settings such as 'academia' (Holland, et al., 1998) or 'early childhood education'. Language is used with agreed meanings by those who share social contexts such as institutions. Institutions are ubiquitous in contemporary life and have enormous relevance to construction of selves (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). ITE institutions and central agencies such as Ministry of Education, New Zealand Teachers Council, Education Review Office and New Zealand Qualifications Authority have considerable power in shaping early childhood teachers' subjectivities. Institutionally decreed ways of being are hegemonic: "Knowledge that is sanctioned institutionally can produce such an authoritative consensus about how to 'be' that it is difficult to imagine how to think, act and feel in any other way" (MacNaughton, 2005, p.

32). Institutional knowledge and power are sanctioned through legislative requirements, regulations and professional standards in early childhood teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand. Authoritative knowledge embedded in educational institutions is seen as ‘truth’ (Cannella, 1997; Duncan, 2005; Fler, 2008). However, members may change institutions through critical reflection, resistance, agitation and advocacy.

Institutional values and beliefs shape teachers’ subjectivities when they are situated in professional contexts such as ITE or early childhood education services through discourses of professionalism.

### **Teacher Professionalism**

Early childhood teachers’ personal professional identities have been shaped in local contexts that have led to a nationally regulated and governed, professionalised early childhood education sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. Several discourses provide frameworks for thought and action (Miller Marsh, 2002b) around teacher professionalism, from the historical mothering discourse and traditional functionalist professionalism, to contemporary discourses of neo-liberal managerialism, relational or caring professionalism, and critical or democratic professionalism. Professional standards control the profession from outside and within as practitioners are subject to constant surveillance and normalisation (Cannella, 1997; Osgood, 2006). Professional standards in Aotearoa New Zealand reflect multiple discourses of professionalism.

The traditional functionalist description of professionalism emphasises high community status and professional autonomy, high qualifications and remuneration, and regulatory standards (Kinos, 2010). A distinguishing feature of professionalism in early childhood education, according to a survey of early

childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand was “(specialist) professional knowledge and practices” (Dalli, 2010, p. 52). This discourse of functionalist professionalism is reflected in ‘professional knowledge’ sections in the *Registered Teacher Criteria* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009a) and *Graduating Teacher Standards* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007). Early childhood education has adopted features of functionalist professionalism such as qualification requirements and professional standards as a means of claiming professional status (Aitken & Kennedy, 2007; McGillivray, 2008). In a commonly held modernist view, there remains a “dichotomy between a workforce that is construed as caring, maternal and gendered, as opposed to professional, degree educated and highly trained” (McGillivray, 2008, p. 245). The historical mothering discourse attributes childcare skills to women’s biological and social roles (Duncan, 1996), and shapes the view that teaching of younger children has lower status than teaching older students.

Relationship-based discourses of professionalism share historical mothering discursive values of love and caring, and are based on a professional ethic of caring (Goldstein, 2002; Noddings, 2003). Having a relational focus has been associated with the feminised nature of the profession and linked to early childhood teachers putting perceived needs of others, such as children and families, before their own (Duncan, 1996; Sumsion, 2005). Dalli (2006) advocated that teachers use caring relationships as a central pedagogical strategy and means of empowerment by “rehabilitating love in our professional discourse” (p. 7). Relational professionalism is included in professional standards of the early childhood profession in Aotearoa New Zealand through requirements for professional relationships in *Graduating Teacher Standards* and *Registered Teacher Criteria*.



Managerial professionalism values “choice, efficiency, quality, accountability, and a free market approach” (Sullivan, 1998, cited in Aitken & Kennedy, 2007, p. 176) and requires documentation and accountability. The pervasive influence of neo-liberal managerialism since the late twentieth century has meant that teachers have experienced tensions between deeply-held values of relational professionalism and pressures to conform to managerial expectations of professional behaviour (Adams, 2010; Moss & Petrie, 2002; Sachs, 2001; Woodrow, 2007). Managerial professionalism is reflected in requirements for accountability in the *Early Childhood Regulations* (New Zealand Government, 2008) and *Licensing Criteria* (Ministry of Education, 2009), through surveillance by the Education Review Office and in the *Registered Teacher Criteria* requirement to “communicate assessment information to relevant members of the learning community” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009a, p. 4).

Professionalism has been described as a site of struggle in a complex ecology of relationships (Dalli & Urban, 2010; Sachs, 2001). Dalli and Urban (2010) suggested that professionalism is interwoven with institutions that are “means of social control, normalisation and confinement” but that professionalism can also be “a vehicle for social transformation and hope grounded in concrete practice” (p. 150). They advocated that teachers develop understandings of professionalism that challenge existing power relations by engaging in critical reflection and collective action.

Democratic or critical professionalism views early childhood professionals as activists collaborating with other educational stakeholders, committed to caring and critical of social, political and economic structures (Moss & Petrie, 2002; Sachs, 2001; Sumsion, 2005; Woodrow, 2008). The *Code of Ethics for Registered Teachers* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2004) reflects this

discourse of professionalism through its four fundamental principles of autonomy (rights), justice, responsible care and truth (honesty). Democratic or critical professionalism advocates questioning values and beliefs of dominant discourses of professionalism and resisting subject positions offered to professionals, to make new understandings of teacher professionalism possible. However, it is important to acknowledge the real institutional power exerted by dominant discourses through regulations and standards, and inclusions and exclusions based on legislation and government policy (Woodrow, 2007).

Early childhood teachers experience discursive practices within discourses of professionalism as they negotiate their understandings of their personal professional identities.

### **Professional Identities and Personal Professional Identities**

Modernist definitions of professional identities have included technical descriptions of teachers' roles and images of 'good teachers'. Professional identities have also been described in ways that reflect change and complexity, such as through narratives and metaphors, in terms of constant reinventing and in terms of discourses (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Sachs (2001) contrasted a modernist understanding of professional identity as a fixed set of externally ascribed attributes with a postmodern understanding of professional identities as "negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous" (p. 154). A review of research (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004) suggested a postmodern definition for teachers' professional identities, summarised by Cohen (2010): "an ongoing dynamic process in which individuals negotiate external and internal expectations as they work to make sense of themselves and their work as teachers" (p. 473). This definition resonates with the self-authoring concept

where individuals negotiate subjectivities by engaging in inner dialogue with voices and influences from their social settings.

Teachers' subjectivities may be unstable when teachers experience rapidly changing social settings, as they do when they start professional practice or enrol in ITE. Personal subjectivities can undergo similar periods of turbulence, but individuals are more likely to have a feeling of stability because their personal subjectivities have been negotiated over a lifetime. Individuals may understand themselves as having stable, substantive personal identities which include core values and beliefs, and more unstable, socially constructed professional identities (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006).

Teachers are sometimes offered contradictory subject positions within multiple discourses, such as warm nurturer in a discourse of developmentally appropriate practice and potentially confrontational in an advocacy discourse (Grieshaber, 2001). As teachers negotiate their subjectivities, they decide whether they can reconcile contradictory subjectivities, need to choose between them, or just live with the conflict. Holland et al. (1998) described this process as "sorting out and orchestrating voices" (p. 182).

Professional discourses in teaching settings are overlaid by wider societal discourses: "each of us lives our gendered, sexualized, "classed", and "raced" identities in and through the power relations that constitute our daily lives" (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2001, p. 122). Teachers are positioned in discourses in an ecological array of social settings: broad social and cultural macro structures, organisations such as ITE providers and early childhood education settings, micro structures in relationships with colleagues, children and families, and personal biographies (Day, et al., 2006). Teachers' multiple

subjectivities are negotiated through experiencing discursive practices in multiple discourses in their personal and professional lives.

I understand that answers teachers might give to the question ‘Who am I as a teacher?’ constitute their ‘personal professional identities’. Subjectivities, or self-understandings are foregrounded in such an interpretation. According to my theoretical framework, individual teachers negotiate understandings of their personal professional identities through engagement in social interactions within discourses in their personal and professional lives. Social interactions expose individuals to perceptions of others, and provide opportunities to demonstrate self-understandings. The processes of ITE and teacher registration provided opportunities for my participant early childhood teachers to consider who they were or were becoming as teachers. They further explored their subjectivities through reflection and self-study during their participation in my research. The remainder of this chapter will address aspects of the methodological theoretical framework: a poststructural approach to methodology, and identity work through reflection and self-study.

### **Poststructural Approach to Methodology**

A postmodern worldview that regards human societies and identities as “fundamentally incoherent and discontinuous” (Hughes, 2010, p. 50) led me to a poststructural research paradigm for this study. A poststructural approach to data collection and analysis means admitting and embracing complexity and confusion, and resisting categories and themes. Deleuze and Guatarri (1987, cited in MacLure, 2010) compared orderly ‘tree-like’ thinking underpinning category and theme-driven modernist research with a poststructural metaphor of “a rhizomatic network, a flat, fluid arrangement of connecting stems and nodes that are constantly disrupted and rearranged into changed configurations

of thought” (Knight, 2009, p. 54). The postmodern researcher is challenged to disrupt taken-for-granted ways of thinking shaped by dominant discourses: “to make language stutter, we need somehow to interrupt its usual workings” (MacLure, 2010, p. 7). I looked for data that indicated what participants thought were characteristics of ‘normal’ early childhood teachers, for data that indicated discomfort or tension in their understandings of who they were as teachers, and for evidence of discursive practices and power relations.

How this poststructural approach played out in terms of methodology will be described in Chapter Four. The remainder of this chapter will describe concepts underpinning the research design that I engaged with from a postmodern perspective.

### **Identity Work**

The concept of identity work presents images of teachers as capable of examining, reflecting on and changing their identities. Identity work can be understood from modernist and postmodernist perspectives. From a modernist perspective, individuals are understood as capable of actively monitoring and modifying their identities: “The concept *identity work* refers to people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness [emphasis in original]” (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1165).

From a postmodern perspective, identity work is complex and multifaceted, as individuals actively negotiate subjectivities within discourses, and engage in discursive practices “to produce a kaleidoscope of new identities for new contexts, new circumstances and new purposes” (Harrison, Clarke, & Reeve, 2003, p. 96). Postmodern identity work reflects concepts of self-authoring and interpretive practice as individuals actively engage in discursive practices.

Active negotiation of 'self-identities' by agentic individuals is moderated by regulation by discursive forces (Beech, 2008). Individuals self-author identities with available cultural tools in local contexts, constrained by discursive rules (Williams, 2011). Jones (2009) suggested that postmodern identities are shaped through inwardly-focused identity negotiations and outwardly-focused management of others' perceptions. Harrison et al. (2003) described teachers in further education working "the fuzziness of their role boundaries" (p. 103) using discursive resources to negotiate "complex, contingent, contextualized and multi-faceted constructions of what it means to work as a teacher" (pp. 103-104).

Teachers communicate their subjectivities to others through narratives. Narratives are outward expressions of identity work, where identity is understood as "an ongoing process of identification" (Watson, 2006, p. 509) and individuals "actively use available subject positions [...] to position themselves as teachers" (Søreide, 2006, p. 528). Holstein and Gubrium (2000) linked narratives to interpretive practice, where discursive practices (resources) interplayed with discourses-in-practice (constraints): "the storying of the self is actively rendered and locally conditioned" (p. 103).

Metacognitive identity work has been recommended as an important constituent of teacher education (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Freese, 2006; Korthagen, 2004; Stenberg, 2010). This view is reflected by institutional requirements for assessed reflective writing in my participants' ITE experience. Compulsory identity work may work as discipline or self-governmentality to position student teachers within dominant discourses. Teachers may also use metacognitive strategies such as reflection and self-study to actively negotiate their subjectivities by seeking pleasure, resisting positions and negotiating tensions within discourses.

## ***Reflection***

Reflection can be understood as metacognitive identity work from both modernist and postmodernist perspectives. The institutionally-directed reflective journal entries my participants selected as data were written using a template based on Schön's (1983) work. Schön and Dewey (Dewey, 1933, 1955; Hildebrand, 2008) were modernist thinkers who have influenced how reflection has been used in ITE. Their technical, problem-solving approach to reflection that extracted meaning from experience represents a modernist perception of identity as reality that can be discovered, described and improved. Schön suggested reflective strategies of reflecting-in-action, which is thinking about action while involved in it, and reflection-on-action, which is thinking about action before or after engaging in it.

Technical reflection is a modernist approach by which teachers can "systematically and critically engage with evidence to reflect on and refine their practice" (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007, p. 5). Schön's template is well suited to technical reflection, with considerations of what went well, or not, and decisions about changes in the future. Technical reflection has been criticised as supporting managerial efficiency and standard practice while failing to question values and beliefs underpinning social, political, economic, educational structures (Parker, 1997, cited in Mayo, 2003; Smyth, 1992).

Reflexive reflection can provide an alternative to technical reflection: "reflection on the self in action in terms of interrogating one's beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, prejudices and suppositions that inform teaching" (Atkinson, 2004, p. 381). Teachers may engage in reflexive reflection in ways that reflect modernist or postmodern perspectives on identities. Reflexive reflection is possible when using Schön's template, but not demanded by the

format. Reflecting a modernist perspective, Korthagen (2004) suggested an onion model of reflection with environment, behaviour and competencies on the outer layers, and beliefs, identity and mission inside. Korthagen advocated core reflection focused on the level of mission “the question of what is deep inside us that moves us to do what we do” (p. 85).

In terms of Foucault’s theories, technical and reflexive reflection can be regarded as disciplinary discursive practices. Dominant discourses make certain subject positions available, and teachers are disciplined as they shape their subjectivities through identity work. Teachers are under surveillance when they share reflective documentation and vulnerable to normalising judgements when their reflective writing is assessed. Students engaging in reflective journal writing may feel unsafe if their experiences and beliefs differ from dominant discourses, while others situated within dominant discourses may have their voices magnified and overlook non-dominant discourses (Seifert, 2004). Documentation does not represent reality to a postmodern perspective, and what we write down is never neutral and innocent, but always social and political (Dahlberg, et al., 2007). Documentation can be used to exercise and resist power, and to comply with disciplinary discursive forces.

Critical reflection is compatible with postmodern perspectives, as it aims to illuminate the socially negotiated nature of identities and subjectivities, and the workings of power relations (Alsup, 2006; MacNaughton, 2005; Osgood, 2006; Sachs, 2001; Seifert, 2004; Zembylas, 2003). Teachers who understand the influence of discourses are aware that they are offered available subject positions within discourses, and also understand they can exert agency to negotiate their subjectivities (MacNaughton, 2005). Alsup (2006) suggested that “borderlands discourse” (p. 36) can allow individuals to negotiate contradictory subjectivities in overlapping discourses. Borderlands discourse



can allow new integrated subjectivities to emerge, in contrast with reflection that affirms taken-for-granted perceptions. However, although individuals may become aware of socially negotiated subjectivities through reflection, they are always immersed in discourse, as there is no space outside discourses from which individuals can observe themselves (Atkinson, 2004).

Critical reflection is understood as a means to challenge inequitable and unjust power relations and positioning (Dahlberg, et al., 2007; Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001a; MacNaughton, 2005; Smyth, 1992). Smyth (1992) called for reflection that enables teachers “to uncover the nature of the forces that inhibit and constrain them and work at changing those conditions” (p. 295). Teachers are encouraged through professional standards to engage in critical reflection as a means of becoming aware of and responsive to diversity among learners, and of examining their own values and beliefs (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007, 2009a). Like reflexive reflection, critical reflection is permitted but not demanded by the use of Schön’s template. Specific teaching in ITE of discourse theory and skills of critical reflection has been recommended by some writers (Alsup, 2006; Danielewicz, 2001; MacNaughton, 2005; Miller Marsh, 2002a).

Critical reflection and awareness of discursive practices form connections between subjectivities and discursive contexts. Awareness of these contexts will never be complete because individuals are immersed in discourses where subjectivities are negotiated (Atkinson, 2004). The participants in my research had been immersed in values and beliefs of their ITE context when they carried out institutionally-directed reflective writing. Self-study may provide teachers with opportunities to further explore their subjectivities by reflecting critically and collaboratively and making the findings public.

### *Self-Study*

Self-study is a research approach used by teacher educators, teachers and student teachers to investigate their teaching practice in a critically reflective way that acknowledges complexities of teaching (Pithouse, Mitchell, & Weber, 2009). Loughran (2007) described self-study as a scholarship of teaching with three key attributes: becoming public, being critically evaluated and having the teaching community using and building on ideas. Self-study has more emphasis than reflection on collaboration and making the study public (Loughran, 2004). Making self-study public encourages researchers to challenge their personal theories and avoids romanticising and self-justification (Loughran, 2007). Public discussion and critique of self-study, as well as collaboration and dialogue help provide validity through trustworthiness (Loughran, 2007). Loughran and Northfield (1998) acknowledge that the personal and unique nature of self-study research can potentially limit the studies' value unless reports are detailed enough to 'ring true', demonstrate triangulation of data and multiple perspectives, and make explicit links to literature.

There are significant tensions between self-study and the postmodern theoretical framework of my research. Self-study is underpinned by modernist assumptions that imply "a core, constant self that can be uncovered and studied during the research process" (Sandretto, 2009, p. 91). Like poststructural research, self-study aims to reframe teaching practice by "making the familiar strange" (Hamilton, 1998, cited in Sandretto, 2009, p. 92). Sandretto advocates researchers bringing a poststructural lens to self-study research to critically examine discourses in which teachers are embedded, and that underpin self-study research.

Qualitative self-study methods include autobiography, narrative, teaching self-portraits and portfolios. Artefacts like portfolios represent modernist perspectives if they are presented as evidence of teacher identities, posing challenges to poststructural researchers. Goodfellow (2004) described a professional portfolio from a modernist perspective as “a reflection of the ‘self’” (p. 66) that provided evidence that the teacher met professional standards as well as an arena for self-evaluation. In contrast, Lyons and Freidus (2004) described reflective portfolios as scaffolding practitioner inquiries as well as a means of making inquiry public. They linked portfolio creation to core purposes of self-study: “Through reflection, portfolio makers revisit their own teaching and learning, identify strengths or areas for refinement, critique what succeeded or failed and why, or pursue some aspect of student learning” (p. 1077). From a postmodern perspective, reflective portfolio data represents temporarily negotiated aspects of selected subjectivities. From a Foucauldian point of view, a student teacher’s institutionally-directed portfolio consisting of collected assessed reflective writing represents an institutional disciplinary discursive practice. Teachers’ subjectivities are shaped by the requirement to perform acceptable subjectivities in assessed writing, and by the modernist assumption that these artefacts provide evidence of identities.

There were tensions between modernist assumptions of self-study and my postmodern theoretical framework in terms of how the ‘self’ is understood. However, the two approaches encourage critical reflection and admit complexity. My research design set up the data collection process as a facilitated self-study process. My intention was that participants could reflect on several occasions to revisit and explore self-understandings independently and with others. Using a poststructural lens to analyse data collected in a

facilitated self-study process could help me interrogate some discourses underpinning early childhood education and ITE.

## **Conclusion**

My postmodern worldview underpinning this investigation acknowledges complexities of human social interactions. Postmodern identities are multiple, complex and dynamic, in contrast with modernist essentialist identities. The ways teachers understand their personal professional identities comprise multiple, dynamic subjectivities. Subjectivities are made available as positions in discourses and negotiated by individuals experiencing discursive practices.

Foucault's discourse theories inform my understandings of how individuals' subjectivities are shaped. Discourses are frameworks for thought and action that represent particular 'truths' or knowledge about how people should or could be in certain social settings. Discourses are created by people interacting in social settings, and in turn discourses make subject positions available. Individuals negotiate subjectivities in circulating power relations within discourses through engagement in and subjection to discursive practices. They are offered positions in discourses, and through discipline and governmentality they are encouraged to conform to these subject positions. They may be motivated by desire and pleasure to seek particular subjectivities, or they may use agency to resist, change or improvise positions in discourses. As individuals negotiate subjectivities within discourses, they conduct inner dialogue with internal and external influences. Individuals actively negotiate subjectivities through identity work, which includes metacognitive strategies such as reflection and self-study.

Through critical reflection, individuals may become aware of how power and knowledge within discourses shape their subjectivities. Awareness of power

relations and positioning may empower individuals to exert agency, however reflection occurs from within discourses so awareness must be partial.

Reflection as part of a self-study process underpins the methodological theoretical framework of my research study. Self-study research uses reflexive and critical reflection, to help teachers examine their subjectivities as teachers. Self-study takes a collaborative approach as participants reflect together and make their reflections public. However, there is tension between reflection and self-study and a poststructural research approach.

Having described the substantive and methodological theoretical frameworks of my research study, I will examine selected research literature on the topic of teacher identities and find areas of resonance and dissonance with my chosen approach.

## **Chapter Three: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will review selected research literature on the topic of teachers' understandings of their personal professional identities. I selected recent studies that reflected a poststructural research paradigm and Foucault's theories, studies that examined early childhood teacher identities and subjectivities, and those set in Aotearoa New Zealand. I also included studies relevant to the methodology of my research study, such as studies about teacher reflection and self-study research. Following a summary of a published research review, the selected research studies will be reviewed according to three themes: shaping of identities and subjectivities, discourses, and identity work.

### **Professional identity: Research review**

A review of 22 research studies published between 1988 and 2000 on the topic of teachers' professional identities (Beijaard, et al., 2004) found that understandings of the topic generally showed a shift over time from modernist essentialist identity to postmodern dynamic socially-negotiated identities and subjectivities. Some studies positioned in modernist thought defined professional identities as job or role descriptions, or professional standards. This view of identities is relevant to early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand because of the influence of *Graduating Teacher Standards* and *Registered Teacher Standards* on a profession that is becoming increasingly professionalised. Such standards present sets of expectations that form

normative ‘good teacher’ identities. As a result of the review, Beijgaard et al. (2004) identified four features of professional identities: an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experience; implies both person and context; consists of sub-identities that more or less harmonise; and agency is an important element. Postmodern understandings of professional identities go beyond how an individual should be, to recognising multiple and changing identities responding to multiple and changing contexts.

### **Themes in the Research Literature**

Three overlapping themes emerged from my selection of reviewed research studies: how teachers experience shaping of their personal professional identities and subjectivities, how discourses influence subjectivities, and how teachers carry out identity work. The studies investigating shaping of identities and subjectivities foregrounded the role of social interactions. The studies exploring discursive influences foregrounded Foucault’s theoretical ideas. The studies of teachers’ identity work investigated reflection, self-study and teaching portfolios. Finally, this chapter will highlight incompatibilities between reflection and portfolios, and postmodern perspectives.

#### ***Shaping of Identities and Subjectivities***

##### ***Constructivist Studies of Identity Shaping***

Poststructural and constructivist research paradigms are based in beliefs about individuals situated in social contexts. Researchers working in a constructivist research paradigm understand knowledge as reality constructed during social interactions (Grieshaber, 2007; Hatch, 2007b; Hughes, 2010). A constructivist view is modernist, and sees individuals’ identities as realities which can be described and agreed upon. In contrast, a postmodern view does not admit the

concept of knowable identities, focusing instead on dynamic negotiation of subjectivities. A postmodern criticism of the constructivist paradigm is that researchers can ignore power relations, so they are “likely to contribute to the perpetuation and reproduction of the power relations in which they are enmeshed” (Grieshaber, 2007, p. 157).

Four constructivist studies have been included in this review because they are set in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Nuttall (2003) investigated a group of teachers in an early childhood centre using a symbolic interactionist approach, which views knowledge as constructed within the self and through interaction with others. She investigated how teachers’ understandings of their roles were co-constructed with colleagues by analysing data from observations, interviews and documents. Nuttall asserted that teachers construct their professional identities in response to each other. Nuttall (2006) also investigated narrative expression of an early childhood teacher’s identity. She again used a symbolic interactionist approach to interpret how a teacher and her colleagues co-constructed her self-as-teacher within her professional context.

Aitken (2006) used a communities of practice approach (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to describe professional identity experiences of eight newly qualified early childhood teachers. Data from focus groups, interviews and documents indicated that the teachers’ identities reflected their multiple roles and changes in responsibilities as they became qualified. The fourth constructivist study reviewed took a grounded theory approach and derived a ‘ground up’ concept of professionalism for early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand (Dalli, 2010). Dalli used survey data collected in 2003 from about 255 respondents to construct categories to describe an ‘ideal’ professional identity: distinct pedagogy, professional knowledge and practices, and collaborative



relationships. A similar constructivist approach was taken to design the *Registered Teacher Criteria* as a process of consultation, feedback and a pilot programme sought consensus on normative professional teaching identities described by the criteria (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009b).

