Recasting the subject:

Curriculum, equity, and the educated ideal in secondary English classrooms

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, the University of Auckland, 2020.

This thesis is for examination purposes only and is confidential to the examination process

ABSTRACT

This thesis argues against the contemporary curriculum push for choice and flexibility around content selection in New Zealand secondary English classrooms. The thesis critically explores how contemporary curriculum trends produce particular versions of subject English and considers the effects of these versions against social equity outcomes and the development of broader education ideals. The focus on choice and flexibility is important because their prominence and appeal shape secondary English in ways that may further reproduce social class inequalities. This focus is also pertinent in the context of a national curriculum that asserts an ambitious social vision about the kind of citizen our schools should produce but says little about the curriculum content that fosters that kind of citizen.

Literature and scholarship on subject English and knowledge has emerged in response to social realist critiques of contemporary curricula. While this literature has focused on questions of knowledge in relation to subject English, this is an emerging area of scholarship in subject English.

Grounded in critical theory and using social constructionism to inform the choice of an interpretive qualitative research approach, this research engaged secondary English teachers in semi-structured interviews. The data were analysed and interpreted using thematic and discourse analysis. Using multiple theoretical lenses across the articles that constitute the findings chapters, the research found that secondary English is an entanglement of multiple contexts that shape secondary English classrooms in a range of complex and nuanced ways. The overarching conclusion is that choice and flexibility, rather than opening up possibilities, have limiting effects in relation to social equity.

This study contributes to subject English scholarship and to ongoing discussion about the relationship between curriculum and broader societal and education ideals. By showing how contemporary curricula are grounded in neoliberal imperatives, the thesis reveals that teaching for equity and for democratic participation is not straightforward.

DEDICATION

For secondary English teachers and their students,

y para Luis y sus abuelos.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank my supervisors Professor Carol Mutch and Associate Professor Barbara Grant for their patient and scholarly guidance in helping me turn my ideas into a thesis. Your willingness to let me tell my story while making sure I did so in a rigorous manner made the journey rich and educative. My acknowledgements and thanks to Dr. Maxine Stephenson, Professor Peter Roberts, and Professor Robin Small for their guidance in the early stages of this project.

I would also like to thank the teachers who gave up precious time in order to talk to me about their experiences as secondary English teachers. Your dedication to young people and to secondary English teaching was always clear.

Professor Terry Locke and Professor Bill Green were kind enough to let me tell them about my project. Their insightful comments helped with the development of my ideas. To Dr. Ngaire Hoben for turning me into a secondary English teacher and later into a teacher educator. A warm thank you to my colleagues in CRSTIE for the gentle support, to Maria for sharing the last part of the journey, and to my friend Viviana for picking me up and carrying me over the finish line.

Finally, to my much-loved family. To my parents for bringing me up in a home where books were not only read and films were not only watched but eagerly discussed afterwards. And to my teenager, Luis, for the way you pay attention to life, and that big pile of books by your bed.

You said the place

You said the place, was a great space to plot. For contriving. A mutiny or a murder. That its dark corridor was perfect. For roaming up. And down. Slow steps. Summoned with purpose. The weight. Of decision and strategy. Like a game of noughts and crosses. Inside the wrought-iron gate. Sunlight barely – sneaking through.

But I prefer to think of the place, as a great space to plot. For contriving. A love letter or a manifesto. Its dark corridor is perfect. For making up. And down. Slow words. Summoned with purpose. The weight. Of decision and handiwork. Like a game of noughts and crosses. Inside the wrought-iron gate. Sunlight barely – sneaking through.

Under the watch. Of Spring and Autumn. And Summer and Winter. You have to pull the trigger. At some point.

Claudia Rozas G.
Auckland Winter Gardens February 12, 2020

Photo credit: Luis Rozas

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

PROLOGUE

A RESTLESS WANDERING

My interest in secondary English emerges from several aspects of my personal history. Perhaps the most important is my experience teaching secondary English for six years at Aorere College, a Decile Two[1] *school in South Auckland. However, my thesis-story and connection with Aorere College begins much earlier when I attended the school as a student in the 1980s. Back then, Aorere College was the less desirable school in our area, but my family literally lived on the wrong side of the tracks where the zone ended for the more prestigious Papatoetoe High School. Despite Aorere's reputation, I received a robust education under the care of excellent teachers. Our English curriculum was rich. I got to fall in love with Gatsby, write poems, wrestle with Macbeth, and became a committed pacifist after reading John Hersey's Hiroshima. No one thought that because I had arrived as a refugee, or because my parents spoke with an accent, or we lived in a modest house on the wrong side of the tracks, that I should not read literature or attempt to write creatively.*

Eleven years later when I went back to teach at Aorere College, things had changed. Māngere East and Papatoetoe North were much more diverse suburbs and the school served a predominantly immigrant, multicultural, and low socio-economic status community. The context was challenging but joyful. In our English department we thought hard and worked hard in order to meet the needs of our students, a number of whom were one to two levels below curriculum expectations. My last two years of teaching, however, presented me with an

unexpected and quickly changing curriculum terrain. As a way of addressing the educational needs of our students, the content taught in our English classrooms was changing. Short stories replaced novels, literacy skills replaced poetry, and communication standards replaced film. Increasingly, it was achievable assessment that determined what we covered in our English programmes.

In this context, we were encouraged to offer texts that were shorter and reflective of our students' interests and lived experiences. I was committed to culturally responsive pedagogy, but the push for always-relevant content left me wondering whether we might end up with a generation of young people who would think that the only things that should matter to them are the things that matter to them. I was equally committed to the idea that one of education's purposes is to make the seemingly irrelevant relevant. How else might students come to care for things they might not otherwise personally encounter, like the destruction of rain forests, or the suffering of others?

The broader education context in which my experiences played out is another salient part of this history. I was formed as a teacher in the late 1990s. Outcomes-based education was our mantra and I engaged in thoughtful backwards planning (as we were taught to call it) for every unit I dreamed up. I never questioned the legitimacy of this kind of planning. I developed units with the certainty that this was a watertight approach to teaching. Planning from the outcome made me feel like a competent teacher who could justify pedagogical decisions against achievement objectives to within an inch of my life. Yet planning this way also meant I rarely asked questions about curriculum content. My focus was primarily captured by the outcome I was pursuing rather than what content might be worthy in an English programme.

I like to say that my journey into secondary English teaching was a backwards journey, similar to my dutiful backwards planning. I explain it so because I decided to enter teaching after completing undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in sociology of education. In some ways, I went into teaching to test theory and thought of myself as a sociologist doing fieldwork. Sociology, then, is the final part of the personal history that frames this thesis. Sociological concepts and theory taught me to see education in new ways. These concepts showed me how schools can serve particular interests and reproduce social inequalities – even when one of the purposes of modern education is to foster social mobility.

The changes in our English department led me to lots of sociological thinking about what it meant to teach secondary English and what it meant to teach in ways that contributed to greater levels of equity for my students. I found it troubling that the response to complex content was not to teach it, and that our way of dealing with students who already had less of many things was to take even more (content) away. If education is to even out the playing field, then surely equal access to a common curriculum is one of the ways to ensure this worthy social outcome.

My supervisor, Barbara, named this searching-thinking a "restless wandering" and this thesis is very much that. It is a wandering in the sense that it does not seek to find the truth about secondary English and teaching but seeks to stand back and view subject English from a range of possibilities for enquiry. This thesis engages with the question of curriculum in the secondary English classroom from a critical, sociological vantage point to examine its current forms. Ultimately, the thesis has two pressing concerns. The first is to examine how teachers make decisions about what content to make available to which students, with a particular focus on differences between high and low decile schools. The second is to consider the extent to

which current versions of English foster the social vision expressed in our national curriculum for actively involved young people in society. In linking these two concerns, I am interested in the relationships between curriculum content and educated ideals, as well as the relationships between curriculum and social equity. And, from a sociological perspective, I am keen to examine why current versions of subject English make the most sense to teachers right now.

After six years in a secondary classroom, followed by several years of conscientious motherhood, and a sort-of career in pre-service teacher education, I have come back to where I started. Restless, and ready to ask new questions and test new theory.

Once again sociology is my window. The following chapters are my landscapes.

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[1] Schools in New Zealand are categorised by deciles according to the socio-economic status of the surrounding community. A decile 10 school reflects a high socio-economic status and a decile 1 school reflects a low socio-economic status.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

Introduction

This thesis examines the versions of subject English that are possible in New Zealand secondary schools. The contexts in which subject English is formed are local, national, international, economic, and policy based. My task is to explore the interplay between these multiple and layered settings in order to consider what versions of subject English these contexts produce and what the effects of these versions may be. I seek first to examine how teachers differentiate subject English content with a focus on any differences between high and low decile schools. My second focus is to consider the extent to which different kinds of content are likely (or not) to produce the social vision expressed in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007). As stated in the Prologue, I link these two foci as a way of further exploring the relationship between curriculum and equity and curriculum and educated ideals.

The focus on subject English comes at a time when questions of knowledge have become dislocated from broader questions about what knowledge is for (Standish & Sehgal-Cuthbert, 2017) and what role it might play in democratic society (Biesta, 2014). The research is also located in a contemporary discursive landscape that positions education as a key player in the economy. Consequently, the forms of knowledge most privileged are those associated with economic productivity and with creating a flexible workforce (Whitty, 2010; Wheelahan, 2010; Savage, 2017). The perceived need for a flexible workforce has produced contemporary curricula that maximises choice and flexibility for both teachers and students (Priestley & Sinemma, 2014). Alongside these policy imperatives, schooling contexts are also increasingly

governed by measurement and accountability discourses, turning public attention to individual school results (Thrupp, 2014).

The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) reflects some of these contemporary discursive framings but also offers a social vision and an educated ideal for young people. This vision is not entirely instrumentalist in nature and speaks to a broader societal vision and educated ideal for democratic social ends. The document expresses this vision as a desire for young people who are "confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners" (p. 8). As a subject, English similarly offers a vision of active and critical engagement with society. However, while *The New Zealand Curriculum* details the competencies necessary to enable this vision, the curriculum document says little about the relationship between knowledge and the educated ideal asserted in its vision. In fact, teachers have substantial choice in terms of curriculum content

These economic and policy contexts render some versions of English more likely than others and the key focus of this thesis is to examine the effects of prevailing versions. Specifically, I aim to show the effects of these versions in relation to issues of equity and the extent to which these versions foster the vision expressed in *The New Zealand Curriculum* for actively and critically engaged young people. To this end, I pay attention to the ways of teaching English that make the most sense right now and theorise why certain versions prevail. In order to do this work, I take a sociological approach that focuses on the relationship between secondary English curriculum and the broader political and economic mandates in which we live.

This scope includes the policy structures that delineate the field where curriculum decisions are made. However, part of my restlessness is connected to the ways in which current regimes

are so easily adopted by teachers in schools. Why is it that the diminished space for literature and complex thinking is not only readily abandoned but also often seen as a better and more responsive way of students' needs. To understand this phenomenon, I closely examine teacher subjectivity and think about teachers as curriculum workers (Green, 2017). I take the position that secondary English is an entanglement of multiple structural contexts *and people*, pushing and pulling the subject in both predictable and unpredictable ways. In this view, teachers are fundamentally important actors, not only at the interface between policy and practice, but also at the borderlands between education and democracy (Freire, 2005). Here, I adopt a Freirean understanding of teaching as a deeply human endeavour that is heavy (and heaving) with urgent political responsibility.

Acknowledging the broader context in which subject English takes place, incorporating the political economy, policy, and teachers as curriculum workers, offers me the opportunity to go beyond a simplistic account of curriculum decision-making. A more complex account acknowledges that any solutions must engage with teachers at a human level rather than simply making changes to policy. This focus also allows an exploration without problematising teachers or schools, locating curriculum decision-making in broader structures instead. In moving beyond a descriptive account of secondary English I am able to theorise why some versions of English are more dominant than others. This vantage point also allows for the identification of tensions within teachers' work and decision-making, as well as exploring possible spaces of resistance.

Identifying and Addressing the Thesis Problem

The thesis problem enters the secondary English curriculum sphere at a time when a number of interrelated contexts come together to produce subject English in particular ways. One

context is the utilitarian turn in international curricula (Whitty, 2010, Savage, 2017) and the corresponding emphasis on competencies rather than curriculum content. Going hand in hand with this context is the way in which contemporary curricula and assessment structures offer a certain amount of flexibility and teacher autonomy (Ormond, 2017). At the same time, national achievement data shows that social class continues to be a significant determiner of educational attainment (Snook & O'Neill, 2014). These disparate achievement results are further supported by Ministry of Education data, which shows that while Māori and Pasifika students (who make up a large proportion of students in low decile schools) are passing The New Zealand Certificate of Educational Achievement Level 1 and 2 at higher rates, these qualification outcomes are often tied to cognitively less demanding achievement standards (Education Review Office, 2018).

Differentiating access to subject English merits careful examination for a number of reasons. The first of which is that as a curriculum area, secondary English is an unstable and contested space (Marshall, 2001; Medway, 2005; Ireland, 2017; Yates et al., 2019). What it may mean to know in subject English has shifted over time (Ball, 1990; Locke, 2015) and remains contested both in its construction through curricula and its enactment in secondary English classrooms. The rise of competencies and outcomes-based education, further destabilises the place of knowledge in secondary English. In *The New Zealand Curriculum,* for example, the presence of achievement objectives in place of prescribed content adds another layer of complexity to how we might define subject English. Given this slippery nature, an analysis of how teachers interpret and enact secondary English curriculum policy is important (Ireland, 2017).

A second reason for examining how teachers make content decisions is the flexibility that secondary English teachers have in designing curriculum. This flexibility produces an uncertain space in which more than one version of English is possible. Moreover, it is the very presence of choice and the possibility of multiple ways of doing English that holds seductive appeal for teachers. In positioning teachers as curriculum producers and students as curriculum choosers *The New Zealand Curriculum* is readily embraced for the presumed autonomy this flexibility affords both teachers and students. However, the disparate achievement outcomes for particular groups of students require a close analysis of *why* and *how* curriculum might be differentiated.

Curriculum differentiation is also worthy of investigation because it asks fundamental questions about the relationship between curriculum and equity. An analysis of who has access to what content must sit at the heart of any discussion about equity in education. As such, research suggests that access to content continues to be a marker of privilege (Polessel, 2015; Sawyer, 2016; Teese, 2013) and that social class mediates that access. A concern with equity, therefore, requires an analysis of the ways in which policy and curriculum envisage equity in practice. In New Zealand, while data suggest that students in low decile schools have restricted curriculum opportunities, there is no significant analysis of how curriculum differentiation designed to support learning of underachieving students may serve to disenfranchise them even further.

Much of the literature on secondary English focuses on identifying who is underachieving and what strategies can be used to teach at those students. The literature tends not to focus on the relationship between ideas and practice. What is also missing is an analysis of the ways in which policy and curriculum envisage equity in practice. There is also no significant analysis

of how curriculum choice and flexibility may serve to reproduce social and educational inequalities.

Finally, this study contributes to a bigger discussion about curriculum and societal and educated ideals. *The New Zealand Curriculum* contains a social vision that affirms the right to participate in society but says little about the forms of knowledge that may enable this kind of citizenship and social ideal. While current policy and research focuses on teacher practice as well as the development of competencies and skills that maximise participation in the marketplace, the relationship between curriculum and what forms of knowledge are most likely to deliver the educated ideal espoused in *The New Zealand Curriculum* is under-researched. Much of the literature and policy focuses on identifying who is underachieving and what strategies can be used to teach students more effectively rather than the relationship between ideas, policy and practice.

Thesis Aims

I aim to examine the content and assessment opportunities that secondary English teachers make available to different groups of students. I examine how teachers construct subject English and what affordances it offers secondary school students. I situate this analysis against the educated ideal constructed in *The New Zealand Curriculum* and its vision for creatively and critically engaged young people, both in school and in wider society. Of particular concern is to question whether teachers provide students with the knowledge and skills required to engage *critically* with the world consistent with the educated ideal promoted in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The nature and content of what students have access to will be considered vis-à-vis stated curriculum objectives and stated policy concerns – which may be at a point of tension. Second, it will examine how teachers make decisions about which students have access

to what types of English content and assessment opportunities. Third, these decisions are linked to how policy might be interpreted in English departments and the extent to which teachers may accept these different forms of English curricula for the purposes of equity and/or meeting the needs of all learners.

The Research Questions

My research questions emerge from the identified contexts above and from my desire to grasp the current secondary English moment and its effects. The overarching question is how teachers come to understand and make choices in the secondary English classrooms. From this broad question further questions have emerged and are addressed in each of the four articles.

1. Which discourses and versions of English are rendered most likely in the current context?
2. What tensions, anxieties, and pleasures exist within these discourses and constructions?
3. What are effects of these versions in relation to the stated educational ideals in *The New Zealand Curriculum*?
4. What are the effects of these versions in terms of educational equity?

Theoretical and Methodological Tools

In order to pry subject English from its multiple contexts, more than one theoretical lens gives voice to the analyses in this thesis. I use theoretical tools as methods for explanation and analysis rather than as means for establishing a definitive truth about secondary English. These tools are used as explanatory frameworks that make the complexities of curriculum decision-making visible in an applied theoretical analysis. In this sense, my theoretical stances are, as Ball (1993) suggests, an attempt to grapple with complexity using a range of theoretical tools rather than with committing to one theoretical perspective. Therefore, I explore the discursive

space in which English is constituted and practised by using the concepts and theoretical tools that best allow me to address my research questions.

As I am interested in how curriculum choices may further reproduce unequal social relationships, the overarching theoretical stance in the thesis is critical theory. Critical theory exposes and examines power relations that reproduce inequality (Gibson, 1986). The majority of the theory I draw upon falls within the critical theory umbrella. I start with Paulo Freire's work as a way of thinking about literacy and its relationship to social justice. While subject English encompasses more than literacy, Freire's work is important in demonstrating how different types of literacy have the potential to either domesticate or liberate students (Freire, 1998a).

Freire's insistence that curriculum should develop critical capacities also connects with the overall concern of this thesis about the social vision expressed in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. From this basis I consider how differentiated forms of subject English may exclude certain groups of students from the forms of knowledge that allow them to participate in society in powerful ways. Within a critical theory tradition, Freire's work is important because it draws attention to how subject English and power may intersect in secondary school contexts.

The type of investigation I wish to undertake cannot be solely theoretical. The study also engages with teacher subjectivity and explores how teachers construct and negotiate meanings about subject English, and how they make content decisions. This focus, therefore, requires empirical data to understand how and why subject English teachers make content decisions. In doing so, I draw from a qualitative and interpretive methodological paradigm (Neuman, 1997). My analysis and interpretation of data employ a social constructionist lens where meanings

and experience are socially produced and historically situated (Burr, 2015). Using a social constructionist lens allows me to consider the meanings that circulate about subject English and to consider them as a function if this historical moment.

Current meanings and constructions are the result of social and economic arrangements, but they become normalised through discourses as truths. Social constructionism allows me to ask how it is that subject English is constituted in ways that seem natural and incontestable to teachers. At the same time, this methodological approach allows me to question and critique contemporary rationalities about subject English. Further, as there is always more than one discourse present in any given context, the potential for tension and complexity also exists. In as much as this thesis seeks to explore the interplay between the multiple and layered contexts that shape subject English, social constructionism allows me a rich conceptual framework from which to explore these contexts.

Thesis Overview

My research questions are addressed in the four articles submitted for publication, while the two preceding chapters provide the context, theory, and methods that inform these questions. I have included a preamble between each of the articles as a way of ensuring logical development of ideas as well as coherence of thought and argument. These preambles provide ideas that were not included in the original articles but remain important because they show the development of my own thinking and evolving understanding. As each article provided one set of possibilities for making sense of secondary English, these possibilities led to more questions or a new area of investigation.

The *Prologue* provides a short account of my personal history and how I have come to the thesis.

The *Introduction* provides an overview to the thesis and outlines my research questions and how I aim to address these questions.

Contextualising the Thesis outlines three interrelated contexts that form the landscape from which subject English emerges. I focus on the utilitarian turn in international curricula, *The New Zealand Curriculum*, and subject English, to lay the contextual foundation for the rest of the thesis. These contexts are identified and discussed because they also help me to make links between the broader political economy and subject English. These links also help me to build my overall argument about why some versions of English make sense to teachers right now.

Theory to Method provides an account of the disciplinary and theoretical basis for the thesis. I discuss the sociological lens that frames the thesis and locate the overarching theoretical approach within critical theory and social constructionism. I also outline the methods employed to gather the empirical data and discuss the theory used to interpret and analyse the empirical data in each of the four articles.

Article One *Audience and Purpose* explores the sorts of constructions that secondary English teachers hold about subject English. I identify common themes and emerging tensions in teachers' constructions of the purposes of English. I also explore the sorts of commitments and preoccupations that come into play when teachers make curriculum decisions. The theoretical lens for this article draws on Fairclough's (1992) account of critical discourse analysis in order to consider the multiple and competing meanings that are available to teachers. The article also

considers these constructions in relation to the stated vision in *The New Zealand Curriculum.* I argue that enacting the vision in the curriculum is not straightforward. This article addresses the first research question.

Article Two *Risky Choices* examines how teachers' simultaneous positioning as autonomous professionals *and* intensely scrutinised workers may shape curriculum and assessment decisions. This article uses Foucault's notion of governmentality (1979) and Ball, Braun and Maguire (2012, following Foucault) to analyse how an accountability culture impacts teacher decision-making, including the intensified effects on low decile schools. I suggest this context contains elements of risk, both to teachers in terms of poor student results, and to students in terms of exclusion from meaningful content. The article concludes by considering spaces of resistance and accommodation to current norms and practices. This article addresses the second research question.

Article Three Considerable Flexibility examines differing participation rates between low and high deciles schools in complex assessments. I use Wheelahan's (2010) work on the usurpation of progressive ideals by neoliberal language and show how this confluence shapes the relationship between curriculum content and equity in certain ways. I use interview data to examine the discourses that mediate what it means to teach for equity in secondary English classrooms. I argue that neoliberal discourses, which emphasise individualised learning, produce certain ways of conceptualising educational equity. This article addresses the third research question.

Article four *Strangers and Orphans* uses Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, to examine the relationship between conceptualizations of knowledge and the extent to which these different

conceptualizations lead to socially connected lives. The article draws on the work of Paulo Freire to argue that conceptualizations of knowledge and how knowledge is sought and produced play a role in fostering humanization and mutuality in education contexts.

Pleasures explores the compelling identity of the responsive teacher by using Hall (1996) work on identity and subjectification. I look at the place of progressive discourses in shaping teacher identity.

Possibilities summarises the main conclusions of the thesis and identifies a series of questions that need to be addressed if subject English is to foster a broader democratic project.

The *Conclusion* provide a brief statement ending the thesis.

The *Epilogue* is a short narrative constructed from the interview data in this study and serves as a coda, of sorts, to the thesis. Not quite a full stop, the epilogue attempts to hold tension rather than resolve the complexities encountered in the thesis.

CONTEXTUALISING THE THESIS

Introduction

This chapter situates the thesis problem and the research questions in three broader and interrelated contexts. These contexts are important to addressing my research questions, but are also important because they help build my overall argument about why some versions of English are rendered more likely right now. The three contexts are: contemporary curricula in a globalised world, *The New Zealand Curriculum*, and subject English. I begin with a general and brief discussion about curriculum as a concept as a way to anchor the three contexts and to maintain the focus on curriculum. As a whole, this chapter serves to highlight the broader contexts that help to address my thesis puzzle and questions.

Conceptualising curriculum

In its thinnest conception, curriculum can be defined as the content taught in a programme of study (Gobby, 2017). This conceptualisation, however, does not capture the full scope of the role curriculum plays in education, or the complexity of how curriculum may be played out in schools. As McGee (1997) points out, curriculum involves much deeper questions about what the most important knowledge is and how it should be learned. As he points out, "curriculum decisions are required whenever choices are made about learning programmes" (p. 9). In view of the sorts of decisions required in order to deliver a curriculum, defining curriculum remains a fraught and contested undertaking (Mutch, 2009). Green (2017), for example, discusses the inescapably ambiguous nature of the concept and how curriculum is often left open to multiple understandings. As such, Mutch (2009) notes that curriculum can be examined in terms of its relationship to societal ideals, in terms of its manifestation as government policy, in terms of how it may be enacted in schools, and in terms of outcomes for students.

Yet, as Green points out, curriculum is the only "indigenous concept" to education (p. 6) and what structures "the teaching-learning experience" in classrooms (p. 7). Given the importance of the concept and its centrality to education, Green goes on to argue that curriculum requires thoughtful engagement both as a concept and as a question. This distinction is important, Green suggests, because it allows an engagement with curriculum in terms of its accepted meanings, as well as how we might conceive curriculum theoretically and philosophically (Green, 2017).

Green's distinction is connected to my overall concern with how differentiated access to different types of content may sustain social inequality. Green (2017) notes that discussions about secondary English tend to be removed from conceptual understandings about curriculum. The tendency not to engage with subject English on conceptual grounds, Green argues, suggests that curriculum as question is an important area of study in secondary English. In the context of this thesis, curriculum as question is connected to a broader interrogation about the relationship between subject English and equity as well as the relationship between subject English and educated ideals.

Curriculum as question also draws from critical perspectives that view curriculum as a non-neutral selection of knowledge and as a potential site for social reproduction (Carpenter, 2001). Michael Apple (1979) for example, argues that curriculum must be problematised and scrutinised to illuminate the ways in which advantage is maintained through its implementation. This conception is a political account of curriculum and pays attention to the broader power relations and interests served in the selection (and exclusion) of knowledge. Concepts such as the null curriculum (what is left out of curriculum) and the hidden curriculum (what is learned but not officially taught) further highlight the ways in which curriculum works to serve interests and reproduce inequality (Carpenter, 2001). The importance of a critical lens

on curriculum and its relationship to critical theory is discussed in the following section, *Theory to Method*. However, in brief, critical perspectives problematise the sorts of decisions that are made around what students should learn and how they should learn it. Crucially, these perspectives highlight that questions about what should be taught in schools are not straightforward or simple to answer (Jenkins, 1976).

Context One: Contemporary Curricula in Globalised Times

Globalisation and Transnational Education Policy

I begin this section with a note on the globalised context in which contemporary curricula unfolds. A focus on globalisation is important because of the prominence and power that transnational policy has to shape national curricula (Robertson, 2016). Globalisation refers to the ways in which national economies and interests may be governed by multinational or transnational imperatives (Dale, 2008). Dale and Robertson (2009) explain this shift as a corresponding decline of the nation state as the basis of the economy and the expanding influence of international organisations. Institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Organisation and Development (OECD), for example, mediate the relationship between global and national systems and serve to advance transnational policy and interests (Dale, 2008). In its current form, globalisation is referred to as neoliberal globalisation because of its emphasis on free trade and deregulated markets. Significantly, as Dale and Robertson (2009) point out, neoliberal globalisation is more than an internationally played-out process but a "political project that seeks to remove all barriers to free trade and use the state for its own purposes" (Dale & Robertson, 2009, p. 7). The authors note that this is a significant shift from socially democratic states where public services are administered as public goods. Dale's overarching point is that globalisation is a way of reforming and governing education in nation states.