These studies viewed identities as realities constructed in social settings. Teachers were concerned with expectations of others and used feedback in communities of practice to evaluate personal professional identities that could be known and described. The influences of discourses and power relations were not considered, in contrast with poststructural approaches.

### *Poststructural Studies of Shaping of Identities and Subjectivities*

The reviewed studies with a poststructural approach focused on the dynamic and socially contingent nature of teachers' identities and subjectivities as they tracked negotiations of these by small groups of teachers. Most of the reviewed literature with postmodern perspectives discussed 'identities' while some, such as Alsup (2006) and Britzman (2003) also referred to 'subjectivities'. The terms 'subjectivities' and 'identities' are not interchangeable. 'Subjectivities' are the ways individuals understand themselves, whereas postmodern 'identities' encompass subjectivities as well as how others perceive individuals, and how they perform or portray themselves to others. Beech (2008) used the term 'self-identity' to communicate a postmodern understanding of identities. I have outlined the meanings expressed by these postmodern writers and used their chosen terms when reporting their work.

Four qualitative studies with small groups of participants who were beginning their teaching careers investigated struggles to reconcile conflicts within their

professional identities (Alsup, 2006; Britzman, 2003; Danielewicz, 2001; Miller Marsh, 2002b, 2003). Working in the United States, Britzman, Danielewicz and Alsup wrote about student teachers in the secondary school sector, and Miller Marsh studied kindergarten teachers in their first year of teaching. These studies viewed identities as formed by individuals in social contexts within discourses that provided opportunities and constraints. The participants in these studies worked to resolve tensions between multiple subjectivities as they experienced 'becoming' teachers. They were influenced by explicit and implicit normative identities that set up expectations of how teachers should be.

Britzman and Alsup discussed subjectivities of participants, but this term was not used by Miller Marsh or Danielewicz. Miller Marsh's (2003) definition of identities as representations of the self embedded in discourses provided evidence of her postmodern perspective. Danielewicz (2001) demonstrated postmodern understandings of identities as "our understanding of who we are and of who we think other people are" which are "always in flux, always multiple and continually under construction" (p. 10).

Britzman (2003) explored the process of learning to teach as her two participants tried to reconcile their preconceptions of how a teacher should be with their lived experiences. She used a poststructural critical ethnography approach, interweaving participants' narrative with her critical commentary on interview data gathered during a three month field teaching experience in 1983. Britzman argued that her participants negotiated available subjectivities within discourses as they struggled to express their self-understandings. They developed agency "as negotiators, mediators, and authors of who they [were] becoming" (Britzman, 2003, p. 29).

Danielewicz (2001) described becoming a teacher as a process where individuals recognise themselves and are recognised by others as teachers. She worked with six undergraduate preservice teachers over two years, collecting life histories, interviews, observations of the students' teaching and collections of their written work. Danielewicz noticed that her participants' professional settings offered ways they could identify themselves as teachers, such as becoming aware of similarities to or differences from other teachers. Danielewicz suggested a pedagogy of teacher education that includes awareness of discourse, dialogue that generates knowledge and understanding, and reflexivity that "fosters a more profound awareness of situation, a better sense of how social contexts influence who people are and how they behave" (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 155).

Miller Marsh (2002b, 2003) examined discursive fashioning of identities of two kindergarten teachers as they negotiated school discourses. Data included curriculum guidelines, interviews, and observations of teaching and staff meetings. One teacher appropriated school discourses of 'normalisation' and 'at risk'. She accepted discursive positioning as a teacher who categorised her students as 'normal' or 'at risk', which resulted in "possibilities and constraints for the social identities of the young children" (Miller Marsh, 2002b, p. 338). In the case of the second teacher, school discourses overran discourses from her ITE course. Discourses from the two settings overlapped, but the school discourse of human relations emphasised respecting commonalities and differences on a personal level. This approach overlooked societal issues of race and class addressed by the ITE programme's social reconstructionism discourse.

Alsup (2006) investigated how teachers managed dissonance between personal and professional identities in her study of six preservice secondary school

teachers between 2001 and 2003. She took a postmodern perspective on professional teacher identities: “the weaving together of various discourses and associated subjectivities” (Alsup, 2006, p. xiv). Data included interviews and teaching observations, participants’ lesson plans and philosophy statements, and creative activities such as photographic metaphors. Five of Alsup’s participants engaged in “borderland discourse” (p. 36) in narratives to reflect critically on dissonance between their subjectivities and perceived professional expectations. However, students whose personal subjectivities conflicted most with professional expectations, for reasons such as sexuality or preferred dress, found it most difficult to reconcile these. Alsup suggested that student teachers should be guided to understand the complexity of the connections between their life histories and professional teaching experiences.

These researchers explored teachers’ perceptions of learning to be teachers. Participants in their studies worked to reconcile tensions between subjectivities: how they saw themselves through their biographies and lived experiences, how they saw themselves as teachers and how they perceived authoritative discourses of how teachers should be. Britzman (2003) and Alsup (2006) indicated the presence of normative identities describing professional expectations. It might be expected that early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand would be similarly challenged by tensions within their personal professional identities due to influences of normative identities prescribed by professional standards and institutional ITE expectations.

Cohen (2010) described teachers interacting to negotiate their professional identities. In her qualitative study, three United States secondary school teachers engaged in reflective talk about classroom challenges and practices in a focus group setting. The teachers addressed identity issues implicitly, using “identity bids” (p. 475) as to display themselves as ‘teachers as learners’.

These bids could be recognised, or not, or mis-recognised by colleagues. Unlike the student teachers or new teachers in Britzman's, Danielewicz's, Miller Marsh's and Alsup's studies, Cohen's participants were experienced teachers with colleagues who acted as resources for agentic negotiation of identities.

These studies show how postmodern perspectives recognise circulating power relations and social influences influencing teachers negotiating their multiple and dynamic subjectivities. These power relations and influences circulate within discourses.

### *Discourses*

Teachers negotiate subjectivities within dominant discourses that determine ways of speaking, acting and thinking regarded as 'normal' in their professional social contexts. The studies reviewed that highlighted discursive negotiation of subjectivities drew on Foucault's theories to describe discourses and discursive practices. Studies described: negotiating discourses of professionalism and discursive power relations; negotiating discursive images of good teachers; negotiating conflicting subjectivities; the cultural aspect of teacher identities; and awareness of discursive fashioning of identities. These are all aspects of teachers' negotiations of subjectivities that I would expect to be relevant to my participants as early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Duncan (1999, 2007, 2008) described early childhood teachers navigating circulating power relations within discourses. She took a life history, feminist, Foucauldian approach to investigate eight kindergarten teachers' experiences of an education reform period (1984–1996) in Aotearoa New Zealand. Analysis of interview data linked the teachers' experiences and responses to

past and present educational, social and political discourses. Duncan's participants negotiated conflicts between subjectivities within a dominant neo-liberal discourse and an alternative traditional kindergarten discourse that valued relationships with family and community. Teachers positioned as "governed and docile" (Duncan, 2008, p. 261) felt frustrated and powerless, but they also exerted agency by claiming subjectivities within or in resistance to the neo-liberal discourse. Duncan (1999) described kindergarten teachers' experiences of the disciplinary discursive practice of surveillance when she deconstructed ways early childhood services became physically and procedurally structured through child protection policies. Centres were made into more open spaces through measures like removing toilet doors, and centre policies restricted teachers' movements, producing safe and controlled teachers.

When teachers talk about their work, they reflect subjectivities within discourses that represent values and beliefs about early childhood teaching and its place in society. Robinson (2007) investigated the influence of discourses on six early childhood teachers working in early childhood centres in Aotearoa New Zealand. Among the discourses that emerged from her interview data were some that positioned teachers "to consider and meet the needs of others and subjugate their own needs" (Robinson, 2007, p. 84), such as normative-mother-care, parent support and professional discourses. In contrast, child-in-context and forum-for-care discourses offered positions enabling more equitable professional relationships.

Dominant discourses of professionalism can make subjectivities available that reflect modernist images of how a teacher should be: "[b]eing a teacher means that an individual has mastered a certain set or kind of discourse – one that includes speaking, writing, dressing, acting, and even living within certain

boundaries” (Alsup, 2006, p. 39). Such images are reflected in professional standards, regulations, and expectations of ITE and teacher registration. Cohen’s (2010) participants made identity bids to portray themselves to their colleagues as the sort of teacher regarded as professional in their setting.

Devos (2010) examined positioning of teachers within a dominant discourse of functionalist professionalism through standards and professional expectations. She deconstructed the Provisionally Registered Teachers Program in Victoria, Australia and critiqued the programme as having a gatekeeping function. Devos suggested that the mentoring process acted as governmentality through surveillance of required documentation, “the writing up of oneself” (p. 1222). Such a critique could also be applied to the teacher registration process in Aotearoa New Zealand, and institutionally-directed reflective writing in ITE.

The historical mothering discourse continues to influence negotiation of teachers’ subjectivities, despite dominance of the functionalist professionalism discourse through standards and qualifications requirements. Duncan (1996) deconstructed texts associated with 1992 New Zealand kindergarten teachers’ employment negotiations and linked low pay in the early childhood sector to the mothering discourse. According to this discourse, education is not needed for early childhood teachers as they are filling a role that is biologically natural. However, the many developments since 1992 that led to increased professionalization of early childhood teaching may have reduced the status of the mothering discourse from a dominant to an alternative discourse.

Descriptions and role titles of early childhood practitioners reflect tensions between the dominant discourse of functionalist professionalism with its emphasis on qualifications and professional standards and the historical mothering discourse. McGillivray (2008) examined historical documents

describing early childhood practitioners in England. Titles such as nursery nurses, childminders and nannies reflected caring, maternal identities, while others such as early years' professionals, pedagogues and teachers reflected professional, educated identities. McGillivray advocated that the early childhood profession work collaboratively to resolve this tension and establish "constructs of professional identity informed by a shared vision and understanding" (McGillivray, 2008, p. 252). The review of professional standards that resulted in the *Registered Teacher Criteria* involved considerable consultation, feedback and a pilot programme, and these criteria reflect discourses of functionalist, managerial, and relational professionalism.

Like McGillivray, Dalli (2000) noticed that teachers experienced tension between subjectivities within discourses, and suggested that teachers should develop new discourses that better reflected their work and empowered them. Dalli (2000) carried out five qualitative case studies of the experience of starting childcare for mothers and teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand. Data collected through journal records, interviews, field notes and video records suggested that mothers and teachers positioned each other and themselves in terms of discourses of mothering and of teaching. Teachers regarded themselves as second best to parents with respect to mothering but with professional knowledge and responsibility for children's learning.

Male teachers face personal risks and emotional costs of improvising and resisting positioning in gender-orientated discourses such as the mothering discourse (Sumsion, 2008). Sumsion took a critical life history approach, juxtaposing excerpts from a male teacher's professional biography with the researcher's critical reflections. The teacher encountered suspicion for crossing gender lines, however he also experienced privileging in terms of promotion. Johnson's (2004) male student teacher participant negotiated identities that



were “multiple, fluid and relational” (p. 21). Johnson observed and reflected with the participant during an eight-week practicum in a United States elementary classroom. His enactments as a male educator interacted with his enactments as a multicultural educator, resulting in teaching practices that “recognise[d] student diversity while continuing to privilege identity enactments of male students” (Johnson, 2004, p. 32). Early childhood teachers negotiate subjectivities in societal discourses of gender and cultural diversity as well as discourses of professionalism.

Images of ‘good early childhood teachers’ reflect tensions between discourses of mothering and functionalist professionalism. Langford (2006) asserted that personal qualities associated with being a good early childhood educator could be regarded as stereotypically feminine. She suggested that such a gendered image contributed to marginalisation of the early childhood workforce in Canada. She investigated images of good early childhood educators through analysis of data from early childhood textbooks, interviews with teacher educators, and about 270 student assignments. The personal qualities that emerged were: “passion, happiness, inner strength, caring, and alertness (to individual child needs and interests)” (Langford, 2006, p. 117). Using critical discourse analysis, Langford identified a crisis of authority in these characterisations of good early childhood educators. She questioned how early childhood teachers could express authority as knowledgeable professionals in ways that would be regarded positively while positioned in the traditional gendered discourse.

The images of good early childhood teachers in Western societies largely reflect Euro-American values, beliefs and assumptions. The cultural aspect of teacher subjectivities tends to be overlooked in discourses of professionalism and images of good early childhood teachers. Professional teaching standards

in Aotearoa New Zealand (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009a) include requirements to teach in bicultural and multicultural ways. However, the default position for normative teacher identities is membership of the dominant culture, as shown by two Canadian studies (Kannen & Acker, 2008; Langford, 2007) and an Australian study (Santoro, 2008).

Langford's 2007 study, using the same data set as her 2006 study, focused on the relationship between cultural difference and the image of a good early childhood educator. A universalist context-free view of the child influenced the image of the good educator, and meant that cultural differences were not allowed to disrupt the agreed "single, normative identity" (Langford, 2007, p. 333). Langford suggested that hegemony of normative identities marginalised teachers of diverse cultures whose cultural beliefs and practices were devalued.

Santoro (2008) and Kannen and Acker (2008) noticed teachers' apparent blindness to their own dominant ethnicity, and tension between noticing and ignoring diversity. Santoro investigated eight Australian secondary student teachers engaged in a three-week teaching practicum in inner-city, multicultural secondary schools, while Kannen and Acker's participants were five Canadian kindergarten teachers. Santoro (2008) recommended that "teachers need to come to know themselves as ethnic and encultured if they are to understand their students and engage with the complexities of teaching for diversity" (p. 41).

Teacher educators are in a position to raise their students' awareness of discourses and how they influence teacher subjectivities. Miller Marsh (2002a) took a narrative self-study approach to describe her practice as teacher educator attempting to teach student teachers experientially about discursive

fashioning of identities. Following explicit teaching of concepts like discourse and power, Miller Marsh chose to role-model teaching within a group-centred, sociocultural discourse. She used a fiction text to help her student teachers to see alternative ways of constructing their identities through available discourses, and to become aware of the ways power is exercised through discourse. Other studies reviewed have also recommended that teacher educators help student teachers become aware of how discourses influence the shaping of identities and subjectivities (Alsup, 2006; Danielewicz, 2001). By explicitly teaching discourse theories, teacher educators can help early childhood teachers understand how discourses of professionalism and mothering have shaped professional standards and expectations, and critically reflect on values and beliefs underpinning good teacher images.

Awareness of discursive fashioning can empower teachers to negotiate their subjectivities with some appreciation of discursive influences acting on them. Metacognitive identity work can involve critical reflection that exposes positioning and power relations. However, teachers are always embedded in discourses, so some workings of discourses will remain invisible. Values and beliefs of dominant discourses are assumed, and teachers may carry out active identity work as a form of self-governmentality to conform to discursive values, or because subjectivities within discourses bring pleasure.

### ***Identity Work***

Teachers carry out identity work when they actively engage in discursive practices to negotiate subjectivities. Identity work may be carried out through inner dialogue such as portrayal through narratives, self-authoring, or metacognitive strategies such as reflection or self-study.

Identity work may be reflected in narrative. Watson's (2006) case study of a United Kingdom secondary school teacher described identities constructed through a process of identification expressed through narratives: "how we externalise ourselves to ourselves and to others" (p. 510). Telling stories enabled the participant to capture the complexity of his identities by "integrat[ing] knowledge, practice and context within prevailing educational discourses" (p. 525). In another narrative study, Søreide (2006) interviewed five Norwegian elementary school teachers. The participants' narratives reflected complex discursive negotiations where they identified with or distanced themselves from over 30 subject positions. Williams (2011) investigated self-authoring identity work by two secondary school mathematics teachers. He described identity work each engaged in to negotiate influences from the world of mathematics teaching, role models and anti-heroes, and their own experiences as learners.

Within dominant discourses, metacognitive identity work strategies such as reflection and self-study may act as disciplinary or agentic discursive practices. The studies reviewed here are divided into those that investigated reflection, those that examined self-study, and the use of teaching portfolios as artefacts of identity work.

### *Reflection*

Many teachers and teacher educators assume that metacognitive identity work such as reflection is important for teachers, especially for those new to the profession. This assumption was evident in a case study of a preservice school teacher in Hawaii who engaged with a researcher in a mentor dialogue journal about his teaching practice (Freese, 2006). The study showed how the student teacher's self-understandings changed as he engaged in reflection. Aubusson,

Griffin and Steele (2010) concluded that student teachers needed to learn to be reflective. They investigated student teacher reflection with 26 secondary science student teachers, 26 cooperating teachers and four lecturers engaged in an Australian ITE programme. Projects with contextual anchors linking theory to practice helped their participants to make sense of reflection.

Stenburg (2010) asserted that teachers need to develop reflective skills through experience. She carried out a collective case study of four experienced Finnish teachers' reflections as they used autobiographical essays and video diaries to explore their self-understandings. She noted that teachers' personal practical theories were resistant to change and concluded that teachers needed to experience transformative reflection based on experiences that forced them to question their taken-for-granted personal theories of teaching.

Atkinson (2004) provided a postmodern critique of reflection in his qualitative analysis of two United Kingdom preservice secondary teachers' narratives. His participants experienced challenges and tensions between their teaching intentions and results, and seemed to use imaginary identifications of themselves and their students based on their values and beliefs. Atkinson noticed that his participants seemed unaware of how their assumptions coloured their perceptions, and he questioned the assumption of a "transcendental and rational subjectivity" (p. 384). When individuals are immersed in discourses of an ITE or professional setting, they are unable to understand themselves except in terms of subjectivities available within discourses. Even when perspectives of others such as tutors are sought, they also operate within discursive boundaries. Atkinson asserted that reflection has no credibility in a poststructural paradigm because of the pervasive nature of discourses.

In contrast to Atkinson's view of discursive 'blindness', Alsup (2006) and Warin, Maddock, Pell and Hargreaves (2006) claimed that critical reflection about identity dissonance can help individuals make sense of their identities. Alsup (2006) recommended reflection informed by awareness of discourses to "lead to cognitive dissonance and resultant critical engagement with their developing professional selves" (p. 128). In a poststructural case study of a United Kingdom male nursery teacher, conflicting identities were described as multiple ways of making sense of self. Identity dissonance arose from conflict between the teacher's identities as an ordinary class teacher and as project manager of a 'Dad's work' initiative (Warin, et al., 2006). These conflicting identities could be integrated through reflexive practice.

Reviewed studies with modernist perspectives generally assumed that reflection is valuable in developing teachers' identities. Korthagen (2004) took a modernist essentialist view of identity when he described three projects where student teachers, experienced teachers and teacher educators were introduced to core reflection. Korthagen asserted that if teachers could gain self-understanding, they would be more able to make conscious choices about their teaching.

Graham and Phelps (2003) studied a teacher education course from their own Australian institution based on their shared belief that reflection and metacognitive learning processes were associated with life-long learning and effective teaching practice. They advocated developing the teacher as an "expert learner" (p. 10): self-aware, self-directed and goal-orientated, concentrating on understanding the complexity of being a teacher, rather than focused on meeting standards. Data collected through students' feedback showed modernist perceptions of reflection as goal and improvement oriented,

and as aimed towards more self-awareness. Power relations and discursive influences were not addressed by Korthagen or Graham and Phelps.

Two reviewed studies (Hung, 2008; Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010) analysed and evaluated reflection in online forums, and asserted the value of reflection in a social context. Both took the modernist approach of quantitatively measuring the reflective value of contributions. Neither took a critical stance or discussed power circulating in such social interactions. Hung (2008) concluded that students negotiated meanings in a community of practice. Sutherland et al. (2010) measured increases in amounts of critical and analytical reflection over the time their participants were engaged in an online forum.

Most of the studies on reflection that I reviewed took modernist perspectives and assumed that reflection was a useful strategy for teachers to become aware of essentialist identities. However, one writer claimed that being embedded in discourses limits possible insights. From a postmodern perspective, reflection may act as a disciplinary practice, as teachers reflect from within dominant discourses that work to position them. Teaching awareness of discourse theories in ITE could help student teachers to engage in critical and transformative reflection. Expanding the reflective process to include multiple perspectives and rigorous analysis through self-study may also illuminate discursive practices that shape subjectivities.

### *Self-study*

Self-study is a research approach embedded in modernist worldviews. It combines reflexive and critical reflection with collaboration with others and making findings public. Although self-study can be carried out by teacher educators, teachers and student teachers, most published self-study research

involves teacher educators as researcher-participants. The modernist perspective of self-study was indicated by Harris's (2007) "fundamental ontological question: Who do I want to be as a teacher and who am I becoming in this situation?" (p. 153).

In three studies reviewed, teacher educators and teachers reflected modernist perspectives as they used self-study to reflect collaboratively on an aspect of their professional practice. An Australian teacher educator (Harris, 2007) combined self-study with action research as she developed play-based pedagogy with student teachers. Williams and Ritter (2010) used a constructivist communities of practice framework to examine their transitions from teacher to teacher educator in Australia and the United States. In a third study (Thomas & Monroe, 2006), a United States elementary school teacher carried out self-study into his pedagogical practices collaboratively with an advisor acted as critical friend. A modernist perspective was reflected in his intention to reconstruct himself as a teacher: "from a dispenser of knowledge to a facilitator of student learning" (p. 173).

Teacher educators Hug and Möller (2005) investigated connectedness through collaborative self-study as they co-taught early childhood education methods courses in the United States. Their data sources included emails and reflective oral dialogues between the researchers and artefacts like teaching plans and student work. They concluded that their collaboration provided them with intellectual, emotional and pedagogical connectedness.

My chosen approach of facilitated self-study was investigated in two studies reviewed. Pizzolato (2009) used a mixed-method approach to explore experiences of 29 United States college students engaged in course-required facilitated self-study through journaling, reflection and class discussion. She



concluded that facilitation helped motivated students for whom self-study differed from their usual learning approach to move towards “self-authorship via the construction of self-knowledge” (p. 136). Hopper and Sanford (2004) reflected on a Canadian action research project that incorporated communities of practice theory. The researchers concluded that their student teacher participants were supported to become aware of their ‘selves-as-teachers’ when their teacher education was integrated into a school setting, allowing them to observe and interact with school teachers.

The reviewed self-studies took modernist perspectives, with themes of self-awareness and transformation. They concluded that people were empowered to make changes through self-awareness made public and rigorous. In contrast, Sandretto (2009) used a poststructural approach to self-study as a means of interrogating discourses underpinning teacher education as she carried out a collaborative self-study project with groups of Aotearoa New Zealand teacher educators discussing their understandings of social justice. She suggested that poststructural analysis of self-study data can “acknowledge those [discourses] even as I seek to trouble them” (p. 93). This the approach I intended to take when I designed my research study. Teaching portfolios reflect modernist perspectives on personal professional identities, and so they could provide data reflecting dominant discourses of early childhood ITE.

### *Teaching Portfolios*

Teaching portfolios are artefacts that can use practices of self-study and reflection to produce modernist interpretations of teachers’ personal professional identities. Berrill and Addison (2010) identified two theoretical frameworks for teaching portfolios: constructivist learning portfolios and positivist assessment portfolios. They carried out a mixed-method study of 367

teachers in their first five years of teaching in Canada. Their online survey showed that most respondent teachers regarded portfolios as powerful tools supporting construction of their teacher identities including aspects like philosophies, beliefs and teaching strengths and weaknesses.

Antonek, McCormick and Donato (1997) also distinguished between the working or process portfolio as a tool for self-reflection, and the showcase or product portfolio. They carried out a collective case study of two preservice foreign language teachers in the United States. The researchers took a constructivist approach, describing “the portfolio [as] an instrument for the construction of the self as teacher” (p. 17). Portfolio data consisted of evidence such as sample lesson plans, observation notes and evaluations of teaching. Antonek et al. concluded that each student’s portfolio was a form of autobiography showing their emerging teacher identities.

Berrill and Addison (2010) and Antonek, McCormick and Donato (1997) acknowledged tensions around purposes of teaching portfolios, and whether they are personal records of learning and self-knowledge (the constructivist view), or proof of competence (the positivist view). Goodfellow (2004) integrated the two purposes and described portfolios as means of “accountability to self and to others” (p. 64). She drew on written reflections of Australian student teachers to support her assertion that portfolios enable individuals to interrogate their practice to “not only gain insight into our capabilities but also the theories, beliefs and values that underpin the wisdom of our professional practices” (p. 63).

Teaching portfolios do not represent postmodern understandings of identities and subjectivities, and so are incompatible with my postmodern theoretical framework. However, as artefacts of ITE experiences, they provide insight

into discourses that position teachers, subjectivities claimed by teachers, and some identity work carried out.

## **Conclusion**

There is significant tension between modernist and postmodernist approaches in this overview of selected literature about teachers' understandings of professional identities. Many researchers have taken a qualitative approach which acknowledges complexity and individuality of negotiation of identities. Some qualitative researchers took modernist constructivist approaches and described constructed knowable identities, while others took postmodernist perspectives and described identities or subjectivities that were multiple, complex and dynamic. Other studies described discourses of professionalism, and the workings of discourses in professional teaching settings.

Metacognitive identity work is often recommended for teachers to gain self-knowledge and be empowered to negotiate identities and subjectivities. Most of the reviewed studies into reflection and self-study assumed that reflection would give teachers self-knowledge, while one took a critical stance and pointed out that teachers and their advisors reflected while immersed in discourses, so were unlikely to be able to take a transcendent approach. Some writers asserted the value of ITE that encouraged student teachers' awareness of the discursive fashioning of identities.

The teaching portfolio strategy for reflection on teachers' identities is at odds with postmodern understandings of identities and subjectivities. For poststructural researchers, significance of portfolios lies in ways their contents influence negotiation of teachers' subjectivities. As reflective journals following the Schön pattern and teaching portfolios are expressive of

modernist images of good early childhood teachers, these artefacts give insight into some discursive practices represented in teacher education.

## **Chapter Four: Methodology and Ethics**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will explain the process of designing my research study as a qualitative collective case study. The design was situated in a poststructural research paradigm, which involved considerations of multiple complex understandings and power relations. Each step of participant selection and data collection was carefully planned with the intention of producing ethical, valid and credible research. Data analysis was complex as I explored the data through several lenses, taking an iterative approach between data and literature as I negotiated my understandings of the data and the theoretical ideas underpinning my research study.

### **Methodology**

I situated my research study in a poststructural paradigm of qualitative research, which fitted with postmodern framing of the concepts of identities and subjectivities. My worldview includes an understanding of knowledge as negotiated within individuals engaged in social interactions, and so I share the view “that qualitative methods are more faithful to the social world than quantitative ones and that individual human experiences are important” (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 578). Qualitative research is characterised by interest in participants’ perspectives and complexity of their understandings, by admitting the involvement of the researcher, and by being situated in the participants’ settings (Hatch & Barclay-McLaughlin, 2006). I aimed to investigate subjectivities, or the understandings that my early childhood teacher participants had of their personal professional identities: “A qualitative researcher doesn’t seek to learn more about the topic itself, but rather about

how people understand and make sense of the topic” (Hughes, 2010, p. 59). In contrast, quantitative research is associated with positivist paradigms and modernist worldviews, and involves application of the scientific method by forming and testing hypotheses and expressing data as quantities. I understood my involvement as researcher would influence every stage of the research as my theoretical framework was reflected in the design. My previous relationship as teacher educator of the participants and the power relations circulating amongst us would also influence the data collected. I was familiar with the ITE setting that the participants had shared with me as student teachers, but my knowledge of their professional teaching settings was limited to occasional visits.

Research paradigms reflect particular worldviews about the nature of knowledge, reality and meaning. Paradigms are associated with particular research methods and strategies, and determine matters such as relationships between researchers and participants, what data is collected and how, how data is analysed and findings presented, and how readers are persuaded that the research was worthwhile. My worldview of knowledge and reality led me to adopt a poststructural paradigm. Poststructuralist researchers believe that “order is created in the minds of individuals in an attempt to give meaning to an inherently meaningless existence” (Hatch & Barclay-McLaughlin, 2006, p. 499). I designed my research study with the intention of empowering participants to contribute while admitting uncertainty, complexity and power relations. I intended to explore multiple perspectives of my participants through focus group discussions, individual written reflections on artefacts of institutionally-directed reflective writing and individual interviews.

Choosing a poststructural research paradigm led me to investigate how discourses of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand shaped my

participants' subjectivities. I aimed to seek evidence of dominant discourses, discursive practices and negotiation of subjectivities by these participants. According to a postmodern worldview, knowledge is socially constructed and context-specific so findings from my research study could not be generalised to apply to other early childhood teachers. Whether readers regarded my research study as persuasive and compelling would depend on its validity.

The validity of a particular piece of research depends on the worldviews of researcher and readers. Validity according to positivist assumptions requires that research should be valid (measures what it sets out to), reliable (could be replicated) and generalisable. In contrast, a qualitative research approach asserts multiple perspectives and complex understandings, making positivist criteria meaningless. Qualitative research must meet criteria of validity that reflect the beliefs underpinning a qualitative approach (Rolfe & MacNaughton, 2010), such as trustworthiness and credibility.

Trustworthiness may be interpreted as openness and clarity of explanation of the research process (Mutch, 2005), so readers can trust the researcher's processes and findings. I planned ethical procedures to make the research process as transparent as possible to my participants, although I admitted that individuals would interpret my communications in multiple ways.

Trustworthiness in a poststructural paradigm may also be achieved through multiple readings of data and by including changing perspectives and shifting positions (Taylor, 2010). In my research study, participants revisited their understandings in a variety of ways and in different social settings during data collection.

Credibility of qualitative research can be assisted by strategies like member checking and triangulation, as these help ensure that the research findings

resonate as credible and convincing to people familiar with the setting (Mutch, 2005). Participants in my research study were given opportunities for member checking of focus group discussion summaries and interview transcripts.

Triangulation is suggested as an alternative to validation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a) by combining multiple data sources, methodologies, researchers and perspectives (Edwards, 2010). Triangulation adds “rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a, p. 8). In my research study, I accessed multiple data sources by having multiple participants and data collection occasions, and having written and verbal data. Noticing that participants expressed their subjectivities similarly at different times and in different ways during data collection would show credibility through triangulation. However, some inconsistency would not indicate a lack of credibility as a poststructural research paradigm is based on beliefs that subjectivities are multiple, dynamic and can be contradictory (Grieshaber, 2001).

Following Alsup’s (2006) lead, the trustworthiness of this study was maintained through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, cited in Alsup, 2006). Having varied sources of data provided triangulation for findings, which helped credibility and dependability. Using thick description from verbal and textual data sources helped transferability, which is the perceived relevance to a reader’s situation, and a paper trail of textual data provided confirmability.

## **Ethics**

As an ethical researcher, I ask “How will I be a moral person in the world?” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b, p. 245), and the answer reflects my chosen poststructural research paradigm. Positivist paradigms value objectivity, lack



of context and researcher distance and neutrality. In contrast, constructivist, critical/feminist and poststructuralist paradigms of qualitative research highlight context and expect researcher involvement with participants exploring their perspectives. Guidelines that are commonly foundational to institutional ethical requirements for research approval are: informed consent; no deception; privacy and confidentiality; and accuracy (Christians, 2003). My research study conforms to the ethical requirements of my academic institution and my employing ITE provider.

As a poststructuralist researcher, I took further steps to be a moral researcher in a postmodern world. I analysed data using Foucault's theoretical ideas to make visible ways subjectivities are negotiated in social contexts of discourses and power relations. I was ethically obliged to be aware of power circulating in the research relationships among the participants and myself, and to minimise repressive power relations.

### ***Relationships between Researcher and Participants***

Power circulates in relationships among researcher and participants, and power relations influence the research experience. The researcher may represent authority, while participants are ultimate gatekeepers who control access to data (Hatch, 2007a). I had existing relationships with my participants as a former teacher educator. I had held the ITE provider's disciplinary power of surveillance and normalisation in the past. Our professional relationships were also characterised by mutual loyalty, warmth and trust. Professional relationships have continued between me and my former students in the local early childhood education community.

I held power as I designed and facilitated the research process. I took steps to empower participants: providing written information so they could make an

informed decision about participation; selecting neutral venues with welcoming hospitality; keeping them informed about the research process; maintaining confidentiality while being open about possible limits to anonymity; and including member checking of data. As participants were gatekeepers of data, and able to withdraw at any stage up to data analysis, I considered aspects of the research that might appeal to or put off participants.

Power circulated in interactions among the participants and me in interviews and focus group discussions. Briggs (2002) pointed out the importance of the social dynamics of the interview and how participants shape their responses according to how they imagine future texts and audiences for the research. Rather than being “passive vessels of answers” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p. 13), participants are actively involved in interactions that may shape subjectivities as the interview progresses. They may be resistant to contributing to the interview due to issues of comfort, trust or uncertainty (Adler & Adler, 2002). When I analysed the first focus group discussion, I noticed that I had exerted control through structure, questioning and responses, despite my intentions that participants feel empowered. They had also exerted power on each other through means such as affirmation, disagreement and teasing.

Relationships among participants and me during the research process were a mix of familiarity and uncertainty, as our established relationships moved into new territory. Power circulated in these research relationships, and I made efforts to redress imbalances of power through research design and ethical processes.

### ***Ethical Processes and Safeguards***

My constant vigilance about the need for confidentiality, and safeguards surrounding inclusion of personal information were intended to minimise the possibility of participants being harmed. In terms of scientific research, the participants were adults capable of giving informed consent. However, from a poststructural perspective, informed consent was complicated by issues of power and trust. I discussed with the participants some professional consequences that could arise if others guessed identities and made assessments of people on the basis of information given in the belief that it would remain anonymous.

Participants signed the Consent Form (Appendix A) after reading the Information Sheet and discussing the study with me. The Information Sheet (Appendix B) described the nature and purpose of the study, outlined ethical processes and safeguards and explained participants' rights and responsibilities. It stated that personal information would be collected throughout the study and that inclusion of personal information in the final report would be negotiated with each participant. This assurance was repeated every stage of data collection. Participants shared personal experiences and perceptions during focus group discussions and interviews. They carried out self-study written tasks on selected reflective writing from their ITE experience, so personal information was included in the textual data. Participants were provided with transcripts of interviews and summaries of focus group discussions to check for accuracy. I planned this member checking to alleviate the significant risk to a small group of participants that could possibly be identified (despite anonymity and confidentiality provisions) by their membership of a regional early childhood education community. I included personal information in the final research report only when essential

to findings and discussion, and I considered how to mask details of participants' personal and professional lives. The final negotiation of inclusion of personal information was carried out on a one-on-one basis and actively negotiated in detail.

Anonymity of participants was safeguarded through use of pseudonyms in the report. Participants were aware that membership of the early childhood community could lead to some readers guessing identities. They were aware of each others' identities and contributions to focus group discussions. I reminded participants about the need for confidentiality in the Information Sheet and at every data collection occasion. I reminded participants throughout the facilitated self-study process that they would continue to have access to me as researcher after the study if issues arose from their involvement. The person who assisted me by transcribing the individual interviews also signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix C).

Ethical approval was sought and granted by University of Canterbury and my employing ITE provider. I submitted an Application Form for Ethical Approval of Research Projects to the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. Some minor changes were made: the consent form was simplified, a return address was added to the consent form, and a statement that complaints were to go to the Chair of the Committee included. I submitted an Ethical Approval for Research Application Form to my employing organisation and this was approved with some recommendations. Suggested changes were made to clarify conditions on the Consent Form and Information Sheet and to provide participants with a short summary of findings. The final recommendation was that I should not identify the participants as my former students as this would increase the likelihood of identification. I felt that revealing my relationship with participants was

essential to my poststructural approach of considering positioning of all participants including the researcher. I replied to the Ethics Committee Chair outlining my position with assurances that I would maintain confidentiality and protect participants' privacy.

## **Methods**

### ***Participants***

The participants in this qualitative collective case study (Stake, 2003) were five early childhood teachers who had recently completed a three-year field-based Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) course, and who had retained the institutionally-directed reflective writing needed for this study. Having five participants provided diversity within the group while keeping data manageable and provided a suitable number for focus group discussions.

Ryan and Lobman (2007) emphasise the importance of selecting focus group members who will give rich information and cast maximum light on the topic. I approached five teachers who reflected diversity of experience in early childhood education. There was little cultural diversity among participants, which was representative of the group from which they were selected. Initial contact was made by phone, followed by mailing the Consent Form and Information Sheet. At this stage one prospective participant became unavailable, and I approached another teacher, who agreed to take part. Once written consent was obtained, the first focus group discussion was scheduled. Regular contact was made with participants through text messaging, phone calls, emails and letters.

All five participants were female: Sally, Jessie, Naomi, Ruby and Poppy. All except Jessie identified themselves as New Zealand-born European Pākehā.

All participants were employed as qualified provisionally-registered teachers in education and care centres at the time of data collection. Ruby, Poppy and Naomi had been early childhood practitioners for about six years at the time of this study, as they had started working as practitioners in early childhood centres shortly before commencing ITE. Ruby and Poppy were employed as unqualified practitioners while they were student teachers, and carried out the same duties as teachers in their centres. Ruby moved to a different early childhood centre during her third year of study and again shortly after qualifying. Poppy remained in the same centre throughout ITE and after qualifying. Naomi's job description was 'teacher support' in the centre where she was employed during ITE. She started a teaching job in a different centre soon after qualifying and moved to another centre shortly after my research was completed.

Sally had been an early childhood practitioner for 21 years. During this time she had several job titles including teacher, assistant supervisor and teacher aide, as changing regulations classified her as qualified, then unqualified. This change in status motivated Sally to re-enter ITE. Jessie emigrated from Europe where she had been a qualified early childhood teacher for 23 years. She entered ITE in Aotearoa New Zealand because her overseas qualification and experience were not recognised by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. Jessie has English as an additional language.

### ***Data Collection***

The data collection phases made up a facilitated self-study process. This consisted of a first focus group discussion, self-study written tasks based on selected institutionally-directed reflective writing from participants' ITE experience, an individual interview and a final focus group discussion.

Incorporating facilitated self-study into data collection gave participants opportunities to reflect independently and collaboratively and on several occasions.

### *Pilot Study*

I carried out a small pilot study (Appendix D) to get feedback on the data collection process with five volunteer student teachers three weeks before the first focus group discussion. Having the same number of participants provided similar group dynamics to the research study and allowed me to check the venue and audio recorder. Pilot study participants discussed the first focus group discussion questions, shared one significant reflective journal entry each from their ITE course work, and discussed my outline of the other data collection phases.

The first part of the pilot study discussion followed a similar format to the first focus group discussion (Appendix E), with pauses for feedback about questions and facilitation. Participants confidently shared ideas, supported each other and showed knowledge of each other's professional and personal contexts. I simplified questions for the first focus group discussion as a result of participants' feedback. Participants expressed confusion when I used the term 'negotiated' in questions about teachers' identities, and they thought 'personal professional identity' was a complex term that made discussion prompt questions confusing. I decided to outline the main points of my theoretical framework during the first focus group discussion, and to use the simpler term 'your teacher identity' throughout data collection.

Pilot study participants recommended that I slow down facilitation to give participants time to reflect during discussion. They suggested questions like "So what do you think about that?" or "Does that trigger thoughts for anyone

else?” to allow them to add thoughts that had developed during discussion. My challenge was to remember these points in the immediacy of the group discussion situation. I identified the importance of probing questions to elicit explanations and examples. Participants appreciated having a PowerPoint presentation available, and I used this approach throughout data collection. I gave participants handouts of the PowerPoint presentation at the first focus group discussion, as it outlined theoretical concepts and the data collection process.

Pilot study participants discussed the self-study written task requirements (Appendix F) in relation to one selected reflective journal entry each from their ITE course work. This gave me insight into potential pitfalls and misunderstandings, and participants’ experiences of reflecting on significant professional experiences. Feedback from the participants about intensity of revisiting reflections and effort involved in analysing them led me to drop the number of selected reflective journal entries in the self-study written tasks from six to three, with the option of selecting four. Feedback also led me to remove a superfluous question “What is this entry about?” as reflective journal entries would be included as data.

Explaining the self-study written tasks to the pilot study participants highlighted to me the complexity of the tasks, and ways each built on the previous task. For this reason, I produced a set of worksheets that set out the tasks for participants to work through. I also added some “What happens next?” slides to the PowerPoint presentation to clarify the data collection process to participants.

The remainder of the pilot study meeting was spent looking at the proposed outline of individual interviews (Appendix G) and the final focus group



discussion (Appendix H). Again, participants suggested that I simplify questions. They recommended that I change the order of questions at individual interviews, by starting with discussion of the summary of the first focus group discussion then considering the self-study written tasks. Participants recommended interview prompts that responded to individuals' tasks such as "Tell me about..." or "I noticed that...", and suggested ending interviews with a very general question: "Is there anything we haven't covered that you would like to talk about?"

Carrying out a pilot study allowed me to confirm that the venue and technology were suitable, and to practise my facilitation skills. Participants were generous in their contributions and gave thoughtful feedback on the data collection process. I was reassured that this research topic was interesting and relevant to early childhood teachers, and that reflective journal entries from their ITE study were relevant to their subjectivities.

### *Study Data Collection*

Data was collected from two focus group discussions (Appendices E and H), text produced by the participants in self-study written tasks and institutionally-directed reflective writing (Appendix F) and from individual semi-structured interviews (Appendix G). These data represented five participant sources, and two verbal methods and two textual methods of data collection. Given the small scale of the research study, this provided some richness and complexity as recommended by Denzin and Lincoln (2003a) for qualitative research.

The data collection phase was carried out over four months in 2011. A timeframe of about four weeks for completion of the self-study written tasks was negotiated at the first focus group discussion. I sent summaries of the first focus group discussion to the participants before the individual interviews.

Transcripts of individual interviews were returned to participants for checking in an amended form, in which researcher affirmations and encouragers were removed and conversation rendered in a coherent grammatical form.

Summaries of the final focus group discussion and study findings were sent to participants, and the full final report was made available on request. Inclusion of personal information in the final report was negotiated with participants at individual meetings.

### *Focus Groups*

Focus groups provide different social dynamics to individual interviews, as they provide opportunities for groups to interact and share their thoughts about topics. Data is influenced by individual perspectives and the dynamics of the group. The researcher has less influence than in an interview, and moderates the discussion to keep it on track and help participants feel comfortable contributing (Morgan, 2002; Ryan & Lobman, 2007).

The focus group discussions began and ended the data collection process, and were audio-recorded and transcribed. One participant was unavailable on each occasion, and so had an individual interview using the same PowerPoint presentation as the focus group discussion. This highlighted a major logistical challenge of focus groups, which was finding a time that suited everyone. The first focus group discussion (Appendix E) started with a brainstorm which developed into a general discussion about what ‘identity’ meant for participants, how it is formed and how much it can change. Then I outlined key concepts from the theoretical framework. The second part of the discussion was semi-structured and covered three discussion questions about personal professional identities and how they might be influenced. Then the data collection process was outlined and self-study written tasks described.

The final focus group discussion (Appendix H) followed the interviews, about eight weeks after the first focus group discussion. The discussion began by revisiting participants' understandings of their personal professional identities and how these had been shaped. Then I asked the participants to consider the research questions, and discuss how they thought the facilitated self-study process and their institutionally-directed reflective writing had influenced their understandings of their personal professional identities.

### *Self-study Written Tasks*

Following the first focus group discussion, participants were asked to select three or four reflective journal entries written as required components of a professional portfolio when they were field-based ITE student teachers. All participants selected three reflective journal entries. Following the instructions and template (Appendix F) presented in worksheet form, they reflected on these reflective journal entries and their statements of values and beliefs (a first-year requirement) and philosophy statements (required in second and third years). Then they wrote their responses to the questions "Who am I as a teacher?" and "How do you think your teacher identity has been formed and changed?"

The self-study written tasks were returned to me for analysis. These provided the basis of the individual interview, together with the summary of the first focus group discussion (or interview for one participant).

### *Interviews*

The interview is a commonplace feature of everyday life, based on the "shared understanding that the individual has the wherewithal to offer a meaningful description of, or set of opinions about, his or her life" (Gubrium & Holstein,

2002). Familiarity with interviews can lead to assumptions about what they offer and how they are conducted, and mask complex social dynamics. As I was working in a poststructural research paradigm, I considered these social dynamics and associated power relations and planned the individual interviews to redress power imbalances to some extent.

Data from the first focus group discussion and each participant's self-study written tasks, and my preliminary analyses formed the basis for semi-structured individual interviews (Appendix G). The interviews explored participants' experiences of the facilitated self-study process so far and their understandings of their personal professional identities. As researcher, I recognised the interview as a "conversational partnership" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, cited in Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p. 19) where both interviewer and interviewee play an active part. I recognised that as interviewer I could not be neutral, and needed to remain aware of power invested in my positions as researcher and former teacher educator of the participants.

Thinking of the interview as a conversational partnership rather than extraction of data helped me remember to be friendly and open. Having a semi-structured format meant that I could be responsive to participants and what they wished to talk about, while covering the same topics with all participants. I could also add probing or prompting questions to encourage further contributions. I intended to empower participants to contribute through respectful and responsive facilitation by allowing them time to reflect and expand on their contributions.

### ***Data Analysis***

Analysing qualitative data from the facilitated self-study was a many-layered process as I brought various lenses to interpret participants' verbal and written

contributions. I started by aggregating and categorising segments of text into codes and themes to begin to make sense of data. This approach is problematic within a poststructural research paradigm because categorising tries to set some sort of permanence on knowledge that is intrinsically shifting and impermanent. I then explored the data in an iterative fashion, using different lenses of analysis. My approaches to data analysis included extracting narratives, looking closely at conversational interactions, and finding places in the data where language appeared to “stutter” (Deleuze, 1994, cited in MacLure, 2010, p. 6). Discourse analysis provided a further layer of meaning as it “aims to reveal the means by which social realities are produced” (Liamputtong, 2009, p. 136). Building on insights gained from the initial layers of data analysis, I used Foucauldian discourse analysis to identify dominant discourses and discursive practices participants were engaged in or subjected to.

### *Coding and Thematic Analysis*

A common starting point when analysing qualitative data is to take an inductive approach and elicit themes or codes from a close reading of the data. The transcript of the first focus group discussion and the self-study written tasks were read closely and coded: “A code is simply a tag assigned to a line, or a small piece of data, that captures the meaning in some way” (Coffey & Atkinson, cited in Ryan & Lobman, 2007, p. 71). This approach aims to reduce the influence of preconceived notions, in contrast to the positivist aim of proving or disproving hypotheses. The researcher “is keen to stay close to and analyse the data, looking at the theory emerging from it and perhaps even modifying the line of inquiry in response to developing understandings” (MacNaughton & Rolfe, 2010, p. 14).

Coding and thematic analysis is based on an assumption that knowledge can be held in common between individuals, in contrast with a postmodern view of individuals as “incoherent and discontinuous” (Hughes, 2010, p. 51). There is tension between coding and thematic analysis, and my poststructural paradigm with its associated belief that absolute knowledge does not exist, but is negotiated in minds of individuals as unique understandings. However, discourse theory acknowledges that people in social settings share values and beliefs, and accept subjectivities made available in discourses. Evidence of values, beliefs, assumptions and behaviours associated with dominant discourses should emerge from data from all or most participants. Coding and thematic analysis provides a way for such evidence to start to emerge.

Despite tensions with my chosen poststructural research paradigm, I used coding and thematic analysis to initially engage with the data from the first focus group discussion and self-study written tasks. The coding process can enable the researcher to become aware of the detail of text and provide a foundation of ideas to begin the sense-making process. Coding need not be a way of simplifying data and forcing it into categories; instead “it can be used to expand, transform, and reconceptualise data, opening up more diverse analytical possibilities” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 29). Carrying out this initial analysis gave me some insight into commonalities and differences among the participants in my research study and helped me become familiar with the data in preparation for interviews and subsequent data analysis.

Two groups of themes emerged from initial analysis of the first focus group discussion. There were five themes describing the ways identities were understood by participants: core, construction, development, negotiation and perception. Four themes emerged regarding professionalism: structural professionalism, relational professionalism, intellectual professionalism and

professional integrity. I used both sets of themes to carry out preliminary analysis of the self-study written tasks and to plan questions for the individual interviews.

These themes did not equate to Foucauldian discourses, which were central to my theoretical framework and poststructural paradigm, but they did provide indications of participants' values and beliefs, and what participants considered 'normal' ways for early childhood teachers to be.