Dale (2008) outlines the relationship between globalisation and education and identifies the ways in which this relationship shapes national priorities and policies. He notes that globalisation replaces previously state-funded systems by removing key features and establishing mechanisms that mediate relationships between globalisation and education. Dale also notes that changes to national education systems are carried out beyond a national scale. The biggest impact of globalisation is at the level of governance by setting norms and making these norms accountable through benchmarks and international comparisons (Robertson, 2016). One example is the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment, in which fifteen year old students in participating countries are tested for literacy and numeracy. Dale (2008) claims that such programmes effectively replace national educational aims with transnational targets and "assume a global standard of best practice" (2008, p. 31).

Globalisation and transnational education policy have also reframed knowledge in the drive for a knowledge economy. The notion of a knowledge economy refers to the idea that some forms of knowledge directly lead to economic growth and competitiveness (Lauder et al., 2012). Within this paradigm, education is central to the delivery of skills, competencies, and attitudes required to compete in a knowledge economy. Lauder et al. (2012) associate these discourses with the push for STEM subjects, lifelong learning, learning how to learn, and technology. These curriculum shifts also underscore the idea that schools are no longer fit for purpose due to their inflexibility and adherence to traditional school subjects. The pervasive belief that the needs of the economy and the aims of education are somehow no longer in sync, has led to substantial rethinking and reframing of school curricula (Collin, 2014). I discuss these effects on curricula in the following section.

Contemporary curricula: the utilitarian turn and the knowledge turn back

It is well documented that curriculum has taken a utilitarian turn since the 1980s in many western countries (Savage, 2017; Priestley & Biesta, 2013; Whitty, 2010; Wheelahan; 2010, Peters & Marshall, 1996). This shift can be traced back to 1970s when attention turned to the needs of the economy and to the needs of industry in terms of labour (Carr & Hartnett, 1996). Variously described as 'utilitarian', 'technical instrumentalism', and 'new vocationalism' (Savage, 2017), this turn is associated with the perceived needs of how economies work in a globalised market and the role schools play in a knowledge economy. Curriculum has come under scrutiny in the so-called knowledge economy where the creation of wealth is connected to technology rather than a traditional academic curriculum (Wheelahan, 2010). Arguments for reshaping curriculum emphasise the need to prepare young people for a rapidly changing future in which new jobs are still to be invented. The expansion of vocational pathways and the vigorous presence of 21st century skills have further framed curriculum in utilitarian ways. 21st century skills emphasise problem-solving, critical thinking, technology, and social and civic competencies (Whitty, 2010). The alignment between curriculum and economic pursuits has been a feature of the New Zealand landscape since the 1990s. Peters and Marshall (1996), for example, argue that *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) fostered a culture of enterprise and competition. They also argue subject English was mostly a set of skills designed to meet economic-rationalist ends.

Carr and Hartnett (1996) describe the ways in which this shift in education results from the introduction of an educational discourse that defines educational problems and solutions in particular ways. Primarily this discourse blames economic failures on educational ones, for example in New Zealand in 1981, The Employers Federation released a statement expressing a need for schools to prepare students with the dispositions and skills required for the world of

work. Carr and Hartnett (1996) also claim that this discursive shift is evident in the move from progressive language such as child-centred education and equality of opportunity to neoliberal language of parental choice, accountability, school effectiveness, and value-added education.

This shift in the language of educational debate is not neutral. Language such as standards and accountability are loaded terms that serve to protect some educational interests while marginalising others (Biesta, 2010). Importantly, this language sets the terms in which educational debate can be conducted, for example, by legitimising education reform and policy. These language shifts also point to the contestability of education meanings and demonstrate why it is important these meanings should be scrutinised in terms of the political interests they inhere.

Transnational curriculum policy has also pushed the development of competencies as fundamental to the development of the economy, environmental sustainability, and social cohesion (OECD, *Definition and Selection of Competencies Report*, 2005). From the outset, this report acknowledged the competing and possibly contradictory nature of these three aims. Acknowledgement of this tension is important because it shows the complexity of what education is meant to deliver. More recently, the OECD has released *Global Competency in an Inclusive World* (2016) in which the notion of global competence is promoted as a means to develop a "global and intercultural outlook" for participating in the world (p. 1). While the document promotes global competence for social cohesion, global competence is also justified in terms of enabling students to "thrive in a changing labour market" (p. 2). The document's main focus is on how schools may develop these capacities and how the Programme for International Assessment will incorporate these competences into school testing. The drive for a "highly skilled and flexible workforce [essential] to national success within the new global

knowledge economy" (p. 3) shapes a new form of student subjectivity, one that serves the interests of the market place.

Alongside, and complementary to the focus on competencies, is the presence of outcomes-based education and the rise of qualifications (Allais, 2018). Allais (2018) discusses the dominance of outcomes-based education and the corresponding emphasis on qualifications. The rise of credentialism rests on the belief that a knowledge economy requires a workforce with high levels of education. The kind of knowledge required is specific, and tends to focus on technology and science rather than the humanities and the arts. At the heart of this turn, Allais argues, is a misplaced belief that education can reliably attend to all of the needs of the economy. Yet, this belief about what education can do for the economy persists and has led to increasingly instrumentalist education policy, including curriculum. Not surprisingly, therefore, international curricula are generally organised around outcomes rather than content (Allais, 2014; Yates et al., 2019).

Given the pervasiveness of competencies, qualifications and outcomes-based education, an argument can be made that the utilitarian turn in curricula has led to the marginalisation of knowledge (Whitty, 2010). Wheelahan (2010) for example, notes the instrumentalisation of knowledge leads to the atomization of knowledge by redefining curriculum as measurable outcomes. Similarly, the emphasis on developing competencies and generic skills over knowledge, as well as the modular and flexible approaches to learning have also further marginalised the place of knowledge and disciplinary learning in schools (Sinemma & Priestley, 2014). Cross-curricular linkages (as are encouraged in *The New Zealand Curriculum*) also diminish the space for knowledge in schools (Whitty, 2010).

The utilitarian turn does not just have epistemological effects on school curriculum; this turn produces ontological effects as well. Students are no longer initiated into disciplines, but consumers who choose learning that maximises their ability to participate in the labour market. Increasingly, this emphasis has turned to the development of learner dispositions and competencies that offer students marketised subjectivities (Robertson, 2012; Cobb & Couch, 2018). In order to meet the needs to of changing labour markets, individuals need to become flexible, entrepreneurial, and self-managing. Savage (2017) argues that the 21st century skills agenda is utilitarian because it shifts the emphasis of young people's learning from knowledge to competencies by foregrounding the skills and competencies that young people should be able to demonstrate, rather than the knowledge they should acquire. Positioning individuals in this manner is consistent with neoliberalism's political economy, which places responsibility for welfare on individuals rather than the state.

Critiques of current curricula focus on the economic rationality that drives what is taught in schools. Brown (2015) for example, has argued the forms of knowledge most valued are the ones that contribute to the development of capital rather than those that contribute to re-imagining society and enable new ways to live. Nussbaum (2010) has argued on similar grounds by stating that current curricula rest on a very narrow conception of economic development. This conception, she argues, overly focuses on marketable skills at the expense of the humanities and the development of a civic imagination. For the most part, these critiques identify the displacement of knowledge as a troublesome turn, not just in terms of what is taught in schools but in how this displacement closes down broader conversation about the social purposes of education. Biesta (2010) suggests knowledge in schools has been replaced by a learning agenda in which the focus on measurable outcomes comes at the expense of a conversation about what a good education may entail. Wheelahan (2010) argues that a curriculum singularly concerned with the needs of the economy actively constrains a discussion

about knowledge and how we decide which knowledge is most worthy.

Arguments against this utilitarian turn have also focused on contemporary curricula's relationship to late capitalism. Agger (2004), for example, argues that new types of literacy are consistent with forms of fast capitalism. He defines fast capitalism as the increased pace of consumerism and argues that this sped-up consumption and modes of production have impacted a range of areas including the forms of literacy we engage with. For example, he notes that we increasingly consume shorter and simpler texts such as blogs. Morgan (2018) similarly draws links between the language associated with fast capitalism and the language embedded in education discourses. He notes that language such as, innovate, entrepreneurial, and creative often surface in curriculum documents. A key driver of these curriculum shifts, according to Morgan, is that schools have gone from preparing young people for the world of work to preparing them for consumer society and students are now consumers who choose what to study. He argues that this type of capitalism "reinforces competitive and individualistic values and practices that capital requires from its subjects" (p. 5). Not surprisingly, Morgan argues, the kind of knowledge now pursued through school curricula is knowledge that affirms personalised learning and consumption (via smaller, more compartmentalised units) over a traditional curriculum (Morgan, 2018). Morgan argues this new type of curriculum does not encompass learning about the social or economic practices that shape our world.

Perhaps the loudest critique, or at least, the one that has had most impact on academic discourse is Michael Young's call to bring knowledge back into curriculum (Young, 2008). Arguing for a realist view of knowledge, Young claims that disciplinary knowledge is not bound by its mode of production, and therefore that its claims to truth can be trusted, even if just provisionally so. He locates the diminished space for knowledge as a result of progressive and postmodern responses to traditional and canonised forms of knowledge. Expanding on this

work, Young and Lambert (2014) outline three kinds of school knowledge. While Futures 1 knowledge (traditional academic knowledge) dominated up until the 1970s, Young and Lambert claim that Futures 2 knowledge has dominated since the 1970s. They identify this type of knowledge as knowledge that has lost its disciplinary integrity in favour of cross-curricular approaches, generic skills, and more student-focused curricula (Young & Lambert, 2014). Young then makes the argument that social justice depends on access to disciplinary knowledge. Young, and others working from a social realist position suggest that equity depends on students having access to disciplinary knowledge that they might not otherwise have access to in their homes. This distinction between disciplinary knowledge and every day or social knowledge forms a fundamental part of the social realist position and has significant epistemological implications for school curriculum.

This section has provided an account of how curricula across international contexts have adopted a utilitarian aspect. The literature surveyed included specific features of this turn, as well as critiques that centred on the diminished space for knowledge in school curricula. I have also drawn on literature that situates this curriculum turn in the wider political economy and the overemphasis that education is given in terms of what it can do for the economy. This context is a starting point to develop my argument about the effects of this turn in subject English and the subsequent effects on subject English's potential to advance the ideal invoked in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. In examining the context, a question remains about whether knowledge is marginalised in secondary English curricula. Or, is it that knowledge is simply an assumed outcome? As Harris and Burn (2016) point out, current curricula models have "not proceeded from the assumption that knowledge is unimportant (but that) what young people need are the skills that will allow them access to it" (p. 257).

Context Two: The New Zealand Curriculum

The New Zealand Curriculum shares all the features of contemporary curricula as outlined by Priestley and Biesta (2013), a shift to competencies, student-centred learning, a focus on outcomes, and teachers as curriculum producers. This following section discusses the ways in which these features take form in New Zealand's curriculum.

Given that contemporary curricula are also charged with developing a particular type of citizen, it is common to find vision statements and guiding principles in curriculum documents (Priestley & Biesta, 2013). *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) reflects this global trend by beginning with a vision for young people who will leave school as "confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners" (p. 8). The document constructs young people as those who participate in ways that are "critical, ethical, and contribute to a greater common good" (p. 4). While *The New Zealand Curriculum* details the values and competencies necessary to enable its vision for young people, it does not detail the specific knowledge that produces this type of citizen. Consequently, the curriculum is organised around achievement objectives and outcomes in place of prescribed content. In turning away from prescription, the curriculum turns to competencies as a way of developing a certain type of student.

The competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* are closely tied to the competencies identified by the DeSeCo Report (2005) and include: *thinking, using language, symbols, and texts, relating to others* (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 5). In a shift from the previous *Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) essential skills have been replaced by key competencies. The shift in language is not inconsequential. Hipkins (2005) explains that

the competencies are meant to integrate knowledge, skills and attitudes and that they should be embedded in all learning rather than taught as discreet competencies. The notion of a competence that embodies an attitude as well as a skill is connected to the idea that contemporary work and everyday life require complex demands from us. Hipkins argues that the competencies should be developed in ways that have personal relevance to students' lives.

The New Zealand Curriculum (2007) is also consistent with contemporary curricula in rejecting a one-size fits-all approach to content and learning (Priestly & Biesta, 2013). For this reason, the document asserts the flexibility that schools have to develop curriculum content that best meets students' needs and interests. Although this shift toward student-centred and constructivist pedagogies can be seen as pedagogically progressive, the turn is also aligned with the neoliberal focus on the development of the self (Wheelahan, 2010). This focus also positions teachers as curriculum producers who are facilitators of knowledge (Sinnema & Priestley, 2014; Robertson, 2012) and who must attend to individual student needs and interests (Collin, 2014).

Despite the strong alignment with international trends, *The New Zealand Curriculum* nevertheless, carves out aims and ideals that are consistent with New Zealand's unique history and identity. As Dale (2008) notes, the potent position of transnational policy and governance has limits, where some aspects, like citizenship, are still negotiated at a national level. This observation is important in the context of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and shows the ways in which national aspirations may manifest in national documents. Dale refers to these autonomous spaces as parallel systems of education and in New Zealand's case, while the mandate for developing citizens who contribute to the economy reflects transnational goals, the curriculum also frames citizenship in terms of New Zealand's unique bicultural identity.

Although the document is often presented as a coherent text, it should be seen as one with competing aims and ideals, where more than one vision for New Zealand education and society jostle for space. As a text, *The New Zealand Curriculum* is inscribed by more than one discursive field. The vision, for example, contains elements of progressive discourses in its focus on student-centred learning, as well as critical discourses that focus on social justice in the "values" part of the document (p. 10). But the document also contains neoliberal imperatives and encourages the development of the enterprising individuals.

Placing the vision, principles, values, and competencies at the forefront of the document constructs a broad social purpose for education by determining what the educated person should look like. There are repeated references to social justice, acting ethically, valuing diversity, developing critical discernment and participating for the greater common good. These references serve to produce both an educated ideal and a vision for society. As Priestley and Biesta (2013) argue, contemporary curricula attempt to reconcile competing agendas and appeal to both progressive and neoliberal aims. However, as Allais (2003) details in her account of curriculum reform in South Africa, the more progressive and democratically orientated ideals are immobilised by the neoliberal imperatives. The New Zealand Curriculum similarly appeals to critical, progressive, and neoliberal (individualistic) discourses. Although reconciling these three competing narratives is fraught, appearing to do so makes the curriculum a discursively powerful document.

Still, with such an emphatically asserted vision, important questions emerge about the forms of curriculum knowledge that are most likely to produce these types of students. In the context of this thesis, the nature of a curriculum that so forthrightly constructs a social vision requires

deep thought about how subject English might enable such a society. While I have suggested the curriculum inheres multiple discourses, the vision of actively participating and contributing members of society is nevertheless unequivocal. And, if the vision is connected to broader ideas about participatory society, it remains vital to consider the kinds of curriculum content that enable this vision. That is, questions of knowledge must remain at the forefront of discussions about the social purposes of education. In terms of the analysis presented in this thesis, questions of knowledge are also at the forefront of my thinking about the aims and ideals of subject English.

Context Three: Subject English

Subject English has its own history and traditions. One salient feature of this history is that in all its guises, English has always been political and connected to "the social reproduction of inequality and political hegemony in different ways" (Ball, Kenny, & Gardiner, 1990, p. 74). For this reason, secondary English should be seen as a site of contestation and power. In tracing the history of English in the United Kingdom, Ball et al. (1990) note how English as a school subject emerged as a way of educating a newly growing urban working class. Subject English was seen as a way of teaching appropriate ways of behaving through reading and writing. That is, literacy was seen as an important contributor to moral and civil behaviour. Teese (2013) and Doecke (2017) trace a similar history of subject English in Australia, where the subject is again tied to social and moral concerns at different historical periods. As Doecke, points out, English has historically been seen as a way of "subduing the masses" (p. 223).

In the United Kingdom, subject English is generally traced from Matthew Arnold's cultural heritage view and the belief that 'culture' could be made available to the masses. A cultural

heritage view was further entrenched after the Newbolt Report (1921) where national pride, unity, and fostering 'the English way' was important post World War One. Literature became the apex of subject English and valued for its ability to bring joy to personal experience. In the 1930s and 1940s, subject English was seen as a way of bringing an aesthetic sensibility in the face of an increasingly industrialised society (Ball et al., 1990). This view of English gave way to progressive, and later political, critiques that pushed for more student-centred and diverse forms of subject English.

In New Zealand, Locke (2015) traces the development of subject English back to the Thomas Report (1944), which, he argues, remained the dominant model until the 1980s. The Thomas Report emphasised the importance of expression in speech and writing and the ability to understand the expression of others (1944). In the 1980s, Locke notes, that the word language replaced the word English and the attention shifted to language and its relationship to human life. The rise of language over English meant a focus on creativity, media, linguistics, and more student-centred ways of teaching secondary English. Locke situates this student-centred shift as an alignment with Dixon's *Growth Through English* (1967). The 1990s brought with it a new English curriculum document in New Zealand, which Locke suggests was a combination of personal growth and rhetorical skills. This new curriculum also saw the introduction of literacy as official policy within subject English, what Green (2016) refers to, as the literacy turn. Justified in terms of a perceived crisis in literacy, the prominence of literacy was also tied to concerns about student employability as well concerns about teacher accountability.

In view of these English histories and trajectories, Doecke (2017) argues that an important aspect about the subject's development becomes clear. Historically, subject English has been non-instrumentalist in its aims and ideals until recently. As Collin (2014) notes, during the

industrial period, secondary English was not orientated towards the world of work. The expectation was that students would read novels and not "worker training manuals" (p. 385). So, despite the emphasis on social control, historical accounts of secondary English suggest much broader social purposes than instrumentalist approaches to the subject (Doecke, 2017).

English and the knowledge question

Mclean-Davies and Sawyer (2018) note that English is not often discussed in terms of knowledge and that what counts as knowledge could be conceived in multiple ways. Knowledge, for example, may be conceived as "specific texts, literary techniques, historical periods, conceptual grasp of the nature of literature, or, 'ways of knowing' [that are] produced through classroom interactions" (p. 840). A search of literature suggests a broad range of conceptualizations about subject English knowledge (see for example, Marshall, 2013).

The diminished space for literature has been a long-held concern that predates social realist critiques of curriculum. Marshall (2003) has critiqued the turn to generic forms of learning in the secondary English classroom at the expense of pleasure and wonder. While Medway (2005) has critiqued the increasingly instrumental and functional aspects of language in the secondary curriculum. Locke (2008) has critiqued the privileging of literacy of the literary. Described by Green (2017) as the literacy turn, these critiques have focused on the rise of skills at the expense of the development of aesthetic sensibilities. As content has shifted in secondary English classrooms, so too has secondary English teaching. Brass (2014) discusses the preparation of English teachers as emphasising generic approaches to teaching that further diminish the space for curriculum specialization. In the current context, Brass argues, English teaching is reduced to aligning "curriculum, teaching and classroom assessments with behavioural objectives that are aligned with state standards" (p. 121).

Subject English has more than one land, and literature is not the only emphasis ascribed to the subject. Locke (2007) outlines an English Map (discussed further in Article One: *Audience and Purpose*) that details the different emphases that may be given to the subject. These emphases are, cultural heritage, personal growth, critical literacy, and textual competence. At different times, national curricula has adopted different versions or models of school English. However, it is generally accepted that personal growth continues to be a favoured emphasis in how we conceptualise the subject in western democracies.

However, personal growth is not a static model and its own emphases have changed over time. Driver (2013) points to the ways in which personal growth has been connected to particular pedagogies and a encompassing definition of what counts as literature (he attributes this to critical literacy influences in which everything is seen as literature). Along with this shift, he argues, subject English is transformed from having content at its centre to a focus on activity. The effect and limits of the growth model, according to Driver, is the diminishing of literature and redefined "under the auspices of growth" (p. 60).

Goodwyn (2017) argues along similar lines and suggests that personal growth has been co-opted by a model of English that emphasises personal interest rather than critical agency. Goodwyn draws on a Deweyan sense of personal growth where the relationship between language and learning leads to the development of an informed citizen in democratic society. Green (2017) echoes this call for critical agency but ties it rhetoric and the importance of shaping young people into meaning-makers. Defining rhetoric as "doing things with texts" (p. 76) Green sees rhetoric and language as underpinning concepts of the subject. Green's conception of rhetoric and its place in subject English is one that is explicitly linked to agency.

He explains that production of text must take central place in secondary English classrooms because of its ability to develop critical reasoning.

As discussed, neoliberal contexts also see knowledge as the driver of economies. Under such a regime, subject English takes on a new guise. Collin (2014) considers the effects of knowledge economy discourses (KED) on subject English and argues that these discourses are particularly appealing to English teachers because of the things it offers. Collins explains that in late capitalism, creativity and innovation are seen as key drivers of the economy. The appeal for teachers, Collins argues, is in the rejection of one-size fits all and in the emphasis on the practical, including, inquiry, creativity, and collaboration. But KED reshapes English to the logic of capital by channelling creativity and sociality into capitalist systems. Students are directed to write about their lives in more economic terms rather than civic or communal terms. Driver (2013), Goodwyn (2017) Green's (2017) critiques of a personal growth model that is overly student-centric, then, may also signal a more recent construction of subject English that is embedded in neoliberal ontologies of the self and the enterprising individual.

It is not surprising, then, that social realist critiques of subject English have focused on the simultaneous and connected shifts towards the learner and away from content (Young & Muller, 2010). Maton (2013), for example, uses two contrasting responses to text to show the difference between a more sophisticated response to one that simply details a personal responses. He uses this illustration to make the point that a literary gaze must be intentionally cultivated by building on subject English knowledge. Cuthbert (2017) advances a social realist understanding of subject English by making claims to its transcendent and universal aspects, arguing that the ideas students encounter in texts move them beyond their everyday lives. A social realist response to what should be taught in subject English falls back on notions of

prescribed content and the literary canon as prescribed by disciplinary experts (Young & Muller, 2010)

Doecke and Mead (2017) respond directly to Young's arguments by challenging Young and Muller's distinction between knowledge and experience. Doecke and Mead call for a more sophisticated understanding of experience that should be seen as an "awareness and heightened interaction with the world" (p. 8). This notion of experience and its centrality to subject English is not aimless fancy. The authors draw on a romantic view of experience and imagination to show that critical awareness rests on experience and imagination. Doecke (2017) further develops this argument by claiming that subject English is a fundamentally social subject that requires interaction, dialogue, and community.

If subject English is a place of social interaction, it is also a place for contested interpretation. Yandel and Brady (2016) compare two diverse student groups (one group from England and one group from Palestine) to demonstrate the limits of a social realist view of literature. Their comparison between the two groups pf students reveals two different interpretations of the text. Yandel and Brady's study demonstrates some of the limits to social realist arguments, including its claim to universality and neutrality. In summary, the knowledge question remains complex for subject English. While concerns about generic and instrumentalist versions of knowledge remained a consistent critique, more nuanced questions about what counts as subject English knowledge continue to be debated.

Subject English in The New Zealand Curriculum

In *The New Zealand Curriculum* subjects are officially recast as Learning Areas as a way of encouraging curriculum integration. As a learning area, English is described in ways that align

strongly with the *New Zealand Curriculum*'s vision, values and principles. Indeed, the answer to the question: Why study English? is a clear re-stating of the document's early pages: "Literacy in English gives students access to the understanding, knowledge, and skills they need to participate fully in the social, cultural, political and economic life of New Zealand and the wider world." (2007, p. 18). The learning area descriptor emphasises learners who can think critically and in-depth by learning "to deconstruct and critically interrogate texts in order to critically to understand the power of language to enrich and shape their own and others' lives" (p. 18). The descriptor not only shows the consistency between subject English and the overall vision expressed in *The New Zealand Curriculum*, but also the strong commitment to this ideological vision.

Learning area English is divided into two strands: *making meaning* and *creating meaning*. *Making meaning* is the receptive strand in which students learn to draw meaning from a broad range of texts. *Creating meaning* is the productive strand in which students learn to produce their own (increasingly) sophisticated texts. Within each strand there are three language modes: oral written language, oral language, and visual language. Each language mode corresponds to either the receptive or productive strand. *Making meaning*, therefore, includes reading, listening and viewing and *creating meaning* includes writing, speaking, and presenting. In each of the strands and language modes, there are five aspects from which the achievement objectives are drawn. These aspects are *processes and strategies*, *purposes and audiences*, *ideas*, *language features*, and *structure*. *The New Zealand Curriculum* is divided into eight levels from Year 1 to Year 13 that span primary through to secondary school. Secondary English covers level 4 through to level 8.

The organisation of the strands into language modes rather than content (for example literature) emphasises a more skills-based approach to the subject. This feature is in-line with transnational policy that promotes more generic approaches to learning. The organisation of the learning area into achievement objectives and outcomes is also a feature of contemporary curricula. Each achievement objective contains a set of indicators that detail the what students should be able to do. For example, within Level 4 Making Meaning Strand, the indicators for the *Language Features* aspect, state that students will be able to:

- Identify oral, written, and visual features used and recognises and describes their effects;
- Uses an increasing vocabulary to make meaning;
- Shows an increasing knowledge of how a range of text conventions can be used appropriately and effectively;
- Knows that authors have different voices and styles and can identify and describe some of these differences.

These outcomes-based indicators demonstrate what Locke (2008) refers to as the eroding of school English as a disciplinary subject. The skills, themselves, are clearly designed to be generic and transferable across subjects. What is more, constructing the subject around skills prevents teachers from engaging in a broader conversation about what content should be taught.

Despite this instrumentalist bent, Locke et al. (2009) locate Learning Area English as consistent with the personal growth model of English with a strong focus on students as creators of meaning. Certainly, the organisation of English into *Making Meaning* and *Creating Meaning* reveal a progressive and student-centred view of learning. In *The Curriculum Guide: Senior*

Secondary (English) (Ministry of Education, 2012), for example, four key concepts are laid out, which are meant to incorporate "big ideas" and "understandings" that students will take with them beyond school (p. 9). The concepts themselves: identity, story, communication, and meaning also bear out a personal growth emphasis. The focus on identity and the need to be responsive to students is explained in a series of questions such as, "Who are my students? What do they want to achieve? How can I tap into or connect with their particular expertise, interest and experiences, culture, language and identity?" (p. 10). Teachers are encouraged to "choose texts that students are going to relate to and see as being relevant." (p. 10). The guide goes as far as to suggest that teachers should consider changing a text if students do not find it engaging. This strong focus on identity and responsiveness is, of course, consistent with the flexibility that teachers are afforded within the curriculum. The focus on identity also further constitutes the learning area in ways that strongly attend to individual development and growth, which is in keeping with neoliberalism's ontology.

This student-centred impulse is entrenched into all parts of the Learning Area English. A fascinating analysis of *The Curriculum Guide: Senior Secondary (English)* (Ministry of Education, 2012) uses discourse analysis to show how the language used in the document prioritises the learner. Ward (2019) found that references to students considerably outweigh the references to teachers. She argues this framing is problematic (in what is after-all a guide for teachers) because it fails to properly focus on the actions of teachers, what teachers need to know, or what it may even mean to *teach* subject English. The shift from the teacher to the learner raises further questions about subject English content and renders the enactment of secondary English as a variable and contested space.