### *Memo Writing and Layers of Analysis*

Memo writing was used to summarise impressions and start the writing process (Charmaz, 2002). I theorised about values, beliefs and assumptions suggested by the themes that emerged from the data. I summarised the first focus group discussion for the participants. This obliged me to organise my preliminary analysis so that participants could consider my interpretations and discuss their ideas in response at their individual interviews.

The memo writing continued as I used various approaches to analysis. These processes represented an iterative approach, as I moved between reading and rereading literature about poststructural data analysis (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; MacLure, 2010) and reading and rereading data. For instance, I analysed line-by-line conversational exchanges in the first focus group discussion with an approach that drew on the ideas of Conversation Analysis (Silverman, 2006). I noted examples of stutters in language in the first focus group discussion, such as laughter, hesitation, contradictions or disagreements. Sometimes such stutters provided signposts to tensions, resistances and negotiation of subjectivities. Participants' narratives provided insight into ways they made sense of themselves.

Memo writing continued as I summarised my preliminary analysis and impressions. I became familiar with the data and started engaging with it in terms of Foucault's theories. From my preliminary analysis of all the data, I created a summary for each participant that included evidence of subjectivities and themes, positioning and agency, and possible discourses shaping her subjectivities. I was then ready to embark on secondary Foucauldian Discourse Analysis.

### *Foucauldian Discourse Analysis*

In a poststructural research paradigm, discourse analysis is an appropriate strategy to make sense of qualitative data, with its attention to social, cultural, political and historical context (Mutch, 2005). As Liamputtong (2009) states: "we cannot fully understand social interactions without making connections to the discourses that give rise to them" (p. 136). Discourse analysis, however, is a broad term that covers a variety of analytic methods reflecting various theoretical perspectives. Various versions of discourse analysis share a view that language does not reflect reality, but provides a means for people to negotiate understandings.

Foucauldian discourse analysis is a poststructural approach that uses Foucault's theoretical perspectives to examine data texts to "uncover the unspoken and unstated assumptions implicit within them" (Cheek, 2008, p. 2). A researcher analysing texts within a poststructural perspective would use deconstruction of power relations and discursive practices as a critical framework. A critical deconstruction approach formed the basis for my secondary analysis of data. Taylor (2010) suggested asking critical questions to guide analysis in reconceptualised postmodern action research, including



“What discourses are privileged?” and “How is power working on multiple levels?” (p. 303).

My first step in Foucauldian discourse analysis was to examine all data for evidence of discourses described in literature I reviewed, such as gendered mothering, relational ethics of care, sociocultural and discourses of difference. At the same time I identified evidence of discursive practices such as disciplinary technologies, self-governmentality, and subject positions claimed and negotiated. I used this information to write analytical summaries for participants, describing how each experienced discursive practices in relation to multiple discourses.

My analysis of how participants expressed themselves reflects my belief that Foucauldian discourses do not simply determine individuals’ subjectivities, but that individuals actively self-author their subjectivities within discourses using discursive practices. I incorporated the concept of “interpretive practice” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000, p. 94) into my analysis by taking account of both discursive practices and discourses-in-practice. I noticed ways participants engaged in discursive practices within limits of possibilities offered by discourses. Using self-authoring and interpretive practice concepts helped me understand why individual participants differed so markedly in understandings of their personal professional identities and how they actively negotiated their subjectivities.

Consideration of ways participants described themselves as teachers and values and beliefs they professed led me to describe three dominant discourses. These dominant discourses linked to evidence in the data of discursive values and beliefs, subjectivities and discursive practices. I further refined these discourses by returning to the raw data to check what had not yet

been included in any of the dominant discourses. This step in the analysis showed that some alternative discourses were involved in shaping subjectivities.

The final analytical step was using insights gained from Foucauldian Discourse Analysis to consider how facilitated self-study and institutionally-directed reflective writing influenced participants' negotiations of their personal professional identities. The data analysis was a lengthy and complex exercise that demanded familiarity with the data and with my substantive and methodological theoretical frameworks.

### **Introduction to 'Findings' Chapters**

Three dominant discourses of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand emerged from data collected in my research: the authority discourse, the relational professionalism discourse and the identity work discourse. Chapters Five, Six and Seven will unpack these discourses and their associated discursive practices in terms of the data collected from the five participants. Participants will be extensively quoted, and the source for each quotation given will indicate the stage of data collection: first focus group, self-study written tasks, individual interview and final focus group. Quotations from participants' institutionally-directed reflective journal entries and philosophy statements (IDRW) will be further identified: 'self-study written tasks, IDRW'. Naomi's first stage of data collection will be described as 'first interview' as she was not able to attend the first focus group. Similarly, Jessie was not able to attend the final focus group and her corresponding data will be described as 'final interview'. Transcription conventions used are: ... (words edited out); .... (trailing off, end of sentence); [ ] (editor's words added); and ( ) (speaker's aside comment).

Each chapter will begin with an overview of one of the dominant discourses, followed by three sections that unpack the complexities of the discourse: discipline and governmentality; desire and pleasure; and tensions, resistances and negotiations. Alternative discourses that emerged from the data will also be described.

## **Conclusion**

Deciding on methodology situated in my chosen poststructural research paradigm led to decisions about ethical processes and research methods. There are tensions between postmodern worldviews that emphasise uncertainty, multiple perspectives and complexity, and researchers' intentions to make sense of data and communicate their understandings. Awareness of power relations is characteristic of a poststructural paradigm and led to my sensitivity as researcher to ways power circulated in relationships among the participants and me. Ethical processes and details of data collection were designed with the intention of minimising inequities, and with awareness that power relations are complex, unpredictable and cannot be removed.

The data analysis process was complex and multi-layered. Having four phases of data collection gave opportunities for data analysis to start early in the research process and inform later phases. Participants were able to respond to my preliminary analyses, and I was able to progressively negotiate my understandings of data. The validity of my research study was enhanced by collecting data from multiple sources on multiple occasions, with member checking of data and participant response to preliminary findings.

## Chapter Five: Authority Discourse

### Overview of the Authority Discourse

The dominant authority discourse values knowledge, skills and status. Teachers are positioned in this discourse as claiming and being claimed by authority in ways they understand themselves as early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand. Knowledge claimed as truth in this dominant discourse makes subjectivities available for teachers as holders of specialised professional knowledge and attitudes towards young children and their learning, with academic and practical skills. The authority discourse values qualifications and meeting professional standards in similar ways to the discourse of traditional functionalist professionalism. However, the authority discourse has emerged from my participants within early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand so reflects local historical, societal and educational contexts.

Early childhood teachers are claimed by authority when they are categorised according to their qualifications. The title of teacher is restricted to someone who holds an approved teaching qualification and who meets professional standards through the teacher registration process (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011). The Ministry of Education, Education Review Office, New Zealand Teachers' Council, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, ITE providers and teachers themselves all take responsibility for ensuring that teachers meet and maintain professional standards and qualifications. Discursive practices such as ITE and assessment are underpinned by documents such as the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki*, *Registered Teacher Criteria* and *Graduating Teacher Standards*. The government's target for 80% of teachers in early childhood centres to be qualified by 2012 is a

disciplinary discursive practice within the authority discourse that provides motivation for early childhood practitioners to enrol in ITE.

Teachers are claimed by authority through centrally and locally determined regulations and policies. Early childhood education regulations are set by government and early childhood services are licensed and funded by the Ministry of Education and reviewed by the Education Review Office. Registered teachers are obliged to abide by regulations and their early childhood service policies: “comply with relevant regulatory and statutory requirements” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009a, p. 2). These requirements for accountability align the authority discourse with the discourse of neo-liberal managerial professionalism.

Alternative discourses to the authority discourse make conflicting subjectivities available. Ruby described herself as teaching from the heart, which positioned her in a discourse that valued instinct and emotion over academic learning: “I teach from my heart and ... it comes from within, it’s not something that’s taught” (final focus group). Poppy doubted the value of qualifications when she started working in early childhood education: “I [thought], I don’t have to be trained, I reckon I’m better than her [qualified colleague] anyway” (first focus group). These alternative discourses are not dominant in the present regulatory situation where qualification levels are linked to government funding of early childhood centres. Discourses that devalue academic learning have historical origins in the strongly gendered mothering discourse of early childhood. Ruby reported a discursive assumption that early childhood teachers would be female when she described a parent telling her “that if there is ever a male relieving or in the centre they want to know” (final focus group). Sally compared the mothering discourse to an historical authoritarian discourse of teaching when she considered possible

titles: “I like educator [as a role title] because it reinforces that we’re not just carers, and a teacher [title] makes me [think of a] black coat and a stick” (individual interview).

Early childhood teachers are claimed by authority in hierarchical relationships within early childhood centres. Relationships in early childhood centres exist in hierarchies according to qualifications, experience and roles. The participants in my research study had been field-based student teachers working or volunteering in early childhood centres for at least 15 hours each week throughout their ITE course. Each participant was aware of positions in circulating power relations among colleagues in her centre.

Early childhood teachers claim authority within the dominant authority discourse as desire for power and prestige motivates practitioners to become qualified and registered. Teachers have higher status, better pay and more responsibility than unqualified early childhood practitioners. Teachers seek and embrace positions that reflect professional knowledge, skills and attitudes, and enhance these through professional development. Qualified registered teachers profess and embody values of the authority discourse in their everyday practice. They demonstrate their expertise through interactions with children, parents, families and colleagues, and through documentation of children’s learning assessments, programme planning and self-review (Ministry of Education, 2006). By doing this they both create and are created by the authority discourse.

Early childhood teachers do not all adopt identical subjectivities as teachers. Their personal professional identities reflect interplay between dominant discourses of early childhood education, as well as other discourses. There were similarities and differences in how my participants were positioned and

how they negotiated subject positions offered within the authority discourse. However, the data showed that they were all claimed by and claiming of authority within this discourse.

## **Findings: Unpacking the Complexities**

### ***Discipline and Governmentality***

All participants were positioned within the authority discourse through discursive practices of discipline and governmentality. Qualifications and standards in Aotearoa New Zealand are set nationally and requirements are enforced through regulatory machinery. Compliance with regulations and policies is disciplined through Education Review Office reviews, professional standards and employment contracts. Data showed evidence of at least five of Gore's (1998) micropractices of power (MacNaughton, 2005) within the authority discourse: regulation (controlling by invoking rules and limiting behaviours); exclusion (using truths to include or exclude particular ways of being); classification (differentiating between groups or individuals); normalisation (comparing or conforming to a standard); and surveillance (being or expecting to be closely observed and supervised).

All participants had encountered requirements that included or excluded them as they became qualified and registered teachers. All described themselves in terms of their stage of ITE: "In this journal entry I was a first year student with a training provider gaining my Diploma of Teaching" (Sally, self-study written tasks). Sally and Jessie had experienced exclusion from the title of teacher by regulations that determined who could be approved as a teacher. Sally was an experienced early childhood practitioner with a qualification that had been approved, who lost her status as qualified teacher when regulations changed. Jessie's overseas qualification and considerable experience were not accepted

by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority: “NZQA said ‘No, no, no, no’, and then finally, ‘No, it’s too long ago, you have to study again’” (Jessie, first focus group). Sally resisted the disciplinary push to enter ITE: “I said ‘No’, and I put my foot down and if they don’t want me the way I am, that’s it” (individual interview). However, when exclusion threatened, she complied:

And then it got really serious, and I wasn’t going to be able to work in the centre, because if you weren’t trained, because they wanted 100% or 80% or whatever for funding, I wouldn’t have a job, and so then I retrained. (Individual interview)

Naomi’s role titles reflected the disciplinary technique of classification within the authority discourse. During data collection she often compared her role of teacher support with that of student teacher or teacher: “a first year student teacher who is employed in the role of teacher support” (self-study written tasks, IDRW). Naomi described herself as struggling with her identity when a child saw her “as a teacher who happened to do all the cleaning, unlike the other teachers” (self-study written tasks). The child classified her as a teacher, but her role was teacher support, and she did cleaning tasks that teachers did not do. She sometimes felt excluded by some colleagues because she was not a teacher: “[it was as if they thought], ‘We didn’t include you here yet, because you’re not trained’” (first interview). Naomi was aware of status associated with classification: ““Hey, I’m not just the teacher support now, I’m a student teacher”” (first interview). She expressed understanding of the ‘teacher’ category in terms of the authority discourse: “Probably when you’re qualified, it seemed ... that’s legitimately a teacher” (first interview).

Meeting professional standards and being recognised as competent teachers involved disciplinary discursive practices of normalisation and surveillance. When the participants were student teachers, their academic writing and teaching practice were assessed against ITE course standards. Ruby expressed



reservations about her academic ability and doubts about meeting ITE expectations: “I wondered does this make me any less of a teacher because I can’t write it down.... I thought what happens if I can’t write what I feel down?” (self-study written tasks, IDRW). Sally was aware of attitudinal standards as well as academic standards: “I sort-of felt, in particular, that sometimes I challenged ideas that maybe I sort-of thought afterwards maybe I should have shut my mouth” (first focus group).

During their ITE course, the participants’ teaching practice was under surveillance by teacher educators and colleagues. Ruby said that she thought that teacher educators assessed her in a positive way:

We were used to being sat down in a triadic discussion and being told our real strengths, so propped up and then being told, you know, these are some things you could work on, but it was never ever in a negative way, it was still building you up. (Final focus group)

In contrast, Sally said that she had felt subject to repressive power of ITE teacher educators when her teaching practice was assessed: “In the end I thought if I don’t speak like her and I don’t use the same language as her and I’m not in that box, I’m not going to get anywhere” (final focus group). Sally described being aware of power exerted over her by ITE expectations through surveillance:

If we didn’t comply with how they thought we should be then... I’m not saying we wouldn’t get a good grade but I felt like maybe the perceptions of the lecturers could ultimately play a big part in how our studies went. (First focus group)

Naomi described a disciplinary discursive practice of government surveillance of early childhood education, when she was told that a teaching practice would not be acceptable to the Education Review

Office (ERO): “we were told, ‘No ... that’s not right, and ERO ... they’ll be on your back’” (individual interview). Sally described surveillance through documentary accountability in her role: “programme planning and reviewing, and a weekly review, and newsletters and a parent survey” (individual interview).

Surveillance by qualified and registered colleagues with higher status influenced participants’ subjectivities within the authority discourse. As a student, Poppy had felt forced to accept negative feedback from a colleague: “I felt ridiculed and underestimated as a teacher but seem to justify this [to myself] at the time because I’m ‘just a student’!” (self-study written tasks). All participants were aware of being positioned in centre hierarchies according to their qualifications, whether they were newcomers or old hands and in relation to people in management roles. Naomi described her response as a newcomer in her early childhood centre to teaching practices she did not agree with: “I went with what they said to start off with. I think I was quite shocked” (individual interview). Ruby’s position in her centre hierarchy was written into her employment contract: “In my contract it was pointed out that I was a year three student and I had to listen to what the qualified [teachers said]” (individual interview).

All participants engaged in the discursive practice of self-governmentality by adapting their thinking and behaviour according to values and beliefs of the authority discourse. Poppy professed values of the authority discourse, in contrast to her earlier doubts, in a reflective journal entry written near the end of her ITE course:

I hated it and cringed everytime people would say that you didn’t need training to look after kids. *Look after kids?* NO, definitely not, but for children to become competent and

confident learners who make a valued contribution to society, then I think ‘Yes’, people most certainly should! [emphasis in original] (Self-study written tasks, IDRW)

As provisionally-registered teachers undergoing a two-year period of supervised teaching, my participants were still subject to discursive discipline in their everyday teaching practice. However, they showed positive commitment to the authority discourse as they authored their own subjectivities, motivated by desire and pleasure.

### *Desire and Pleasure*

Desire for credibility and respect clearly motivated some participants as they sought the status of qualified registered teacher in the authority discourse. They wanted to be regarded as knowledgeable and skilled, with enhanced status and responsibility in centre hierarchies. Conversely, some participants expressed pleasure in complying with authority and avoiding burdens of responsibility.

Sally associated professional self-esteem and confidence with being qualified and holding a position of responsibility: “Now that I have my Diploma and I am in a head teacher position I can hold my head high. I hope that I radiate my new confidence; I know that I deserve it” (self-study writing tasks). She described losing self-esteem when she lost qualified teacher status: “From supervisor, to teacher aide, to assistant supervisor, to trainee, to supervisor. You know that’s hard” (individual interview). Sally said that this “up and down” (individual interview) experience made her aware of working respectfully with her teacher aide colleague: “[I] keep telling her she’s doing a great job, and why we do things the way we do them” (individual interview).

Jessie could reclaim her desired subjectivity as an experienced qualified teacher by becoming qualified and registered in Aotearoa New Zealand. She emigrated from Europe and her overseas qualification and experience were not recognised by New Zealand Qualifications Authority. Her subjectivity as an early childhood teacher was so important to her that when she could not be a teacher in this country she felt as if she had lost her identity:

[I was] a teacher in training, who just started the course, and just new in the centre. [I was] a teacher with a great and long and interesting experience from overseas, who felt so lost in her new country. [I was] a teacher who lost her identity. I was not the teacher who I was for 23 years. (Self-study written tasks)

Jessie was empowered to claim the subjectivity she desired by becoming a qualified teacher again. She described her pleasure and commitment to being an early childhood teacher: “I love children and I want to be with people, and do what you have to, do what you want to do, what’s your passion” (first focus group).

Sally took pleasure in being regarded as responsible and trustworthy within the authority discourse. Her embarrassment about being a mature student teacher was replaced by feeling valued in her new position of responsibility: “I think for me, in my new role as supervisor, I think people coming in and out actually realise that [colleague] and I share that position. It’s becoming more obvious” (final focus group). Although Sally found the responsibility challenging, she took pleasure in her role:

But it’s good when it’s going good, it’s really good. And it’s a challenge, and then sometimes it’s like ‘Oh, it’s just too much’. But it’s good that we can call [colleague] in and say ‘I need a day, just give me a day, to get [me] out of drowning’. (Individual interview)

All participants claimed pleasure associated with gaining specialised knowledge and skills. Naomi associated professional credibility with having specialised knowledge and skills of a qualified teacher. She referred to her theoretical knowledge when she disagreed with some of her centre's teaching practices: "We don't write names on their things. But then, well how the heck do you expect them to have literary experiences if we don't role model that?" (individual interview). She also appreciated professional credibility of familiarity with literature:

Sometimes it helps putting it to literature and stuff like that, [it] helps you to be able to express that and if you were sharing it sometimes with other professionals. 'Cause sometimes that's quite a key thing .... You know, sometimes they often want you to link it to something. (Final focus group)

Like Naomi, Poppy valued credibility associated with holding specialised knowledge. She described how professional development had changed her teaching practices and grounded her beliefs: "It seemed I could finally confidently articulate my beliefs if asked and could explain reasoning behind my own practice if ever asked. Having numerous readings to back up what I was implementing was fantastic" (self-study written tasks).

Ruby claimed a subjectivity of teacher as learner in the authority discourse when she described her pleasure in reading and exploring ideas, and stated her desire for more knowledge: "I just want to know more" (first focus group). She identified herself as a lifelong learner: "I think I'm definitely going to be a lifelong learner.... When I entered training I thought I knew everything and now that I've finished training I realise that I know nothing" (final focus group). Ruby showed strong interest in professional development and selected reading, despite reservations about how well she met academic expectations within this discourse.

Poppy linked values of the authority discourse to pleasure in her subjectivity as a capable academic learner interested in ideas:

I'd rather write than sit here and talk about stuff. I always found it easier if I was just typing and I'd think of a possibility and then kind of go off on another tangent and it seemed to open me up to more ideas... just open up my own mind. (Final focus group)

Being able to exert power in centre hierarchies gave some participants a sense of satisfaction. Ruby and Poppy described ways they claimed authority over themselves and others regardless of their qualification status. Poppy described a situation where she negotiated a policy for her area of her centre “for myself and anyone else that wants to join in” (first focus group) to circumvent a centre-wide policy she objected to: “I don't like [policies] like that telling me I can't [choose what to wear]”. Ruby described how she had felt able to ignore a centre hierarchy: “I always had so much responsibility anyway [as a student teacher]. I just thought I was the boss anyway!” (first focus group).

All participants recognised pleasure from submitting to authority in some situations. Ruby and Poppy described authority of the ITE provider as empowering and beneficial to them as student teachers: “So everybody is different, and everybody achieves things in different ways and [ITE provider] acknowledges and celebrates that, like no-one's put down for who they are and they come out themselves” (Ruby, final focus group discussion). They associated submission to authority with trust and respect in this way.

Being able to leave the burden of responsibility to others could be a desirable subjectivity in the authority discourse. Jessie and Naomi both talked about realising the extra responsibility associated with becoming qualified: “Oh my God, I'm qualified but now I have to take more responsib[ility]! Oh, this is me,

the only one [qualified teacher] here, you know?” (Jessie, first focus group). Poppy recalled not being expected to take responsibility: “I’m just a student, I can’t do that” (first focus group). Sally was aware of extra work and time management required to comply with documentation requirements: “Sometimes [the teacher registration process] just feels like more work. Like, ... where do you fit it all in?” (final focus group).

All participants were positioned in authority discourses through ITE, teacher registration and professional relationships in their centres. Negotiating multiple discourses and multiple possible subjectivities inevitably led to tensions, resistances and negotiations of subjectivities.

### ***Tensions, Resistances and Negotiations***

The five participants experienced tensions and contradictions within the authority discourse, such as when subjectivities which submitted to authority conflicted with subjectivities which sought to gain authority. Their resistance to positioning was limited by powerful discursive practices that could include or exclude participants from the position of teacher. Participants negotiated subjectivities to reconcile demands of multiple discourses to ‘be’ particular ways as early childhood teachers.

Jessie and Sally negotiated tensions between their wish to claim authority as qualified teachers, and being claimed by authority through classification as unqualified. Neither Jessie nor Sally could resist this discursive discipline if they wanted to continue to be teachers, and they re-entered ITE. Sally’s expressed resistance to being disciplined to re-enter ITE through cynicism. She described recently being permitted as a qualified teacher to take children out of the centre, after over twenty years of being an early childhood practitioner: “I put on a big display, being able to say ‘I’m taking two children

to the letterbox, I'm going off the property'. So it was really just pathetic" (first focus group). Jessie and Sally reconciled the conflict between claiming and being claimed by authority by acknowledging enhanced knowledge and skills through ITE: "I think now that I have new and current theory and knowledge I can be more of an advocate for children" (Sally, self-study written tasks). Jessie acknowledged that re-entering ITE had enabled her to become familiar with new cultures, bicultural teaching and a different education system.

Ruby and Poppy experienced tensions between subjectivities within the authority discourse. Ruby regarded herself as good at verbal communication but disliked reading and written work, which placed her in conflict with positions in the authority discourse that reflected ITE academic requirements. For example, she worried about not being able to adequately express her teaching philosophy in writing: "I can say it, but I can't write it down on paper. But I'm pleased that I have written it down on paper, but it's still not as deep as I think my teaching is" (final focus group). Ruby asserted her subjectivity as a holder of specialised knowledge and skills within the authority discourse through professional development of her choice. Ruby positioned herself as being in control of her learning: "I listen to a lot of people, and I take what I like from what they've said and then I biff away [discard] the stuff I don't think I need or want, but I still remember it so that it's there, but I don't act on it maybe" (individual interview). She managed her subjectivity as reluctant reader of academic material by choosing her own professional reading material and engaging with it enthusiastically. Ruby explained her motivation for reading as a teacher claiming authority:

I think that's why I'm [reading], because I have to teach myself.  
So someone's not teaching me and showing me the way all the



time now, and because I'm almost being put in that role now where I'm teaching someone else. So I need to know all I can possibly know about ... teaching. (Individual interview)

In contrast to Ruby, Poppy experienced conflict between subjectivities as a hesitant verbal communicator and as someone who ably communicated her ideas in academic writing: "I'll edit it as I go, and say 'Oh no, that doesn't sound right', and I'll work on that sentence, get it right and then carry on, and end, and references and that's done" (individual interview). Poppy felt tension between these subjectivities when engaged in professional discussions with colleagues. She did not like "being pulled up for being wrong" (individual interview), and claimed subjectivity as knowledgeable by accessing literature to support her professional discussions: "If they kind-of look at me funny, I can [say] 'Hey, well, actually I have these readings'" (individual interview). Poppy felt more confident to express her knowledge verbally when she could call on the authority of literature.

Naomi described tensions between her subjectivity as qualified teacher with specialised knowledge and skills and her positioning within professional relationships in her early childhood centre: "We were basically told from first start off that none of us understood what, didn't really understand what learning was, we couldn't recognise it. And I'm like 'Argh!'" (individual interview). Naomi resisted this positioning through questioning. She noted conflict between warm positive professional relationships she valued, and feeling undervalued by directive relationships within the centre hierarchy: "How much does [what] someone who's... your superior... is saying about you, how does that make you feel?" (individual interview). Naomi managed tensions between her obligation to comply with the authority of the Education Review Office and her subjectivity as knowledgeable when she doubted an

interpretation of requirements she was given: “[I] said I’ll check that one out, ’cause it didn’t sound right to me” (individual interview).

Poppy, Naomi and Ruby described resistance in hierarchical power relations with colleagues through assertiveness. Ruby described successfully instigating assertive courageous conversations. Naomi talked about developing her assertiveness with colleagues, and taking initiative: “some of the things I’m doing ... I don’t know whether they’ve noticed or just not said anything” (individual interview). Naomi, Jessie and Ruby all described leaving centres because they did not agree with teaching practices.

Negotiating subjectivities and managing tensions, contradictions and resistances within the authority discourse were associated with how participants responded to various claims of authority on them and to what extent they were able to claim authority for themselves as teachers.

## **Conclusion**

The authority discourse is dominant in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. The sector is organised on a national level, and there are stringent requirements around ITE, qualifications and teacher registration. Professional standards require compliance with regulations and employment contracts require compliance with centre policies. The discourse values proven professional knowledge, skills and attitudes, which are rewarded with credibility and status. Compliance with authority is expected in terms of these requirements and in terms of hierarchical relationships in early childhood centres.

Participants in this research study accepted positioning as subject to disciplinary techniques of regulation, exclusion, normalisation, classification

and surveillance. These discursive practices effectively dictated that these participants engage in ITE and perform to acceptable levels academically and practically. Conversely, participants were also motivated by desire and pleasure within this discourse, as they sought credibility and status, accepted responsibility and saw themselves as capable, knowledgeable and trustworthy.

Participants responded in individual ways to subject positions made available in the authority discourse because they were embedded in multiple discourses as teachers and influenced by their life histories and societal discourses. There were tensions and contradictions in their teaching subjectivities, and participants sometimes responded to these with resistance or negotiation.

The authority discourse was one of three dominant discourses to emerge from the data collected in this research study. There was interplay between the authority discourse, the relational professionalism discourse and the identity work discourse of early childhood teaching that shaped participants' subjectivities.

## **Chapter Six: Relational Professionalism Discourse**

### **Overview of the Relational Professionalism Discourse**

According to the dominant relational professionalism discourse, an early childhood teacher should be a good communicator who has positive, respectful and responsive relationships with adults and children in early childhood settings. Within boundaries of these sorts of relationships, teachers are expected to be emotionally engaged. The values on which the relational professionalism discourse is based are similar to those of the historical mothering discourse of early childhood education, which values warm nurturing relationships that are instinctive and natural. The mothering discourse is strongly gendered, while the relational professionalism discourse has a more subtle gendered tone. The relational professionalism discourse was described by Dalli (2006) when she advocated bringing love and care into a discourse of professionalism, and draws on the concept of ethics of care (Noddings, 2003).

The relational professionalism discourse is linked to the authority discourse through requirements for qualified and registered teachers to display “ethical, respectful, positive and collaborative relationships” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009a, p. 2) with children, colleagues, parents and families.

Participants’ relational knowledge, skills and attitudes were assessed during ITE and teacher registration processes. All participants in my research study characterised professional relationships as “warm, trusting, positive” (Naomi, final focus group). This description resonates with Cannella’s (1997) assertion that as early childhood teachers “women’s identities are constructed as the good mother (who naturally bonds to children)” (p. 154). Teachers who value

warm, trusting and positive relationships may find themselves also positioned as compliant and submissive within discourses of early childhood education.

Discursive practices of discipline and governmentality encouraged participants to maintain emotional engagement in positive respectful relationships. The desire for the pleasure of warm emotional engagement was also strong. Participants invested strongly in this discourse and valued relationships highly. Each participant claimed a subjectivity that could be described as ‘relational professional’.

Tensions arose when participants experienced contradictions in available subject positions that reflected alternative discourses of relationships. For example, sometimes they found themselves engaged in cold, mistrusting and negative relationships when positioned in the authority discourse. Participants worked to negotiate conflicting subjectivities.

## **Findings: Unpacking the Complexities**

### ***Discipline and Governmentality***

Although there might still be debate in some parts of our society about whether early childhood teachers need to be qualified, the historical mothering discourse has ensured general societal agreement that they should have positive respectful professional relationships underpinned by good communication skills. Values and beliefs of the relational professionalism discourse were expressed by the participants as undeniable truths, which provided both opportunities and challenges for them.

Some participants were aware of discipline to conform to the available subjectivities of this discourse. Poppy described a centre policy that prescribed how teachers should greet visitors. Ruby was aware of surveillance of teachers

by children. She pointed out that children notice the relationships between teachers: “the children see those relationships. So if you’ve got a fake one [with colleagues], then they’re going to be questioning what kind of relationship you have with them [children]” (final focus group).

Naomi’s discussions of professional relationships revealed a disciplinary technique of normalisation. In one of her reflective journal entries she recalled thinking that she needed professional development to learn how to interact with a child with special needs. She then returned to values of the relational professionalism discourse: “Later I realised that just being myself, warm and caring in my approach, was the key to remaining an authentic teacher, enabling inclusion of all children” (self-study written tasks). Naomi identified with the relational professionalism discourse so strongly that she described her subjectivity as relational professional as being authentic and ‘normal’. This self-image was affirmed for Naomi when she was classified by a survey of teachers conducted in her centre: “that relationships were for me the most important thing to have, to have that in all your teaching, and for any learning [the important thing] was having that relationship base” (final focus group).

Sally, Naomi and Jessie acknowledged complexity of links between relational professionalism and gender. They classified females in general as naturally “more relational” (Naomi, final focus group discussion) than men. However, Poppy, Naomi and Ruby described male teachers whose relational skills they admired. Male teachers were classified as providing valuable male role models for children: “I think the little boy needs a man in his life that can show respect to women and that can show how to be a good person” (Sally, final focus group). Sally and Ruby discussed how attributing relational skills to females could position male teachers as having feminine characteristics.

Data showed that some participants governed their subjectivities within the relational professionalism discourse by having multiple subjectivities. Sally, Poppy and Ruby described adapting ways they related positively and respectfully to different people in their professional lives. Sally talked about having a “split personality” (first focus group) and “put[ting] on a face” (individual interview), presenting herself differently to different people: “I sort of feel like I’ve got different identities for where I am. I mean, like at work I feel like I should have like almost a professional identity, where at home, I’m just [Sally]” (first focus group). She talked about putting on her “teacher hat” or her “parent hat” (individual interview). Her different subjectivities depended on who she was relating to. Being a relational professional for Sally meant adapting herself to who she was with. Ruby and Poppy also drew on adaptability to describe themselves.

Ruby described herself as “a totally different teacher to what I am [as] a person” (final focus group), and as different with different age groups. She explained this adaptability as responsiveness to other people: “Everybody’s different and you’ve just got to learn how they work so you can make that relationship work” (final focus group). Poppy also described having multiple subjectivities within the relational professionalism discourse, as she adapted to other people. Poppy kept her various subjectivities separate from each other:

If you, say, meet me outside of work, I don’t think you would even know I was a preschool teacher, and if you met me at work you’d probably think that I wasn’t what I am outside of it. I think that it’s just that I try to adapt. Relationships is a big thing for me. That’s where it all starts, for me and at my centre. So I think I just adapt for each family maybe and each child. (Individual interview)

Having contrasting subjectivities proved challenging for Poppy as a relational professional when she encountered a parent from her centre in another sphere

of her personal life: “I thought ‘Oh no, I’m going to have to hold myself back a bit’, and then I didn’t, and I don’t and it was fine” (individual interview). She was capable of adapting in this situation too.

Poppy, Sally and Ruby described differences between their personal and professional subjectivities, so they could relate appropriately in different social settings and conform to relational professionalism subjectivities in their professional settings. Poppy referred to the work involved in maintaining her subjectivity of relational professional when she was in her teacher role. She found that sometimes she could not do this, which worried her: “I’m a pretty big believer in leaving [her baggage or personal concerns] at the door, but then again sometimes you can’t, or I know I can’t always. I haven’t always, so I’m probably hypocritical” (individual interview).

All participants identified strongly with values and beliefs of relational professionalism and worked to portray associated subjectivities in their teaching practice. Always relating in warm, trusting and positive ways in their professional lives was challenging and some participants used strategies such as having multiple subjectivities to deal with the demands of the discourse. All participants derived pleasure from relational professional subjectivities and this pleasure motivated them within this discourse.

### ***Desire and Pleasure***

The relational professionalism discourse is taken-for-granted in early childhood education, with its roots in the historical mothering view of people who work with young children. It seems likely that people attracted to early childhood teaching would be those who identified strongly with values and beliefs of relational professionalism. All five participants expressed commitment to these values and beliefs and described their professional



subjectivities accordingly: “I love to be with people... I function really well with other people around me” (Jessie, individual interview). Both Poppy and Ruby emphasised the importance of relationships for them as teachers: “Relationships for me is massive. I think, without relationships with your team, with the children, you have nothing. So for me, that’s a core professional thing” (Ruby, individual interview).

All participants described emotional pleasure in their professional relationships with children, colleagues, parents and families. They talked about warmth and trust, respect and belonging, feeling valued and encouraged, and feeling supportive and supported. Ruby reflected on a teaching situation where she felt pleasure at relational connectedness: “I felt really connected to the under-two children that day. I felt like I was on their wavelength. To me, it really affirmed my practice and passion” (self-study written tasks, IDRW). Jessie explained her enjoyment of relationships with children: “The openness, the humour, the going to their level, spontaneous interacting. I love the way they learn” (individual interview). She described feeling self-efficacy when she was able to help an anxious, unsettled child: “Sensitive, respectful, building relationship with child, getting to know each other” (self-study written tasks). All participants expressed the view that relationships with children were central to their teaching: “My kids [children] probably inspire me, the children that I started all this respectful [practice] with, and the te reo [Māori language] and ... stuff .... That’s my inspiration, or big influence” (Poppy, first focus group).

All participants valued positive and respectful relationships with colleagues. They talked about productive team relationships and positive emotions that resulted. Naomi talked of professional emotional support she had as a student teacher: “a very good environment and so you felt respected and trusted” (final

focus group). Poppy emphasised the importance of “teamliness, having a supportive team” (individual interview):

I’m a team person who relies and thrives off having a supportive team that can be both critical and supportive for my teaching. I didn’t do this diploma, or become a teacher by myself. (Self-study written tasks)

Poppy explained how the values of relational professionalism worked to reconcile different teaching philosophies in her team of teachers:

[Working together] just seems to work, but I think that’s because we get on really well as a team, and that we’re able to communicate openly .... We all have our own philosophies .... A lot of our philosophies are the same, but then we all have our own strengths and ... own pieces we bring to it. (First focus group)

Respectful relationships with parents and families were valued by all participants. Poppy described her willingness to negotiate aspects of her teaching practice to maintain respectful relationships: “Parents are first teachers and we are there to support them... I value our partnerships with parents more than a philosophy in our centre” (individual interview). Sally recalled a situation where she decided to advocate for one family: “I found myself in a situation where I was expressing my view ... that ‘It is not our job (as adults) to agree or understand but to respect’” (self-study written tasks).

Sometimes participants’ subjectivities shaped by the relational professionalism discourse conflicted with subjectivities shaped by other discourses. Social interactions shaped by other dominant discourses could conflict with the sorts of interactions valued by the relational professionalism discourse. When teachers encountered relationships that did not fit the expected relational professionalism pattern, tensions arose and negotiations sometimes occurred to

make sense of or resolve these. If relationships were not positive or respectful, participants negotiated their subjectivities in multiple discourses.

### *Tensions, Resistances and Negotiations*

Naomi, Sally, Ruby and Poppy described examples of relationships that were not positive or respectful between teachers and children, and teachers and other adults. The presence of these relationships indicated that alternative discourses were framing subjectivities. For example, individuals could be positioned within the authority discourse as commanding or submissive. Interactions between individuals with commanding or submissive subjectivities could result in patterns of relationships that were not warm, trusting and positive.

Poppy described two experiences from her teaching when alternative discourses shaped subjectivities. Firstly, a colleague took a position with higher status than Poppy within the authority discourse, and directed her to act in a way that Poppy regarded as unfair to a child. Poppy called on her subjectivity as relational professional to challenge her colleague: “I think it shows that through building trusting relationships with these children and their whānau, I can trust my gut feeling and read the cues I see” (self-study written tasks). In the second experience, Poppy recalled being criticised by a colleague in a way that made her feel “ridiculed and underestimated” (self-study written tasks). She again called on her subjectivity as relational professional to make sense of this: “Maybe being so hurt by ... this teacher reflects my own nature of being, I hope, an empathetic, honest and trusting teacher” (self-study written tasks).

Tensions sometimes arose for participants where their subjectivities as relational professionals were challenged by negative communication from

others. Sally described her emotional reaction to an adult's unfeeling comment to a child who was unable to participate in a centre event because of family beliefs: "Oh I was so angry, I was shaking" (individual interview). Sally claimed subjectivity as a teacher who valued warm, trusting and positive relationships, and advocated for the child's emotional well-being by reminding the other adult: "you know we don't talk to him about it" (individual interview).

Tensions arose for participants when they wanted to stand up for their values and beliefs, and found that assertiveness required interactions that were counter to the submissiveness sometimes demanded by the authority discourse, and the warm, trusting, positive relationships of the relational professionalism discourse. Claiming conflicting subjectivities as warm, caring people and as demanding advocates sometimes presented challenges for participants (Grieshaber, 2001). Naomi described a dilemma she faced about challenging authority in her centre. She governed her subjectivity through a wish to be a respectful relational professional and not to be seen as aggressive: "[I] don't really want to get into a state of rebelling, 'cause you want to respect" (first interview). Her mentor helped her work out how to be assertive without being aggressive, so that she could maintain her subjectivity as a relational professional: "encouraging me to stand up and just say what I believe and what I think [is] important" (individual interview).

## **Conclusion**

The relational professionalism discourse made subjectivities available that were pleasurable to all participants. They were motivated by desire for the pleasure of warm and respectful relationships. They liked to like, and liked to be liked. However, it can be challenging to maintain warm and respectful

relationships with all people in all professional situations. Some of the participants resolved this challenge by having multiple subjectivities to help them relate positively and respectfully to everyone they encountered in their professional life.

Relationship patterns from alternative discourses presented participants with tensions which could be negotiated by learning skills in being assertive while remaining committed to subjectivities as relational professionals. Participants reluctantly accepted that they would sometimes experience relationships that were not warm, trusting and positive in their professional settings. Learning new relational skills like assertiveness, or making decisions about having multiple subjectivities to relate differently to different people, are examples of identity work. The final of the three dominant discourses that emerged from my research data shaped teachers' subjectivities as people who could take responsibility for shaping their own personal professional identities: the identity work discourse.

## **Chapter Seven: Identity Work Discourse**

### **Overview of Identity Work Discourse**

The identity work discourse makes introspective teacher subjectivities available. This discourse assumes that teachers are responsible for shaping their own teacher subjectivities. Interplay between the identity work discourse and the authority discourse is reflected in the importance placed on reflective practice in ITE and teacher registration processes, and in professional standards. Student teachers and provisionally-registered teachers are required to produce reflective writing as evidence that they “use critical inquiry and problem-solving effectively in their professional practice” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009a, p. 4).

In the identity work discourse, teachers’ subjectivities can reflect a modernist view of essentialist identity, or a postmodern view of changing and multiple subjectivities. Reflection in the prescribed Schön (1983) format was embedded in modernist perspectives on identities. However, all participants considered postmodernist understandings of multiple, dynamic identities during metacognitive identity work of the facilitated self-study process, although Naomi rejected this way of understanding her identity.

Data from my research showed all participants were positioned in the identity work discourse to carry out metacognitive identity work, especially reflection. This positioning led to two kinds of identity work: standing up for values and beliefs, and working on change in identities and subjectivities. Metacognitive identity work was often supported by desire to feel normal by conforming to positions in dominant discourses, which was regarded as improvement: “the desire to be useful and productive, the desire to be a contributing part of the

community, and the desire to be needed and to help others” (Cannella, 1997, p. 149).

There was interplay between participants’ negotiations of subjectivities within and across all three emergent dominant discourses. Within the identity work discourse, teachers were encouraged to feel responsible for adapting their subjectivities to meet expectations of the authority discourse and the relational professionalism discourse. Data showed that participants’ subjectivities within the identity work discourse were cultivated through ITE and teacher registration processes using disciplinary discursive practices. As newly qualified teachers, participants used discursive practices of self-governmentality and desire and pleasure to maintain their subjectivities as teachers responsible for continuous engagement in identity work.

Data showed that all participants had subjectivities in the identity work discourse underpinned by commitment to changing and improving their teaching through reflective practice. Gaining pleasure from identity work was sometimes associated with feeling a sense of belonging in professional settings, having self-efficacy over subjectivities and influencing how others perceived them. Participants were concerned with how others perceived them as teachers and wished to be regarded as good teachers.

The context discourse emerged from the data and provided an alternative discourse to the identity work discourse. The context discourse was grounded in the belief that subjectivities were shaped by contexts such as family, society, culture and role models: “Identity is for me, what made you ... what would influence [you], who brought you [to] this stage” (Jessie, first focus group). According to this context discourse, subjectivities resulted from forces over which individuals had no control. Sally described the context of societal

attitudes influencing subjectivities: “this is a society that’s actually hopping into a whole new way of thinking .... We’ve gone from pretty racist to including everyone and multicultural, and biculturalism is just huge” (first focus group). She saw these contextual influences as challenging older student teachers: “That’s a huge [challenge] for my generation, it’s probably not so much for you ’cause you’ve gone through school with it, but we never did” (first focus group).

All the participants in my research study claimed positions in both the identity work discourse and context discourse. The two discourses did not form a dichotomy. Participants claimed subjectivities of being shaped by contexts, such as when they associated being relational with being female. They also claimed subjectivities of being responsible for how they were as teachers. There was interplay between the two discourses. For example, contextual factors that shaped subjectivities could act as motivation for metacognitive identity work. Ruby talked about being shaped by her family context to always to do her best, and linked this contextual influence to her subjectivity as someone committed to identity work and striving to be the best she can be as a teacher (first focus group).

As the identity work discourse values awareness of identities and subjectivities and encourages teachers to consider change, it was inevitable that tensions would arise and result in resistances and negotiations of subjectivities. Participants’ multiple interpretations of identity concepts were reflected in tensions within their understandings of their identities and subjectivities, and with identity concepts and expectations represented by ITE and professional standards.



## **Findings: Unpacking the Complexities**

### ***Discipline and Governmentality***

Reflection is a discursive practice associated with the identity work discourse. The participants' subjectivities as reflective practitioners were shaped through disciplinary discursive practices as they learned prescribed ways of reflecting on their subjectivities during ITE and teacher registration processes. Technical reflection examines teaching practice, and reflexive reflection focuses on self-awareness. Critical reflection is linked with awareness of power relations and standing up for values and beliefs through assertiveness and advocacy. Within the identity work discourse, reflection enables teachers to change their subjectivities, or to assert their subjectivities by standing up for values and beliefs. Teacher educators, teacher registration supervisors and colleagues with higher status in the centre hierarchy provided disciplinary influences on all participants within the identity work discourse in the forms of surveillance, normalisation and classification.

Participants were subject to surveillance of reflective identity work through assessment as student teachers in ITE. They had been required to write reflective journal entries about teaching experiences in a format based on the work of Schön (1983): describing what happened, reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action and deciding what to do next. All participants accepted positioning as reflective practitioners through the disciplinary discursive practice of institutionally-directed reflective writing. Ruby described a selected reflective journal entry as shaping her self-perception as someone who could cope with professional change: "There was so much [professional] change happening for me that that was just the next thing, but it [reflective journal entry] kind of shows that I was a 'coper'. Like I was able to cope with lots of

really big things in my life changing” (individual interview). Ruby described the reflective journal format as giving her tools to carry out identity work: “[ITE] gave me like, [the pattern of reflecting on] what’s happening, how that happened, what do I think now and what can I do next, it definitely gave me those kind of tools” (final focus group). Poppy claimed a subjectivity of reflective teacher that had been shaped through discipline in ITE: “I think I was doing them [reflective journal entries] because I had to, not because I knew what they were actually about .... Then I realised that they actually weren’t about that [getting it done] and they do actually help you” (final focus group). At the time of data collection, the participants were required to write reflective journal entries as provisionally-registered teachers. Like Poppy, Jessie claimed subjectivity as a reflective teacher who was subject to discipline. She integrated prescribed written reflection with other methods:

What [reflection] I do is for the teacher registration. I write reflective journals but less. But I do a lot of reflection... and I write it down but not always in a learning journal. But I reflect on little quotes or little things what happened... and ... setting goals and finding evidence later.... And I will reflect on that, and communicate with other teachers, how they see me. (Final interview)

Other people’s perceptions were sometimes seen as disciplinary surveillance within the identity work discourse. Naomi accepted positive feedback from others as affirming: “You can use positive stuff other teachers or colleagues or people have said, where you can use that to back up your own identity or practice as a teacher” (first interview). Naomi wanted to feel that she could withstand negative judgements and hold on to her subjectivities: “I’d like to come to that place where it shouldn’t matter what anybody thinks of you” (individual interview). Jessie described mutual surveillance stimulating identity work when her team of colleagues reflected together:

And it will help another one [teacher] to think ‘Oh yes, what you said was really true’. And so another teacher can come up with a good highlight and the things where you can work on or want to know or whatever, or I can tell you what I found from you. (final interview)

All participants governed their subjectivities in the identity work discourse by expressing commitment to values of self-examination and self-improvement: “[I intend] to continue to be open to change and reflection, because being a teacher is an ongoing process of learning and development” (Naomi, self-study written tasks, IDRW). Jessie also linked reflection to improvement: “By reflecting, you’re analysing, you go back to what worked and what didn’t, or what you can gain in the future or what to work on” (final interview). Sally linked reflection with agentically shaping her teaching practices:

Being taught to be reflective is what’s influencing me, I think. ‘Cause, like [Poppy], I’m seeing stuff that, not necessarily I don’t like, but I don’t want to do that. So sort of reflecting on how I would do it. Self-checking in a wee way I suppose. (First focus group)

Ruby and Poppy demonstrated subjectivities as responsible for identity work when they described themselves as learning from experience: “I know that I learn from my mistakes and although I am open to ideas and suggestions all the time, I am not always easily persuaded and seem to need to ‘botch’ things up and learn from this” (Poppy, self-study written tasks). Ruby put it succinctly: “Experience equals knowledge for me” (individual interview). Poppy claimed agency in experiential learning: “I think I am made up of all the experiences I have had in life. I choose what to take with me and what to leave behind” (self-study written tasks).

Identity work is challenging and demanding. Teachers need rewards of pleasure to motivate them to work on self-awareness (or awareness of

subjectivities), stand up for values and beliefs, hold on to valued subjectivities in face of challenge and constantly work to change and improve.

### *Desire and Pleasure*

All participants showed that identity work subjectivities gave them pleasure by presenting positive self-understandings in terms of the discourse. Ruby described herself as reflective: “I’m a real reflective person anyway. Yeah, I’m good at kind of whipping it all in the pot and steaming over it” (final focus group). Data showed that participants were motivated by pleasure of feeling a sense of belonging, regarding themselves and being regarded as good teachers, feeling self-efficacy over their subjectivities and influencing other peoples’ perceptions of them.