Subject English in the National Certificate of Achievement

The focus of this thesis is on curriculum but The National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) plays a significant role in shaping senior English programmes. The NCEA is a standards-based assessment framework in which students must demonstrate competence against specific learning outcomes (Hipkins, Johnson, & Sheehan, 2016). The framework was brought in as a compromise between the previous norm-referenced School Certificate and Unit Standards, which were entirely competency-based. These small, compartmentalised units of curriculum assessments, known as standards, can be assessed either internally in schools or externally as national assessments (Locke, 2002). The standards are designed to be flexible and include students who have been previously excluded by a norm-referenced system or are disengaged from schooling (Hipkins et al., 2016). Imbued with the task of providing a seamless progression through assessment, the NCEA actively promotes the assembling of specific standards into specific courses to meet the needs of specific students. This feature has been critiqued for its fragmentation of knowledge, its eroding of English as a discipline and its impact on teachers themselves (Locke, 2002, 2007, 2008).

Concluding Comments

This chapter has provided a discussion of the broader context from which my study emerges and identifies some of the issues that my research seeks to address. While the concept of curriculum remains contested, it is possible to identify contemporary trends that shape curricula in certain ways. Specifically, I have focused on transnational policy and the shift towards competencies and more utilitarian versions of curriculum. I have also considered *The New Zealand Curriculum* and subject English in this global context and noted its alignment with international trends.

How, then, might subject English be critically examined against the vision espoused in *The New Zealand Curriculum*? In as much as teachers are encouraged to be responsive to the students in front of them, how might we examine the decisions teachers make about the types of English content they make available to different groups of students? How might the kind of content a student has access to limit her ability to develop creative and critical capacities, including the capacity for re-imagining the world? The following chapter outlines and justifies the theoretical and methodological approach to addressing the thesis questions.

THEORY TO METHOD

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline and explain the theory and methods used in this study. As the aim of the thesis is to examine the multiple and entangled contexts that produce versions of secondary English, I had to think about the theories, concepts, and methods that would best allow me to address my research questions. In order to make visible as many layers of complexity as possible, I realised that I would need to make use of a selection of theoretical frameworks to account for the nuances and possible contradictions in the data. I begin with a discussion of the theory that informs my research and then outline the methodological assumptions and methods used in my analysis. The theoretical underpinnings and methodological choices are aligned in their assumptions about social reality and the nature of my data. They work together to critically interrogate contemporary norms and practices in secondary English. I conclude the chapter with a summary of the articles that follow this chapter.

As a way of focussing the rest of the discussion in this chapter, I return to my research questions:

1. Which discourses and versions of English are rendered most likely in the current context?
2. What tensions, anxieties, and pleasures exist within these discourses and constructions?
3. What are effects of these versions in relation to the stated educational ideals in *The New Zealand Curriculum*?
4. What are the effects of these versions in terms of educational equity?

A Sociological Disciplinary Lens

Sociology is the disciplinary backdrop to this thesis and provides some of the concepts used to frame the thesis problems and analyse the data in broad terms. Sociology is the study of society and sociological study focuses critically on the complex relationships between individuals and society (Macionis, 2005). Sociological study emphasises an investigative stance that poses searching questions about society. Seminal work such as Peter Berger's *An Invitation to Sociology* (1963) defines the sociological perspective as the importance of seeing the general in the particular. That is, Berger argues for the importance of examining individuals in their social context and the importance of contextualising individual behaviour in broader social patterns, such as social class. Similarly, C Wright Mills in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959) captures this sociological orientation in terms of imagination and the ability to see society anew. Often captured as seeing the strange in the familiar, sociological study encourages us to question taken for granted assumptions about people and society.

In this vein, a sociological approach to education adopts an imaginative and wondering stance to examine taken for granted structures and processes within education and to explore the relationship between education and society (Ballantine, 2001). In sociological terms, this interplay is framed as structure and agency. Structure refers to the societal institutions that organise and mediate how individuals live their lives and relate to each other, for example, schooling (Macionis, 2005). Agency refers to individuals' ability to interact with and act upon the structures that shape society (Macionis, 2005). Sociologists also study society in terms of levels or systems (Giddens, 2004). Described as macro, meso, and micro levels, each level relates to the different systems that organise society and shape relationships. The macro level encompasses legal and political systems, whereas, communities or individual political parties

occupy the meso level. The micro level describes smallest societal systems such as those found in individual relationships in local settings. Processes is another important sociological concept that refers to the actions and activities that give life to societal structures (Ballantine, 2001).

This thesis takes up a sociological lens and problematises some aspects of secondary English teaching. I use the sociological concepts of structure and agency to examine the interplay between curriculum and teachers' decision-making. Structure, agency, and processes are important foundational concepts to my work because they mark the space within which versions of subject English are possible. I focus on the push and the pull between structures and process that shape subject English and how teachers mediate these structures and processes in their classrooms. This focus situates subject English within macro, meso, and micro contexts in order to explain its current form.

Sociological approaches to curriculum and social class

Sociological study has provided a range of ways to think about school curriculum and its relationship to social class (Ballantine, 2001). In the 1960s and 1970s a new sociology of education focused on the ways in which school curriculum reflected the knowledge and culture of the dominant class (Dale, 1994). This turn is associated with Marxist interpretations and analyses that focused on the reproductive role schools may play. Bernstein's work (1971) for example, used socio-linguistics to examine how language patterns contributed to social reproduction in schools. Young's seminal text *Knowledge and Control* (1971) argued that knowledge is a social construct that serves particular interests. French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 2005) used the notions of cultural capital and habitus to similarly argue that school success and failure was linked to the kinds of knowledge forms that students encountered in schools. Later, in *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976), Samuel Bowles and

Herbert Gintis argue that the structures and processes of schooling mimic the labour market in ways that reproduce social class inequalities.

This body of sociological work suggests a persistent role that schools may play in setting and settling social relationships in society. In *Learning to Labour: How working class kids get working class jobs* (1982) Paul Willis demonstrated the ways in which working class boys subverted middle class aspirations only to ensure their own working class destinations. Jean Anyon's work (1980, 1981) also provides an empirical basis for how a hidden curriculum of work and differentiated curricula across high and low socioeconomic status schools reproduce social class advantage and disadvantage. In New Zealand, work by Alison Jones (1990) drew on Bourdieu's work to examine the different experiences between a top stream and predominantly Pākehā girls' class, and a lower stream, predominantly Pasifika girls' class. Jones' work demonstrated the ways in which classroom interactions mediated by each group's cultural capital reproduced patterns of privilege and disadvantage. While social reproduction theorists have been critiqued for being overly deterministic, they nevertheless serve to show how schools can play an active role in sustaining, rather than disrupting, social inequality.

More recently, academic research suggests that students from lower socio-economic communities experience a more diminished and less challenging curriculum that students from middle class backgrounds (Darling-Hammond, 2001 ; Haberman, 2010; Polosel, 2015). In the context of subject English, recent work has shown that students in low socio-economic communities are more likely to get a concentration of the basics over more complex learning (Sawyer, 2014). Mclean (2013), drawing on Bourdieu, explores the issue of text selection and cultural capital in secondary English classrooms and notes that curriculum documents can use literary works to reinforce or renegotiate literary cultural capital. Importantly, she points to the

crucial role teachers play in enacting curriculum policy and the how they may mediate access to literary cultural capital. Maclean's points are pertinent to this thesis in two ways. First, because they point to the way in which curriculum content plays a role in mediating cultural capital and second, because it highlights the role teachers then play in mediating access to valued content. In sum, Mclean's research reminds us that subject English is always bound to questions of who has access to what and to what effect.

Teese, Lamb, and Helme (2008) offer a theoretical and explanatory framework for thinking about how secondary English and Maths curriculum may reproduce social class inequalities. They argue there are two fictions about curriculum that obscure the ways in which it actually works to sustain social class inequalities. The first fiction is that all curriculum subjects provide the same opportunities to all students. That is to say, curriculum is assumed to be non-hierarchical and non-selective in its nature. The second fiction is that schools are neutral spaces where cultural and economic funds are equally distributed among teachers and students. However, as Teese et al. (2008) argue curriculum actually inheres a discriminating power in the ways it is used in different sites within the schooling system. They maintain that how teachers use the curriculum at different sites within and across schools means that curriculum becomes discriminatory because "curriculum and pedagogical choices are conditioned by who is taught and to what end" (Teese et al., 2008, p. 36).

To further theorise how curriculum operates in ways that both enable and disable students, Teese et al. (2008) use the notions of *fortified sites* and *exposed sites* in secondary English classrooms. A fortified site is where complex content is exploited in order to maximize student results, which Teese et al. argue is only possible in middle class schools. Working class schools, on the other hand, are exposed sites, who are unable to pursue or rely solely on academic

achievements and must therefore pursue broader goals, such as sports or non-academic pathways. Because working class schools cannot specialize singularly in academic performance, they must *adapt* school curriculum by offering particular pathways and/or reducing cognitive demands on students. So, while working class schools may be able to protect students from a traditional academic curriculum, they are not able to use curriculum to their advantage in the same way middle class schools use curriculum as an asset. As Teese et al. (2008) argue, for a working-class school, curriculum is instead, a liability.

In later work, Teese (2013) argues that structural inequality exists "when the locations in the school system typically occupied by different social groups yield advantages and disadvantages that are large, persistent and predictable" (p. 195). This point is important to my thesis because it suggests that secondary English may be a site that produces patterns of inequality through differentiated curriculum. Inequality therefore, is not tied to individual students or individual teachers, but in the ways in which the subject is packaged to different groups of students in different sorts of schools. As Teese (2013) convincingly argues, inequality is the result of both how schools are organised *and* how the curriculum is organised.

Overarching Theoretical Stance: Critical Theory

Neuman (1997) describes theory as a "system of interconnected abstractions or ideas that condenses and organises knowledge about the social world" (p. 37). Theory rests on assumptions that make sense of the world in particular ways. To do this work, theories are made up of concepts and ideas that attempt to explain linkages between different phenomena. As used in this thesis, theory is provisional and offered for its explanatory potential as opposed to truth or definitive solutions to subject English. As Neuman (1997) explains, theory is always

"incomplete and recognises uncertainty" (p. 38). However, theory must also contain a level of internal consistency in order to provide its explanatory capabilities (Neuman, 1997).

Critical theory is the overarching theoretical stance for this thesis. Critical theory emerged in the early 20th century, with its roots in the work of Karl Marx and originating in the Institute for Social Research in 1923 in Germany (Gibson, 1986). The Institute (also known as the Frankfurt School) was set up by intellectuals interested in developing social theory that examined the contradictions and inequalities in capitalist democracies (Anyon, 2009). The Frankfurt scholars were interested in social transformation and their work is concerned with both cultural and economic critiques. These critiques emerged from the changing social context, as well what was seen as the failure of social institutions to produce more socially just ways of living.

Despite, its name, critical theory is not a single theory but theories that challenge norms and naturalised ways of seeing the world (How, 2003). One significant norm that critical theory challenges is the positivist-empiricist paradigm, which dominated the first part of the 20th century. Critical theory focuses on how things come to be the way they are, and what they might be in the future. That is, critical theory has a concern with "the wider truth or validity of what is currently the case" (How, 2003, p. 3). Critique, in this sense, is associated with questioning normative practices and beliefs (Giroux, 1984). Importantly to this thesis, critical theory challenges dominant ideologies that work to sustain inequality and oppression (Gibson, 1986). In seeking to engage with the ideas and practices that reproduce inequality, critical theory maintains its focus on "real world problems" with emancipation and social transformation as its goal (Anyon, 2009. p. 15).

Anyon (2009) describes this aspect of critical theory as an approach bringing theory and data together so that research findings are interpreted via "larger theoretical infrastructure" as a means to increase their "explanatory, critical, or even liberatory power" (p. 1). This thesis seeks to examine the relationship between several interrelated contexts that produce current versions of English. If my aim is to make well-defended links between structural and personal realities in the context of secondary English, then Anyon's point about the importance of locating data within a broad theoretical and explanatory framework is central to this thesis. Theory and theoretical work provide a range of concepts and frameworks for making these links, without it, the data would only provide a descriptive account of how teachers make content choices. The theories and theoretical concepts used have been chosen for their ability to illuminate these relationships and their effects on subject English. As such, I make use of theory that provide explanatory potential for examining my thesis questions.

Critical Frameworks and the work of Paulo Freire

The work of Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire, is known for its unequivocal stance that education is a political act (Freire, 1996). Freire's insistence that teaching and learning practices have political power locates his work within a neo-Marxist and critical theory framework. The focus throughout his work is on structural analysis and a Freirean lens provides me with a critical stance to examine the intersection between subject English and power. For Freire, reading and writing are not neutral acts, they are social practices that either enable or disable possibilities for criticality and emancipation (Freire, 1998b). Access to critical ways of knowing the world is fundamental to social justice according to Freire, it is in the act of praxis, "the action and reflection of men upon their world" (1994, p. 63) that social transformation becomes possible. If education has the potential for both liberation and

domestication, then, to what extent does access to, or exclusion from, English content reproduce social inequalities?

The terms critical and functional literacy indicate a distinction between reading and writing practices that either advance or limit students' ability to engage with texts so that underlying values and ideas can be identified (Janks, 2010). Reading and writing practices that are limited to tasks such as filling in a form or using a phonebook are functional in nature. Functional models of literacy have been critiqued by educationalists, such as Lankshear and McLaren (1993) for further disempowering individuals already marginalised by structural disadvantage, by making them less aware of the structures of power that oppress them. A key purpose of the thesis is to identify the sorts of literacies that are being delivered differentially to students in secondary school English departments and what the implications of those different literacies might be for students.

Freire's ideas provide a conceptual framework for critically engaging with *The New Zealand Curriculum*, because they allow a focused consideration of the relationship between curriculum, power, and equity. The concepts allow me to question whether the knowledge and skills delivered to students enables them to connect with each other and the world in critical ways. To this extent, restricting access to content and assessment opportunities might be regarded, from a Freirean point of view, as working against the social vision and ideals expressed in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. If the full promise and enactment of the curriculum's vision is not a given, it is important to examine which students are more likely to receive a diminished curriculum.

Finally, Freire's emphatic claim that teaching is a human endeavour and that teachers are never released from ethical responsibility (Freire, 2005) provides a lens from which to explore the act of secondary English *teaching* as politically important curriculum work. Identifying teachers as curriculum workers is an important underlying assumption in this thesis. To begin with, teachers as curriculum workers highlights the importance of taking teachers' voices and experiences seriously. Second, teachers' engagement with curriculum shows that curriculum production and delivery is not a neutral or static process. This rich interplay between curriculum as a policy structure and its enactment through teachers' work affirms that any kind of curriculum discussion and/or reform must involve an examination of teachers' own commitments and understandings of subject English.

Methodology

This thesis uses a qualitative and interpretive paradigm in order to address the research questions. Qualitative interpretive research seeks to go beyond description and to instead offer analysis and explanation (Mutch, 2013). Qualitative work "extracts themes or generalisations from evidence and organizing data to present a coherent and consistent picture" of social contexts (Neuman, 1997, p. 335). Social contexts are important in this kind of work because qualitative interpretive research seeks to identify and explain social processes and posit causal relationships, using theoretical constructs to illuminate possible meanings and implications. Qualitative and interpretive methodology also uses a range of evidence and, in this study, I use interview data as well as policy frameworks to explain how and why subject English takes its current forms.

My use of a qualitative, interpretive framework and thematic analysis is embedded in certain assumptions I hold about the nature of data and what they may tell me about the complex space of secondary English teaching. The collection, analysis and interpretation of data in this thesis uses a social constructionist lens, which assumes that meanings and experience are socially produced, rather than emerging inherently from individuals (Burr, 2015). A social constructionist lens means that the focus of my data collection, analysis and interpretation rests not on individual or psychological persuasions but the social and historical contexts in which they play out (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this way, the data become a way to theorise the contexts and structures that produce teachers' personal accounts of secondary English.

Social constructionism is an umbrella term for theories that focus on the shared and socially created nature of reality (Weinberg, 2014). This emphasis on the socially created and shared understanding has its roots in Berger and Luckman's work, *The social construction of reality* (1966) in which they argue that individuals create and then sustain social realities and conventions through the use of certain social practices. Berger and Luckman argue social interactions are the means by which we create and maintain our social reality. In other words, what we see as reality is always constructed by socially accepted norms and practices that we learn and use to interact with others.

Social constructionism draws from a broad range of philosophical influences such as Marxism, postmodernism, feminism, post-colonial and standpoint theory (Burr, 2015). These influences locate social constructionism within anti-essentialist frameworks that challenge the idea of inherent or fixed meanings. Instead, ideas and meanings are understood as rooted in their historical contexts and individuals ascribe meaning to experiences in a range of ways that are also historically situated (Weinberg, 2014). Social constructionism is an appropriate and useful

methodological framework for my data collection, analysis and interpretation because of its emphasis on the constructed nature of meaning. This stance allows me to explore the contexts in which meanings about subject English are produced as well as identify why these meanings are most likely to surface at this moment. A social constructionist framework also allows me to delve into the personal constructions that teachers hold about subject English and to consider the effects of these constructions in relation to my research questions.

Social Constructionist Research and Critical Theory

Social constructionism and critical theory share assumptions and values that provide epistemological and ontological coherence throughout the analyses in my thesis. Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) describe critical theory as a method of inquiry with a focus on social issues and a commitment to challenging the status quo. Social constructionist research similarly questions traditional research orthodoxies as well as the givenness (and inevitability) of social structures and relationships. Like critical theory, social constructionist research considers the effects of language on the social world (Burr, 2015). In this sense, language does not reflect reality, it constitutes reality.

These connections between critical theory and social constructionism anchor the focus of my thesis in two ways. First, they open up the secondary English teaching space for scrutiny in ways that emphasise its constructed and contested nature. By acknowledging this historical contingency, I am able to make connections between the broader context and how secondary English is enacted in schools. Second, in acknowledging subject English's situatedness I am able to argue against the contemporary rationalities that give subject English its form.

Social Constructionism and Discourse

Social constructionism and discourse are related and complementary frameworks that focus on the role of language in setting the parameters of what is possible to think and do (Burr, 2015). Discourse refers to situated language use (Burr, 2015) and is an applied analytical tool that surfaces consistently throughout the thesis. The concept has been variously defined in ways that emphasise different aspects of language and its effects in-use (for example, Foucault, 1982; Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2000; Janks, 2010). Broadly, discourses are arrangements of representation that produce our social realities. The social construction of reality involves a bidirectional relationship in which individuals both shape and are shaped by discourses. This shaping of reality includes socially situated identities that we enact and recognise in different social settings (Gee, 2000).

As used in this thesis, discourse refers to meaning systems that produce particular norms and truths (Foucault, 1982). This constitutive notion of discourse makes visible the ways in which meanings about curriculum shape versions of subject English. Discourse allows me to identify the historical assumptions upon which subject English rests and how it is constituted in ways that seem natural and incontestable to teachers. These constructions are the result of social and economic arrangements, but they become normalised through discourses as truths (Tamboukou, 2008). Further, as there is always more than one discourse present in any given context, the potential for tension and complexity also exists. In as much as this thesis seeks to explore the interplay between the multiple and layered contexts that shape subject English, tension and complexity are worthy of investigation.

While discourses constitute the limits of what is possible to think and act, they nevertheless speak us into existence. In this view discourses are political forms that shape school and teacher

practices in particular ways. The notion of discourse allows me to examine how discourses are embedded in curriculum policy sand how they may position and govern teachers and students in particular ways. How might discourses construct particular norms and practices in relation to secondary English? Which discourses are dominant right now and how might they produce compelling teacher identities?

Critical Discourse Analysis: Language and Power

Discourse analysis, and in particular, critical discourse analysis arises from a critical theory approach to the social world and sees language as the means by which social relations are produced and sustained (Burr, 2015). The relationship between language and power is the primary focus of critical discourse analysis because discourse is where ideologies are both constructed and reflected (Paltridge, 2007). The aim of critical discourse analysis is to unmask dominant ideologies present in discourse through shared meanings and common assumptions that form our lives (Fairclough, 1992). Critical discourse analysis, therefore, seeks to deconstruct norms constituted in language in order to reveal what interests may be served.

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis: Power and Subjectivity

Part of my analysis (*Article Two: Risky Choices*) draws on a Foucauldian approach to discourses analysis. I use a Foucauldian approach because of the focus on subjectivities and how these may be governed. A Foucauldian approach to discourse is also useful to my analysis because it allows me to identify the sorts of tensions, anxieties, and pleasures that education discourses produce for secondary English teachers

Methods

While the purpose of this thesis is to examine the versions of secondary English that prevail in schools, the empirical aims of my study are to explore and analyse how secondary English teachers are discursively positioned within their subject – and the effects of this positioning on curriculum and content differentiation. Yates et al. (2019) discuss knowledge in secondary English and argue that any focus on curriculum content requires both conceptual and empirical work. They suggest an understanding of the discursive field as well as an engagement with what secondary English teachers "bring to the task and how this develops in the context of the school" (p. 3). Interviews with teachers, therefore, are an important part of this research, allowing me to examine how discourses are embodied in secondary English classrooms.

Participant selection

Ten English Heads of Departments were invited to participate in individual semi-structured qualitative interviews in order to explore how policy, curriculum, and assessment discourses manifest themselves in teachers' understanding and practice. The Heads of Departments were asked questions about how they differentiate between their mainstream English programmes and their targeted programmes for students who underachieve in English, details were sought about what texts they studied and the kinds of assessment they used. They were also asked how their decisions were linked to bigger ideas about equity and justice.

The Heads of English came from different Auckland secondary schools. I wanted to ensure a broad representation of schooling contexts and wrote to the principals of all Auckland secondary schools to ask for their permission to carry out my research. I heard back from twenty principals and selected ten Heads of Department in order to ensure a mixture of school

deciles and community contexts. I chose to interview Heads of Departments for the study because they are the ones who set the direction of the department and where decisions about how subject English is differentiated. Although the teachers I interviewed were all Heads of Departments, I refer to them throughout the thesis, including the articles, by their pseudonyms.

Table I: School demographic descriptions and participant pseudonyms

Participant	**School Context**	**School Decile**
Teacher A (Susan)	An integrated Catholic school	10
Teacher B (Filipo)	A coeducational state school	1
Teacher C (Rachael)	A coeducational state school	2
Teacher D (Mary)	A coeducational state school	9
Teacher E (Eseta)	A coeducational state school	1
Teacher F (Rob)	A coeducational state school	8
Teacher G (Helen)	A single-sex girls' state school	3
Teacher H (James)	A coeducational state school	2
Teacher I (Mike)	A coeducational state school	3
Teacher J (Rose)	A coeducational state school	4

Qualitative Interviews

I made use of semi-structured interviews that included pre-planned but open-ended questions (Neuman, 1997). In a qualitative interview, the process is one of constructing, and sometimes co-constructing, the understanding of the research phenomenon (Mutch, 2013). Semi-structured interviews would provide me with data focused on the themes I was interested in exploring but still create space for teachers to take the conversation thread towards their own experiences and concerns. In order to gain insights into the participants' understanding, I

needed to develop a rapport and build trust. That I had been an English teacher myself was helpful in engaging in a more free-flowing discussion where the participants felt that they were being heard and understood. Kvale (1996, p. 2) suggests that an interview is literally an "interview, an exchange of views between two persons…" and it was such exchanges that led to the richness of the data.

Ethics

In keeping with Ethics requirements at The University of Auckland, I wrote to all school principals and Boards of Trustees asking for their permission to conduct my study in their schools. If Boards of Trustees consented, principals were then asked to pass on the Participant Information Sheets and Participant Consent Forms to their English Heads of Departments. Both the schools and individual teachers were assured anonymity. They were also assured that the University's relationship with the school would not be impacted either by participating or not participating in the study. Participants had the right to withdraw at any stage of the study and were fully informed about how the data would be used. Teachers were also offered a transcript of their interview, which they were able to edit as they wished. The interviews were then transcribed by a professional transcriber who signed a Confidentiality Agreement.

Data analysis

My interview data were firstly analysed using thematic analysis, a method for "identifying, analysing and reporting patterns" found in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). As used in this thesis, thematic analysis searches for meaning across multiple interview data. This kind of analysis allows me to examine how the data constitute subject English and secondary English teaching. Importantly, a thematic analysis allows me to examine the ways in which secondary English teachers construct and give meaning to their experiences. At the same time, thematic

analysis also allows me to consider the broader contexts that make some versions of English more likely than others. In the context of this thesis, identifying themes will allow me to illuminate common patterns in the data that relate to the research questions.

The process began by closely reading the interview transcripts and looking for general thoughts, ideas, experiences, and meanings in the data. I looked for repeated words and phrases that either conveyed personal experiences and feelings, or that described the concrete aspects of teachers' work. I used these initial findings to identify tentative patterns and establish some broad themes. During this early reading of the data, I also used Locke's English Map (2007) to examine the data against different models of subject English. Using Locke's map helped me to gain a sense of how teachers construct the nature and purpose of secondary English. From these initial readings I began coding data along three different lines, personal experiences, constructions of the subject, and the everyday realities of teaching life. Once this initial coding process was complete, I refined my themes and conducted a second and third reading of the data. At this stage, I was able to establish stronger patterns that would help me address my research questions.

As my sense making proceeded, I needed a second analytic approach and turned to critical discourse analysis, such as Norman Fairclough's work (1992), which is important in showing how power relations and social relations and ideologies are negotiated and performed through discourse. Critical discourse is a useful analytical tool because it not only provides a way to interpret my interview data but also allows me to explain why some ways of making sense of secondary English are more dominant right now.

Data interpretation

As Braun and Clarke (2006) noted, thematic analysis is helpful when researching a topic that is under-researched in order to provide an in-depth interpretation of the phenomenon. The complexity of the topic, however, did not appear to fit neatly into the traditional thesis with a single set of findings and a discussion chapter. The data seemed to offer up opportunities to examine the critical insights and nuances through different theoretical lenses. Thus, a set of theoretical and conceptual explorations emerged that have been shaped into articles for publication and the thesis became a 'thesis with publications'.

Each of the four articles makes use of different concepts and theories to provide an analytic lens through which to view the interview data and to address the key questions in the thesis. Although the concepts and theory are unpacked in the preamble to each respective article, Table 1 provides a summary of the theoretical and/or conceptual frameworks that inform each article.

Table II: An outline of the use of differing theoretical lenses in each chapter

Article title	Concepts and theory used for analysis
Audience and Purpose	Social constructionism (Burr, 1995) Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992)
Risky Choices	Governmentality (Foucault, 1979) Policy enactment (Ball et al., 2012)
Considerable Flexibility	Critical sociology (Wheelahan, 2010)
Strangers and Orphans	Humanisation and knowledge as a social process (Freire, 1998)

To orient the reader, a brief summary of each of the articles that follows, is provided in Table III**.**

Table III: Summary of the four articles

Article	**Journal**	**Summary**
Article 1: *Audience and Purpose*	Submitted to: *Curriculum Matters.* (Sole author)	In my data analysis, I found that teachers hold more than one meaning about subject English and that these meanings may sit in tension with each other. This finding led me to conclude that the range of meanings renders subject English as an unstable and contested space and that enacting the vision in *The New Zealand Curriculum* is not straightforward. In this article, I suggest that Goodwyn's (2017) call to rethink personal growth to include a critical agency is useful for fostering the critical elements of both subject English and the curriculum document.
Article 2: *Risky Choices*	Submitted to: *The New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work.*	In my data analysis I found that increased teacher autonomy in the context of increased accountability measures shapes curriculum content choices. My findings also suggest the interplay between autonomy and surveillance has a bigger impact on low decile schools. In this

	(Sole author)	article, I suggest that although accountability measures shape teachers' decisions about content and assessment, they nevertheless make decisions based on their own ethics and commitments to subject English.
Article 3: *Considerable Flexibility*	Submitted to: *English Teaching: Practice and Critique.* (Sole author)	In my data analysis, I found that neoliberal imperatives and progressive ideals produce a version of teaching for equity, in which equity is often reduced to curriculum differentiation. Data from the Ministry of Education is also used to show how curriculum differentiation is structured along social class lines. Using Wheelahan's work, I suggest that the neoliberal focus on the self is re-interpreted by teachers progressive and student-centred.
Article 4: *Strangers and Orphans*	Submitted to: *Education, Philosophy and Theory.* (Sole author)	In my analysis I use Freire's notion of humanisation and knowledge as a social process to give a philosophical account of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. My analysis explores the different ways in which Victor and the Creature conceptualise and pursue knowledge. I suggest that *Frankenstein* has much to offer current debates about knowledge and curriculum.