Feeling a sense of belonging was linked with desire to be regarded as good teachers in terms of professional standards and dominant discourses (Cannella, 1997). Jessie was a recent European immigrant, and was motivated to do identity work to feel a sense of belonging in societal and early childhood education contexts of Aotearoa New Zealand. She felt challenged by having English as an additional language. Jessie was aware of being positioned as ‘other’ by dominant cultural discourses and by the dominant authority discourse that denied her a position as qualified teacher: “I found myself really fragile in the beginning [when I] couldn’t say what I wanted to tell ..., and because all the knowledge I gained there [in her home country] was different here [in Aotearoa New Zealand]” (final interview). She did identity work to position herself in dominant discourses of early childhood teaching. Jessie changed her subjectivities by improving her English language communication and by achieving qualified teacher status. She gained rewards of self-confidence: “But now it’s different, it’s better.... I’m not ashamed of my

language or if I have to think about it or express it in [the] way I do” (final interview).

All participants were motivated to carry out identity work by pleasure of understanding themselves as good teachers in terms of professional standards and dominant discourses, and being regarded as good teachers by others:

I think it's something you review all the time subconsciously, like I know I'm constantly doing it in my teaching, but I think I'm constantly doing it in my personal life as well .... Like reviewing, thinking about your identity and what do other people think about it and how do they see you. (Ruby, first focus group)

Ruby identified strongly with the discursive belief in learning from experience: “I honestly think I’m forever changing, and improving what I’m doing, and the more knowledge and experience I get, the more I know” (Ruby, individual interview). She associated her father’s influence with her motivation for self- improvement: “I remember him telling me I can always do whatever I want to do, but always do everything to the best of your ability” (first focus group). Ruby linked her striving to be best with motivation to do identity work: “I think it’s what drives me” (first focus group).

All participants expressed self-efficacy, or capability to use reflection as a tool to claim positions in dominant discourses as ‘good’ teachers. Sally took pleasure in changes in her subjectivities from identity work: “I am also becoming a teacher who can stand back and watch, listen, learn and have input without taking over the event. I have not always taught this way, and I like what I have become” (self-study written tasks). All participants described self-efficacy over their subjectivities as inclusive teachers who “respond effectively to the diverse language and cultural experiences” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009a, p. 3) of children, families and colleagues of non-dominant

cultures. The four participants in the final focus group discussion reflected perspectives of the dominant New Zealand-born European culture when they claimed subjectivities of teachers with respect for Māori culture and an attitude of inclusiveness towards non-European cultures. Jessie, a European immigrant, was absent from this discussion. Poppy and Sally described identity work they did to claim subjectivity as Pākehā (non- Māori) teachers using te reo Māori (language) in their teaching practice:

[My ethnicity] used to make me not want to speak Māori because I'm white and don't have any Māori in me, but now I just ... fire away [speaking te reo Māori] and the parents love it and always ask me to write it down. (Poppy, final focus group)

Being inclusive towards minority cultures was expressed in terms of being friendly and not making assumptions. Naomi talked about “just being bright [and] friendly” (final focus group) with adults with English as an additional language. Jessie linked inclusive teaching practices to her own pleasure in hearing someone speaking her home language:

I know how people ... can be really happy when ... I talk [their language] to them, it gives them a sense of belonging. I find it really helpful or nice when I hear one of the mums talking [my language] to me. It was like, ‘Wow, hey, someone knows my language’. (Final interview)

Naomi reflected pleasure in self-efficacy that enabled her to hold on to subjectivities she valued in face of challenges in her teaching situation: “You have to hold on sometimes to your identity of who you are, to your values and beliefs but also hold true to your identity and knowing that ... what you believe in, what you think is right” (first interview). She felt that she needed to do identity work to reinforce her positive self-understanding:

The environment ... was really challenging, 'cause it really challenged ... what I thought of myself, ... who I was as a teacher. But I had to come back to that core belief in myself and know who I am, based on other things [I] had in the past to know, my practice is good. (Final focus group)

Some participants claimed power in professional relationships through subjectivities within the identity work discourse as critical thinkers who could assert their values and beliefs. They used institutionally-directed reflective journal writing to question power relations they experienced as student teachers. Poppy, Sally and Ruby included examples of critical reflection in their selected reflective journal entries. Poppy expressed a wish to be critically reflective: "I hope to become a critical thinker who develops the confidence to do 'reasonable, reflective thinking which is focused on deciding what to believe or do' (Arthur et al., 2008, p. 143)" (self-study written tasks, IDRW). Both Poppy and Ruby wrote about situations where reflection led them to be assertive: "I think it made my philosophy really stick out for me and what was ok for me, and what I let slide and stuff that was just not ok" (Ruby, individual interview).

Some participants described influencing others' perceptions through identity work. Some made decisions about how much influence other people should have on their identity work. Some decided how to portray themselves to particular people or in particular settings. Ruby and Poppy engaged in identity work by deciding how they would present themselves to others. Ruby described her identity work in terms of a project, where she would work on herself, and decide what to reveal to others:

I feel like I'm still adding to it, so I'm not ready to let ... [you see] the real Ruby .... I'm not happy with it yet, so you're just going to see what I want you to see, and you're not going to see

any more than that until I've finished filling it up. (First focus group)

Ruby described her desire to hide vulnerability from others: "if I was to show if I was vulnerable, maybe people would think less of me, but I don't tend to show stress or if I'm upset" (individual interview). She used a metaphor to portray herself hiding stress: "this real calm duck, sitting on top of the water, but my feet are going mad underneath" (individual interview). Ruby stated that agentically shaping her teacher subjectivities was very important to her: "I definitely am not going to be someone that someone else wants me to be. I'm going to be who I want to be" (individual interview).

Poppy described presenting herself in different ways in different situations: "I definitely do portray myself as someone else" (individual interview). Her portrayals depended on the social setting: "a lot of [my friends] say 'I can't believe you're a preschool teacher, I think 'cause I swear... and my excuse is that I don't swear at all during the day'" (individual interview). Poppy decided how to show herself to others depending on: who she was interacting with ("I try to adapt": final focus group); how well she knew them ("the more people get to know me": individual interview); and what image she chose to portray ("I don't want to be seen as smart": individual interview). Poppy described presenting a particular persona: "there's me on the outside, pretty much always with a smile on my face, but then that's not always me" (individual interview).

Participants negotiated their teacher subjectivities motivated by desire for the pleasure of belonging, regarding themselves and being regarded as good teachers, having self-efficacy over their subjectivities and influencing others' perceptions of them. Their identity work reflected values of all the dominant discourses and reflective skills and attitudes taught in teacher education.



Tensions arose, and resistances were present for each participant. These often represented discursive positions that conflicted with each other.

### *Tensions, Resistances and Negotiations*

The discourse of identity work values awareness of identities or subjectivities, holding on to valued subjectivities, and making changes and improvements. Tensions that arise when individuals are engaged in identity work may reflect differences between subjectivities that are available in different discourses. Tensions may also reflect conflicts between modernist and postmodernist perceptions of identities. The identity work discourse encourages teachers to wonder about questions like: ‘Who should I be?’; ‘Who could I be?’; and ‘Who do I want to be?’ In contrast, the alternative context discourse encourages awareness of how contextual factors have shaped subjectivities. Sometimes, participants felt their subjectivities had been shaped by their contexts in ways that conflicted with available desirable subjectivities within dominant discourses. Sally and Naomi described tensions between their subjectivities as members of the dominant culture and their self-efficacy to do identity work to become inclusive teachers. Sally was embarrassed that she assumed an Asian visitor would have difficulty speaking English: “She was perfectly fluent .... I was expecting her not to be” (final focus group). Naomi said she wished she was able to communicate with children in their home language: “Sometimes they come up to you and they’re so excited they just start talking in their language and ... [I think] ‘Oh, I wish I knew what you were saying’” (final focus group).

All participants expressed uncertainty about how they interpreted the concept of identity, which caused tensions in their understandings of their identities and subjectivities. Modernist and postmodern perspectives were present in

each participant's data, which represented tensions within each individual's self-understandings, and between each individual's perception of herself and expectations of ITE and professional standards. Sally reconciled tension between these perspectives on identity by distinguishing between a core identity belonging to her personal life, and her multiple teaching subjectivities. However, she struggled to define her teaching philosophy as a student teacher because of her perception of changing professional subjectivities: "I was in such a meaningful, powerful and unpredictable stage of my life. I was halfway through my teacher training and learning so much about myself and my teaching. I was about to metamorphose" (self-study written tasks).

Naomi experienced tensions between perceptions of changing subjectivities within the identity work discourse and her self-understanding of having a core identity. She held a subjectivity of having an essentialist identity grounded in core values and beliefs, which were "unmovable and unchangeable" (first interview) and strongly associated with her life history. In contrast, she also admitted the possibility of change through reflective practice: "teaching practice and things and stuff like that may change 'cause you may consider and look at something you didn't think before" (first interview). She resolved this tension by understanding identity as 'being' and behaviour as 'doing': "I thought, 'Am I saying two things here?' .... Instances and experiences that come up, so they do change you, but I don't think that it changes ... your identity. Maybe it changes your practice" (individual interview).

In the earlier data collection phases, Jessie claimed subjectivity of having a singular authentic identity that consisted of all her characteristics, feelings, values and beliefs. She talked about needing to "stick by your own identity" (first focus group): "If you see something of work in a centre [that] you don't like, or is not what you really feel or you want to be... then you get stronger in

your own vision” (first focus group). Jessie felt she had lost her identity by leaving her home country, culture and teaching role and immigrating to Aotearoa New Zealand. As she watched a teacher in a school playground “I was almost crying, I can’t do that anymore. ‘Ah, you’re losing your own identity’. My whole person identity went away. I couldn’t be the [Jessie] that I was” (first focus group). Doing reflective identity work through the facilitated self-study process in my research study led Jessie to acknowledge her multiple and dynamic subjectivities: “So you have different kinds of identities, that’s true. And [my] authentic identity, I haven’t lost that, who I was as a little girl, through my whole life. And that is still there, yay” (individual interview). She was able to reconcile her perceptions of her identity shaped by contexts with her multiple subjectivities that she was able to shape through identity work.

Some participants resisted disciplinary aspects of the identity work discourse. During her interview and the final focus group discussion, Sally expressed resistance to surveillance represented by having her ITE reflective journal entries assessed. The other three participants in the final focus group discussion supported her view. They regarded their reflective journal entries as personal expressions of their subjectivities: “I perceived them almost like a ‘dear diary’. They were really personal, and they weren’t actually to be marked” (Sally, individual interview). Ruby agreed: “you’re putting who you are in there” (final focus group). They accepted assessment by teacher educators they knew: “when I write [reflective journal entries] and I think [teacher educator] is marking them, I imagine [teacher educator] reading them, or sort of talking to the [assessor]” (Sally, final focus group). Within the relational professionalism discourse, the teacher educator assessing their written reflective writing was seen as a trusted friend who could listen and offer helpful advice: “I remember writing in mine, ‘Have you got any ideas for

what I could do in this situation?’’ (Poppy, final focus group). However, when their reflective writing was assessed by someone not known to them the surveillance aspect came into view. Sally reacted strongly to an assessor’s written feedback: ‘‘I nearly called it quits right then and there. And how important it is to know people before you can mark a reflection, and reflections shouldn’t be [assessed] outside in my opinion’’ (individual interview). In this situation, there were tensions between subjectivities within the authority discourse, the relational professionalism discourse and the identity work discourse.

Ruby resisted the ITE expectation that reflection as identity work should be documented. Ruby identified herself as reflective within the identity work discourse. She positioned herself in the authority discourse as struggling with written work, and the two subjectivities conflicted when written reflections were required: ‘‘I used to struggle getting what was in my head onto paper and I struggled the whole way through with that. But yeah, I would have been quite happy to sit in a room and say it face-to-face’’ (final focus group). Ruby and Sally negotiated how they reflected, both expressing a preference for reflection on everyday teaching practice. They preferred to use technical reflection as qualified teachers. Sally commented that her reflective journal entries as a student teacher were about ‘‘personal growth and understanding’’ (self-study written tasks), but her reflections as a qualified teacher tended to be about how an activity went, or combinations of children (final focus group). Ruby compared reflexive reflection involved in participation in my research study with her usual technical reflection: ‘‘You don’t usually think about yourself. You don’t spend much time. Well, I reflect on my practice, but it’s usually about something that’s happened during the day’’ (individual interview).

Participants negotiated positions in the identity work discourse when they discussed influences of role modelling on their subjectivities. Role models were described as ways to be teachers that participants could evaluate. They could then decide whether to carry out identity work. Poppy linked negative role modelling with her position as responsible for shaping her own teaching subjectivities:

Teachers that I ... see do things that I hate or think '... what are you doing?' I think influences me a lot, and it makes me reflect on not just my own practice but probably just as much other people's, if not more, 'cause I think 'Ok, I know not to do that'.  
(First focus group)

Sally described a positive role model that had influenced her subjectivity: "I think for a long time I thought, 'How would she deal with that?'" (individual interview). Sally felt conflicted by her classification of her role model as "what I see as a teacher" (first focus group) because she saw herself as different: "It would be really hard to put on a façade all the time" (individual interview). Poppy expressed an agentic attitude that reconciled this tension:

[Role modelling is] not that you're actually [trying to be] that person, but maybe, just some certain aspects of her practice, or ... like taking a little piece from her, and then, maybe, a little piece from a book, [and a] piece from an experience".  
(Individual interview)

Tensions and contradictions arose when participants became aware of conflicting subjectivities in dominant and alternative discourses. Different ways of understanding identity concepts also led to tensions. Discursive practices that arose from the identity work discourse encouraged participants to take positions within dominant discourses. However, there were conflicts between subjectivities in the dominant discourses. Participants positioned in

the identity work discourse felt responsible for managing and negotiating their subjectivities to reconcile these conflicts.

## **Conclusion**

The participants in my research study had been exposed to discipline and governmentality that shaped their subjectivities within the identity work discourse through ITE practices and surveillance. They learned how to govern themselves to do identity work that would shape their teacher subjectivities according to dominant discourses of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Participants wanted to have professional knowledge, skills and attitudes, and to be relational professionals and reflective practitioners. Their identity work was carried out with these aims in mind. The identity work discourse positioned them as responsible for shaping their personal professional identities.

As participants moved out of ITE and through the teacher registration process, the overt discipline became less, leaving self-governmentality and desire for pleasure to motivate them to maintain subjectivities of teachers who do identity work. The pleasure they gained from belonging, being regarded as good teachers, having self-efficacy over their subjectivities and influencing others' perceptions seemed to motivate these participants to carry out identity work.

These participants experienced tensions between their teaching subjectivities when engaged in identity work. Being a reflective teacher demands consideration of possible changes and alternative subjectivities. Participants received many discursive messages about being good early childhood teachers and negotiated these in professional social interactions. When messages conflicted with each other, and with existing subjectivities, participants

considered discursive practices at their disposal to negotiate their teaching subjectivities to resolve these conflicts.

## **Chapter Eight: Discussion**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, discussion of my findings will be framed by the research questions, discourses that emerged from the data, my postmodern theoretical framework and reviewed literature. Three dominant discourses emerged from Foucauldian discourse analysis of data from the facilitated self-study process: the authority discourse, the relational professionalism discourse, and the identity work discourse. The context discourse of identity shaping emerged as an alternative to the identity work discourse. I will compare facilitated self-study and institutionally-directed reflective writing as methods for early childhood teachers to negotiate their subjectivities, or understandings of their personal professional identities.

My participants were positioned in discourses and also authored their subjectivities as they engaged in discursive practices. Self-authoring describes how individuals negotiate subjectivities through inner dialogue with internal and external influences. Interpretive practice describes interplay between discourses and discursive practices. Data showed that three dominant discourses constrained the range of subjectivities available to my participants. Discursive practices arise from discourses and are “the means through which the self is constructed” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000, p. 89). They provide resources for individuals in social settings to negotiate their subjectivities through interactions. Discursive practices may position individuals through discipline or self-governmentality, or they may involve individuals exerting agency to claim desirable subjectivities, or to resist or negotiate subjectivities.



The participants were newly-qualified, provisionally-registered teachers working in early childhood education centres in Aotearoa New Zealand. They were situated in an increasingly professionalised workforce in a nationally regulated education sector. Government policies, regulations and professional standards provide frameworks of authority. *Graduating Teacher Standards* shape initial teacher education (ITE) courses. Qualified teachers are expected to meet professional standards set out in the *Registered Teachers Criteria* and become fully-registered. These standards reflect discourses of early childhood professionalism such as traditional functionalist, managerialist and relational professionalism discourses. The dominant discourses that emerged from data in my research share values with these discourses of professionalism.

The first research question considered ways the early childhood teacher participants negotiated their personal professional identities when engaged in facilitated self study, and the second research question explored how institutionally-directed reflective writing influenced negotiations of participants' personal professional identities.

### **Discussion: Research Questions**

Personal professional identities are understood to be “complex, contingent, contextualized and multi-faceted” (Harrison, et al., 2003, pp. 103-104) from a postmodern perspective. My research explored participants' subjectivities that reflected their understandings of their personal professional identities.

Participants' negotiations of subjectivities were investigated through analysis of data from facilitated self-study and selected institutionally-directed reflective writing.

The first research question asked: how do early childhood teachers negotiate their personal professional identities when engaged in a facilitated self-study

process? Data analysis showed that participants in my research negotiated subjectivities by engaging in and being subjected to discursive practices within three dominant discourses. Participants discussed or demonstrated engagement in discursive practices in past experiences or during self-study. The second research question asked: how does institutionally-directed reflective writing contribute to teachers' negotiations of personal professional identities? The data showed that institutionally-directed reflective writing provided opportunities for participants to engage in discursive practices within discourses. Reflection could be a disciplinary or self-governing discursive practice which positioned participants as reflective practitioners within the identity work discourse, and positioned them to conform to available subjectivities within all three dominant discourses. Participants could also use reflection as an agentic discursive practice to negotiate their subjectivities.

***Research Question One: How do early childhood teachers negotiate their personal professional identities when engaged in a facilitated self-study process?***

#### *The Facilitated Self-Study Process*

Data was collected through facilitated self-study: first and final focus group discussions, self-study written tasks based on selected institutionally-directed reflective writing, and individual interviews. I chose facilitated self-study because it involves reflection, collaboration and making findings public (Loughran, 2004, 2007). Self-study is based in modernist perspectives, which assume that there is a self to study. Ruby's and Jessie's comments about the facilitated self-study process reflected a modernist perspective on identity: "I think it's made me more aware of who I am as a teacher" (Ruby, final focus group); "what it did with me is to put myself on hold again ... this is what you

need to do, think [deeply about] who you are” (Jessie, final interview). However, Jessie, Sally and Poppy also described their personal professional identities in ways that acknowledged postmodern complexity and instability. Participants were able to express tensions between different conceptions of identities within the self-study framework.

The facilitated self-study process provided opportunities for collaboration during focus group discussions. Participants collaborated in focus group discussions as they shared ideas and responded to each other with agreements, disagreements, humour, surprise and negotiations. Poppy and Ruby discussed their ideas prior to the final focus group discussion, and collaborated to explain their understandings. Hug and Möller (2005) experienced intellectual, emotional and pedagogical connectedness through collaborative self-study. Naomi missed the first focus group discussion, and described intellectual connectedness when the final focus group discussion caused her to reconsider her views: “It’s been interesting listening to the girls .... I have a [totally] different slant, and they’ve actually made me think about things” (final focus group discussion).

Participants knew I intended to make my research public, and they shared their thoughts and reflections with each other and me during the facilitated self-study process. Loughran (2007) linked making self-study public with encouraging participants to challenge personal theories, avoiding self-justification and helping to provide validity through trustworthiness. During the self-study process, Jessie challenged her personal theory that she had lost her whole identity through immigration, and changed her theory of identity to admit multiple subjectivities. Ruby became aware that her personal theory of teaching could be expanded from respect and relationships to include “experience equals knowledge for me” (individual interview). Naomi’s

personal theory that separated her identity from her teaching practice remained unchanged, but she did consider her theory: “I thought ‘Am I saying two different things here?’” (individual interview).

Data from facilitated self-study provided evidence that all participants negotiated their subjectivities through discursive practices within the three emergent dominant discourses. Evidence consisted of: claims to subjectivities; expressions of discursive values and beliefs; narratives of past experiences reflecting discursive practices; and evidence of discursive practices within the facilitated self-study process.

### *Claims to Subjectivities*

All participants made claims to subjectivities when they described understandings of their identities in terms of dominant discourses. Such self-description resonates with Beijjaard et al.’s (2004) description of teachers’ negotiations of professional identities as ways of making sense of themselves. Cohen’s (2010) teacher participants used identity bids in professional discussions with colleagues as discursive practices to claim desired identities as teachers-as-learners. Examples of claims to subjectivities from the facilitated self-study process included Sally’s self-description as a qualified teacher in a position of responsibility, Naomi’s reference to a survey that showed her that she was “really relational” (final focus group) and Ruby’s self-characterisation as a “real reflective person” (final focus group). These subjectivities represented acceptance of subject positions offered by dominant discourses.

Ruby’s self-description as someone who struggled with written work caused tension with her positioning in the authority discourse as a qualified teacher with proven academic skills. Sometimes participants sorted out and

orchestrated voices from internal and external influences to negotiate tensions in their subjectivities. A dialogic self is always being addressed by and is always answering the social world (Holland, et al., 1998). Ruby's internal influences from previous education experiences provided her self-image as academic 'struggler', while external ITE influences demanded academic competence.

### *Discursive Values and Beliefs*

Participants expressed positive and negative orientations to discursive values and beliefs when engaged in facilitated self-study. Dominant discourses work by making values and beliefs they represent into accepted knowledge or truth (Moss & Petrie, 2002). Subjectivities that reflect these values and beliefs become 'normal'. Belonging to a social group involves signalling the 'right' values and beliefs (Gee, 1990). Duncan's (2008) kindergarten teacher participants discovered that education reforms brought changes in 'right' values and beliefs from those underpinning a traditional kindergarten discourse to those reflecting a neo-liberal managerialism discourse.

Positive orientation to values and beliefs of dominant discourses resulted in all participants claiming and accepting subjectivities. However, negative orientation to discursive values and beliefs caused tensions and resistances. All participants showed positive orientation to relational professionalism discursive values and beliefs. Both Ruby and Poppy stated that there is "nothing without relationships" (Ruby, individual interview). Warm, trusting and positive relationships evidently brought pleasure to the professional lives of these early childhood teacher participants.

Both positive and negative orientations to values and beliefs of the authority discourse were expressed. Sally, Jessie, Naomi and Poppy expressed pride in

subjectivities as holders of qualifications and specialised knowledge, but Ruby expressed ambivalence about academic values of the discourse. However, Ruby showed strongly positive orientation towards valuing continued learning and seeking of knowledge, and identified herself as a “lifelong learner” (final focus group). Sally and Jessie had negative feelings about value placed on particular qualifications and disregard of experience by the authority discourse as discursive practices of normalisation and classification denied them subjectivities as qualified teachers and required them to re-enter ITE. Similarly, Harrison et al.’s (2003) participants were disciplined by an authoritative discourse of flexibility. They disagreed with discursive values of reformist capitalism and resisted the discourse through creative strategies as they could not defy discursive authority. In my research study, Jessie and Sally attempted to circumvent the discipline of the authority discourse through changing job titles (Sally) and applying to have her overseas qualification and experience recognised (Jessie).

Participants showed positive orientation to values and beliefs of the identity work discourse by claiming subjectivities of reflective teachers who valued self-understanding, who were capable of change, and who were responsible for improving their teaching practice. Ruby specifically expressed belief in self-understanding when she said: “I think I want to know who I am” (first focus group). Both Ruby and Poppy described themselves as teachers who learned from experience. Naomi showed strong positive orientation towards standing up for her values and beliefs when she described herself as someone who wished to hold on to her identity.

How participants orientated towards or away from discursive values and beliefs of the dominant discourses was reflected in discursive practices they

reported from past experiences and discursive practices they experienced during the self-study process itself.

*Past Experiences reflecting Discursive Practices*

During facilitated self-study, all participants described past experiences that revealed engagement in discursive practices to negotiate their subjectivities. Discursive practices included accepting available positions because of discipline or self-governmentality, and motivation by desire and pleasure. Discursive practices also included resistance or negotiation of subjectivities. In Duncan's (2008) study of kindergarten teachers' responses to education reforms, participant teachers were positioned as business-minded competitors with teachers from other kindergartens. Although they felt powerless, some of the teachers resisted this neo-liberal positioning through involvement in the Kindergarten Teachers Union.

Sally and Jessie told narratives about being subjected to the disciplinary discursive practice of classification within the authority discourse when they were forced to accept positions as unqualified student teachers, despite their previous teaching qualifications. Sally described being classified as qualified when she gained her first teaching qualification. Discipline was exerted on her to re-enter ITE when she was re-classified as an unqualified teacher aide. Sally accepted the position of student teacher only when the disciplinary classification of the discourse threatened her job. Jessie recounted her teaching team's discursive practices of mutual surveillance and self-governmentality when they reflected on each other's practice. Devos (2010) described senior colleagues mentoring new teachers undergoing a teacher registration programme as governmentality to conform with dominant discourses.

All participants told narratives that reflected their subjectivities as warm, positive and respectful within the relational professionalism discourse. They governed themselves to conform to this discourse, as shown by Poppy's expression of the maxim "leave your baggage at the door" (first focus group). Poppy felt hypocritical when she found it difficult to always act this way. This reflected discursive self-governmentality to maintain a positive relational style even when experiencing negative emotions.

While engaged in facilitated self-study, all participants told narratives of using discursive practices to reconcile tensions or contradictions, or leave them unresolved, presenting multiple conflicting subjectivities. Individuals experiencing tensions and contradictions in their subjectivities may engage in inner dialogue to sort out authoritative and persuasive influences. Alsup (2006) noticed that dissonance between her participants' understandings of their personal and professional identities sometimes resulted in "borderlands discourse" (p. 36) to confront dissonance and transform subjectivities. Naomi recounted her professional experience of overcoming her unwillingness to challenge authority through discussion with a mentor that showed her ways to be assertive. Ruby told narratives of past professional experiences reflecting negotiation of her conflicting subjectivities of qualified teacher with academic writing skills, and someone who has difficulty expressing herself in writing. She said she preferred people to observe her teaching practice rather than read her written teaching philosophy statement. Ruby improvised her subjectivity in the authority discourse with her self-description as a lifelong learner. She managed her difficulty with academic work by choosing to gain specialised knowledge through professional development. Ruby actively used discursive resources available to her within dominant discourses (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000).



### *Discursive Practices in the Self-Study Process*

Participants engaged in discursive practices during the facilitated self-study process itself. Data provided evidence of circulating power relations in focus group discussions and interviews. All participants used narratives as a discursive practice to support claims to subjectivities. All participants engaged in reflection during the self-study process to accept, resist or negotiate subjectivities within discourses. Freese's (2006) participant was similarly enabled to examine his own teaching practice critically when engaged in a reflective journal dialogue with a mentor.

Power circulated between participants and me, and also within the group of participants. As a poststructural researcher, I planned to minimise repressive power relations through research design and respectful interactions during data collection. I held power as researcher, and as former teacher educator of these participants. Data showed that I used open-ended questions, probes and prompts and responded to participants. I also exerted power through control of discussion structure and progress, as I introduced topics and asked questions. There were some examples of closed and leading questions, and my responses to participants' contributions sometimes indicated approval, surprise or reservations, all of which would have influenced data. Conversely, participants exerted power over me through interpretations of my questions, through silence, and by sometimes disrupting the researcher/participant relationship: "I want to ask you Alison ... can I ask you about your identity?" (Jessie, first focus group). Participants may have felt constrained from critically reflecting on the power of the ITE provider because of our former relationships within ITE. When Sally critically reflected on ITE assessment practices, Poppy and Ruby reacted with surprise: "I've always thought ... if I wanted to challenge something I could" (Poppy, first focus group). However, the participants in the

final focus group discussion collaboratively critically reflected on ITE assessment of reflective journal entries.

Circulating power relations among participants during focus group discussions were shown through humour, teasing, surprise, affirmations and disagreement. Participants negotiated subjectivities through challenging and supportive interactions. During the first focus group discussion, Ruby reflected the self-improvement value of the identity work discourse when she said she wanted to be the best she could be. Jessie questioned how Ruby could know what she was striving for and suggested that Ruby was attempting an impossible task. Ruby responded by claiming a subjectivity within the identity work discourse of a teacher in control of who she would be, telling Jessie that she would “let her know [what her ‘best’ was] when she was 30” (first focus group). Supportive interactions from other participants helped Poppy to express her resistance and negotiations of centre policies that shaped her subjectivities within the authority discourse.

All participants used narratives as discursive practices throughout the facilitated self-study process. Narratives provided more than simple accounts of past events. Participants described past discursive practices through their stories, and also actively used narratives to support their claims to subjectivities. In the first focus group discussion Ruby used her description of trying a strategy of ‘courageous conversations’ to make claims to subjectivities within the identity work discourse as assertive and willing to innovate in professional relationships. Sally negotiated her subjectivities during her narrative of her changing qualification status: “I know how frustrated I was and everything but I don’t think I felt like a teacher before” (first focus group discussion).

Reflection during facilitated self-study provided all participants with opportunities to accept, resist or negotiate subjectivities within discourses. Jessie used reflection as a discursive practice to negotiate alternative subjectivities as she engaged with the facilitated self-study process. Initially she had a subjectivity of having one core identity. She felt as if she had lost her “whole person identity” (first focus group) when she was excluded from the subjectivity of qualified teacher. Her thinking changed through reflection during facilitated self-study and she acknowledged that she could have changing and multiple subjectivities.

The facilitated self-study process offered opportunities for participants to engage in critical reflection about their experiences of power relations, and to question social and political contexts of their teaching practice. Self-study has been described as an opportunity for teachers to critically reflect on their complex role (Pithouse, et al., 2009). All participants showed awareness of power relations in relationships with those in authority over them, such as government, ITE providers and colleagues in their centre hierarchy. On several occasions during data collection, Sally critically reflected on teacher educators’ expectations of ways student teachers should act and express views. Critical reflection occurred when there were tensions between subjectivities and participants felt constrained by power relations. Naomi disagreed with some centre teaching practices but felt she was required to comply with them. Critical reflection empowered some participants to resist, negotiate or improvise subjectivities. Poppy questioned the professional integrity of a superior colleague who demanded Poppy’s compliance. Ruby, Poppy and Naomi showed that they were aware of their own power in professional relationships when they discussed assertiveness as an agentic strategy to manage power relations.

Critical reflection was used as a discursive practice that demonstrated participants' claims to subjectivities within the identity work discourse as teachers who stand up for values and beliefs. Critical reflection is advocated as a way for teachers to become aware of social injustice and inequities (Dahlberg, et al., 2007; Grieshaber, 2001; MacNaughton, 2005; Smyth, 1992). Participants engaged in critical reflection during facilitated self-study that demonstrated awareness of social issues of injustice to people of diverse cultures, and gender stereotyping of male early childhood teachers. Sally and Naomi also described commitment to inclusion of children with special needs.

Participants did not use the terminology of discourse and positioning, but they all showed awareness of the authority discourse, especially when they were subjected to discipline and classified as qualified teachers or not. In contrast, some positions and subjectivities were presented as their independent choice. They were aware of social and political contexts that shaped some of their subjectivities, but did not specifically discuss discourse theory.

The facilitated self-study process gave participants opportunities to negotiate their understandings of their personal professional identities as they claimed subjectivities and identified with discursive values and beliefs. They recalled and engaged in discursive practices, and used critical reflection to consider how power relations in their professional relationships influenced their subjectivities.

***Research Question Two: How does institutionally-directed reflective writing contribute to teachers' negotiations of personal professional identities?***

*Institutionally-Directed Reflective Writing*

In the second phase of data collection, participants selected reflective journal entries and philosophy statements from their ITE course to carry out self-study written tasks. The criterion for selection of journal entries was participants' decisions that entries were significant to their personal professional identities. Negotiations of subjectivities were evident in institutionally-directed reflective writing and in written and verbal discussions of this writing. Reflection can be described as a discursive practice of discipline or self-governmentality, and also an agentic discursive practice to negotiate subjectivities.

Reflective writing is valued in the identity work discourse as a means for teachers to carry out metacognitive identity work. Most of the literature I reviewed about reflection by teachers assumed that reflection was beneficial (Graham & Phelps, 2003; Hung, 2008; Korthagen, 2004; Sutherland, et al., 2010; Warin, et al., 2006). This assumption was generally based on a modernist view of essentialist teacher identities that could be known and developed. For example, Korthagen (2004) advocated for core reflection focused on "what is deep inside us" (p. 85). The value placed on reflection by my participants' ITE provider was reinforced by tying reflection to assessment.

Reflective writing has been criticised as impossible to extract from discursive contexts, affirming taken-for-granted perceptions, focused on technical problem-solving and a means for discipline and governmentality (Atkinson, 2004; Parker, cited in Mayo, 2003; Smyth, 1992). While reflexive and critical

reflection can be compatible with postmodern perspectives, assessed reflective writing in a format based on Schön's theories in a context of professional standards and regulations is likely to encourage reflection from modernist perspectives. Professional standards provide essentialist 'good teacher' images, with which teachers are disciplined to conform. Reflective writing within ITE can be seen as a disciplinary discursive practice that encourages student teachers to take on subjectivities within dominant discourses and restricts acceptable reflection through assessment (Smyth, 1992). In contrast, critical reflection can enable awareness and questioning of power relations.

Within these significant limitations, institutionally-directed reflective writing could be used as an agentic discursive practice within dominant discourses, giving participants pleasure of feeling empowered to negotiate their subjectivities.

#### *Reflective writing as Discipline and Governmentality*

Student teachers embedded in ITE institutional power relations might feel reluctant to engage in critical reflection questioning power relations associated with government and ITE in assessed reflective writing. My participants used various kinds of reflection in their institutionally-directed reflective writing. In their selected reflective journal entries, Jessie used technical reflection and Naomi used reflexive reflection, while Sally, Ruby and Poppy used a mix of reflexive and critical reflection. As the research design did not include a quantitative component, no conclusions can be drawn about relative amounts of different types of reflection. All participants reflected critically on their reflective writing during the self-study discussions. Naomi and Jessie's style of reflection in their selected institutionally-directed reflective journal entries contrasted with their written and verbal discussion of this writing in facilitated

self-study. Jessie used technical reflection to consider teaching strategies in all her selected reflective journal entries. For example, she reflected on helping an unsettled child start to feel a sense of belonging. In contrast, she used a critical approach when she reflected on this reflective journal entry, and linked the child's experience of feeling lost and her own sense of having lost her identity. Naomi used a reflexive approach in all her selected reflective journal entries, where she took responsibility for shaping her personal professional identity. However, she used critical reflection to consider power relations in her discussion of the journal entries in facilitated self-study.

Institutionally-directed reflective writing acted as a means of discipline and governmentality in all three dominant discourses: "Reflection, then, becomes a means of focusing upon ends determined by others, not an active process of contesting, debating, and determining those ends" (Smyth, 1992, p. 280). Seifert (2004) suggested that students whose experiences and beliefs differed from dominant discourses may feel unsafe engaging in journal writing because of the disciplinary force of dominant beliefs. Reflective writing controlled by templates and assessment demonstrated interplay between the authority discourse and the identity work discourse because participants were required to be recognised as reflective teachers to be recognised as qualified teachers.

The four participants in the final focus group discussion showed they were aware of positioning in the authority discourse as subject to surveillance. In an occasional ITE practice, reflective writing was assessed by teacher educators unknown to the student teachers. My participants preferred to link assessment of reflective writing to relational professionalism, and likened assessment by 'their' teacher educators to a dialogue with a trusted friend. Sally and Ruby demonstrated awareness of positioning in the authority discourse in selected reflective journal entries discussing writing philosophy statements. Achieving

this task would allow them to claim desired subjectivities as knowledgeable and credible teachers. Ruby was aware of tension between this subjectivity and her subjectivity as ‘academic struggler’. Sally felt challenged by the ITE requirement to write a philosophy statement that represented a modernist view of identity. She was aware of her dynamic identities: “how am I meant to document my thoughts, philosophies, values and beliefs when I didn’t know what they were?” (self-study written tasks, IDRW). Poppy described her values and beliefs statement as discursively disciplined within the authority discourse through assessment: “for an assignment purpose” (self-study written tasks, individual interview).

All participants selected reflective journal entries that made specific claims to subjectivities demonstrating their relational professionalism: valuing warm, trusting relationships (Naomi), feeling empathy with an unsettled child (Jessie), feeling connectedness with children (Ruby), knowing a child’s cues and advocating for a child (Poppy) and adapting a teaching approach to maintain positive relationships with children (Sally). The ITE reflective journal template encouraged reflective writing that used narratives to provide evidence for subjectivity claims. Naomi described feeling unsure how to interact with a child with special needs, then realising she should just ‘be herself’ and build a warm, trusting relationship with the child. She claimed the subjectivity of relational professional.

Subjectivity claims in assessed reflective writing reflected discipline or self-governmentality as my participants sought to prove they were ‘good teachers’ by positioning themselves within dominant discourses. All participants referred to reflective writing as a tool to agentially negotiate and transform their subjectivities, tackle challenges in their professional lives and resolve or manage tensions, contradictions and resistances.



### *Reflective Writing as an Agentic Discursive Practice*

My participants understood themselves as reflective practitioners who could agentially negotiate their subjectivities. They could evaluate their teaching practices in terms of available subjectivities within the authority, relational professional and identity work discourses, and plan ways to change or negotiate subjectivities. The participants could use reflection to plan to take on particular subjectivities, and to resist or transform available subjectivities.

All participants identified themselves as reflective teachers and linked this subjectivity with institutionally-directed reflective writing. Sally said that a major influence for her as a teacher was “being taught to be reflective” (first focus group). Both Naomi and Jessie showed commitment to discursive beliefs about reflection within the identity work discourse. Naomi expressed the view that being a teacher necessarily meant being “open to change and reflection” (final focus group). Poppy embraced the subjectivity of reflective teacher when she described writing reflections as “opening up my mind” (final focus group). Reflective writing was regarded in the literature and by my participants as valuable for teacher improvement, in keeping with the values of the identity work discourse.

Several of the selected reflective journal entries described situations where participants reflected on alternative subjectivities and used the reflective writing process to agentially consider the situation. Both Poppy and Ruby commented that using the Schön template for reflective writing helped them plan their responses in challenging teaching situations. In one of Poppy’s selected reflective journal entries she described a conflict situation with a colleague and considered a number of possible approaches. Poppy critically reflected in all her selected journal entries, showing awareness of power

relations and considering how to manage these situations. Ruby showed her determination to claim a desired subjectivity through reflective journal writing when she described trying several strategies to meet the challenge of writing her teaching philosophy statement. Sally and Ruby described the template for reflective journal entries as a set of tools for reflection.

Poppy, Ruby and Sally critically reflected on power relations in some selected reflective journal entries. Data from facilitated self-study phases showed that all participants were aware of power relations, but they did not use the terminology of discourse theory. Danielewicz (2001) and Alsup (2006) advocated pedagogies of teacher education that included critical reflection and awareness of discourse and its influence on teacher subjectivities. Osgood (2006) suggested that teachers need to develop agency informed by awareness of discursive forces and alternative counter-discourses.

For some participants, institutionally-directed reflective writing provided skills that they used to agentically modify reflection methods they chose as qualified teachers. Sally, Ruby and Jessie said that although institutionally-directed reflective writing provided useful tools, they chose not to use this style in their teaching practice. Sally and Ruby described their preference for technical reflection. Sally contrasted the reflexive approach of her past institutionally-directed reflective writing with her present technical reflection about managing everyday teaching events.

The data collected indicated that institutionally-directed reflective writing reinforced my participants' positioning within dominant discourses through discipline of the reflective writing template and assessment. Participants' negotiated their subjectivities within dominant discourses by planning to adapt teaching strategies to claim desirable subjectivities. They also negotiated how

they used reflective writing once they were no longer subject to the discipline of institutionally-directed reflective writing.

## **Conclusion**

Institutionally-directed reflective writing and facilitated self-study offered my participants different opportunities for negotiating subjectivities through metacognitive identity work. In both situations, subjectivities were discursively fashioned through interplay between discursive practices and dominant discourses. All participants were active in authoring their subjectivities as they engaged in inner dialogue with internal and external influences representing a multiplicity of discourses.

Institutionally-directed reflective writing had been written to meet ITE requirements and had been assessed. The selected reflective journal writing showed technical, reflexive, and some critical reflection. Institutionally-directed reflective writing could be seen as disciplinary in terms of all three dominant discourses, but was also used by participants as an agentic discursive practice. In the facilitated self-study process, my participants revisited previous teaching and ITE experiences, and examined selected institutionally-directed reflective writing. They engaged in self-study reflective writing and discussion with other participants and with me as researcher. The data showed that they claimed subjectivities and values that reflected dominant discourses through engagement in and subjection to discursive practices. They engaged in some critical reflection that indicated that they were sometimes aware of power relations and positioning. They described ways in which they resisted and negotiated subjectivities within discourses.

The facilitated self-study process was largely semi-structured and designed to encourage participants to explore their understandings of their personal

professional identities. Participants who used technical and reflexive approaches in institutionally-directed reflective journal entries used critical reflection when discussing these in facilitated self-study. Agentic self-authoring requires a level of critical reflection that allows individuals to perceive options for negotiating subjectivities. Three dominant discourses guided all participants' negotiations of their subjectivities in both the facilitated self-study process and the institutionally-directed reflective writing. The participants authored their subjectivities within discursive boundaries, and used discursive practices agentially to resist, negotiate and transform their subjectivities.

## **Chapter Nine: Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

Early childhood teachers' professional interactions are underpinned by their multiple, complex and dynamic understandings of who they are as teachers. Professional interactions happen within discourses, and influence self-understandings of all children and adults in early childhood education. As early childhood education is embedded in societal contexts, these self-understandings reflect power relations and issues of social justice in wider society. Early childhood teachers who understand how subjectivities are influenced through discourses may develop self-efficacy to address inequities and injustices through their professional practices.

I took a poststructural approach to investigate how five newly-qualified early childhood teachers negotiated their personal professional identities while engaged in facilitated self-study, and how institutionally-directed reflective writing influenced the negotiation process. Participants progressively explored their subjectivities through a facilitated self-study process. Foucault's theories underpinned data analysis, which led me to identify three dominant discourses that shaped participants' subjectivities.

Concepts of self-authoring (Holland, et al., 1998) and interpretive practice (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000) helped me understand teachers as actively engaged with their social and cultural worlds. Subjectivities are constrained by available subject positions within discourses, and by discursive practices that exert discipline and governmentality. Teachers engage in agentic discursive practices which provide resources for negotiation of subjectivities. Teachers

can claim subjectivities that give pleasure, they can resist positioning by discourses, and they can negotiate and improvise subjectivities.

I concluded that facilitated self-study and institutionally-directed reflective writing offered different opportunities for participants to negotiate their subjectivities through experiencing disciplinary and agentic discursive practices within dominant discourses.

### **Key Findings**

Key findings from my research study were that three dominant discourses of early childhood education shaped the participants' subjectivities: the authority discourse, the relational professionalism discourse and the identity work discourse.

Within the authority discourse, participants were positioned as claiming and being claimed by authority as teachers. Participants claimed authority as knowledgeable, skilled and responsible teachers. They were claimed by authority by being positioned to comply with expectations regarding standards, qualifications and hierarchical relationships with colleagues. The relational professionalism discourse was subtly gendered and valued warm relationships that are instinctive and natural. According to the relational professionalism discourse, an early childhood teacher should be emotionally engaged in positive, respectful and responsive relationships with others in their professional settings. The identity work discourse assumed teachers were responsible for shaping their own subjectivities through metacognitive identity work, especially reflection. Positioning in this discourse leads to two forms of identity work: standing up for values and beliefs; and working on change, development and improvement in teacher subjectivities.

Alternative discourses that emerged from the data represented different sets of values and beliefs from those of dominant discourses. Some participants referred to alternative discourses to the authority discourse that did not value qualifications for early childhood teachers, and reflected mothering discursive beliefs in early childhood teaching as instinctive and natural. The authority discourse and the identity work discourse were alternative discourses on relationships to the relational professionalism discourse. The authority discourse reflected beliefs that relationships between teachers involving power relations in centre hierarchies could involve direction and compliance. The identity work discourse valued assertiveness and advocacy, which could result in challenging and confrontational relationships. The contextual discourse emerged as an alternative discourse to the identity work discourse. The contextual discourse made subjectivities available that were passively shaped by contextual influences such as family, society, culture and gender.

Data showed that participants assumed values and beliefs associated with dominant discourses of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, data also showed that all participants actively negotiated their subjectivities by engaging in discursive practices. Understanding that individuals negotiate subjectivities in interplay between positioning in dominant discourses and engagement in agentic discursive practices helped me to answer my research questions.

### **Research Questions**

My answers to the two research questions were based on my understandings of how the participants' subjectivities were shaped and negotiated within dominant discourses. Facilitated self-study and institutionally-directed reflective writing contributed to negotiations of subjectivities. All participants

engaged in reflection during facilitated self-study and in institutionally-directed reflective writing. Reflection was a discursive practice that positioned participants within all three dominant discourses, and was also a resource for participants to negotiate subjectivities through self-authoring.

1. How do early childhood teachers negotiate their personal professional identities when engaged in a facilitated self-study process?

When my participants engaged in facilitated self-study, they negotiated subjectivities by experiencing discursive practices within three dominant discourses. They revisited previous teaching and ITE experiences, examined selected reflective writing and discussed their subjectivities. They claimed subjectivities and demonstrated positive or negative orientations to discursive values and beliefs. Discursive practices were described in narratives of past experiences and demonstrated during the facilitated self-study process. Their discussion included critical reflection that indicated some awareness of power relations and discursive positioning.

2. How does institutionally-directed reflective writing contribute to teachers' negotiations of personal professional identities?

Institutionally-directed reflective writing represented both disciplinary and agentic discursive practices within three dominant discourses. The selected reflective journal writing reflected discipline and self-governmentality, as well as negotiations and claims to desirable subjectivities within dominant discourses. Institutionally-directed reflective writing positioned participants as reflective practitioners within the identity work discourse, and positioned them to conform to available subjectivities within all three dominant discourses. Participants could also use reflection as a discursive practice to agentially



negotiate subjectivities. Three participants engaged in critical reflection in their selected journal entries. Two participants who used technical or reflexive reflection in their selected reflective journal entries engaged in critical reflection when they discussed these in facilitated self-study.

My answers to my research questions reflect self-authoring and interpretive practice concepts. Participants actively sorted out and orchestrated messages about how they should understand themselves as teachers. Dominant discourses and disciplinary discursive practices provided constraints to possible subjectivities, and agentic discursive practices provided participants with resources to negotiate their subjectivities.

### **Evaluating my Research Study**

I designed my research study with the intention of producing a thesis with validity according to qualitative research criteria of trustworthiness and credibility. I aimed to be a trustworthy researcher by providing the participants with comprehensive and detailed information throughout the research process. PowerPoint presentations at focus group discussions and interviews repeated research questions and ethical requirements. I outlined key concepts of my theoretical framework at the first focus group discussion. I provided participants with summaries of focus group discussions and transcripts of their interviews to check for accuracy and to inform subsequent stages of facilitated self-study. Participants negotiated inclusion of their personal information in the final report with me. I provided the participants with a brief summary of key findings of the study and the final report was made available to participants on request.

Multiple sources of data provide trustworthiness (Taylor, 2010) to poststructural research as they allow for participants' changing perspectives

and shifting positions. My participants revisited understandings of their personal professional identities through multiple phases of data collection allowed. They shaped self-understandings through interactions with fellow participants during focus group discussions. They revisited and reflected on reflective writing from their ITE course when they carried out self-study written tasks. They explored their personal professional identities with me during individual interviews based on preliminary analysis of the first focus group discussion and their self-study written tasks. Five participants and four data collection phases provided a quantity of data that I could manage as researcher. I aimed to persuade readers that my findings were transferable and confirmable (Alsup, 2006) by providing a final report with thick description of participants' experiences supported by extensive quoting. I intended that readers familiar with early childhood teaching and ITE in Aotearoa New Zealand would find the data recognisable and credible.

Limitations to my research study need to be acknowledged. Greater diversity within the participant group would have provided a wider range of perspectives. My participants came from a small, uniform group. Statistics indicate early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand reflect similar uniformity. In 2010 98% of early childhood teachers were female and 72% were of European ethnicity (Education Counts, 2011). Validity could have been enhanced by adding data collection phases. Further individual interviews could have explored participants' reflections on their institutionally-directed reflective writing in more depth. Further semi-structured focus groups could have encouraged more critical reflection on power relations in participants' professional settings. Data collection could have included observations of participants' professional interactions with children, families and colleagues. This would have provided further triangulation through multiple data sources.