Concluding Comments

This chapter introduced the overarching theoretical stance that underpins the research, its interpretation and its presentation. Grounded in a sociological disciplinary lens and a critical theory stance, the social constructionist approach to data gathering, analysis and interpretation enabled a complex and detailed examination of how secondary English teachers construct their subject. Semi-structured interviewing was the main data gathering method with thematic and critical discourse analyses the analytic tools. The interpretation of the data, however, needed multiple theoretical frameworks to account for the nuances and contradictions that appeared during the analytic process.

PREAMBLE TO ARTICLE 1

AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

The impetus for this thesis came from what I saw as an instrumentalist and functional turn in New Zealand secondary English departments. To me, it seemed that in our rush to secure engagement from and outcomes for, our students, it was the subject's aesthetic and critical aspects that were being abandoned. As literacy gained prominence, literature receded to the background. However, in speaking with teachers, I realised my taken for granted notions of what I thought my subject should 'do' for students was not a given. What became clear was that my colleagues thought about our subject in broad and varied ways and that their conceptions of the subject were often connected to broader notions of educations' role in society.

To begin the work of untangling the complexities of secondary English, I explore teachers' own discursive constructions of the subject. Drawing on interview data, I asked teachers about how they saw the aims and purposes of subject English. The interviews focused on what they understood was the essence of the subject and how English might enable broader societal ideals, in particular equity and social justice.

Two frames of analysis are employed for interpreting the data. Initially, the data was coded against Locke's (2009) English Map to gain a sense of how teachers broadly constructed subject English. However, I was also interested to explore English as a contested space, where multiple, and possibly competing, meanings sit alongside each other. For this analysis I make use of social constructionist and critical discourse lenses.

This focus and analysis allowed me to pay attention to which constructions rose to the surface and to identify the sorts of commitments and preoccupations that may mediate the content decisions teachers make. It also allowed me to consider these constructions vis-à-vis *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007), both in terms of its broader (social) vision and in terms of the aims and ideals of the subject specifically. To what extent do teachers' constructions enable the broader visions contained within the curriculum? This article allowed me to explore my first research question: which discourses and versions of English are rendered most likely in the current context?

ARTICLE ONE

AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

SECONDARY ENGLISH TEACHERS TALK ABOUT THEIR SUBJECT

Abstract

This article examines secondary English teachers' constructions of subject English. I use interview data with ten heads of departments in Auckland secondary schools to examine how they construct subject English as well as the discourses that may inform these constructions. I draw on Locke's (2007) English map as an initial way to plotting teachers' constructions. I use a social constructionist lens to interpret and analyse the data. The main body of the article identifies prevailing constructions including the sorts of competing aims teachers negotiate. I argue that subject English exists in a complex realm of multiple and competing discourses, which warrant close attention in terms of the possibilities and limitations they may contain, particularly against the broader social vision expressed in *The New Zealand Curriculum.*

Keywords: secondary English, curriculum, discourse

Introduction

Meanings about subject English are multiple and contested (Medway, 2005; Marshall, 2011; Yates, 2019). So much so, the scholar Peter Medway said the "name English for a curriculum area is exceptionally uninformative and fails to indicate anything significant about the subject" (Medway, 2005, p. 20). These points of contestation include what counts as knowledge within the subject, the nature of English teaching, what English teachers need to know, the aims and purposes of the subject, as well as what its distinct qualities may be (Ireland, 2017). Yet subject English is not entirely amorphous, and its meanings are not completely up for grabs. English is always constrained by curriculum norms and practices, which means that in any given moment, some versions of secondary English are more likely than others. Policies such as *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007), and the National Certificate of Education (NCEA) for example, construct the nature and purposes of subject English in specific ways.

The purpose of this article is to examine the sorts of constructions about subject English that prevail in New Zealand secondary classrooms. I examine these constructions in two ways. First, by using Locke's (2007) English Map as a way of plotting these constructions against broader models of English. Second, these constructions are examined against the vision in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) for "actively involved" citizens (p. 8). This second plotting exercise offers a way to consider how subject English might contribute to the development of such citizens.

The New Zealand Curriculum and Subject English

The New Zealand Curriculum constructs the educated young person as one who is "actively involved" in civic life (p. 8). Words such as: *connected, actively involved, community*

engagement, innovation, inquiry, curiosity, participating and contributing feature prominently and repeatedly in the opening pages of the document. This participatory impetus is also present in the document's description of *Learning Area English*. Subject English is couched in terms of empowerment and active participation by stating that: "by engaging with text-based activities, students become increasingly skilled and sophisticated speakers and listeners, writers, and readers, presenters and viewers" (2007, p. 18). As students develop their skills it is expected that English will allow them to "critically interrogate texts in order to understand the power of language to enrich and shape their own and others' lives" (2007, p. 18). The aim is to ensure that students will "participate fully in the social, cultural, political, and economic life of New Zealand and the wider world" (p. 18). As outlined in the document, participation includes the ability to think critically and in an in-depth manner, to make appropriate language choices and to know how texts work in a range of contexts.

Despite this ideologically weighty preamble, *The New Zealand Curriculum* says little about the kind of curriculum content that enables this social vision. Levels of progression, for example, are organised around achievement outcomes rather than prescribed content. A key feature of the document is its emphasis on flexibility and responsiveness to student context. Framed as a guide rather than "a detailed map" (p. 37). *The New Zealand Curriculum* allows schools and teachers to determine curriculum content. In relation to secondary English in New Zealand, Locke et al. (2009) argue that our curriculum document offers insufficient direction in terms of what content should be taught, indeed, the description of Learning Area English is outlined on a single page. Further, given the emphatic vision espoused in the document, there seems little discussion on the relationship between curriculum content and *which* forms of content are most likely to enable this vision (Rozas Gómez, 2011).

An exploration of teachers' constructions of subject English is important for both conceptual and practical reasons. First, there are multiple discursive landscapes that produce subject English and these landscapes set the possibilities for how we think about the subject. Second, multiple versions of English produce secondary English as a shifting and complex space that includes points of tension or competing discourses that teachers need to negotiate. Third, given the broader social outcomes outlined in the curriculum document, it is important to consider which versions of English are more consistent with these ideals and outcomes. This exploration is particularly important given the flexibility teachers have to decide on curriculum content. As Ireland et al. (2017) show, teachers' beliefs play an important role in enacting curriculum ideals. In practical terms, then, teachers' constructions represent a range of discourses about the aims and ideals of the subject that directly shape the ways in which secondary English is enacted in New Zealand classrooms.

Making use of a social constructionist lens (Weinberg, 2014) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992), I further explore the sorts of meanings that circulate in secondary English, including why some versions of the subject may be more dominant than others. My aim is to identify which constructions prevail and to consider any emerging tensions between these different constructions. Finally, I consider the extent to which these constructions and tensions foster the educated ideal and social vision expressed in our national curriculum document.

Mapping Subject English

Locke (2007) offers an English map as a way of organizing the different emphases and aims of the subject. The map also offers a conceptual basis from which teachers construct their subject. He details four possible ways of categorizing these different emphases: *cultural heritage*, *personal growth*, *textual competence*, and *critical practice*. These categorizations do

not presume that teachers' constructions emerge neatly or solely from a single emphasis, rather it is assumed that teachers "operate out of a set of assumptions that are discursively constructed and complex both in nature and in origin" (Locke, 2007). This map is outlined below:

Cultural heritage: This construction views English as a traditional body of literature (Locke, 2007) and is associated with notions of a canon and the best literature produced. In this view, literature is a privileged form of meaning. Therefore, the emphasis in this approach is on acculturation and on seeing students as readers, rather than producers, of literary work. Learning to closely read for meaning becomes a central focus of English teaching, which, Locke argues, explains why writing and oral language were historically much less valued than reading.

Personal growth: Locke suggests this construction is consistent with a progressive model of learning where both canonical and popular texts are valued. While literature continues to play an important role, the emphasis is on students as meaning makers with the focus shifting to readers' experience of texts. Within this construction, the literary text and the reader share a dialogical space where meaning is negotiated and produced. In placing the reader at the centre of this transaction, classrooms become interactive spaces and teachers take on a guidance role, leading the way for shared understanding.

Textual competence: This view emphasises the importance of mastering textual skills in a broad range of genres and texts. Associated with genre-theory, the focus of study is on how texts are produced. Students work towards becoming astute meaning-makers who can learn to make intentional language choices in purposeful and powerful ways. Locke argues that at its weakest conception, textual competence is reduced to a set of disconnected skills, where, the

focus is on developing competence in a range of decontextualized measurable skills. This includes the decontextualized use of literature, which serves only as a basis for demonstrating particular conventions.

Critical practice: Connected to notions of critical literacy, this depiction of English emphasises the location of texts within broader power relations in society. The purpose of subject English is to enable students to identify the interests and ideologies embedded in texts and to understand how they may produce particular versions of reality. In this sense, close reading is concerned with uncovering meanings that are connected to wider power relations in society.

Mapped against Locke's four possible English models, Learning Area English resonates with all four emphases to some degree. The description of the place (and pleasure) of literature, for example, suggests a cultural heritage view of the subject.

> "The study, use, and enjoyment of the English language and its literature, communicated orally, and visually, and in writing for a range of purposes and audiences and in a variety of language forms." (2007, p. 18)

Critical practice is evident in the subject's emphasis on interrogation of texts, and textual competence surfaces in the subject's focus on creating texts using appropriate and effective text conventions. The strongest alignment, however, is with personal growth (Locke, 2007). The Curriculum Guide: Senior Secondary (English) (MoE, 2012) for example, focuses on identity as a central concept in English and emphasises the importance of choosing texts that students will find interesting. As Yates et al. (2009) point out, literature becomes a means

through which self or cultural knowledge might be achieved rather than literature as a category of its own.

The personal growth aspect of subject English is further cemented in the curriculum's pedagogical stance, which affirms student-centred and co-constructivist approaches to learning. Under the 'Effective Pedagogy' section (p. 34), for example, the curriculum emphasises learning conversations and learning partnerships between students and teachers. While subject English is framed by broader persuasions and mandates that emphasise student agency and voice, it can be argued that all four models outlined by Locke (2007) have the potential to enable the vision expressed in *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

While the focus of this study is on subject English and the social vision expressed in *The New Zealand Curriculum*, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) further shapes English content in the senior school. The NCEA is a standards-based assessment framework in which students must demonstrate competence against specific learning outcomes (Hipkins, Johnson, & Sheehan, 2016). These small, compartmentalised units of curriculum assessments, known as standards, can be assessed either internally in schools or externally as national assessments (Locke, 2002). The standards are designed to be flexible and include students who have been previously excluded by a norm-referenced system or are disengaged from schooling (Hipkins et al., 2016). Imbued with the task of providing a seamless progression through assessment, the NCEA actively promotes the assembling of specific standards into specific courses to meet the needs of specific students. This feature has been critiqued for its fragmentation of knowledge, its eroding of English as a discipline and its impact on teachers themselves (Locke, 2002, 2007, 2008).

The Study

This article is part of a wider research project exploring how English teachers make decisions about content and assessment opportunities for different groups of students. The study made use of qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews with ten Heads of Departments across ten schools in Auckland, New Zealand. Schools were invited to participate and then selected in order to have a range of deciles represented. At each interview teachers were asked questions about the sorts of curriculum choices they made in relation to student need and the ways in which they might target courses for particular sorts of students. Questions about their understanding of the purposes of subject English were open-ended, while other questions sought specific information about text and assessment choices and what teachers took into account when they made those choices. A second set of questions sought to explore the sorts of tensions and competing demands that teachers may experience.

Conceptual and Theoretical Lens

My analysis and interpretation of data employ a social constructionist lens where meanings and experience are socially produced and historically situated (Burr, 2015). Using a social constructionist lens allows me to consider the meanings that circulate about subject English and to consider them as a function of this specific discursive moment. Teachers' constructions of the subject are interpreted using a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Both the social constructionist lens and thematic analysis situate teachers' constructions in a broader context where meanings about subject English are produced. While critical discourse analysis allows me to make connections between teachers' conceptions and the broader ideologies that shape ways of thinking and talking about subject English (Fairclough, 1992). Significantly, social constructionist and critical discourse analysis allows an examination of why some constructions are more likely to prevail without attributing any problematic or contradictory

constructions to individual teachers themselves. Instead, teachers' constructions are seen as a function of broader policy structures and discursive landscapes that give English its forms. This vantage point provides a useful framework to examine the relationship between policy mandates and teacher constructions and practices.

Teachers' Constructions of Subject English

The teachers I spoke to tended to align with the personal growth model. However, there were also nuances and tensions to these constructions that merit closer attention. While my data suggest that teachers hold a progressive and personal growth view of English, their constructions gravitated toward the following three ways of thinking about their subject: English as narrative knowledge, English as validating student voice, and English as cultural capital.

Prevailing Constructions

i) English as narrative knowledge.

The idea that narrative is an integral part of English and that it constitutes worthwhile knowledge was a strong and consistent theme. The place of narrative was tied closely to the personal growth model of English with its emphasis on the learner and on experience. As one teacher put it: English is about ***"****being able to experience things"* and that while qualifications were important, subject English should be "*about creating the whole person with a good understanding of themselves and of the world that they're living in."* Teachers suggested one of the purposes of English was to provide stories that were relatable and were able to advance our understanding of the human condition. Teachers also noted that exploring narrative plays a fundamental role in reflecting our own stories back to us. Another teacher for example, states

that the essence of English is *"stories we can relate to"*. The importance of relatable stories was underscored by the belief that stories transcend social and historical boundaries by dealing with a universal humanity. For example, Mike (Teacher, Decile 3) notes that students *"can learn things about the human condition. They can learn things about themselves, they can learn about their community."*

The value of stories emerged as a repeated theme, so I asked the teachers what it was specifically about narrative that contributed to students' personal development. The responses to this question were consistently tied to the value of exploring the lives of others and the ways in which this contributes to both self-understanding and a broader understanding of humanity. Teachers noted the importance of fostering a shared sense of experience with others, and one teacher noted that it is not always about being culturally responsive but rather that good literature *"speaks to everyone"*.

I always talk to my students about Shakespeare and say to them you know this is a guy who lived 500 years ago. He's a middle-aged white guy. Why are we reading his stories? He lived on the other side of the world! Why? Because they are stories we can relate to, no matter what culture or time period you live in. There's jealousy, there's love, there's forgiveness. (Filipo, Teacher, Decile 1)

[Othello] is as relevant now, as it ever was because it's a play that reflects our anxieties. It's a basic human right to be able to make sense of the world around you. (Rob, Teacher, Decile 8)

It's studying human nature and what makes us do the things we do. I'm here in New Zealand and students can still relate to someone growing up in the 1400s. I mean it just gives them a sense that all humans, we go through the same thing and we go through the same struggles. (James, Teacher, Decile 2)

What's the point of writing if it's not to express our feelings and to react to things and to understand how other people have written…and to understand what they mean. (Mary, Teacher, Decile 9)

ii) English as developing and validating student voice

This theme was closely tied to notions of agency and emphasised the role English plays in developing students as a confident meaning-maker. This more therapeutic aspect came through strongly in teachers' talk. Through validating students' voices, teachers felt that confidence and self-efficacy would follow. The development of a confident student voice meant that teachers also emphasised the importance of initiating students into textual practices and conventions to maximise students' ability to use and produce a wide variety of texts. Mike, for example, draws attention to the importance of valuing student voice while at the same time showing how to best express that voice: *Students are being challenged to engage more in developing their own ideas…it is paragraph writing and its developing ideas sequentially…confidence is so important, confidence in his or her own self-efficacy*.

Similarly, Rose (Teacher, Decile 4) saw a link between developing textual competency and developing confidence: *Some kids do have the thinking skills but they don't have the writing skills [English] gives them a chance to say 'yes, actually, my ideas are worth something', they've been validated.* While, Eseta (Teacher, Decile 1) reasoned that although not all kids

are going to be professional writers, literature is still worth learning because *"if we teach kids to communicate their ideas and their feelings accurately, with passion and with feeling, then we've done a good job."*

iii) English as cultural capital

Teachers saw their subject as providing access to cultural capital. Bourdieu (2005) defines cultural capital as the assemblage of values, tastes, clothing, entertainment, ways of speaking and engaging with others that are connected to an individual's social class. Bourdieu used the concept to examine how schools may reproduce social class relations. Teachers suggested that English played an important role in opening a window to broader knowledge and experiences, which students might not otherwise experience in their own communities, *"That's what literature does. It transports you to other places that you have never experienced."* (James, Teacher, Decile 2)

In this view, subject English has the potential to play a role in challenging existing ideas so that students would be able to *"think beyond where they are"* (Rose). Seen as *"rich cultural capital",* one teacher was surprised to find that while she thought *"kids in South Auckland want to read about their own world"* they were actually keen to *"read about other worlds"* (Rachael, Teacher, Decile 2). This was underscored by the often-seen reality in low decile schools where students had far fewer opportunities to travel, even beyond certain parts of Auckland.

> *"A lot of young people we work with here don't have much life experience outside of South Auckland and they don't have many friends who are from different cultures, who speak differently. How do you expose them to those other vernaculars?"* (Filipo, Teacher, Decile 1)

Teachers also argued that certain types of English content developed complex cognitive capacities that other types of low level content than more practical types of English offered. The literary essay, for example, was identified by a number of teachers as a form of writing that developed thinking skills in sophisticated ways. James notes that the ability to sustain and develop an idea in an essay promotes higher order thinking because students have to learn to analyse and then to structure ideas in cogent and coherent ways. He connects this to an advantage beyond school, *"If you are able to articulate your ideas and express your opinion in a coherent, intelligent way, you give yourself an advantage."* He then further connects this advantage to the hopes of many Pasifika parents who wish to see their children go to universities rather than go to work in factories.

Similarly, teachers felt that subject English played an important role in the development of critical thought that was necessary for overall school success: *"If you can't think beyond the text, questions things, it's going to make it hard in every subject"* (Susan, Teacher, Decile 10). Mary similarly talked about the importance of students understanding that *"not everything you read is true [and so] having some level of analysis and critiquing"* is an important part of developing the criticality required for participating in informed ways.

Finally, teachers suggested that extending students beyond their immediate realities and developing complex ways of thinking, contributed to participating in society in powerful ways. Susan, for example, discussed the importance of engaging with media distinguishing between *"what's fact and what's opinion*." In preparing students for a variety of settings, teachers saw some of the greatest potential to empower students to move confidently and powerfully in the world. Susan notes that subtle changes to language in different settings and that students *"need*

to be able to communicate with different types of people in different contexts once they leave here." Or, as Filipo notes:

> *It helps with understanding others, exposing you to different perspectives, different backgrounds, experiences and feelings, they're going to be working with people, under people, living next to people who are different than them.* (Filipo)

Subject English as cultural capital surfaced as an important theme about the nature and purpose of subject English. Access to certain form of curriculum content was not only valuable in terms of simply accessing other ways of being, but in affording more powerful and agentic ways of positioning oneself in society.

Competing constructions and possible tensions

Tension is worth of exploring because it reveals the presence of more than one discourse operating in a given context (Levine-Rasky, 1999). Teachers' constructions of subject English, therefore, can be expected to be multiple and contradictory and in need of negotiation. Ireland et al. (2017) note that teachers often work towards coherence between their own personal commitments and their classroom practice. In their study, teachers sought to find congruence between diverse literary theories and their own epistemological beliefs about subject English. I was interested in the extent to which the teachers in this study would be aware of incongruencies and the effects of these competing missions on their curriculum choices.

Examining teachers' conceptions about subject English by focusing on tension is helpful to my analysis because it exposes the unstable space between policy structures such as curriculum and teacher practice where both possibility and constraint operate in unsteady and varying

ways. A further effect is the presence of competing aims and ideals. Levine-Rasky (1999) argues that tension and contradiction are the norm in teacher discourses and that any kind of analysis should seek to uncover tension. As teachers' constructions are always located in a broader setting that is equally unresolved and uncertain, awareness of, and attention to, tension offers important insights to how teachers enact English in their classrooms. Levine-Rasky (1999) maintains it is not the presence of tension in teachers' talk that should be of concern but its absence. That is to say, it is the articulation of tension that demonstrates awareness and critical understanding of this complex context.

To this end, I tease out some complexities and examine tensions present in teacher constructions of subject English. For secondary English teachers, some of these tensions emerge from both curriculum and assessment structures that may themselves have competing aims and ideals. In paying attention to tension, I look for the sorts of negotiations teachers make between these competing demands. The most prevailing tension to surface is the tension between *English as disciplinary study* and *English as performative*. Within this tension it is possible to identify two related tensions:

i) *The tension between providing a broad curriculum to all students and differentiating content in order to meet individual needs.*

ii) *The tension between achieving credits in the short term and what the thinking and skill needed for success in English in the future, including access to important forms of cultural capital that allows students to participate in society in a critical manner.*

Teachers' constructions of subject English were often constrained by the demands of assessment and the need to deliver measurable achievement outcomes. Rachael, for example,

notes her department's courses were about *"making a course to meet the needs of the students"* and that it was the *"achievability"* of the assessments that sometimes drove the design of the course so that when *"no one got that standard"* was there *"there any point in doing it?'*

English as qualification rose as a significant demand that sat in tension with constructions like English as narrative knowledge. Despite her commitment to the broader purposes of subject English, Eseta notes, *"our **main aim** was to get every student in Year 11 the Level 1 literacy credits, **particularly those who are struggling**"* (my emphasis). Credits and minimal qualification were pressing drivers and often meant this became the primary focus in classrooms. Mary, for example, talked about the qualification focus as *"jumping through hoop"* and getting students credits *"by hook or by crook."* This is not to say that teachers were unaware of the problems this drive to get the credits could create. They acknowledged this drive resulted in *"not teaching the subject"* (Mary) and that while striving for minimal credits was a worthy intention it was also *"ultimately short-sighted and not up-skilling our students in the actual things they needed to prepare themselves for the following years."* (Eseta).

The following two excerpts provide a rich illustration of the tension between competing aims, in this case between content and qualifications.

> *"If we look at our results over the last five years, we have doubled the amount of kids who have got their literacy and who have got their Level One Certificate here. And the way we have done it is by looking at the marking criteria and then scaffolding it backwards to get [students] through and we have done that unashamedly so that our kids could pass. It was a really good intention, but I think we're getting to a point now where, basically by breaking things down so*

> *easily for them, we have gone as far as we can go, and the kids have as well because what we're not teaching is understanding. And we've done the same at Level Two which is good, but at Level Three we suddenly expect them to critically analyse and that's a huge skill and you've got to have interpretation and you've got to have discussion skills and you've got to be able to have an opinion and justify it and we're still hitting that brick wall because we're not teaching that."* (Mike)

> *That's back to reflective practice to keep coming back and saying, yes, we want to pass the assessment but how do we keep ourselves keeping on thinking about why we're actually doing this. But you get that kid asking those questions and you catch yourself shutting them down and go 'yeah I don't want to do that, I don't want to be that sort of teacher, but I'm doing it anyway because we need to be true to what I plan for this lesson'. We want everyone in the class to achieve but it is in total tension with the bigger stuff.* (Rose)

Both teachers discuss the ways in which the drive to produce outcomes for students shapes what they do in the classroom. Mike draws attention to the ways in which getting students through results via scaffolding and breaking down content so that it serves the limited and finite function of a credit in an achievement standard. Rose talks about the way in which *"passing the assessment"* sits "*in total tension with the bigger stuff"* so that sometimes more complex forms of learning may be shut down. The tension between broader subject aims and assessment is profound, and shapes content and what happens in classrooms in significant ways. Neither Mike nor Rose attempt to offer a resolved or singular account of their experiences. Instead,

they provide an astute articulation of the challenges they face between being faithful to the purposes of their subject and the exigencies of producing achievement results.

Discussion: Teachers' constructions of subject English and the social vision in The New Zealand Curriculum

As Locke et al. (2009) state, secondary English teachers operate from a range of discursive constructions about subject English. As such, teachers' constructions of the subject contain a number of tensions they need to negotiate. The teachers in this study tended to align with a personal growth model of English, albeit with a focus on narrative knowledge, student voice, and cultural capital. The alignment to personal growth is not is not surprising given that a personal growth model of English is consistent with the aims of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the NCEA, particularly with their emphasis on curriculum flexibility and student-centred approaches to learning.

In exploring the relationship between the social vision espoused in the curriculum and secondary English, the teachers' responses suggest that there are both possibilities and constraints in relation to the vision. The value of English as narrative knowledge was a strong theme, and the ways in which teachers talked about the value of narrative knowledge is suggestive of the orientation towards people and society that the social vision expects. For example, teachers made references to the humanising value of narrative and how learning about others (even distant others) can help students develop understanding about their own communities. In keeping with the curriculum's participatory impetus, teachers also saw subject English as providing important opportunities to develop their student voice. This aspect of subject English was clearly framed in terms of developing confidence and in coming to see one's ideas as valid and worthy of being shared. Finally, teachers' sense that subject English

provides students with cultural capital, was also clearly framed in terms of access and participation in settings beyond the students' immediate communities.

The interview data also suggest, however that *English as performative*, where curriculum content becomes subject to outcomes and standards is an equally dominant construction. And, that this drive to achieve outcomes can lead to a minimum standard approach to teaching and learning that influences how teachers choose content (Sadler, 2007). This particular tension for teachers signals some of the demands that may impede the realisation of the aims and ideals expressed in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Rose, for example, notes that while her department wants to students to *"open their minds"* and *"to explore"* but that *"in order for them to learn what they need to know to pass you've actually got to shut down some of their critical thinking… [and] say stop asking those questions."*

These competing demands suggest that subject English offers both possibilities and limitations in relation to the vision in our national curriculum document. Narrative knowledge through literature and poetry, for example, can become displaced by assessment and the push for short-term achievement outcomes. This displacement not only has the effect of diminishing the space for literary study but also prevents the acquisition and development of more sophisticated ways of engaging with English. Ironically, this includes the potential to access important forms of cultural capital and the ability to use language in powerful ways in senior years – something that teachers identified as an important affordance in subject English.

Given *The New Zealand Curriculum's* explicit and unequivocal commitment to critical participation in society and its positioning of English as a subject that enables students to "deconstruct and critically interrogate texts" (2007, p. 18) it was surprising not to find a

stronger articulation of critical practice. Further study is needed in order to consider how critical literacies are used in secondary English classrooms. This analysis has revealed some possibilities and insights to a much bigger question about the relationship between subject English and the educated ideal expressed in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. In the context of a curriculum that provides teachers with flexibility, teachers' position as mediators between curriculum policy and curriculum enactment is worthy of investigation. As Ireland et al. (2017) note, teachers epistemological understandings about their subject shape the curriculum choices they make.