Power relations and limits to participants' involvement in research decision-making need to be acknowledged. I controlled the self-study process through design and facilitation. I felt increasingly skilled in strategies like effective listening and enabling participants to explore tentative understandings as I gained experience in facilitating focus group discussions and interviews. Data showed that all participants theorised about their personal professional identities, and the four data collection phases allowed them to reconsider and adapt their understandings. However, the important Foucauldian discourse analysis was carried out by me with no analytical input from the participants. Their feedback to my summary of the final report was not included as data. Despite these limitations, my small-scale research study can tentatively suggest some implications for early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand.

### **Implications for Early Childhood Teachers**

My research study was a small-scale, qualitative study in a poststructural research paradigm, so findings cannot be generalised to all early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand. My findings indicate that subjectivities of my participant early childhood teachers were shaped by dominant discourses of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Data indicated that subjectivities of each participant had been shaped by the same three discourses. Readers who find this study credible and trustworthy might consider that aspects of the findings are transferable to other early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand. If there is transferability, then implications for early childhood teachers could be suggested.

Early childhood teachers who understand how dominant discourses position them may be empowered to agentially engage in discursive practices to

negotiate their subjectivities. Teachers who reflect critically may be aware of how power relations circulate in professional settings and society, affecting their subjectivities, and those of children, families and colleagues. This may lead to early childhood teachers advocating for social justice. Such aspirations must be tempered by recognition that teachers reflect from positions within dominant discourses, limiting their capacity for critical reflection. I believe that teachers' self-study through collaboration, critical reflection and making findings available for public comment and debate may raise teachers' awareness of dominant discourses and taken-for-granted assumptions. Facilitated self-study could stimulate exploration of personal professional identities.

### **Implications for Teacher Education**

Within limits described in the previous section, implications for teacher educators and designers of ITE courses may be suggested. Self-study has been advocated as a strategy for teacher educators to critically examine their teaching practice (Loughran, 2007). The findings of this study suggested that facilitated self-study stimulated critical reflection. Teacher educators may become aware of dominant discourses shaping teachers' and teacher educators' subjectivities through engagement in collaborative, critical self-study within a poststructural research paradigm. Dominant discourses of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand are reflected in professional standards and expectations and constrain teachers' subjectivities by presenting normative 'good teacher' identities. Awareness of discursive fashioning of subjectivities may raise teacher educators' awareness of disciplinary and agentic discursive practices in their professional settings. Such awareness may enable them to challenge modernist assumptions of ITE and interact with diverse student teachers and colleagues in equitable ways.

## **Future Research Directions**

Future research directions could address some limitations of my research. Undertaking similar research with participants who reflected diversity of ethnicity, gender and sexuality would widen the range of perspectives. A similar study with teacher educator participants may suggest same or different dominant discourses shaping their subjectivities. Research within teaching teams in early childhood centres may suggest context-specific discourses. Adding further phases or data collection and including data gathered from observations of interactions with children, families and colleagues could deepen discussion about subjectivities and how they are shaped.

Research into strategies to facilitate critical reflection and awareness of discursive fashioning of subjectivities may provide productive future research directions. Although my participants' ITE course had introduced them to discourse theory, they did not use associated terminology when discussing influences on their personal professional identities. Including facilitated self-study strategies as part of ITE or teacher registration processes could be the focus of future action research.

## **Final Comments**

'Who am I as a teacher and how did I come to be this way?' were questions my participants explored through facilitated self-study. Their answers reflected my postmodern understanding of personal professional identities as multiple, complex, dynamic and negotiated through discursive practices within discourses. Three dominant discourses emerged that reflected historical, political and social contexts of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Unquestioning acceptance of discursive values and beliefs can lead to social injustice. Early childhood teachers cannot disengage with dominant

discourses, but some understanding of discursive forces shaping their subjectivities may enable critical reflection on power relations and advocacy for themselves and the children and families they work with.

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## Appendices

### A: Invitation Letter and Consent Form



*Negotiations of personal professional identities by newly-qualified early childhood teachers through facilitated self-study*

(date)

Dear

I am interested in how early childhood teachers negotiate their identities to answer: “Who am I as a teacher?”

I am developing a research study that will involve a group of five teachers from [...], for my Master of Education thesis at the University of Canterbury, College of Education.

If you have kept your reflective writing in your student portfolio, I would like to invite you to be one of the five participants in this study. You would need to be able to attend a 1.5-hour group discussion in [...] in [...], carry out two reflective tasks based on samples from your portfolio, be interviewed by me in [...] for about an hour, and take part in a second focus group discussion in [...]. The Information Sheet attached gives details of the study. Should you have any questions or concerns about your participation, please phone me on [...] or e-mail me at [alison.warren@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:alison.warren@pg.canterbury.ac.nz)

I would appreciate if you could keep this request confidential, whether or not you choose to participate.

My supervisor is Dr. Judith Duncan and she can be contacted at:

School of Māori, Cultural and Social Studies

University of Canterbury College of Education

P. O. Box 4800 Christchurch.

Email: [judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz)

Phone: 03 364 3466

If you are willing to be part of this study, could you please read, sign and return the form below to me in the enclosed envelope by ( date ) to the address below.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely

Alison Warren

[address]

*Negotiations of personal professional identities by newly-qualified early  
childhood teachers through facilitated self-study*

### CONSENT FORM

**Name**\_\_\_\_\_

**Phone**\_\_\_\_\_ **Email**\_\_\_\_\_

I have read the Information Sheet provided about this study and have a good understanding of my participation requirements. I understand that I may approach the researcher or her supervisor at any time for further information.

1. I understand that my participation in this project is entirely voluntary.
2. I believe I meet the inclusion criteria as described in the Information Sheet.
3. I understand that data will remain confidential and my pseudonym will be used in the research report, which may be published or presented. However, I acknowledge that some readers in the local community may be able to guess identities and that the focus group participants will know identities.



4. I understand that Supervisors, Dr Judith Duncan and Glynne Mackey of University of Canterbury may view data, and that they are bound by confidentiality requirements by the University Code of Ethics.
5. I consent to data collection by audiotape at the discussions and interview and as text data in the form of self-study tasks.
6. I understand data will be kept securely at the researcher's office in a locked cabinet until assessment, stored securely at the University of Canterbury for five years then destroyed and that further use of the material may be negotiated.
7. I understand that I may withdraw my participation, including withdrawal of any information I have provided, up until the data collection and analysis is complete.
8. I understand that personal information that I choose to contribute may be referred to, without identifying me, in the research report. The researcher will negotiate with me the inclusion of any personal information.
9. I understand that comments I make can be written down and used in reports, presentations and publications without my identity being revealed.
10. I understand that I will be able to check the summaries of the focus group discussions and the transcript of my interview for accuracy.
11. I agree to observe strict confidentiality regarding any verbal and written material from all stages of the study.

12. I understand that reasonable precautions have been taken to protect data transmitted by email but that the security of the information cannot be guaranteed.

13. I understand that I may decline to answer any particular question that arises in the focus group discussions and interview.

14. I understand that the researcher will remain available to me after the study and that a summary of the final report will be provided to all participants. The complete final report will be available on request.

I agree to take part in this research study.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee and [employing organisation] Research and Ethics Committee.
2. Complaints may be addressed to:

The Chair  
Educational Research Human Ethics Committee  
University of Canterbury Private Bag 4800, Christchurch  
Email: [human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)

The Chair  
Research and Ethics Committee  
[employing organisation]

## B: Information Sheet



*Negotiations of personal professional identities by newly-qualified early childhood teachers through facilitated self-study*

Dear

I am a Master of Education student at University of Canterbury College of Education.

Here is the information concerning participation in my thesis research project, which will investigate how early childhood teachers construct their personal professional identities. The research study will involve a group of five participants in two focus group discussions, one individual interview and two facilitated self-study tasks based on entries in the portfolio created as part of the [ITE] course of [.....].

Here is an outline of what I am planning:

1. There will be five participants in the study, purposefully selected to maximise diversity who meet the following inclusion criteria: having completed the course within the 12 months before the study commences and having retained the required reflective writing (portfolio).

2. Participation in the research project is entirely voluntary. Participants can withdraw at any time until the data collection and analysis is complete.
3. Exclusion criteria are: teachers who have not kept a complete range of reflective writing from their course, are uncomfortable about discussing their reflections with the researcher, are unwilling to travel or take part in focus group discussions, or are uncomfortable with the self-study requirements. People who meet one or more of the exclusion criteria may not participate in this project as they would not be able to contribute the required data.
4. The procedure planned is:
  - a. Initial focus group discussion: I will introduce the concepts under study and outline the procedure. The group will discuss their present understanding of the concepts and clarify the self-study task requirements. The timeframe to complete the tasks will be negotiated (two to four weeks). Discussion will be audio-taped and is expected to take about 1.5 hours. Refreshments will follow.
  - b. Participants will carry out the following self-study tasks:
    - i. Reflective Journal entries: Participants will select four reflective journal entries about situations in their teaching practice that they feel have significance for their personal professional identity. They will then analyse these using a set of questions.

- ii. Reflective writing about “Who am I as a teacher?” and personal professional identity: Participants will use the completed analysis of the reflective journal entries and their statements of values and beliefs (year one requirement) and philosophy (year two and three requirement) to write reflectively.

Data provided from the self-study tasks will be: copies of four reflective journal entries, a values and beliefs statement (from Year One), two philosophy statements (Year Two and Year Three), analysis of reflective journal entries and two pieces of reflective writing.

- c. Individual interview: Participants will be questioned about the self-study tasks, their negotiation of their personal professional identities, and their experience of the self-study process in a semi-structured interview at a venue convenient to them. Discussion will be audiotaped and will last about an hour.
  - d. Final focus group discussion: This will follow the same form as the initial focus group discussion, with the aim of further exploring the concept of personal professional identity.
5. The expected time frame of involvement is about three months. The time allowed for participants to complete self-study tasks will be negotiated at the first discussion, and is expected to be two or four weeks. The interviews will be held about two weeks after the self-study tasks are returned to the researcher.

6. Participants will be asked to choose a pseudonym to be used in the study report, which may be published. Any data gathered will remain confidential, however, due to the small size of the early education community, readers familiar with the researcher and institution may be able to guess identities. Participants will be aware of each others' identities through the focus group experience and of contributions to this discussion, and are required to maintain strict confidentiality.
7. Data, consisting of audiotapes, transcripts, and textual data from the self-study phase will be kept securely at the researcher's office in a locked cabinet until the research is complete then will be stored at the University of Canterbury for five years after which time it will be destroyed.
8. If the researcher proposes to use the study as a basis for further research, further use of material will be negotiated with the participants.
9. Summaries of the focus group discussions and individual interview transcripts will be circulated to participants so they can check them for accuracy. Draft analyses will be circulated to participants to provide a basis for discussion. Participants are required to observe strict confidentiality regarding all written and verbal material connected to the study.
10. Participants will be given koha to help with travel expenses to the focus group discussions.
11. The researcher will remain available to participants after the study is complete in case issues or concerns arise. A short summary of the final

report will be sent to each participant. The complete final report will be available to participants on request.

The University requires that all participants be informed that if they have any queries concerning the manner in which a research project is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to Dr Judith Duncan, who can be contacted at:

School of Māori, Cultural and Social Studies  
University of Canterbury College of Education  
Private Bag 4800 Christchurch 8140  
Email: [judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz)  
Phone: 03 364 3466

Complaints about the study should be addressed to the chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee or the chair of the Research and Ethics Committee of [employing organisation] at the addresses in the footer below.

You are able to contact me if you have any other requests or concerns about the project or would like to be informed of the research findings.

If you agree to be a participant in this study I request that you complete the attached declaration of consent and return it to me by ( date ) in the enclosed prepaid envelope to the address below.

Thank you for considering this request.

Yours sincerely

Alison Warren

[alison.warren@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:alison.warren@pg.canterbury.ac.nz)

Consent forms to be sent to:

Alison Warren

[address]

This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee and [employing organisation] Research and Ethics Committee.

1. Complaints may be addressed to:

The Chair

Educational Research Human Ethics Committee

University of Canterbury

Private Bag 4800, Christchurch

Email: [human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)

The Chair

Research and Ethics Committee

[employing organisation]



### **C. Transcriber's Confidentiality Agreement**



**Research Study: Negotiations of personal professional identities by newly-qualified early childhood teachers through facilitated self-study.**

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT – TRANSCRIBER**

Name:

Phone:

Email:

1. I agree to assist the researcher by transcribing interviews supplied to me by the researcher.
2. I understand that I may approach the researcher or her supervisor at any time for further information.
3. I agree to keep confidential any personal information about participants and specific data details that I learn through my involvement in the study.
4. I will not disclose or copy any confidential information relating to this project.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### **D. Pilot Study Outline**



#### **Negotiations of personal professional identities by newly-qualified early childhood teachers through facilitated self-study.**

##### **INFORMATION LETTER – PILOT STUDY PARTICIPANT**

**Dear ,**

I am interested in finding out about how recently graduated early childhood teachers understand their personal professional identity. The five participants will attend focus group discussions and an interview and carry out some tasks based on reflective writing from their study.

**It is important that you keep all details of this study including this request completely confidential.**

These are the research questions:

1. How do early childhood teachers negotiate their personal professional identities when engaged in facilitated self-study?
2. How does institutionally-directed reflective writing contribute to teachers' negotiation of personal professional identity?

I would like to ask you to help me by taking part in a short pilot study so I can try out some of my research methods. This would happen sometime between [.....] in [.....]. Expected duration is about 1.5 hours. There

will be five participants and you will know each other. You would need to bring your values and beliefs statement from Year One and your philosophy statements from Years Two and Three as well as two reflective journal entries that you think are significant to your teaching identity, and that you are happy to talk about.

The date and time will be worked out so as to suit all of you. There will be koha in appreciation of your contribution. There will be refreshments provided.

If you are happy to do this, could you please read and sign the confidentiality agreement attached, and return it to me in the enclosed envelope as soon as possible so I can set up the meeting.

If you have any questions about the study please contact me or my supervisor:

Dr. Judith Duncan

School of Māori, Cultural and Social Studies

University of Canterbury College of Education

P. O. Box 4800

Christchurch.

Email: [judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz)

Phone: 03 364 3466

Regards

Alison Warren

[alison.warren@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:alison.warren@pg.canterbury.ac.nz)

1. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee and [employing organisation] Research and Ethics Committee.

2. Complaints may be addressed to:

The Chair

Educational Research Human Ethics Committee

University of Canterbury Private Bag 4800, Christchurch

Email: [human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)

Or

The Chair

Research and Ethics Committee

[employing organisation]

**Negotiations of personal professional identities by newly-qualified early  
childhood teachers through facilitated self-study.**

**CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT – PILOT STUDY PARTICIPANT**

Name.....

Phone.....

Email.....

1. I agree to assist the researcher by taking part in one pilot study meeting of about 1.5 hours duration.
2. I agree to bring my values and beliefs statement from Year One and your philosophy statements from Years Two and Three as well as two reflective journal entries that I think are significant to my teaching identity, and I am prepared to discuss these with the researcher and the other pilot study participant.
3. I understand that the pilot study meeting will be audiotaped instead of researcher's note taking, and that the audiotape will be erased after seven days. No written record of the meeting will be kept or used as data.
4. I understand that I may approach the researcher or her supervisor at any time for further information.

5. I agree to keep confidential any personal information about participants and specific data details that I learn through my involvement in the study.

6. I will not disclose or copy any confidential information relating to this project.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Post in the enclosed envelope urgently to:

Alison Warren [address]

### Outline of pilot study meeting

Welcome, thanks for participation, outline meeting, reminder of confidentiality.

Audiotaping instead of note taking, recording will be erased after seven days.

Refreshments provided throughout meeting.

### Discussion:

#### 1. Outline first focus group: Some discussion of concepts to set scene; get feedback/comments about questions

- Identity:
  - Conceptions of this term will be brainstormed by the participants.
  - I will introduce the concepts of 'modernist' and 'post-modernist' views of identity, subjectivities and discourse, prescribed and personal professional identity.
- Discussion prompt questions:
  - How do you think personal professional identity is formed?
  - What are some of the ways your personal professional identity might have been negotiated during your early childhood education experience?
  - How is professional identity prescribed in your experience?

- What are other influences on your personal professional identity?
- Outline of study
- 2. Outline self-study tasks: Feedback on the tasks rather than actually carrying them out
- Discuss reflective journal entries chosen by participants, using these questions:
  - a. What is this entry about?
  - b. Who am I as a teacher in this entry?
  - c. Why did I select this entry?
  - d. What is the context surrounding this entry? (e.g. the situation, what was going on?)
  - e. Additional comments/explanation:
- Reflective statements about personal professional identity: Read and reflect on
  - your values and belief statement completed in Year One and the philosophy statements completed in Years Two and Three, or equivalent material (consult with researcher).
  - your completed writing from Self-Study Task 1.
- Two pieces of reflective writing based on these reflections:



- your response to the question “Who am I as a teacher?” now that you have carried out the self-study tasks
- how you think your personal professional identity has been negotiated.

### 3. Outline individual interview: Get feedback on questions

- Prompt questions:
  - Tell me about the reflective journal entries you chose to reflect on.
  - What did you discover about your personal professional identity when you carried out the self-study tasks?
  - How was the experience of carrying out the self-study tasks for you?
  - What do you think influences the negotiation of your personal professional identity?
  - What would you like to tell me about your response to the draft report? How did you feel about the themes identified?
  - I have some questions arising from your self-study tasks....
  - What would you recommend to a researcher carrying out this kind of study? Any ideas for further study in this area?
  - What other aspects of the study would you like to discuss?

### 4. Outline second focus group discussion:

- Discussion prompt questions (revisit first discussion questions, referring to study experiences and insights):
  - What are your thoughts about personal professional identity now?
  - How do you think personal professional identity is formed?
  - What are some of the ways your personal professional identity might have been negotiated during your early childhood education experience?
  - How is professional identity prescribed in your experience?
  - What are other influences on your personal professional identity?
- Discussion questions about the study:
  - What would you recommend to a researcher carrying out this kind of study?
  - Any ideas for further study in this area?
  - What other aspects of the study would you like to discuss?

Wind up meeting with any questions, comments about the study. Reminder of confidentiality, that their contributions will not be used as data. Thank for participation, give koha.

## **E. First Focus Group Discussion Outline**

Time frame: About 1.5 hours. Audiorecorded.

- Welcome and introductions: Participants are welcomed, and introduce themselves to the group. At this stage, the audio recording equipment will be checked.
- Outline of the session will be displayed and described, including introducing and explaining the role of the notetaker and explaining that she has signed a confidentiality agreement.
- The group will be reminded of confidentiality requirements for all verbal and written material at all stages of the study and asked to sign a confidentiality agreement regarding this discussion.
- Identity:
  - Conceptions of this term will be brainstormed by the participants.
  - I will introduce the concepts of ‘modernist’ and ‘post-modernist’ views of identity, subjectivities and discourse, prescribed and personal professional identity.
- Discussion prompt questions:
  - How do you think personal professional identity is formed?
  - What are some of the ways your personal professional identity might have been negotiated during your early childhood education experience?

- How is professional identity prescribed in your experience?
- What are other influences on your personal professional identity?
- Outline of study: I will explain my poststructural paradigm, and explain the data collection and analysis. The self-study research approach will also be explained.
  - Focus group discussions: These will be audiotaped then transcribed. A summary of the discussion will be circulated to participants with a draft analysis. As well as this initial discussion, there will be a final focus group discussion to explore participants' experience of self-study and their perceptions of their personal professional identities.
  - Self-study tasks: Sheets detailing the tasks will be circulated to participants. Tasks will be outlined and explained. Data analysis will be described: Reflective journal entries and reflective writing of each participant will be analysed by examining words, phrases, sentences and themes that link to the concepts surrounding the research focus of personal professional identity.
  - Individual interviews: These will be semi-structured and will explore each participant's self-study experience and thoughts about their own negotiation of personal professional identity. Before the individual interview, participants will have received the summary and draft report of the focus group discussion.

- Question and answer about the study. Emphasise that researcher is available to help with any queries.
- Remind participants that I will send a summary of the discussion to check for accuracy and a draft analysis to provide a basis for discussion.
- Thank participants for their contribution and invite to stay for refreshments.

## F. Self-Study Written Tasks: Instructions and Template



*Negotiations of personal professional identities by newly-qualified early childhood teachers through facilitated self-study*

### SELF-STUDY TASK 1: SELECTING REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ENTRIES AND ANALYSING USING THE QUESTIONS PROVIDED

1. **Selecting reflective journal entries:** From your reflective journal entries written in the Schön format, choose three or four that are based on situations from your teaching practice and that you think might have significance to your personal professional identity (may be positive, neutral or negative). They may be entries that help you answer the question “Who am I as a teacher?” or “Who was I then as a teacher?” These entries will be included in their original form as data.
2. **Analyse using the questions provided:** For each of the reflective journal entries, answer the provided questions as a means of reflecting on these.

### SELF-STUDY TASK 2: REFLECTIVE STATEMENTS ABOUT PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

1. Read and reflect on

- a. your values and belief statement completed in Year One and the philosophy statements completed in Years Two and Three, or equivalent material (consult with researcher).
  - b. your completed writing from Self-Study Task 1.
2. Two pieces of reflective writing based on these reflections:
  - a. your response to the question “Who am I as a teacher?” now that you have carried out the self-study tasks
  - b. how you think your personal professional identity has been negotiated.

These reflections will be used as the basis for the individual interview.

When you have completed these tasks (time frame will be decided at initial focus group discussion), please email and post to me in the envelope provided, with your pseudonym on each page.

The data required is as follows:

- Four reflective journal entries
- Values and beliefs (Year One), and philosophy statements (Years Two and Three)
- Answers to questions about reflective journal entries
- Two reflective writing tasks

#### REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ENTRY ANALYSIS QUESTIONS TEMPLATE

Pseudonym:

Reflective Journal entry:

Date:

1. What is this entry about?
2. Who am I as a teacher in this entry?
3. Why did I select this entry?
4. What is the context surrounding this entry? (e.g. the situation, what was going on?)

Additional comments/explanation:



## **G. Individual Interview**

Timeframe: About one hour. Audiorecorded.

- Welcome, participant identifies herself for the audiorecording equipment check.
- Ask for comments and questions about the summary and draft report relating to first discussion. Emphasise right to verify summary and rights over any personal information contained in report.
- Prompt questions:
  - Tell me about the reflective journal entries you chose to reflect on.
  - What did you discover about your personal professional identity when you carried out the self-study tasks?
  - How was the experience of carrying out the self-study tasks for you?
  - What do you think influences the negotiation of your personal professional identity?
  - What would you like to tell me about your response to the draft report? How did you feel about the themes identified?
  - I have some questions arising from your self-study tasks....
  - What would you recommend to a researcher carrying out this kind of study? Any ideas for further study in this area?
  - What other aspects of the study would you like to discuss?

- Remind participant of confidentiality requirements. Remind her that the researcher is available after the study is completed if any issues or concerns arise.
- Remind participant that I will send a transcript to check for accuracy and a draft analysis to provide a basis for discussion.
- Thank participant for her contribution, give koha.

## **H. Final Focus Group Discussion**

Time frame: About 1.5 hours. Audiorecorded.

Focus group discussion will start in the same way as the first focus group:

- Welcome and introductions: Participants are welcomed, and introduce themselves to the group. At this stage, the audiorecording equipment will be checked.
- Outline of the session will be displayed and described, including introducing and explaining the role of the notetaker and explaining that she has signed a confidentiality agreement.
- The group will be reminded of confidentiality requirements for all verbal and written material at all stages of the study and asked to sign a confidentiality agreement regarding this discussion.
- Discussion prompt questions (revisit first discussion questions, referring to study experiences and insights):
  - What are your thoughts about personal professional identity now?
  - How do you think personal professional identity is formed?
  - What are some of the ways your personal professional identity might have been negotiated during your early childhood education experience?
  - How is professional identity prescribed in your experience?

- What are other influences on your personal professional identity?
- Discussion questions about the study:
  - What would you recommend to a researcher carrying out this kind of study?
  - Any ideas for further study in this area?
  - What other aspects of the study would you like to discuss?
- Thank participants for their involvement and remind them I will send them a summary of the discussion to check for accuracy, a short summary of the final report, and that the complete report will be available on request.