Concluding Comments

Curriculum flexibility offers English teachers the opportunity to choose content according to student strength and interest, and possibly, to their own proclivities as English teachers. This flexibility, however, also produces subject English as an unstable space where more than one version of English is possible. Nevertheless, this space is still shaped by aspects such as assessment frameworks and achievement results. This interplay between policy and practice suggests that the relationship between subject English and educated ideals warrants further investigation. Secondary English is not bound to a single policy or discourse about its aims and ideals, including *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Nor is it tied solely to how individual teachers conceptualise the subject. This initial examination reveals subject English to be a contested space and suggests that enacting the vision in *The New Zealand Curriculum* is not straightforward.

PREAMBLE TO ARTICLE TWO

RISKY CHOICES

The previous article identified teachers' constructions of subject English and identified some of the tensions within these multiple constructions. One of the things that became apparent is that while teachers hold competing ideas about the subject, they nevertheless identify with a personal growth model of secondary English (Locke, 2009). This model, however, is at odds with other demands on teachers and students and enacting this view of English is not always straightforward. For example, assessment demands curtailed the sorts of choices that teachers made in important ways. As shown in Article One, the pull of credit gathering impacted not only what content students had access to, but also their opportunities for success at Year 12 and 13 where content becomes more demanding.

If part of my thesis quest is to examine teacher decision-making without locating the problem with teachers themselves, then I needed to take the broader education context seriously. A sociological exploration enables a focus on the structural and contextual aspects that shape teachers' work as well as the contexts in which they make curriculum decisions. Having examined the sorts of constructions that surface in teachers' discourses, I wanted to examine the autonomy teachers have as curriculum producers in the context of increased accountability. Specifically, I was interested to explore the interplay between autonomy and surveillance and how this interplay shaped curriculum decision-making. By examining the contradictory positioning of teachers as autonomous professionals *and* scrutinised workers I am able to draw attention to how decision-making is constrained in particular ways. Further, because both autonomy and scrutiny are at play, this analysis allows me to identify possible spaces of resistance as well as how teachers monitor and regulate their own choices.

In carrying out this analysis, I draw on Foucault's concept of *governmentality* (Foucault, 1979) to consider the effects of curriculum autonomy in the context of increased accountability across different school contexts. Specifically, I focus on how increased accountability affects content and assessment choices in low decile schools in particular ways. Foucault examines how individuals might be governed in free, liberal societies, including the ways in which we govern ourselves within certain freedoms (Doherty, 1999). According to Foucault, freedom and autonomy are always constrained aspects of life. The only real freedom we have, is the freedom to act upon ourselves in ways that are always historically bound.

A focus on governmentality unravels the naturalness of practices and normatively accepted accounts of secondary English. Governmentality also helps me to explain how teachers may govern themselves and how this mediates the interplay between policy and practice. In engaging in this type of analysis, I am able to examine the effects of neo-liberalism through the personal narratives of English teachers.

ARTICLE TWO RISKY CHOICES

AUTONOMY AND SURVEILLANCE IN SECONDARY ENGLISH CLASSROOMS

Abstract

Achievement data from New Zealand secondary schools suggest that students from lower socio-economic communities have fewer opportunities to engage with complex content in subject English. This article examines this phenomenon by drawing on Foucault's notion of governmentality and considers how a context of simultaneously increased autonomy and surveillance may shape curriculum and assessment choices. To explore these ideas, I use interview data from ten secondary English teachers in the wider Auckland region. I complement Foucault's (1982) explanation of governmentality with Ball, Maguire, and Braun's (2012) notion of policy enactment to explore spaces of both compliance and resistance.

Keywords: secondary English, curriculum, assessment, policy, discourse, subjectivity, neoliberalism, social class.

In 2013, the then Minister for Education, the Honourable Hekia Parata set the target for students gaining NCEA Level 2[1] at 85% (Ministry of Education, 2013, p.7). Recent Ministry of Education data show that while schools have increased their Level 2 achievement rates, students in lower socio-economic areas are gaining credits in low-level courses (Education Review Office, 2019; New Zealand Qualifications and Assessment Authority, 2018).

Secondary English data are consistent with cross-curricular results and show that students in low decile schools[2] have less access to challenging content and lower participation rates in complex achievement standards[3] (Wilson et al., 2016). This article examines secondary English teachers' curriculum choices and considers how increased teacher autonomy in the context of increased surveillance may shape these choices.

The conceptual framework for this analysis is drawn from Foucault's work on governmentality and technologies of the self (Foucault, 1979, 1982). A focus on governmentality enables an analysis of how teachers become governable through specific technologies. One such technology is increased responsibility in the context of persistent visibility (Doherty, 2007). My central aim is to explore how these techniques of government become embodied in secondary English classrooms and the extent to which they may shape the learning opportunities available to students. To this end, I examine the interplay between autonomy and surveillance as a means to explain the disparate participation rates in subject English NCEA Achievement Standards between high and low decile schools.

I begin by outlining the ways in which both autonomy and surveillance are prominent features of the education landscape in New Zealand. Next, I elaborate on Foucault and governmentality as a methodological lens to critically examine teachers' choices. The main part of the article unpacks interview data with secondary English teachers and critically examines the role of autonomy and surveillance in shaping content choices. I argue that teachers are simultaneously cast as autonomous professionals *and* intensely scrutinized workers, placing them in a contradictory position that offers both agency and risk. Further, that this positioning shapes curriculum decision-making in significant ways, which may contribute to students' exclusion from complex content.

Contextualising autonomy and surveillance in secondary English classrooms

In New Zealand, education policy allows teachers relative autonomy in terms of curriculum design and assessment at all levels, in particular at the senior levels where students engage in external examinations (Ormond, 2018). *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) is consistent with global trends in which there is a focus on developing competencies for a knowledge society rather than a focus on prescribed knowledge content (Gilbert, 2005; Hipkins, 2005). Schools are encouraged to be responsive to community contexts and needs, allowing teachers to adapt content, or potentially bypass it altogether. Similarly, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) is a standards-based qualification, encompassing a range of discrete achievement standards that teachers are able to package in a variety of ways (Locke, 2008). Both of these policy structures enable teachers to target and tailor courses for wide-ranging student need and interest. Importantly for this study, curriculum autonomy also constitutes teachers as curriculum authors and producers. At the same time, prevailing and persistent discourses that position teachers as the major determiner of student success mean that teachers are under increased scrutiny (Thrupp, 2014).

Research suggests that surveillance affects both curriculum content and assessment in important ways (Au, 2007). For example, in her study of history teachers and the impact of standards-based assessment on history content, Ormond (2017) found that assessment narrowed content significantly and that teachers selected and framed content in order to achieve a seamless fit for externally examined standards. Au (2007) argues that because high stakes testing is often linked to school reputation, curriculum is frequently aligned and restricted to assessment outcomes. Au's meta-analysis of 49 qualitative studies on the effects of high-stakes testing on curriculum demonstrates that as a result of teaching curriculum in the context of assessment, content is increasingly taught as fragmented and isolated pieces of knowledge.

Holloway and Brass (2017), for example, identify three ways in which high stakes testing impact the secondary English curriculum. First, high stakes testing reduces the subject to that which is definable and measurable such as literary terms and grammar skills. Second, it reduces the demands on students to minimal compliance as a way of mitigating student resistance, and third, it avoids challenging aspects of the subject, such as complex texts and poetry.

This diminished space for complex content (in particular poetry) is explored in Dymoke's (2012) comparative study of secondary English departments in New Zealand and England. She examined the nature of poetry teaching and found that in New Zealand, teacher content choices were frequently constrained by the type of assessment in place. Some teachers commented on the risk of submitting poetry as an internal assessment, noting that it was harder than submitting other more formulaic types of writing. One particular Achievement Standard *Respond to Unfamiliar Texts* was avoided on the basis of complexity of texts that students had not previously encountered in class. One New Zealand teacher was concerned that there had been a shift from the *what* to the *how*. That is, instead of focusing on what genres or authors should be studied, teachers focused on helping students to identify how a writer might use language or how a text might fit thematically with other texts. Other teachers, however, tended to stick with the tried and true for fear of making a mistake (Dymoke, 2012). Either way, risk and anxiety over results appear to be significant drivers of teachers' curriculum decision-making. Curriculum autonomy, then, offers teachers a constrained and risky autonomy. It creates an environment where there is relative autonomy to make curriculum and assessment decisions *in the context* of increased measuring and reporting of student outcomes.

Autonomous spaces

Two policy structures provide senior secondary English teachers with relative autonomy – *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) and the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). *The New Zealand Curriculum* defines itself as a "framework rather than a detailed plan" (p. 37) and emphasises the role schools have in "determining the detail" (p. 37). This intentional stance can be understood as a desire to create a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of students, whoever, and wherever they may be. As outlined under the section, The School Curriculum: Design and Review (p. 37) *The New Zealand Curriculum* invites schools and teachers to make decisions about implementation of the document "in ways that best address the particular needs, interests, and circumstances of the school's students and community" (p. 37).

The NCEA similarly gives teachers relatively high levels of autonomy in terms of content and assessment selection (Ormond, 2017). In senior English[4], this autonomy is enabled by both a non-prescriptive curriculum and the modular structure of the NCEA, which allows tailored and targeted courses for different groups of students (Locke, 2008). As stated, this autonomy represents a desire to move away from a one-size-fits-all model to a curriculum that is both responsive to, and reflective of, students' lives.

Both the *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the NCEA can be read as progressive educational initiatives because of the centrality of the learner (Arrowsmith & Wood, 2015). However, they are also products of neoliberal discourses about choice and relevance in which students are positioned as consumers of education (OECD, 2006). Here, these two policy structures intersect in mutually reinforcing ways, emphasising choice and further positioning schools as responsible for providing courses that adequately meet the needs of a broad range of students.

All of these contextual curriculum and assessment framings mean the space teachers have to make curriculum choices is delineated in particular ways. That is, any autonomy teachers experience is always shaped by broader imperatives, stipulated ends, and the provision of responsive learning opportunities.

Scrutinised spaces

Teachers have been hailed as an important determiner of student achievement and success (Alton-Lee, 2003; Hattie, 2012). Framing teachers this way represents a major focus of current educational research that attempts to capture best practice and value-added models (Amrein-Beardsley, 2014). As a result, much of the policy language emerging from this focus encompasses a zero-excuses discourse in which explanations that locate underachievement in a broader structural sphere are actively silenced (Thrupp, 2014). In *What does not work in education: The politics of distraction*, for example, Hattie (2015) lends weight to the argument that policymakers spend time and money on solutions related to broader societal structures rather than focussing on developing teacher expertise. This discourse produces a thorny paradox for teachers. On the one hand, teacher practice is the most evidence-based and researched informed it has ever been; on the other, the unchallenged faith in best practice and the belief it is possible to get it right has opened up teacher practice to intense scrutiny. Perhaps more concerning, these discourses underscore a festering suspicion about teacher quality, what Ball refers to as “discourses of derision” (1990, p. 7).

Policies of achievement have also led to an intensification of measuring standards, which are simultaneously seen as informative for parents but also as a check on school and teacher performance (Ball et al., 2012). Measuring student performance is one way teachers may be held accountable for student success. With the increased focus on school performance the emphasis has shifted towards high-stakes testing. This context, Au (2007) argues, results in

increased external influence of teachers' work and school accountability. Connell (2015) provides an Australian example of this intensified scrutiny in the creation of the *My School* website, where Australian schools are measured and ranked against assessment scores. She argues these initiatives occupy a space in the public imaginary where students and parents are positioned as informed consumers of education. In New Zealand, the yearly publication of "Best Schools" in *Metro* magazine similarly demonstrates how pervasive the accountability discourse is in the public domain. *Metro* promotes its yearly publication of school achievement data for Auckland schools as a way of helping parents to make "the right decision" about schools (Metro's best schools in Auckland, 2019). A stirred-up public notion about good schools and bad schools is important according to Connell (2015). A heightened level of public scrutiny is a necessary aspect of the neoliberal commitment to competition and in a context where competition is fostered, there need to be winners and losers. Websites such as *My School* and the publication of league tables draw public attention to so-called failing schools and produce a further need for ongoing scrutiny (Connell, 2 015).

Secondary English teachers' work offers both autonomous and scrutinised spaces. With a flexible curriculum and assessment structure, teachers are curriculum producers charged with devising curriculum that is responsive to student need, espoused in policy documents as personalised learning. The good teacher in this sense, is the teacher who meets individual learning needs at a personal student level. At the same time, discourses of achievement, blame, and performance, actively construct teachers as needing to be monitored and accountable for the results they produce.

The Study

The aim of this study is to explore the interplay between autonomy and surveillance and its possible effects on content and assessment choices. Therefore, talking to secondary English

teachers was an important part of this investigation. Secondary English teachers across Auckland, New Zealand, were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview. A sample size of ten teachers was chosen in order to cover a broad range of schooling contexts and the schools used in this article range from Decile 1 to Decile 10. Semi-structured interviews were used to allow for focused but open discussion around curriculum autonomy and accountability. I used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in order to identify patterns in the interview data in relation to autonomy and surveillance. Thematic analysis was helpful for this study because it allowed me to focus on an in-depth interpretation of a specific context in secondary English teaching. I read the transcripts looking for possible connections between surveillance techniques and how teachers made content choices. On a second reading, I looked at possible sites of resistance, where teachers either accommodated or resisted normalising practices. Both my first and second readings of the interview data are consistent with a Foucauldian lens in which it is assumed that both possibilities and constraints are possible within any discursive field.

Theoretical framework and conceptual tools

Foucauldian concepts allow a rich analysis of the interplay between larger education structures and the details of classroom life (Janks, 2010). Consequently, a range of education policy analyses has drawn on Foucault to theorise the effects of neoliberal policies on teachers' work (Olssen et al., 2004). In particular, there has been a focus on how teachers are rendered governable, aligning their own goals with policy pursuits and outcomes, including any inherent ethics and values (Ball, 1993, 2003; Perryman et al., 2011). Foucault's explanation of power as working upon action and that can only be exercised on free people (1982) opens up possibilities for analysis that make visible how teachers may participate in self-regulating

behaviours. Significantly for this study, this view of power also opens up possibilities for resistance to normative discourses and practices.

Foucault's concept of governmentality refers to the techniques developed to control, shape, and normalise people's behaviour (Foucault, 1979; Rabinow and Rose, 2003). As a methodological tool, governmentality draws attention to the practice of government and the attitudes required to sustain these practices (Foucault, 1979; Fimyar, 2008). Autonomy, in a Foucauldian sense, is a freedom to act upon oneself to the subjectivities available. For this reason, Foucault (1982) argues that analyses should focus on the subject rather than power, focussing our attention on the ways subjectivities (and corresponding practices) are constituted and governed. In the context of this study, a Foucauldian analysis is not concerned with particular curriculum or assessment policies but with how these structures shape the ways in which teachers conduct themselves. Importantly, conduct is not predetermined; rather, teachers are faced with "a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments, may be realised" (Foucault, 1982, p. 790). Governmentality, then, is a valuable way of conceptualising teacher decision-making because it locates choices at a broader discursive level and illuminates the possible spaces for action in which versions of secondary English are rendered possible. To further unravel the interplay between autonomy and surveillance, I draw on Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins (2011) and their own expansion of Foucault's work.

Policy enactment

Ball et al. (2012) draw a distinction between policy implementation and policy enactment. While policy implementation assumes an uncontested and uni-directional relationship between policy and teacher practice, Ball et al. argue that policy enactment actually "involves creative

processes of interpretation and recontextualization" (p. 3). They argue that policy analyses that focus on implementation do not acknowledge the many different contexts that occur within schools. Indeed, these studies, which the authors describe as "overbearingly rational and emotionless" (p. 5), remove the more nuanced and human aspects of how life in schools plays out. In place of policy implementation, policy enactment imbues both interpretation and translation as important aspects of how policy becomes practice. As Ball has previously argued, "policies … create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed, or changed, or particular goals or outcomes are set" (Ball, 1994, p. 19).

In other words – the space between policy and practice is always contested terrain. Ball et al. (2012) point to situated contexts, professional cultures, material contexts, and external contexts as significant mediators in how policy is enacted in schools. They argue schools are not simple or coherent entities and that within any school there will be competing narratives about teaching, learning, and curriculum. By paying attention to interpretation and translation, the tensions teachers negotiate are made visible and I am able to show how teachers in my study actively contest policy, shaping and reshaping secondary English in their classrooms. The notion of policy enactment as a theoretical tool, therefore, focuses on the spaces where teachers negotiate discursive fields in both constrained and enabled ways.

Compulsory visibility

Surveillance is a performance technology, which Ball et al. (2012) refer to as *compulsory visibility*. Although this normalizing and inescapable gaze may be externally imposed, it leads to internal self-regulating behaviours. Paying attention to this interplay between external surveillance and internalised self-regulation reveals otherwise unseen forms of power. For Foucault, it is in setting up the field of action rather than externally mandated laws which lead to certain types of behaviours (Foucault, 1982). Current policy discourses of achievement,

blame, and performance are expressions of wider neoliberal economic imperatives that seek to link school objectives with broader economic ones (Whitty, 2010; Lauder et al., 2012). At the school and classroom level these imperatives shape teachers' daily work and produce particular types of practices (Ball et al., 2012). From a Foucauldian perspective, these discourses work as technologies of performance that ensure teachers manage themselves in specific ways towards specific ends. For teachers, this visibility often manifests itself as intensified scrutiny of student outcomes and/or departmental statistics (Perryman et al., 2011).

Examining the interplay between autonomy and surveillance and its effects on secondary English content

The teachers in this study consistently pointed to the ways in which compulsory visibility impacted their sense of themselves as English teachers. Three interrelated themes emerged from the interviews: a sense of alienation and feeling that they were "not really being English teachers", the high personal cost of accountability measures, and the ways in which their identity as English teachers was shaped by the use of departmental statistics. In spite of this pressure, teachers also reported small sites of resistance, demonstrating an openness to uncertainty by resisting the audit culture emphasis on predetermined and knowable outcomes. Teachers sense of themselves as English teachers was strongly tied to the content they offered in their classrooms. In the frequent instances of having to curtail content in order to ensure better outcomes, teachers tended to comment on how this made them feel less like English teachers. James, for example, noted the effect of measures taken to ensure better results in the department. He described this estrangement as *"not being true to ourselves as English teachers. "*So much so that he *"almost left because I felt like I was not teaching. It [wasn't] literature".* He explained that other staff in his department expressed similar concerns and how they felt they were *"a subject more like employment…. like tick the boxes and follow this*

thing". He comments that during that particular year he did not teach any extended texts and that this felt like a *"dead year"* to him. He also points to the irony that while this was a *"depressing year"* for him, it was also *"the best year for [the department's] results".*

For another teacher, the pressure from both the school and students to ensure credits meant that some English courses felt diminished and lacking in coherence. Susan (teacher decile 10) notes that *"it was very much "now we're doing a form filling unit, now we're doing a speech unit' and nothing really hung together".* The teacher also comments that this narrow focus on achievable assessment meant that students accumulated credits without really developing the capacities required for more complex work the following year, *"the students see it very much as credit-driven and it's hard to motivate them to actually gain skills because they [want to know] how many credits is this worth and, what do I have to do to get credits?"*

The sense of alienation that teachers felt meant they often tried different ways of bringing literature back into courses. However, this was never straightforward and involved a personal cost. Susan, for example, acknowledged that there was a level of risk in teaching a more traditional course, making life more difficult and saying that she *"might be pulling my hair out by the end of Term Two [asking] why couldn't I have been filling in a form?"* Moreover, she talked about the ways in which she would need to *"sell"* a literature-focused course to her principal in order to convince him to accept something that goes against current practice. For Filipo the stress of negotiating the pressure from senior management to produce good results and his own commitments to English proved too much: *"It was a very challenging time and I think that's why I could only last three years".* Ball (2003) argues that performativity produces feelings of alienation, inauthenticity, meaninglessness and leaves minimal time to reflect.

For secondary English teachers, the pressure to perform is often intensified compared with other departments in schools. Literacy credits, for example, which are needed to gain school qualifications as well as for university entrance, are often generated in English courses. As a result, the hunt for literacy credits can place an inordinate burden on English departments and/or encourage departments to be results-driven (Perryman et al., 2011). My findings also show that teachers report high levels of stress associated with anxiety, guilt, and shame. Significantly, the pressure extended beyond everyday teaching into their sense of themselves as English teachers. The dissonance between what the teachers imagined their job as English teachers (that they would stir a love for literature and poetry in their students) and what they actually ended up teaching throws light on the deeper existential nature of their struggle. Similarly, externally imposed targets meant that teachers also experienced a sense of diminished autonomy in their own planning and teaching.

Finally, the possibility of exposing oneself as Head of Department and as an English department by way of potentially damning statistics was an ever-present concern for the teachers I interviewed. Mirroring the narratives presented in Perryman et al.'s *Life in the Pressure Cooker* (2011), there was an equally strong sense that English departments were more examined than others. Statistics become a marker of identity within the school and for this teacher, like others interviewed, it produced an alienating identity that stripped pleasure from teaching.

> *Everyone knows your stats. Everyone knows the Year 11 literacy stats. No-one knows Year 11 drama stats or science stats but they know maths and English. And they know your [University Entrance] stats as well. And management ask you why [the results are what they are] and it's compared year to year. Stats are central in how you are seen. You always have to have a stat in your head. You have to*

> *make stats a focus and you have to find ways to increase the stats and talk about the stats and I started to not really enjoy that, not at all.*
>
> Filipo

Surveillance through departmental statistics is an example of how Foucault sees power as operationalised through technologies of the self (Besley, 2007). These surveillance measures are internalised so that teachers learn to discipline themselves in relation to desired outcomes. The good teacher produces outcomes and ensures that everyone is gaining some level of qualification, no matter how thin that qualification may be. The dominance of these statistics on English teachers' lives are therefore illustrative of Foucault's argument that power is exercised from the bottom up, working through particular technologies and becoming integrated into everyday practices. As Robertson (2016) points out, surveillance becomes a way of governing teachers' work from a distance through an audit culture.

Ball (2003) maintains that autonomy and surveillance work together, inviting teachers to see themselves as good teachers or, as needing improvement. Davies and Bansell (2007) suggest a further effect is to constitute teachers as "responsibilised subjects" (p. 248) who need to work on themselves in order to produce results. This state of perpetual measurement means that teacher autonomy is always governed by targets and comparisons. In this study, when teachers resisted the push for diminished courses, it inevitably contained an element of risk. Teachers had to mediate personal risk against student risk. That is, the more teachers resisted certain types of English courses, the more likely they were to risk things like poor departmental statistics. Conversely, if they accepted these types of courses, they felt they were risking student opportunities to engage with English in ways that were more complex and enabling for students in the long run, as well as more true to the subject itself.

The intense surveillance teachers experience also comes from students themselves who often want to know what they have to do in order to achieve standards. This turn among students represents another tension in teacher curriculum decision-making. Teachers wrestle with the desire to be true to students' learning while ensuring they are engaged and achieving credits. More and more this results in teaching to the assessment: *"Because the students want to know what they have to do to pass and the teachers buy into that because actually whatever our big ideals are we also want them to pass"* (Rose). Again, risk is present for the teacher in negotiating the tension between what works and her own personal commitments to the subject. And, risk is also present for students in terms of having sufficient content to pass course work and having access to more complex forms of knowledge.

While compulsory visibility can govern teacher behaviour in oppressive ways, that is not to say that teachers don't engage in small acts of powerful resistance. Ball (1994) refer to these spaces as "creative non-implementation" (p. 20). This notion of creative resistance is aligned to Foucault's argument that power can only be exercised on free individuals. The teachers generally demonstrated an astute understanding of the discursive field in which their work took place. The persistence and prominence of achievement results were perceptively understood as, "*the kind of philosophy a lot of schools have because they're worried about what their results look like"* (Mary). Insights were also evidence of the contradictions they often experienced in their work. Rose, for example, pointed to what she called the *"paradox"* between fostering critical understanding and providing the content for students to pass, stating that: *"in order for them to learn what they need to pass, you've actually got to shut down some of their critical thinking"*. Moreover, this teacher also pointed out that it is *"the constant grind"* of assessment and accountability that stands in the way of reflecting purposefully about these contradictions. One way to interpret this teacher's comments is to see them as a rejection of

performativity whereby measurement and results become the way of defining what counts in school settings. As Holloway and Brass (2017) put it, performance measures become a way in which "teachers legitimise their classroom decisions" (p. 377).

> *I think most teachers are very aware of [the pressure to deliver results] when they have time to stop and think [but] 'I've got to do this marking and I've got to show them what they do to take the next step', you actually forget it. Until you get that kid asking those questions and you catch yourself shutting them down and go yeah I don't want to do that, I don't want to be that sort of teacher. We want everyone in the class to achieve but it is in total tension with the bigger stuff.* (Rose)

While these responses demonstrate the teacher's own critical stance in relation to school demands, teachers also discussed how they constantly field pressures from a range of sources. Two teachers, each from a Decile 1 school, spoke at length about actively resisting the accountability culture and its effects in narrowing curriculum content for their students. This resistance was required across a number of fronts that were both internal and external to their schools. In one case, James spoke about an external reviewer brought into the department to review their English programme. The reviewer suggested that students at this school should abandon Shakespeare and instead focus on texts that were simpler and more appealing to the student population – magazines were suggested as a better alternative. Another result of this review was to abandon external assessments that year (the NCEA is made up of both internal and external assessments and schools can go forego external assessments if they wish). He notes they tried one year without externals and that everyone followed the same plan, which was, as the reviewer recommended, magazine-based. It was the year, as this teacher remembers it, that *"literature died".* However, he also notes that in his class, he decided his students would

read a novel and a play, even though the assessments were organised around short texts in magazines. He found it *"so disheartening"* that he almost left the school.

> *We tried one year without externals and everyone did the same thing [but] I just did my own thing. I got my kids, and I said 'No, you've got to read a novel, you've got to read a play', everyone else had magazines, mainly short stories, no extended texts, nothing challenging.*

James described the ongoing pressure to conform, structure programmes, and deal with students in ways that were in-keeping with external demands. He cited the Education Review Office (ERO)[5], the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)[6], and senior management within his school as points of tension between his own willingness to be open to uncertainty and the far more rigid external demands. He explains how senior management respond to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority when they don't withdraw students from external assessments. His awareness of how they *"frustrate the Ministry"* (of Education) and *"frustrate ERO"* is illustrative of policy enactment and a curriculum space that is neither fully agentic nor fully determined.

Despite this pressure, *"[senior management] go through [departmental statistics]"* his department tended to err on the side of providing assessment opportunities for students. For example, rather than removing students from external achievement standards, which they may have been unlikely to pass, this department made the decision to let students sit the externals anyway. As the teacher explains, this decision was made by a desire to provide students with opportunities and an openness to being surprised by students.

> *Every Year 11 sits at least one external, which is what we want to do. We want to give them that opportunity…and some kids have surprised us. They've sat the*

> *external and they might have been labelled 'low level' and then they pass the external and it's like: see they can do it! We just want to give them that opportunity. I don't really care about stats, I care about [the students] and I don't let that determine what we deliver because I think stats can be twisted.* (James)

The (riskier) impact of surveillance on low decile schools

I now turn to school context and how the interplay between autonomy and surveillance may play out in low decile schools. Thrupp (1995, 1999, 2007) has repeatedly called for a recognition of school effects and "school mix" in examining school performance (1995, p. 182). Importantly, he draws a distinction between school-based and school-caused reasons for underachievement. Thrupp and Lupton (2006) also call for a less neutral school discourse that takes schooling contexts seriously, arguing that even among low decile schools there is a variance in contextual challenges. They point to staff morale, student characteristics, school characteristics, and area characteristics as examples of how school effects come together to produce significant challenges. The need for a less neutral discourse of schooling is important in a contemporary landscape that overemphasises school effectiveness and improvement research as a way of fixing low performing schools. As Thrupp and Lupton (2006) point out, "By treating all schools as being the same and thus capable of achieving the same, they render unimportant, perhaps even invisible, the social and economic inequalities that really prevent some students from doing as well as others" (p. 312).

Thrupp and Lupton's argument is important to my analysis because it draws attention to the involved and intricate nature of policy enactment in low decile contexts. The more exposed (and riskier) nature of teaching at a Decile 1 school is evident in the contrasting English courses offered at a Decile 10 and Decile 1 school. The Head of Department of a Decile 10 school

talked about how her department differentiated content and assessment according to student need and ability. Students for whom English was a second language, for example, were provided English courses that allowed them to develop their literacy rather than their literary capacities. While this demonstrated a keen awareness of the limits of differentiating English this way, the acceptance of differentiated courses was nevertheless enacted in consistent ways and with little risk to the school. In differentiating courses, departmental results were optimised, and the school maintained its high performing position. The Head of Department in a Decile 1 school, on the other hand, chose not to differentiate (despite school policy) and consequently opened both the department and the school to potentially shakier statistics.

This same teacher in the Decile 1 school recounted the pressures on his department to produce results. He began by discussing the context of his school community in which they experience high rates of truancy (around 30%), which means that a number of students do not turn up to external exams. The teacher then discussed how the school removes students from external assessments when their attendance drops below 80 percent. The extended excerpt below sharply illustrates both the complex pressure experienced in low decile schools as well how teachers may resist official practices:

> *The alternative is that we would present every kid, we would lock them into a course at the beginning of the year and we'd say that's what you're doing and there's no changes. And if you drop below 80 percent attendance we automatically withdraw you from exams. [Yet] only three years ago I had a girl who I would have sworn black and blue at this time of the year that she would not have got her Level One Literacy but, you know, bugger it, she passed one thing during the year and she passed the unfamiliar text and one essay and she got it. If I had withdrawn her then that girl wouldn't have got her Level One Certificate,*

> *so what do you do? Well, I'd rather have kids go through and then, and the Ministry send a report to our database manager who tells the DP who comes and tells me and says, you know, absenteeism is high and my answer is "Yup".* (Rob)

The choices this teacher makes contain an element of risk yet despite the threat of poor statistics and pressure from management, he made choices that were consistent with his broader ethical commitments to education and to his students. He noted the ethically questionable practice of removing students from courses if their attendance dropped and chose instead, to ignore the mandate and give the student with intermittent attendance the opportunity of completing the Level 1 Certificate.

The risk involved in making content and assessment choices is a function of the discursive focus on achievement for all students. Policies of achievement refer to the way in which this focus places the responsibility for achievement with schools, particularly for those groups of students who underperform. The achievement narrative is difficult to argue against. Who would be against the idea of achievement for all? The normative quality of this discourse, however, is worrisome for teachers because it locates them as part of a much deeper problem. In *Deficit thinking and the politics of blame*, Thrupp (2014) discusses the shift in what presently counts as deficit thinking in New Zealand educational contexts. Referring to current policy discourse, he demonstrates how there is no longer a distinction between structural explanations for student underachievement and victim-blaming stances. Instead, he argues, *any* explanation is rendered a deficit response which should be eliminated from educational speak.

This is a critical observation and an important contribution to any examination of secondary English teachers' work. Not only does it blame teachers, but it silences and shuts down any

engagement with structural inequality (Weber, 2007). As Thrupp (2014) points out, if there are to be no excuses for student failure, then when it does occur, the blame must inevitably fall at teachers' feet. Moreover, the silencing of any talk that considers structural reasons (such as irregular attendance) for student underachievement works to erode the moral and ethical dimensions of teacher practice. Significantly, this also contributes to the public acceptance that teachers are in need of reform (Perryman et al., 2011), and therefore greater levels of accountability. Discourses of achievement and blame, therefore, normalise the idea that teachers require more surveillance.

This increased surveillance goes hand in hand with managerialist discourses about teachers' work (Connell, 2009, 2015) and is manifest in transnational policy such as the Teacher and Learning International Surveys (OECD, 2020). Despite the professed neoliberal imperative on self-management and freedom from the state, teachers and schools are actually more constrained and governed under these forms of public management, which Connell argues, is an inherent contradiction in neoliberalism. Furthermore, Biesta (2004) argues that this technical-managerial approach to accountability is difficult to reconcile with a view of teaching that places a social justice ethic at its centre. The example of the teacher who refuses to withdraw a student from an external exam demonstrates this particular tension and reveals the bigger risk to low decile schools.

The data from the interviews suggest that English teachers currently experience a constrained autonomy that holds both agency and risk. The data also show that this risk is much greater for low decile schools. This autonomy manifests itself as a potentially dangerous autonomy due to the highly scrutinised and public nature of departmental results. As Au (2007) points out, it is these sorts of results that are used to name underperforming schools and teachers. Mirroring

the narratives in *Life in the Pressure Cooker* (Perryman et al., 2011), the teachers in this study consistently pointed to the stress and anxiety related to making curriculum and assessment decisions. Words such as *"depressing"* and *"disheartening"* came up repeatedly in the interviews and were regularly linked to a sense of alienation from teachers' sense of themselves as English teachers. The perpetual and potentially damning gaze of departmental statistics meant that teachers were always negotiating tensions between a range of competing demands. These tensions included the contradictions between their own constructions of subject English and teaching in ways that ensured pass rates in assessments. Closely related, there was a tension between a commitment to student-centred ways of teaching and more teacher-directed forms of instruction in order to ensure success in assessed content. Teachers also had to contend with the tension between critically resisting the dominance of departmental statistics and complying with these measures.

Despite the constrained nature of the autonomy on offer, the data also show that teachers may resist normative discourses and normalising practices. Teachers showed they were able to see through these discourses and identify the broader performative and competitive landscape in which they are located. As expressed by Mary when she notes that the push for achievement results were part of the school's philosophy. They were also able to act in ways that intervene and disrupt expected norms and behaviours.

Foucault's notion of governmentality is helpful for investigating how policy structures such as curriculum and assessment play out at school and classroom level. Critically, his work provides a complex view of the autonomy/surveillance tension in teachers' lives where multiple forms of thought and action are always possible. Governmentality signals teacher experiences and voice as an important focus of analysis in curriculum decision-making.

Conclusion: risky choices in secondary English classrooms

Data show that students in low decile schools have fewer opportunities to engage with complex content in secondary English classrooms. Using the concepts of governmentality, policy enactment and compulsory visibility (Ball et al., 2012), I have offered one account of this disparity by examining the effects of both autonomy and surveillance as mediating factors in content and assessment choices. My analysis suggests that increased autonomy in the context of increased surveillance places teachers in a dynamic and contested space that neither fully limits nor fully enables different versions of English curriculum and assessment. I have argued that the space between policy and practice is a rich negotiated field mediated by a number of factors such as teachers' personal commitments and schools' own practices. I have also argued that this field also affords teachers spaces of resistance and agency. Importantly, this space allows teachers to make choices that are more closely aligned with their own commitments and understanding of the aims and purposes of subject English.

My analysis suggests that risk is a significant element in curriculum decision-making in which teachers negotiate risk to themselves (in the form of outcomes and departmental statistics) and risk to students (in the form of access to content and qualifications). However, data also suggest that despite this risk, teachers actively occupy spaces of resistance, and consciously challenge current regimes of accountability and surveillance. That is to say, teachers' willingness to embrace risk should be seen as a marker of resistance. My analysis also shows how this interplay affects low decile schools in more significant ways, leading to potentially diminished opportunities to access complex content and complex assessment opportunities.

Alongside these tensions I suggest that the data reveal three aspects about decision-making in secondary English that may be worthy of further investigation. The first is that statistics and results are a significant marker of how teachers and departments are seen and judged. The second is that compulsory visibility shapes curriculum decision-making in particular ways. The third is that despite the high-stakes environment, teachers often make choices that involve a certain amount of risk, yet are still in accordance with their own personal commitments to both students and to their subject. Secondary English teachers negotiate a risky tightrope between competing demands. Any discussion about curriculum choices must recognise that these choices are deeply embedded within these tensions.

Notes

[1] NCEA is the National Certificate of Educational Achievement in New Zealand. It is the national qualification and Level 2 is generally completed during Year 12.
[2] In New Zealand, schools are ranked by decile to reflect the socio-economic status of the school community. Decile 10 schools are the most affluent, while decile 1 schools serve the poorest communities.
[3] Achievement standards are the individual assessments that students complete in a given subject.
[4] Senior English refers to the last three years of secondary in New Zealand. Years 11 to 13 in which the NCEA Level 1, 2, and 3 are completed.
[5] The Education Review Office (ERO) is the governing body for 'quality assurance' in New Zealand schools.
[6] The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) is the NZ government body that provides leadership in assessment and qualifications.

PREAMBLE TO ARTICLE 3

CONSIDERABLE FLEXIBILITY

The previous article examined the extent to which autonomy and surveillance shape teacher decision-making in relation to curriculum and assessment opportunities. I found that teachers experience a constrained autonomy and that a pressure to produce good departmental statistics actively mediates curriculum choices. The article also showed that teachers can and do speak back to dominant narratives by resisting and rejecting assessment norms and practices. What the article does not address, however, is why teachers might embrace the opportunity to differentiate content in particular ways. National data suggest that access to complex content is strongly aligned to decile rating and social class and that students from low decile schools have fewer opportunities to attain the knowledge and skills needed for further study. At first glance, these results may seem odd in the context of the on-going focus on closing achievement gaps. How is it that some teachers may willingly provide a more diminished curriculum to certain groups of students? In what ways might curriculum flexibility and autonomy enable compelling subjectivities that constitute the good teacher as being responsive to individual needs?

To answer this question, in this article I am interested in the confluence between neoliberal discourses about choice and flexibility and progressive discourses that emphasise student-centred and personalised learning. I draw on Leesa Wheelahan's (2010) work on the ways in which neoliberal discourses have appropriated progressive aims and ideals. Wheelahan argues neoliberal policy imperatives have a strong discursive grip in education because they share common ground with progressive discourses. For this reason, I wanted to problematize choice and flexibility and to consider their limitations. I was particularly interested in how choice and

flexibility offer versions of equity, participation and inclusion that are restricted to curriculum differentiation. That is, in framing equity as simply (and only) curriculum differentiation, participation and inclusion are about achieving something rather than engaging in the knowledge forms that are more likely to enable participatory democracy. Is it possible that what is done in the name of equity could further exclude certain students? These questions are important to the thesis because they go back to my central focus on the extent to which current versions of English are consistent with the social vision expressed in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) for young people who will be *"connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners"* (p. 8).

ARTICLE THREE

CONSIDERABLE FLEXIBILITY:

CURRICULUM AND EQUITY IN SECONDARY ENGLISH CLASSROOMS

Abstract

In Aotearoa New Zealand, both curriculum and assessment policy allow teachers to be responsive to students' needs and interests. In secondary English departments, this relative freedom manifests as targeted courses that provide tailored curriculum and assessment opportunities. Generally, these targeted courses are seen as contributing to more equitable outcomes because they provide achievable assessment opportunities for students who would otherwise underachieve. However, data show that these opportunities are often structured along social class lines and that students from low decile schools[1] have fewer opportunities to engage with complex content. The purpose of this article is to problematise the lure of choice and flexibility by examining their effects on curriculum and assessment decisions. Drawing on Wheelahan's (2010) analysis of how progressive language has been appropriated by neoliberal curriculum imperatives, I examine how this appropriation produces troublesome discourses about equity and inclusion. I argue that in framing equity as (simply) curriculum and assessment differentiation, existing social inequalities may be further entrenched. This article draws on data from a larger study of subject English and secondary English teaching.

Keywords: Secondary English curriculum, equity, difference.

Introduction: Curriculum and equity in neoliberal times

New Zealand education has a history of teacher autonomy, including high levels of teacher agency in setting curriculum content (Mutch, 2017). The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) is designed to foster "considerable flexibility" (p. 37) for teachers in schools to develop content that is responsive to the communities they serve. Curriculum and assessment flexibility are promoted as a way of maximising autonomy and choice for both teachers and students. Quantitative data, however, suggest a concerning pattern in terms of how this choice is enacted (Education Review Office, 2019; New Zealand Qualification and Assessment, 2018). Data show that when compared to high decile schools, low decile schools have significantly lower participation rates in complex English NCEA[2] achievement standards (Wilson et al., 2016). In the context of a national education system that is marked by low equity (Ministry of Education, 2013), these data suggest that tailored, flexible learning may further entrench existing inequalities. In order to critically examine this current state of play, the aim of this article is two-fold. First, I seek to problematise choice and flexibility by examining their effects on curriculum and assessment decisions. Second, using interview data from secondary English teachers, I theorise why choice and flexibility may be compelling discourses for teachers.

Examining the lure of choice and flexibility as a way of theorising current participation rates in NCEA achievement standards offers an important insight into how secondary English teachers make curriculum decisions, including why teachers may limit access to certain assessment opportunities. Wheelahan (2010) has argued that neoliberal policies have captured elements of progressive discourses, in particular, those that emphasise student-centred approaches, the value of situated learning, and contextualised forms of knowledge. Drawing

on this analysis, I argue that choice and flexibility offer teachers a progressive identity associated with catering for individual need and interest. I suggest this teacher identity plays an essential role in mediating curriculum choices in secondary English classrooms. This analysis and interpretation of the data also allow an exploration of the kinds of meanings made possible in discourses about teaching for equity and inclusion. As equity remains a desired but elusive outcome in education, it is vital to examine how we currently construct teaching for equity and to consider the possibilities and limitations of these constructions. While there has been a focus on effective pedagogy as a way of closing the achievement gap and promoting equitable educational outcomes (Alton-Lee, 2003; Hattie, 2012), there has been less emphasis on curriculum content and its possible relationship to educational equity.

I begin by locating the impetus for choice and flexibility in a broader economic context, including the shift toward competencies and the instrumentalisation of knowledge. I focus on the effects of this shift on curriculum and assessment in subject English and outline some research data on assessment opportunities in secondary English classrooms in New Zealand schools. Following this section, I elaborate on Wheelahan's argument and detail both my theoretical stance as well as my data gathering methods. In the findings section, I unpack the interview data to examine how secondary English teachers take up choice and flexibility. Here, I draw on Wheelahan's work (2010) to consider how the appropriation of progressive language allows teachers to position themselves as responsive to individual needs and as flexible curriculum producers. I focus on the ways in which curriculum and assessment flexibility allow teachers to feel progressive and how this, in turn, shapes teaching for diversity and equity in specific ways. Finally, I discuss the ways in which the confluence of neoliberal imperatives and progressive desires produce problematic discourses about diversity and equity that may further entrench existing inequalities.

Contextualising curriculum and assessment

Problematising choice and flexibility, including the widely held acceptance that this is the best and most equitable way of meeting student needs, requires a contextualisation of this curriculum and assessment moment in its broader discursive setting. Savage (2011) locates the assumed link between choice and equity in social capitalist forms of governance present in western democracies. In this form, capitalism pursues democratic and social justice ends *within* a competitive global economy (Savage, 2011). This positioning has significant effects on education because it requires education aims to be tightly aligned with economic ones. Significantly, education is repositioned from an institution that plays *a* role in the economy to *the* institution charged with developing the economy (Wheelahan, 2010). The mantra of choice and flexibility is generally framed as the means for fostering innovation and improving quality through competition (Perry & Southwell, 2013). Maximising consumer choice within schools is seen as a way of ensuring that schools work to meet the demands of the market. However, as Savage (2011) points out, socially democratic ideals are difficult to realise in the context of an economic system built on stratification and performance:

> This is not because excellence and equity are ontologically or diametrically opposed … but because in actually existing schools it is hard to imagine how equity and existing notions of inclusivity and pastoral care cannot be marginalised by practices of competitive individualism that emerge when schools try to nourish and promote excellence in relation to market demands. (p. 34)

Despite the inherent contradictions that Savage highlights, social justice and equity remain compelling narratives for teachers. It follows that teachers will want to provide courses that are responsive to the needs and interests of diverse students. However, this desire for

responsiveness does not fully explain why teachers may actively exclude certain groups of students from complex ways of engaging with English. Wheelahan (2010) argues that one reason the language of choice and flexibility is so appealing is that it conflates the neoliberal emphasis on the individual with the progressive emphasis on student-centred learning. Wheelahan identifies student-centred learning as well as contextualised forms of knowledge as the place where neoliberal and progressive discourses meet. Her specific focus is on how instrumentalised forms of learning make use of the language of autonomy and empowerment in compelling ways. It is in tying progressive notions of autonomy together with the neoliberal preoccupation with informed choice and decision-making that this current discourse gains so much of its traction.

Neoliberal forms of education are consistent with human capital theory in which people are constituted as productive units who contribute to the economy (Harvey, 2005). In this context, education is instrumental for developing this capital in the form of a skilled and flexible workforce (Henry et al., 2001). This context has both epistemological effects in terms of curriculum content as well as ontological effects evident in changing teacher and student identities. Robertson (2012), for example, argues that teaching is currently captured by facilitator paradigms, which focus on constructivist approaches to education. These discourses frame the good teacher as one who fosters opportunities for individualised and tailored learning to suit individual pathways. The repositioning of teachers as curriculum producers demands questions about the kinds of knowledge students encounter, and whether access to (or exclusion from) certain kinds of knowledge is itself a marker of educational inequity. The privileging of individual needs over access to a common curriculum also raises questions about the relationship between knowledge and equity.

Student identities are similarly framed as consumers who choose learning that maximises their ability to participate in the labour market. Increasingly, this emphasis has turned to the development of learner dispositions and competencies (Robertson, 2012; Cobb & Couch, 2018). Transnational policy has pushed the development of competencies as fundamental to the advancing of both the economy and social cohesion (Organisation for the Economic Cooperation and Development, 2005). More recently, the OECD has released *Global Competency in an Inclusive World* (2016), in which the notion of global competence is promoted as a means to develop a "global and intercultural outlook" for participating in the world (p. 1). While the document promotes global competence for social cohesion, global competence is also justified in terms of enabling students to "thrive in a changing labour market" (p. 2). The document's main focus is on how schools may develop these capacities and how PISA (the OECD's programme to assess 15 year-old students' abilities in literacy, numeracy and science) will incorporate them into testing. The drive for a "highly skilled and flexible workforce [essential] to national success within the new global knowledge economy" (p. 3) shapes a new form of student identity, one that serves the interests of the marketplace (Allais, 2014; Collin, 2014).

With education reimagined as the key institution for economic development (Savage, 2017), schooling becomes increasingly aligned with the needs of industry. The development of vocational pathways in secondary education, for example, has come from the drive to align schools with industry needs (Wheelahan, 2010). This reframing of schooling has had wide-ranging effects on education, including curriculum and assessment. Changes in how economies work place emphasis on the knowledge economy in which wealth is generated through specialised forms of knowledge, especially in technology and science (Collin, 2014; Savage, 2011). The push for specialised forms of knowledge that enable equally specialised forms of

work has reshaped curriculum content and knowledge in a number of ways. Academic scholarship has identified the following features of contemporary curricula: the instrumentalisation of knowledge, the atomisation of knowledge by redefining curriculum as measurable outcomes (Wheelahan, 2010), an emphasis on developing competencies and generic skills over knowledge, modular and flexible learning, and problem-solving and critical thinking skills over disciplinary learning (Priestley & Sinnema, 2014). It has also positioned teachers as curriculum producers who are facilitators of knowledge (Priestley & Sinnema, 2014).

These features are evident in *The New Zealand Curriculum* as well as the NCEA. Both policy structures use an outcomes-based approach and are organised around statements which define learning in measurable components (Ormond, 2018). Both policy structures also offer teachers the flexibility to design differentiated curriculum and assessment opportunities according to student need. This means that secondary English departments have considerable scope in how they deliver their English programmes. As a governing document, the *The New Zealand Curriculum* actively promotes the adaptation of departmental schemes to "best address the particular needs, interests, and circumstances of the school's students and community" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 37). This choice is enacted in the context of broader policy imperatives that give form to this flexibility. The modular structure of the NCEA, for example, allows departments to package courses and standards to meet particular student needs (Locke, 2010). That is to say, it is always a constrained choice and flexibility. As Ormond (2018) points out, in as much as knowledge is organised around specifically described outcomes, the potential exists for reducing content (and teacher choices) to these specifically defined outcomes themselves. In other words, teacher choice and flexibility are inevitably constrained by the organisation of content into discrete standards (Sadler, 2007) and curriculum content

becomes subject to outcomes and standards. In some cases, they may create a minimum standard for which to strive.

In the context of secondary English, literature suggests that curriculum content has been reconstituted in a range of ways under new curricula and standards-based assessment. Medway (2005) focuses on the impact of instrumentalisation and how the subject has been reduced to literacy skills. He argues there is a mismatch between the kind of capacities needed for senior English and the activities associated with developing basic literacy. He draws a distinction, for example, between reading a McDonald's sign and analysing a more complex text. In replacing richer, literary content with a set of flexible skills, the secondary English curriculum gives the outward aspect of democratising learning by allowing the learner to "enter the free market economy as a tactical player" (p. 22). However, Medway (2005) argues that the type of knowledge that is empowering to students requires quite different kinds of educational experiences. It is the kind of knowledge and experience, he argues, that is "necessarily ill-defined; it is not and *cannot* [emphasis added] be structured by precise objectives" (p. 22).

Medway's (2005) central argument is that breaking down the curriculum to a set of narrowly defined outcomes takes away from the more complex experiences and content that English offers students. Marshall (2003) argues in a similar vein, stating that English is now more about identifying formal features rather than pleasure and enjoyment. Marshall suggests English has lost its emphasis on the reader/writer relationship and is instead limited to "the detection of certain generic techniques" (p. 88). Marshall contrasts this view of English with one which involves the development of imagination and empathy. Consequently, English shifts from a creative process to the identification and demonstration of predetermined devices and forms.

Teaching language features becomes an end in itself, denying students the opportunity to create and shape meaning through language.

A range of research has focused on the marginalisation of literary content in secondary English. Locke (2010), for example, focuses on how instrumentalist approaches have narrowed possibilities for literature. O'Neill (2006) has demonstrated the marginalisation of poetry in New Zealand secondary classrooms. Dymoke (2001, 2002, 2012) has focused on the marginalisation of poetry as a result of assessment regimes. Her research comparing poetry in both UK and New Zealand schools point to two salient issues. The first relates to the ways in which assessment constrains curriculum. Teachers in her study reported a hesitance to submit poetry as an internal assessment because it was harder than submitting more formulaic types of writing. Teachers also reported hesitancy with the unfamiliar texts external achievement standard due to its complex nature. The second issue has to do with the progressive sensibilities associated with content and assessment choices.

Dymoke (2012) notes that in New Zealand, it is not just curriculum and assessment structures that maximise teacher and student choice but teachers' own desire to be responsive to student dispositions. Drawing a distinction between how poetry is used rather than taught in New Zealand secondary schools, the teachers in Dymoke's study tended to favour the *use* of single poems as part of broader thematic units rather than teaching poetry per se. Significantly, this approach was tied to the teacher's sense that this was a more natural approach to teaching poetry rather than imposing poetry for its own sake and/or against students' own disinterest (sometimes fear) of poetry. Progressive leanings were also evident in *The New Zealand Curriculum* and in broader education discourses where there is a strong emphasis on fostering personal identity, particularly for Māori and Pasifika students who have experienced historical

marginalisation through education. While Dymoke focuses specifically on poetry, her research illuminates the multiple contexts in which teachers make decisions about what content to teach to whom.

How, then, do these imperatives and shifts play out in terms of access to complex content in secondary English classrooms? In their study, Wilson et al. (2016) go beyond identifying achievement outcomes in secondary English and focus instead on the literacy and assessment opportunities available to students enrolled in NCEA Level 2. The researchers were interested in students' opportunities to learn content and skills that would help them gain the qualifications required for university study. In seeking to identify the "'systems' and 'offerings'" (p. 207) in relation to disciplinary literacy teaching practices, they focused on the participation rates of two achievement standards in particular: Analysis of a Studied Written Text (AS 2.1)[3] and Analyse Unfamiliar Text (AS 2.3). These achievement standards were chosen because they make use of complex texts with sophisticated language, demanding complex thinking, reading, and writing from students. The study found that students in low decile schools had significantly lower participation and achievement rates than students in high decile schools.

The researchers used the Opportunities to Learn Framework (OECD, 2013) as a way of determining the "time students spend on, and exposed to, important content as well as the adequacy and effectiveness of their engagement in the learning process" (p. 205). The OTL framework was used as a critical lens to explore equity in secondary schooling contexts. The study found that students in lower decile schools had fewer opportunities to read any form of written text; in particular, to read longer texts, texts provided in original published form, and texts written for adult rather than youth audience. Students in lower decile schools also had fewer opportunities to participate in extended discussions and received less literacy-specific

instruction. In explaining these disparities, the authors note that New Zealand's curriculum and assessment structures contain sufficient flexibility for teachers to determine "what and how they teach and assess, which may unintentionally contribute to unequal OTL for different schools and groups." (p. 207).

A wider sample of Level 1[4] data from all New Zealand secondary schools who used the NCEA as their assessment framework from 2011 to 2014 shows a clear correlation between school decile and participation rates in the same two achievement standards (Source: The New Zealand Qualification Authority[5]). The data from achievement standards 1.1 and 1.3 between 2011 and 2014 are detailed in the tables below.

Table IV Participation rates in Achievement Standard 1.1 Show understanding of written texts

AS 1.1 Show understanding of specified aspects of studied written texts with supporting evidence	Decile 1–3	Decile 4–7	Decile 8–10
2011 Participation Rates	49%	69%	79%
2012 Participation Rates	47%	68%	78%
2013 Participation Rates	49%	68%	78%
2014 Participation Rates	51%	70%	78%

Table IV Source: New Zealand Qualification Authority 2015

Table V: Participation rates in Achievement Standard 1.3 Analyse Unfamiliar Texts

AS 1.3 Analyze significant aspects of unfamiliar written texts through close reading supported by evidence.	Decile 1–3	Decile 4–7	Decile 8–10

2011 Participation Rates	32%	58%	71%
2012 Participation Rates	32%	59%	68%
2013 Participation Rates	25%	65%	68%
2014 Participation Rates	25%	60%	66%

Table V Source: New Zealand Qualification Authority 2015

Wilson et al. (2016) conclude that curriculum and assessment structures may unintentionally contribute to these unequal participation rates. However, their focus on the limits of curriculum and assessment flexibility does not account for why teachers may willingly choose to do so, or why such structures are so compelling to teachers.

The Study

The questions underpinning this study are concerned with how secondary English teachers differentiate curriculum and assessment and opportunities for different groups of students. In particular, I am interested in any emerging patterns between high and low decile schools. Ten Heads of Departments in Auckland secondary schools were interviewed about their English programmes and how they were targeted to different groups of students. In this study, they are referred to as teachers. All secondary schools in Auckland received an invitation to participate in the study and ten schools were randomly selected to represent a mixture of high, mid, and low decile school. Interview data were sought and obtained following all the requirements set out by the University of Auckland Ethics Committee. The data collection took place between 2010 and 2014.

The analysis draws from a qualitative interpretive paradigm that seeks to go beyond description and offer an explanatory account of data (Mutch, 2013). Semi-structured interviews were used

in order to maintain a purposeful focus while also allowing for a broader discussion and identification of individual teacher/school concerns. The data were then coded using thematic analysis, which allowed me to identify emerging patterns across multiple interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initially, I coded the data around themes related to curriculum and assessment decision-making. From there, I looked for language that related to progressive discourses around student disposition, equity, inclusion, diversity, choice and flexibility. What follows is a thematic analysis of this data overlaid with Wheelahan's critique (2010) as an explanatory framework.

Findings: progressive desires and responsive identities

The interview data suggest that teachers made curriculum and assessment decisions strongly mediated by a sense of responsiveness to student need. Typically, this responsiveness was tied to the achievability of the assessment and the desire to be responsive to student emotional well-being. Rachael, for example, notes that her department's targeted programme was about *"making a course to meet the needs of the students"* and that it was the achievability of the assessments that sometimes drove the design of the course: *"No one achieved that standard, is there any point in doing it?"* Mary similarly observed that in his department they chose things students have *"a good chance of actually achieving".* Another teacher discussed how her department had introduced an alternative English programme because students' needs were so vast, and, *"because of the number of students who weren't going to achieve in the regular mainstream English classes"* (Susan).

Although achieving credits and gaining qualifications was a consistent narrative in teachers' talk, there was also an equally strong sense that student disposition toward the subject should play a role in determining content. This meant taking into account students' ability, *"I think*

for the ones who find it really difficult then it's important they have a certain level of literacy where they can read and write and communicate at a basic level." As well as interest: *"But then for kids who really enjoy English and have got a passion for it, then it should go beyond that"* (Mary). The same teacher went on to say that a number of his students would like *"the pressure taken off"* and would prefer to do more practical learning like writing a job application or even interviewing skills. In discussing these sorts of skills, the teacher suggests that this is the content that some students *"actually need"*.

The desire to be responsive to student need was demonstrably high, yet responsiveness sat in direct tension with the ability to ensure rich curriculum offerings. This desire was manifest in the sorts of assessment opportunities from which some students were excluded. Mary, for example, said they didn't do the 'Unfamiliar Texts' achievement standard with certain students because it required *"a lot of independent thought and you can't prepare them for it and they get into an exam and they panic"*. The same teacher also indicated they also wouldn't do short texts because students *"need two [texts] and it just makes it more difficult."* Again, the desire to be responsive to both ability and student disposition appears to be significant drivers in teacher decision-making. Achievement standards like Unfamiliar Texts and those requiring longer essay responses demand more complex thinking and sophisticated written work from students. They also develop the kind of thinking and knowledge needed for success in Year 13 English, yet, this kind of thinking and knowing seemed to be an optional extra. Another teacher commented that his department would offer the external film essay at level 1 and 2, but not at level 3 as this was seen as too difficult. Still, at Level 1 and 2, it was optional: *"So, they don't have to do it, if they really don't want to do external exams and some of them really don't want to do external exams"* (James).

The NCEA permits teachers even further narrowing of the curriculum by allowing students to be assessed against more than one standard using the same text. Rob, for example, notes they were *"trying to feed as many things into a limited number of texts so [students] are not having to get their head around a novel, three short stories and a visual text".* In keeping with the other interview data gathered, this teacher also notes that his class will not be studying an extended text.

These comments suggest a concern for providing courses that are fairer to students in terms of meeting their individual learning needs, as well as student disposition toward the subject. The flexibility in the courses teachers put together for their students was generally perceived positively and as a way to avoid the traditional one-size-fits-all model. Given the current emphasis on achievement for all in education discourses (Ball et al., 2012; Thrupp, 2014), it is understandable that equity may come to be framed in this way. Some teachers see differentiating content as a way of ensuring that all students achieve something. It is also understandable that student emotional well-being figures as an important driver in secondary classrooms. Alcorn and Thrupp's (2012) research, for example, demonstrates a significant amount of time in low decile schools is consciously devoted to building student self-esteem and well-being. In as much as choice and flexibility help to constitute the teacher as one who caters *and cares* for all needs in the classroom, the discourse of choice becomes a desirable one for teachers.

Discussion: Problematising the lure of choice and flexibility

Wheelahan (2010) claims that one reason for neoliberalism's grip on education is linked to its ability to appropriate progressive language. Progressivism's attention to the individual learner as well as its focus on contextualised learning are natural bedfellows to education as individual

development underscored by a performative view of knowledge. However, as the data in this study show, choice and flexibility can lead to exclusion from valued content for groups of students who are already marginalised. In this section, I draw further on Wheelahan's critique of competency-based learning and show how these critiques emerge in the context of secondary English teaching. I problematise different aspects of the lure of choice and flexibility and examine the ways in which they sit in tension with notions of equity in education.

The language of autonomy and empowerment is a dominant and compelling feature of the curriculum discursive landscape. Wheelahan (2010) argues that this type of language is tightly wrapped around neoliberalism's ontological identity project. The ability to mix and match achievement standards gives the appearance of empowering students by giving them some freedom to choose their assessments. It positions them as active players in their own learning while limiting student choice to a minimum requirement or qualification, which may exclude them from valuable content. As one teacher notes, it becomes possible not to *"teach the subject…and [only] teach them to get their literacy requirement"[vi]* (Mary). The same teacher also comments that while not all students think they need to learn how to analyse a text or write a literary essay *"they miss the fact that it is teaching them to think critically".* These comments demonstrate that students' autonomy is always limited to the way in which the tightly prescribed learning objectives are to be achieved so that students have responsibility over learning but no real control over what they learn (Wheelahan, 2010). As Wheelahan points out, this identity is a particular and limited view of the self; it is a market identity that limits what students choose to consume to prescribed outcomes and competencies in order to compete in the labour market.

The affordance of choice further complicates things by enabling students to get to Level 3 without necessarily having the knowledge and skills to engage with complex Level 3 work. A number of teachers commented that because students were able to achieve sufficient literacy credits to get to level 3, they nevertheless required alternative English pathways due to the complexity of Level 3 work, *"because when we've looked at what's expected of the internal/external assessments, those kids are not going to pass that".* In Susan's department, for example, they offered a course where students could gain credits for interviewing skills and writing a CV letter, the emphasis being on *"really practical stuff".*

Choice and flexibility also enable individualised forms of learning that are appealing to both teachers and students. The teachers I interviewed consistently pointed to the ability to provide individualised learning as a positive aspect of curriculum and assessment policy. As demonstrated in my findings, teachers embraced the opportunity to be responsive to individual needs. However, this personalised response often results in a diminished curriculum. A teacher in Dymoke's study (2012) for example, discusses the positive aspects of the freedom to choose as it means that she can provide a more culturally representative and responsive range of texts to her students. Thereby not disadvantaging or excluding them from the curriculum. Another teacher argued that it was "what connects" rather than "which poets" which informed her own decision making (p. 24-25). Added to this, is the idea that English teachers should use curriculum flexibility to "differentiate and select texts that might be appropriate for individual learners" (p. 25). This is an enactment of the impetus to tailor courses to student needs. Some teachers in Dymoke's study saw the inclusion of Māori and Pasifika poets and writers as a positive thing that encouraged a "multiplicity of voices" (p. 26). Relevance also featured prominently in the teachers' responses, with teachers making choices of poets based on in terms

of their meaningfulness to the students' lives. This was coupled with a strong sense of what "was right for *our* [emphasis added] kids" (p. 27).

Cornbleth (2008) refers to this drive toward individual responsiveness in education as "radical individualism" (p. 160). She argues it is a way of engaging with student diversity that ignores any group-associated differences on the basis that everyone is unique. In this view, teachers are not bound by social group stereotypes, and neither are their expectations of students. Cornbleth suggests this perceived freedom from prejudice has a stronghold in contemporary classrooms because it affords teachers a way of viewing themselves as good teachers. Moreover, there is the perceived curriculum advantage of being able to differentiate content to meet individual needs or to be culturally responsive. However, as Cornbleth points out, radical individualism still falls into problematic waters by being fundamentally assimilationist because it denies the power relationships between groups; that difference is always relational (May & Sleeter, 2010). Yet, it is this semblance of individual responsiveness and personalised learning that allows teachers to *feel* progressive and identify themselves as progressive teachers.

The push to be responsive to individual needs produces another effect in terms of how equity and social difference are constructed and addressed. In positioning personalised learning as the most effective way to attend to the diverse learning needs in the classroom, it also presumes that this is the most equitable thing to do. Diversity and inclusion are addressed in terms of curriculum differentiation rather than addressing social difference in terms of broader patterns of power. Consistent with neoliberalism's focus on the individual, it makes sense, therefore, that the answer to difference is to simply differentiate content according to individual interests and capacities without recognising how difference is stratified in society -- or how exclusion from content may reproduce existing structured hierarchies of power. These approaches to

difference point to a tension between difference as justification for differentiated curriculum and assessment, and difference as a need to address the roots of social inequality. Rob, for example, highlights this concerning disparity in acknowledging that *"Although I probably wouldn't advocate Shakespeare for applied students, [if you] take Shakespeare out of the curriculum you are reducing the cultural capital of all those kids".*

Choice and flexibility provide the illusion of inclusion and participation by offering an assortment of curriculum and assessment opportunities that are seemingly responsive to individual needs. In as much as these courses, credits, and qualifications exclude students from opportunities for further study or to develop the capacity for critical engagement across multiple spheres (knowledge, school, society, democracy), this version of inclusion and participation is deeply problematic. Neoliberalism offers inclusion and participation restricted to economic and market identities, not the kind consistent with the broader aims of education or the stated ideals of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Another way to think about this is that the current education moment produces a tension between equity as access to content and equity as access to achievable outcomes. This tension is embedded in a broader context in which English departments need to demonstrate increased achievement and outcomes while simultaneously responding to personal learning needs.

The snapshot of empirical data presented in this article suggests that some students are further marginalised by targeted courses, which are also often designed to ensure good achievement rates and outcomes for schools. Savage (2011) identifies this as an inescapable contradiction in neoliberal education policy that seeks achievement for all by providing access to low-level skills, qualifications, and employment opportunities. As Wheelahan (2010) points out, these

alternative streams and pathways "tend to be associated with lower-status qualifications" and it is "marginalised students who are more likely to encounter these" (p. 127).

Despite these contradictions, the lure of choice and flexibility maintain a firm discursive grip in the education imaginary. Choice and flexibility are inevitably constructed as a good and right way of responding to diversity, ensuring inclusion and equity. This potent pull requires us to examine why this may be so given the concerning statistics for students in low decile schools. Ball (2012) argues that this "obviousness" (p. 78) may be connected to an understandable commitment to ensuring some level of credentials and school engagement for students who have been traditionally underserved by education. Ball's proposition is a logical starting point in unravelling how secondary English teachers make curriculum and assessment decisions. However, my analysis suggests that curriculum and assessment choices are also tightly wrapped to progressive discourses about student agency and voice. So, it is possible that secondary English teachers make the decisions they do as a way of positioning themselves as effective and progressive teachers. As Wheelahan (2010) notes, instrumentalism emphasises situated and contextualised forms of knowledge. In delivering an English curriculum that eschews traditional literary content and assessment forms, teachers are free to provide courses more closely aligned to student experience. It is this unease around the potential for reproducing disadvantage by privileging traditional curriculum content, combined with the concern for reducing educational disparities, that may give teaching for equity its current form.

Contemporary neoliberal curriculum discourses produce both epistemological and ontological effects. It is in keeping with neoliberalism's ontology to produce versions of English teaching that frame inclusion, participation, and equity in terms of maximising individual choice. As such, this framing demands we examine the limits of personalised learning because it may

exclude some students from the types of curriculum that develop the critical capacities for democratic life. The focus on individualism also displaces students from the power relationships they are embedded in as members of social groups. It assumes empowerment happens one individual at a time. Significantly, it is vital that secondary English teachers ask questions about how the appropriation of progressive discourses within a neoliberal framework might work against the critical elements of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, or how it might reduce possibilities for social mobility among marginalised students.

Concluding Comments

Choice and flexibility are persistent and prevailing discourses that shape how English teaching is enacted in secondary English classrooms. Data suggest that how teachers take up this flexibility may serve to disadvantage certain groups of students. While neoliberal imperatives privilege instrumentalist forms of knowledge, they also advocate personalised learning. Wheelahan (2010) argues it is this focus on student-centred learning that makes neoliberal policies compelling to teachers. This plays out in secondary English classrooms by fostering personalised and flexible learning; positioning teachers as flexible curriculum producers and students as flexible curriculum choosers.

Consequently, neoliberal discourses and policies in education give teaching for inclusion and equity a particular form. Using qualitative data from interviews with secondary English teachers, I have demonstrated how curriculum choices frame equity in terms of credits, skills, and tailored learning. Teachers actively make choices for the purposes of equity, but these choices are constrained by neoliberal framings, which reduce the aims of education (and what it means to be educated) to narrow economic goals. Equity is reduced from a broad social ideal that emphasises critical democratic participation to simply developing human capital. In this

curriculum context, what remain at stake are the meanings we ascribe to equity, inclusion, and curriculum. Any engagement with secondary English and notions of equity should, therefore, include engagement with knowledge and content selection. As Wheelahan (2010) notes, an instrumentalist view of knowledge that is focused on the needs of the economy prevents a more in-depth discussion about knowledge per se.

Thoughtful discussion about the relationship between pedagogy, curriculum, and equity is also needed. *The New Zealand Curriculum* is unequivocal in its vision for the full and active participation of all members, of all communities, in all aspects of society. A discussion about what kinds of English content foster this kind of democratic participation is what is urgently needed now.

Notes

[1] Schools in New Zealand have a decile rating (1-10) based on the socio-economic status of the community from where they draw their students. Schools receive funding from the government based on their decile rating. Decile 1 schools serve the poorest communities while decile 10 schools serve the wealthiest.
[2] New Zealand's national qualification is the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). Students complete the qualification at Level 1, 2, and 3 during the final three years of high school. The NCEA is standards-based assessment.
[3] The NCEA contains achievement standards within each subject at each year level.
[4] Level 1 is the first year of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement. Students complete Level 1 at Year 11
[5] New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA)

PREAMBLE TO ARTICLE 4

STRANGERS AND ORPHANS

As this publication was written in the very early stages of the thesis, I offer these fuller explanatory notes in order to make clearer and stronger links between this chapter and the questions addressed in the thesis.

So far in my thesis, I have made the argument that neoliberal policy imperatives reduce curriculum to exacting and pre-determined outcomes. Moreover, that these outcomes are instrumentalist in nature, chosen for their utilitarian value in a flexible workforce and market economy. Literature, poetry, and film occupy an endangered space within some New Zealand English departments, particularly so in low decile schools. And, if they are included, they are dismantled through Achievement Standards into small chunks, losing the full potential of what they have to offer.

I also wanted this thesis to offer a strong defence of literature in the secondary English classroom. This chapter moves away from the empirical data and offers an exploration of knowledge and curriculum through a reading of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1831/1994). I use this reading to explore the possible intersections between literature, philosophy, and education. My reading of the novel is grounded in the work of Paulo Freire and his call for education to be humanising and liberating. I focus on the two central characters, Victor and the Creature, and explore how their trajectories through community and isolation may be functions of how they conceptualise and pursue knowledge.

My primary focus in the following chapter is to consider what happens to possibilities for community when knowledge is seen as having a predetermined endpoint and as a private individual pursuit. This is how Victor conceptualises and pursues knowledge in the novel. The Creature, on the other hand, sees knowledge as dialogical and as embedded in social experience. In returning to one of my central concerns in the thesis, what kind of knowledge enables the social vision in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007), I use the novel to consider the extent to which social connectedness may be achieved by a curriculum that develops students' critical and aesthetic sensibilities. In examining these possibilities, I focus on the non-measurable and non-exacting 'outcomes' of imagination, wonder, empathy and social justice. Is it possible that to know without connection to others is an alienating process in itself? And, what is the role of knowledge that is unknown and socially produced in fostering community?

In these explanatory notes to the following chapter, I begin by grounding the above questions in an anecdotal example. I was invited into a Year 11 English classroom where students were working on the 'Connections' Achievement Standard. In this standard students choose four texts and then compose a report that draws connections between the texts. In this particular classroom (in a Decile 2 school), the teacher explained that students were free to choose their texts and that the next few lessons (while they completed the standard over three weeks) would be independent work. Of the texts that students chose, almost all were visual texts, either film or a contemporary music video. Two students used contemporary novels that were of the historical romance genre. An observation of the films and music videos used showed that most of the texts chosen were 'gangster genre' involving narratives about Black and Hispanic youths in America.

Two aspects of this informal observation troubled me. The first was the limited scope of the texts used. The teacher, operating from a discourse where relevancy and student interest were paramount, eagerly explained that students enjoyed this standard because it allowed them to pursue their interests and were often highly engaged and invested in their texts. However, it was concerning to me that in allowing students choice in choosing all four texts, subject English was actually closing down experiences for students rather than opening them up. Moreover, in primarily using visual texts, students continued to avoid complex written text, which these students struggled with. Part of the promise of the NCEA is that students can be assessed and rewarded for what they can do rather than what they can't do, however it can potentially lead to the exclusion of the content that provides access to aesthetic ways of thinking and engaging with the world. Students should have opportunities to engage with complex text *because* it is complex; the educative potential lies in the grappling with complexity.

Teaching the standard in such an individualised way also unsettled me. Of course, this is not how students would have worked all year, but for an assessment that is about making connections it seemed odd that this learning would be carried out as a private affair. Such individualised work limits the opportunities for dialogue and inter-subjectivity. The learning context in this classroom resonates (in its difference) with Doecke's (2017) work, in which he argues for a view of English that takes into account community and citizenship. Doecke's call is for a non-instrumentalist view of the subject, concerned instead with the "legitimacy of personal response [and the] capacity of people to share their experiences of life with one another" (p. 237). Doecke insists that subject English should always involve an engagement with human experience.

Locke et al. (2009) similarly note that literary reading is often constructed as a private and individual pursuit when social practices and responses to texts may be far more motivating. Freire (1996) saw dialogue as a prerequisite to knowledge and meaning making. It is through dialogical relationships that Freire sees the potential for humanization. Victor's pursuit of knowledge as a private affair is in keeping with neoliberalism's hyper-individualism. The Creature, on the other hand, seeks knowledge as a way of connecting with others and becoming part of a community.

Finally, this chapter is offered as an affirmation that stories are science too. Just like the Creature, who observes Saffie's family from his scientist's hut and claims language to be a God-like science, this chapter affirms the place of story in the development of critical understanding. I use Shelley's narrative to develop my own understanding of curriculum and knowledge. In this manner, the novel becomes another way to tell the thesis story, placed boldly alongside empirical data and theory. Tantalisingly, *Frankenstein* offers a deeper philosophical argument for me to grapple with: that knowledge should lead to community.

For subject English to do this kind of work, we need to pose searching questions - not only about curriculum, but also about what it means to participate and be included in democratic society. Subject English requires an understanding of education that serves social purposes beyond the steely and competitive needs of the economy. A curriculum that is driven by exacting outcomes closes down possibilities for being open to wonder and uncertainty. It strips subject English from its full potential, limiting its ability to develop the aesthetic sensibilities that students might draw on in order to give meaning to experience.

Freire's work provides a useful theoretical framework from which to examine how secondary English teachers differentiate content. In his seminal text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996) Freire draws a distinction between domesticating and liberating education. First, he uses the concept of banking education to argue that a schooling system, which locates students as passive and empty is one which domesticates students (Freire, 1996; 1998b). Second, Freire argues that human beings have an ontological vocation to be humanised and that education should foster humanisation rather than negate it (1996). Humanisation for Freire is borne out of the social nature of our ontology in the belief that knowledge leads to solidarity and connectedness rather than isolation from one another. Third, Freire argues that literacy must include a critical aspect, which allows students not only to read the word but the world also (1998).

ARTICLE FOUR

STRANGERS AND ORPHANS:

KNOWLEDGE AND MUTUALITY IN MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN*

Abstract

Paulo Freire consistently upheld humanization and mutuality as educational ideals. This article argues that conceptualizations of knowledge and how knowledge is sought and produced play a role in fostering humanization and mutuality in educational contexts. Drawing on Mary Shelley's novel Frankenstein, this article focuses on the two central characters who 'ardently' pursue knowledge at all costs. It will be argued that the text suggests two possible outcomes from the pursuit of knowledge. One is mutuality; the other is social disconnectedness.

Keywords: Freire, knowledge, humanization, education

> If the study to which you apply yourself has a tendency to weaken your affections, and to destroy your taste for those simple pleasures in which no alloy can possibly mix, then that study is certainly unlawful. (Shelley, 1994, p. 37)

Introduction

In her introduction to the 1831 edition of her novel Shelley notes that invention "*does not consist of creating out of void, but out of chaos"* (1994, p. 195). The assertion that knowledge is produced in context and in relationship to other (albeit disparate) ideas forms the central premise of this paper. This article explores the possibilities of literary and philosophical intersections for the study of education, focusing on knowledge and knowledge production. The philosophical dimensions come from the work of educational philosopher Paulo Freire, specifically his arguments about the social nature of knowledge and its relationship to humanization and the development of mutuality. I will explore how *Frankenstein* might be read as a novel that asks fundamental questions about the nature of desirable knowledge and its effects on human relationships. I argue that knowledge has the potential for community, mutuality and connectivity but also the potential to make us strangers to ourselves and to each other. If education is to be a vehicle for humanization and mutuality, then education must be informed by a theory that presupposes a view of knowledge as i) having an incomplete and/or uncertain end point and ii) emerging from the lives and experiences of learners, making the everyday strange and worthy of pursuit.

In the first section of the paper, I will provide an outline of Freire's key understandings of humanization and knowledge. In particular, I will focus on the social imperative that lies within his discussion of ontology and epistemology. It is the aim of this article to argue that in educational contexts theories of knowledge and knowledge production have a profound effect in enabling or disabling social connectivity. In the second section of the paper, I will illustrate Freire's ideas by exploring the contrasting conceptions of knowledge that Victor and the Creature hold. Consistent with Freire's understanding, Shelley suggests that a view of knowledge that does not have a social and participatory aspect impacts our ability to be

connected to each other and the world. In the third section, I will consider the effects of each view of knowledge on Victor and the Creature's ability to connect with others and identify with them.

I will conclude the discussion by briefly considering what this reading of the text might offer us in the context of the current education discourse. I will suggest that how we conceive of knowledge as well as how we produce it needs to be open to uncertainty and risk; it needs to focus on and affirm the place of experience and emotions in education. A view of knowledge that does not encompass this, is limited in its ability to contribute to humanization and mutuality.

Critical Responses to Frankenstein

Responses to *Frankenstein* are both plentiful and broad in their range of interpretations. Some readings have focused on the Creature as representative of children and/or oppressed minorities (Behrent, 1990). These readings suggest that the novel is a type of manifesto for the vulnerable, a reminder that society is imbued with the responsibility to look after those who cannot exercise power or advocate for themselves. Others, like Mellor (1998) have provided feminist readings, viewing Victor's creation as a treatise on domestic education. Yousef (2004) and Richardson (1994) have focused on Shelley's engagement with dominant ideas at the time, namely, education and childhood. Their analyses of the text are considered *vis-a-vis* Rousseau, Locke as well as the political writings of Shelley's parents, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. Yousef and Richardson argue that Shelly does not merely replicate the educational thought of the time, but instead offers a critique of education. Generally, these critiques view *Frankenstein* as a *bildungromans,* focusing on the education the Creature receives. Yousef and Richardson respectively argue that Shelley aptly demonstrates the limits

of 18th century thought by problematizing the education the Creature receives. Both Richardson and Yousef focus on the education of the Creature in relation to Rousseau's *Emile*. Richardson suggests that the work of both Godwin and Wollstonecraft plays a key role in the text, denouncing education as a form of subjugation for those who are not in a position of power (Richardson, 1994), while Yousef (2004) suggests that Shelley illuminates the limits of 18th century thought on autonomy, by showing that it is relationships which mark us as human beings. She argues that the Creature can never be seen by others as human because he is not related to anyone, the result of which is that he is never accepted or claimed by anyone. Similarly, Yousef reads the Creature's non-existent childhood as a key indicator of Shelley's belief in the importance of infancy and childhood as a required period of dependence in all our lives. In as much as the Creature has no childhood, argues Yousef, then he is not human (Yousef, 2004).

The Novel

In the story, a young man, Victor, desires both the secret of life as well as the adulation that such knowledge would provide him. To this end, he dedicates months of his life to creating a being – one which would render him a creator. Upon finishing his Creature, Victor finds him unsightly and horrifying, rejects him immediately and flees back to his home and family. The Creature spends the rest of the story searching for his father and attempting connection and community with others.

The novel is divided into four sections and is told by three narrators. The first and last sections are told by Walton, an explorer who meets both Frankenstein and the Creature while on his quest to the North Pole. The middle section is first told by Frankenstein and then by the Creature. In his section, Frankenstein recounts his childhood and interest in uncovering the

secret of life. He relates his hunger for this knowledge and his horror at the conclusion of his experiment. The Creature then tells his story from his birth to his journey into language and society.

Humanization, Mutuality and Knowledge in Freire's work

The central idea in Freire's work is that humanization is our ontological vocation (Freire, 1998). In the first few pages of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Freire (1998) asserts this vocation, emphasizing the importance of dialogical relationships in advancing humanization and stating, "only through communication can human life have meaning" (p. 6). This attention to the social runs through Freire's writing and it informs both his ontological and epistemological frameworks. Freire (1998) saw humanization as a process that allows us to gain coherence by "getting to know, engaging in solidarity with, as well learning from one another" (p. 45). For Freire, education has the potential to humanize or dehumanize. Humanization depends on dialogue and praxis; any educational context that does not allow for this mean a potential for dehumanization. That is to say, both emancipation and oppression are possible outcomes for education. Two aspects of this understanding need to be stressed here: one is that humanization rests on social connectedness; the other is that solidarity is a prerequisite to social change for a more socially just society.

As stated previously, Freire's epistemology shares characteristics with his view of our ontology. In the same way that humanization is seen as a social and dialogical process, so to is knowledge. For Freire, knowledge is not so much an entity to be 'obtained' but a dynamic and incomplete process. In his words: "Knowledge has historicity. It never is, it is always in the process of being" (Freire, 1998c, p. 31). If knowledge *is always in the process of being*, it also means that the outcome or endpoint of knowledge cannot always be known. Freire's own work

illustrative of this important point. Though Freire maintained a commitment to radical social change through education, he was never overly prescriptive about how this might come about. Arguing against any kind of Freirean method, he insisted that his work be challenged and held to the same scrutiny that he expected of all educational endeavours (Roberts, 2000). In this sense, knowledge requires a commitment to uncertainty and risk.

Additionally Freire stresses the importance of engaging and connecting with the world, and making every-day experiences the focus of study. In his description of problem posing education, Freire maintains that it is important for learners to consider their everyday experiences and conditions in a critical light. Questioning and problem posing allow learners to identify their personal issues in a wider context of power, seeing their oppression as something that is not a given but an imposed condition that can be changed (Freire, 1998). The position that Freire takes here illustrates the importance of personal experience as a worthy focus of study. It also signals his belief that critical engagement with the world is a necessary part of increasing self-awareness. The production of knowledge cannot happen, in a manner that is disconnected from others and from the world. Freire insists throughout his work that it is “awareness of the world” that makes “awareness of my/ourselves viable” (Freire, 2004, p. 15). In as much as any knowledge is pursued without engaging with the world it will not lead to connection with others or even, to a connection with oneself. In summary, Freire’s view of knowledge demands a dialogical engagement with others, a commitment to personal experience and a commitment to uncertainty and risk (or at least unknown outcomes) in education. If education is to play any emancipatory role then knowledge cannot perform any technical function in society that merely perpetuates the status quo. Nor can knowledge be an externally prescribed set of objectives where the outcome of said knowledge is known and/or

disconnected from the lives and experiences of learners. Finally, it cannot be a private, individual pursuit.

Contrasting Conceptualizations of Knowledge and Knowledge Production

In *Frankenstein*, it is possible to draw a distinction between the ways in which the Creature and Victor conceptualize knowledge. I have organized the discussion in this section around four concepts of knowledge and knowledge production. I suggest that the first two – *knowledge has a predetermined endpoint* and *knowledge as a private, individual pursuit* – are generally at odds with Freire's view of knowledge. The second two – *knowledge as dialogical and uncertain* and *knowledge as personal experience of the everyday* – resonate more strongly with Freire's ideas. The first two are depicted largely by Victor and to a lesser extent Walton, the explorer. The second two are illustrated through the Creature's search for human knowledge.

1. Knowledge has a predetermined endpoint

As Victor and Walton describe their search for knowledge and discovery, they express a clear and confident sense of the endpoint or outcome of their pursuits. Both express their aspiration for knowledge in almost identical ways, emphasizing knowledge sought for personal status. Specifically, they desire to each be the only one to have discovered and contributed something to society. Although Walton and Victor pursue this at the expense of wealth and comfort – "My life might have been passed in ease and luxury but I preferred glory" (Walton, p. 7) and "Wealth was an inferior object; but what glory would attend the discovery, if I could banish disease from the human frame" (Victor, p. 23) – both are driven by the desire to 'give' something to all human kind in return for personal glory. Walton states that "I shall satiate my ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited, and may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man" (p. 6) and that one cannot "contest the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind to the last generation" (p. 6). Victor echoes these same

sentiments, yearning to be the first to discover the secret of life. This view of knowledge suggests a one-way relationship between learner and knowledge. The role of the learner is to get the knowledge / make the discovery, and then pass it on to others. It is not to engage or reflect critically in any way. Neither Victor nor Walton considers any negative outcomes of their respective quests. There is no expectation that the outcome could be anything other than what they have imagined it to be.

Victor's immediate, irremediable rejection and disconnection with his creation is an example of his inability to consider any other outcome than that the one he initially imagines. His genuine shock and horror at the completion of his experiment clearly signal his inability to have considered any other outcome than the one he had imagined in his head: "That I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe?" (p. 38). It is of no surprise then, that he also does not consider the consequences of rejecting / abandoning the Creature. He never appears to ask: Has he left? Is he coming back? Is he waiting? What will happen to him now? Indeed by page 42 of the novel, as far as his understanding will permit, the experiment is over.

2. Knowledge as a private, individual pursuit

From early on in the novel it is clear that for Victor knowledge is something that is private, secret and waiting to be discovered. Of his early interest in acquiring knowledge he says: "The world was to me a secret, which I desired to discover" (p. 21) and that the things he learned "appeared to me treasures known to few but myself" (p. 23) Unable to disclose his learning to his father ("I often wished to communicate these secret stores of knowledge to my father", p. 23) he chooses instead to share his discoveries with Elizabeth but only then in secrecy. Finally, when he eventually discovers the knowledge he wants he interprets this as something that is

available to him only, stating: “I was surprised that among so many men of genius, who had directed their inquiries towards the same science, that I alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret” (p. 34).

Similarly, Walton and Victor repeatedly lament the absence of a teacher in their lives. Walton bemoans the he had no friend who would *“*have sense enough not to despise me as romantic, and affection enough for me to endeavour to regulate my mind” (p. 9). Describing himself as self-educated he notes that his education was neglected. Victor (after having his interests dismissed by his father) describes dreams that are “undisturbed by reality” (p. 23) with no adult guidance as to the worthiness of his pursuits. The absence of guidance in the lives of Victor and Walton further demonstrates the limits of conceptualizing knowledge as something that can be obtained on one’s own. It is not surprising then that at the end of the novel, Victor attributes his failures to his own inexperience rather than a lack of guidance and dialogue with others. This is in keeping with his understanding that knowledge can be sought privately and individually removed from a wider, more complex context. Victor’s downfall (and indeed Walton’s stranding in the arctic and the resulting loss of lives) can be read as the consequence of pursuing knowledge on one’s own, devoid of critical dialogue and engagement with others.

3. Knowledge as dialogical and uncertain

In contrast to Victor, what the Creature desires to know changes throughout the novel. Learning everything about the world for the first time, at first he wishes to know who made him, then wishes to know language, then wishes to use this to make friends and be connected to others. Unlike Victor he does not pursue knowledge that will allow him to stand out from the rest of humanity, he pursues knowledge that will allow him to become connected to others. The more

the Creature learns the more connected he feels to others, quickly developing empathy towards the De Laceys.

The Creature's ability to develop empathy is in part due to having a view of knowledge that involves a certain amount of risk. The Creature's understanding of knowledge as incomplete demands a certain degree of openness to new possibilities. It allows him to connect with what in many ways could be seen as irrelevant to him (the suffering of others). Yet the De Laceys' problems become the prime motivators in his actions to the point where he gives up food in favour of giving it to them. This transition, where the apparently irrelevant becomes relevant, may have been difficult if he had had a more finite view of the knowledge he was seeking to obtain.

Moreover, he accepts that risk and uncertainty are part of the process. The more the Creature learns about the De Lacey family, the more he feels connected to them. He prepares himself to meet "his protectors" as he allows himself in "painful self-deceit" to call them. He sees his future happiness as resting on the success of this meeting. His ability to accept that the outcome may not be what he desires, demonstrates his awareness of risk.

4. Knowledge as personal experience of the everyday

The Creature's development of empathy, pleasure and identification with others is also made possible due to the form of knowledge that he pursues. He learns through stories and everyday interactions such as listening to conversation. As the Creature realizes that language can connect him to the rest of the world he positions and privileges language as a science worthy of study and as the key to connectivity with others and with the world: "this to me was a godlike science, and I ardently desired to become acquainted with it" (p. 88). In the same way that

Victor commits himself to his study, the Creature commits himself with the same rigour giving his "perpetual attention" to studying the cottagers. Eventually he comes to understand "the strange system of human society" (p. 95). What is more, the very knowledge that allows him access and connection to the world allows him access and insight into himself, this new strange knowledge inspiring "strange feelings" in him (p. 96). These strange feelings ultimately lead the Creature to ask some critical, reflexive and philosophical questions such as who am I and where did I come from. Victor never arrives at these questions, and the Creature does not arrive at them through the kind of abstract, decontextualized knowledge Victor engages with. The Creature arrives at these questions hearing stories, songs and conversations in the context of lived experiences.

In the next section, I consider the effects of different approaches and concepts of knowledge for the possibility of humanization and the development of mutuality.

Discussion: Strangers and Orphans, Knowledge and Mutuality in Frankenstein

In *Frankenstein* being alone and disconnected is a prevailing theme. The experience of being a stranger or an orphan is a dominant one for most of the characters and the narrative built around people who have been estranged from family and/or homelands. Caroline, Elizabeth, Justine, the De Lacey family, Safie, Walton, and of course the Creature, experience at some point, a disconnection from others. Tellingly, it is as a stranger that we first meet Victor. This is significant because one of the most prominent features of Victor's life is the presence of a family and community who unconditionally love and support him. As Yousef (2004) astutely observes, despite having lost family members, arguably as a result of his own actions, Victor actually remains surrounded by people who continue to look after him until the end of his life. Nevertheless when we first meet him, he is a stranger and remains a stranger until Walton

records his story. This recording of Victor's history does not commence with a conventional introduction where Victor begins by introducing himself. Instead, it begins with a genealogy and it is only after we learn of his parents' histories that we find out that his name is Victor. Corresponding with Yousef's argument that bearing a history is a marker of being human (Yousef, 2004) it is not until Victor historically situates himself in relation to others that Walton (and readers) find out his name. This emphasis on social connectedness as a fundamental aspect of our being is later reinforced when the Creature, upon developing awareness of his existence, discovers: "half-frightened *instinctively* to find myself alone." (p. 80, my emphasis). So why might strangers and orphans be important themes in the text and what might this tell us about the relationship between conceptions of knowledge and the potential for humanization and mutuality in education?

In Freire's work, the link between knowledge and humanization is clear and robust. Any knowledge that emerges from a banking model of education is oppressive and negates humanization. As discussed earlier, this form of knowledge is viewed as static, complete and involves a level of passivity on behalf of the learner. Connected to the negation of humanization there is the associated barrier to community and mutuality. Consequently this form of knowledge plays an inhibitory role to any kind of social change. This is a problem in Feire's view because it is participation and dialogue that allows the development of solidarity and identification with others.

In the novel, how Victor and the Creature conceive knowledge and what they pursue *as* knowledge has a direct impact on their ability to connect and identify with the needs of others. Victor, for example, repeatedly notes the distance that grows between him and his fellow beings. This change is almost immediate from the moment that science becomes his "sole

occupation", shunning his "fellow creatures as if guilty of a crime" (p. 28). After Justine's death, he begins to "shun the face of man; all sound of joy or complacency was torture to me; solitude was my only consolation – deep dark death-like solitude" (p. 69). As the enormity of the consequences of his actions continues to unfold, he variously describes "insurmountable" and "insuperable" barriers between himself and others, declaring after the death of Clerval that he "had no right to share intercourse" with others. If we follow Freire's line of argument about the importance of knowledge that is socially produced and dialogical then Victor's failure to connect with others can, at least in part, be attributed to the nature of the knowledge that he pursues and the way in which he decides to seek it. Ultimately Victor's pursuit of knowledge does not contribute to humanization or his connection with others.

Almost inversely, the Creature's quest for knowledge draws him closer to others and it is through his (one-sided) relationship with the De Lacey family that his education begins. In the process of learning the Creature realizes that he has no link to the world because he has no links to others and what he desires most in the end is to have companionship. His motivation for learning as much about the De Laceys as he can is so that he can establish a relationship with them, "The more I saw of them the greater became my desire to claim their protection and kindness" (p. 99). Unlike Victor, the Creature's pursuit of knowledge through observed conversations, stories, songs, and everyday experiences enable him to develop empathy and social connectedness with others.

This discussion about the relationship between knowledge and mutuality offers much to current educational discourses. Knowledge is becoming increasingly tied to notions of standards and measurable outcomes. Often limited to what skills are needed by society and the economy, across all sectors (primary, secondary and tertiary) there has been a move towards more market

orientated subjects at the expense of the arts and humanities (Nussbaum, 2010). In a curriculum subject such as English for example, there is a move away from the critical and aesthetic dimensions of the subject to a more functional, skills-based subject (Locke, 2008; Rozas Gómez, 2011). Though possibly not the intention, this has resulted in much less emphasis in developing creative and imaginative capabilities in students. This shift also constitutes knowledge in particular ways. Jean Francois Lyotard's discussion of knowledge in *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) is useful in unpacking these contemporary understandings of knowledge. Lyotard suggests the kind of knowledge that will be valued will be that which allows learners to perform, small localized roles. As marketable skills and knowledge become the drivers of education, the 'social bond' in society becomes fragmented, impacting on our relationships with others. Drawing upon the notion of performativity, Ball (2003) elaborates Lyotard's work by proposing that knowledge which is performative in nature changes not only what is learnt but who learners become. These insights help to demonstrate the relationship between the kind of knowledge presently pursued in educational settings and how it might impact on the development of social connectedness and mutuality. A view of knowledge that privileges observable and measurable outcomes inhibits the kind of knowledge that is more dialogical, incomplete and uncertain in nature. It resonates more strongly with the kind of banking or traditional view of knowledge and learning that Freire argued is oppressive and dehumanizing.

The social connectedness that Freire contends is a fundamental part of education may be achieved through a curriculum that develops both critical and aesthetic sensibilities in students. Many educational writers have argued for the importance of imagination and creativity in the developing empathy. Writers such as Fritzman, (2000) Dhillon (2000) and Novitz (1987) all suggest that there is a connection between the imagination (and its purposeful development

through formal education) and social progression and justice. Novitz (1987, p. 23) suggests that the "fanciful imagination" leads to empirical knowledge, while Dhillon argues that developing the 'literary imagination' can lead to emancipation through students' ability to imagine and feel responsibility for other people's lives. This describes a curriculum similar to the one the Creature pursues: one that carries a commitment to knowledge as unknown, socially produced and steeped in everyday experiences. In *Romanticism and Education* Halpin (2007) argues that emancipation comes from openness to something new. It is open to multiple possibilities including that which may initially be perceived as irrelevant. Further, the knowledge pursued should be human knowledge that pays attention to emotion and experience (Egan, 1997). Any kind of knowledge or learning that is decontextualized, as literacy and numeracy initiatives are often outlined in educational policy, limits rather than maximizes the possibility of humanization and connectivity.

Conclusion

Knowledge, how we conceive of it and produce it, has the capacity to connect us to "all the relationships that bind one human being to another in mutual bonds" (p. 97) or to make us strangers to each other. For Freire, that which makes us strange to each other inevitably makes us strangers to ourselves as our ontological vocation of humanization becomes thwarted. In this sense, it can be argued that *Frankenstein* affirms the social imperative in Freire's account of our ontology and epistemology.

To view language, communication and stories as strange and as a science places them in a realm that is slightly removed from us; such an approach demands that everyday knowledge be considered new and exciting and worth pursuing. To disregard the value of stories for

connectivity leaves us exposed to the possibility of severed communities and an absence of mutuality. To know without connection to others is an alienating process in itself.

The kind of knowledge pursued in educational contexts requires, first, openness to knowledge as uncertain. Second, it requires a commitment to knowledge as dialogical and socially produced. Third, it involves making everyday knowledge strange and worthy of pursuit, as any knowledge that draws us away from the value of emotion and experience inevitably draws us away from each other.

At the conclusion of his experiment Victor abandons his creation immediately. While hiding in his room he notes that the Creature may have spoken but that he did not hear, a subtle but clear statement about the disastrous consequences of pursuing knowledge in a way that does not contribute to mutual responsibility and community with each other.

PLEASURES IN THE SECONDARY ENGLISH CLASSROOM

DISCUSSION PART ONE

Introduction

This thesis includes articles submitted for publication and does not have a traditional thesis structure. So, the thesis ends with two discussion pieces that bring my overarching aims and questions to a culminating analysis and reflection. In this first discussion piece, I use my interview data to further explore the sorts of pleasures that neoliberalism might produce for secondary English teachers. Teachers' experiences have been a prevailing focus in this thesis. I have argued that any analysis of curriculum decision-making requires an examination of teachers' positioning within broader discursive landscapes. Article Two, *Risky Choices*, for example, shows how autonomy and surveillance work together to govern teachers' work in particular ways. But secondary English teachers' work is not solely governed by risk or anxiety. Discourses produce desires and pleasures too (Tamboukou, 2003).

Pleasures: compelling identities in secondary English classrooms

"Where identification promises the fulfilment of desire, reason cannot compete" (Janks, 2010, p. 232)

In Article Three, *Considerable Flexibility*, I come to the conclusion that a confluence between neoliberal imperatives and progressive desires produce particular versions of participation, inclusion, and equity. I focused on these three notions because part of my thesis aim has been to consider the extent to which subject English fosters or constrains the educated ideal in *The*

New Zealand Curriculum for "participating and contributing" citizens (p. 12) who are "confident, connected, actively involved life-ling learners" (p. 8). In view of this aim, I argued that economic drivers in education framed participation, inclusion, and equity in terms of marketised identities, where inclusion is tied to participating in a market economy rather than democratic society. That is to say, neoliberalism does not solely produce epistemological effects in curriculum, but also produces ontological effects signalled in teacher and student subjectivities. In keeping with the theoretical and ontological stance in this thesis, I explore pleasure as a function of discourse. I consider the sorts of pleasures and subjectivities secondary English teaching offers teachers and examine how these may mediate content choices in their classrooms.

Subjectivity

Secondary English curricula do not merely produce content, they also produce subjectivities (Marshall, 2013). The notion of subjectivity is important to the thesis because it allows me to consider how teachers may (willingly) make themselves subjects through a range of competing discourses. Foucault (1982) argues that we make ourselves subjects through the practices we employ and that these practices constitute us in a range of subjectivities. Teachers, for example, may be constituted as the effective English teacher, the student-centred teacher, the innovative teacher and so on, through the classroom practices they use. The process of making ourselves subjects is always historically bound and the range of subjectivities available will always reflect this situated context. While we may think of ourselves as free to choose our subjectivities, we are not. At any given moment, some subjectivities will be more dominant and/or compelling to us (Tamboukou, 2003).

In terms of the focus of this thesis, the concept of subjectivity is a useful analytical tool that allows me to explore how teachers may take up dominant discourses. Foucault's (1982) view that power operates by becoming integrated into everyday practices lead him to claim that the focus of analysis should be "the subject rather than power" (p. 778). Therefore, I use the concept of subjectivity to examine the more pleasurable and compelling aspects of neoliberal discourses. And, to consider how power might be exercised through such discourses. I make use of Hall's (1996) work on subjectivity as an explanatory framework to examine how these pleasures are taken up by teachers. My aim is to identify the pleasures that work *with*, rather than against, contemporary rationalities about choice, flexibility, and personalised learning.

A Foucauldian perspective on pleasure

From a Foucauldian perspective, curriculum and assessment structures work as rich discursive fields that produce norms, subjectivities, and pleasures. For Foucault, this constitutive element is important because in setting norms, discourses have the effect of power (Foucault, 1982). This view of power as producing pleasures signals the need to examine how teachers may construct good teaching and good teachers. If power manifests itself in all aspects of everyday life and governs the choices we make, a Foucauldian analysis of teachers' decision-making takes the view that teachers' content choices are shaped by a range of discourses, including those that produce pleasures associated with good teaching. In this sense, pleasure works as a regulatory technique, a way of governing teacher practices and choices through desirable identities. Secondary English classrooms, then, should be seen as sites where not just tensions and anxieties exist (as seen in Article 1 and 2) but as sites where "intense flows of desire and affect" are produced (Tamboukou, 2003, p. 209). This theoretical stance assumes that pleasure-as-technology produces practices that secondary English teachers use to constitute themselves as good teachers.

Identifying Pleasures

For Foucault, pleasure is not bound to individual proclivities but a product of historically located discourses. Therefore, any given historical moment will make certain pedagogical pleasures and desires available to teachers and students (McWilliams, 1999). McWilliams' argues these pleasures are learned and that we are trained through discourse to take them on as our own. In this section, I look at the pleasures that emerge from current discourses about choice, flexibility, and personalised learning. In particular, the ways in which these pleasures are connected to notions of teaching for equity. The purpose and value of this analysis is to create the means to contest contemporary practices, or at least, to explore their limits. As a powerful regulatory technique, pleasure has the potential to turn teachers away from critical notions of equity. While at the same time, actively refocusing teachers towards problematic or limiting notions of equity.

Hall (1996) builds upon Foucault's work by further developing the notion of subjectivity and how we come to commit to certain identities. My exploration focuses on the effects of pleasure in relation to curriculum content. Therefore, my analysis is focused on the interplay between ontological and epistemological effects in order to consider how pleasure may shape teacher subjectivity in ways that mediate content choices in secondary English classrooms. The excerpts below are all drawn from my interview with Helen (Teacher, Decile 3).

Pleasure One: The responsive teacher who attends to diverse learning needs, and related practice: the teacher who rejects the traditional literary canon and embraces diverse ways of knowing.

Time and again, we get told that we should be teaching in culturally responsive ways. Auckland is a diverse city, New Zealand is an immigrant nation, why would we continue to teach in ways that are monocultural? It is important that students are able to see themselves and their cultures and literacies reflected back at them, so doing Shakespeare might not always be appropriate. Rap and spoken word are far more likely to resonate with our students rather than other types of poetry but [students] are still getting poetry – a type of poetry they are more familiar with. How can I even plan without knowing who my students are? The more we move away from prescribed content the better. I just don't think the traditional canon has much to offer my students. I would rather that my students were learning to deal with all the complexities of modern life. Climate change, inequality, how are we even going to solve the problems of the future if we don't have young people with the ability to solve problems. So, yes, literature is important but there has to be more. Another thing, the canon is a way of saying this is the only literature that matters. It's preposterous to think that the only important literature written was written hundreds of years ago by white men.

Hall (1996) argues that identities are always located within discourse. As a product of discourse, identities are bound to specific historical and institutional spaces, and can be understood as particular arrangements and practices that render identities visible. Diversity and inclusion are significant discourses within *The New Zealand Curriculum* and in Ministry of Education stated objectives. Both the curriculum and officially sanctioned objectives work to shape teacher identities in robust ways. The Curriculum Guide, Senior Secondary English (MoE, 2012), for example, emphasises the importance of teachers finding out "who the students are" (p. 2). Teachers are also encouraged to consider abandoning texts that are not relevant to students' lives. Within this discursive space, the good teacher is responsive to the

diverse needs of students by designing a diverse curriculum. Indeed, the document (a guide for teachers) makes more references to students, than it does to teachers (Ward, 2019).

In the excerpt above, Helen signals the importance of attending to diversity in her classroom. Her primary concern is that her classes contain a curriculum that reflect a diverse range of cultural perspectives: *"It is important that students are able to see themselves and their cultures and literacies reflected back at them."* Her commitment to a diverse curriculum is tied to wider meanings about the purpose of education and its role in sustaining students' identities. Moreover, when she comments, *"How can I even plan without knowing who my students are?"* Helen's teacher ontology about what it means to teach is constructed as relational and a function of her students' lives and realities.

Helen's comments demonstrate how an ontological impetus (to be a responsive teacher) has epistemological effects in relation to content choices. That is to say, an ontological disposition translates into epistemological choices for her students. In terms of curriculum content choices, this ontological push manifests as scepticism of canonical texts, *"I just don't think the traditional canon has much to offer my students."* Of course, Helen's scepticism about the canon is not constrained to student-centred ideas about education, it is also tied an awareness of the political aspects of curriculum and its legitimation of knowledge. Her astute observation that the canon *"is a way of saying this is the only literature that matters"* demonstrates a critical understanding of curriculum. Nevertheless, the desire for a responsive and diverse curriculum is directly tied to embracing diverse ways of knowing. Teacher and content responsiveness, therefore, connects with broader ideas about more equitable ways of teaching a diverse group of students.

Pleasure Two: The autonomous teacher who has the space to develop curriculum content, and related practice: the teacher who is innovative, flexible, and creative.

This is one thing I really value about our curriculum. The flexibility means that I can really think about what I do with my students. I would not want to give that up and I would object to having any kind of prescribed curriculum over me having the freedom to devise units of work that engage our students. You can't just come here and impose a curriculum that worked for another group of students. This [school]has its own context and the curriculum allows us to tailor our units [to students] and to try new things. One of the things with teaching is that you always have to be adapting and thinking about what works and what doesn't. Our curriculum allows me to do that and I really enjoy the challenge of coming up with new ideas and ways of teaching. It keeps me on my toes and I never get bored.

Another kind of teacher would find it very hard in a school like this. I have seen teachers come and last a week before they have to leave again. Students have to know that you care. And you have to make the time to get know the students and figure out what works for them. This is who I am, I am a teacher who cares.

Teacher autonomy emerged as a compelling aspect of teaching life, and teachers signalled resistance to this kind of agency being taken away. The desire for autonomy is consistent with policy frameworks such as *The New Zealand Curriculum*, which positions itself as a "framework rather than a detailed plan" (p. 37). The New Zealand Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) similarly offers Achievement Standards that can be assembled in a number of ways that provide a sense of autonomy for teachers (Locke, 2009). This autonomy

is framed in terms of innovation and creativity as well as the freedom to be responsive to students.

Both of these ideals are understandably desirable for teachers and further illustrate that pleasures actively turns us towards particular conceptions of what is good and right. In as much as the autonomy offered in our policy frameworks provides the freedom to *be* a responsive teacher, autonomy over curriculum and assessment remains important and undisputed in Helen's discourse. However, as Hall (1996) reminds us, the availability of subject positions is not enough – individuals need to commit to subjectivities in significant ways. Helen's suggestion that flexibility allows her to *"really think"* about what she does with her students because *"you can't just come here and impose a curriculum that worked for another group of students,"* demonstrates her commitment to the idea of the flexible teacher. A non-flexible teacher, by this reasoning is not able to respond to a range of student contexts.

The ways in which Helen discuses autonomy also suggests a freedom to work on herself, *"You always have to be adapting and thinking about what works and what doesn't."* and to be self-managing, *"I enjoy the challenge of coming up with new ideas and ways of teaching. It keeps me on my toes."* Being *"free to think"*, to adapt and to continuously improve is directly aligned to being (a good) responsive teacher. The appeal to self-improvement through always adapting is not surprising given the current discourse on teachers as adaptive experts in New Zealand (Teachers' Council of New Zealand, 2018).

Finally, Helen's identity is also embedded in an understanding of the kind of teacher she is *not*. Hall (1996) sees the process of becoming a subject as a "suturing" (p. 3) between individuals and subjectivities. Part of this suturing requires a clear delineation of difference and exclusion.

When Helen says that "*Another kind of teacher would find it very hard in a school like this,"* she positions herself as the kind of teacher who is successful in her school specifically. This marker of identity is tied to a necessary relationship between an appropriate teacher disposition for a particular type of school.

Pleasure Three: The student-centred teacher who facilitates learning, and related practice: the teacher who co-constructs curriculum with students.

> *I believe that English really helps students to find their own voice and for this reason the texts I use, should reflect the experiences and worlds my students live in. I look for the content and themes in texts and look for material that will engage my students. Of course, the literary aspects of texts are important, but they will be of no use to students if they can't connect with the texts. That's what I really like about the NZC, I can choose material my students will connect with. I wouldn't want this to be changed in our curriculum. But even more important than that, and I really try to embody this in my classroom, is the concept of ako. The idea that I am both a teacher and a learner in the classroom and so are my students. This means that I have to be willing to co-construct curriculum with my students. They are experts of their own lives and it is important that I am able to listen to them and make decisions based on what they are interested in.*

Helen took pleasure in seeing herself as *"both a learner and a student"* in her classroom. Here, she identifies with a facilitator approach to teaching and sees this approach as important to ensuring that her students will be able to *"engage"* and *"connect"* with texts. The facilitator teacher plays on a sense of autonomy not just for Helen, but for her students as well. The facilitator, co-constructivist subjectivity constitutes students as autonomous learners who are

able to take control of their learning. Sharing decision-making with students was also tied to promoting students' own agency and to helping them to "*find their own voice."*

Helen's facilitator stance is connected to a view of subject English that sees the fostering of student agency and voice as part of its purpose. In keeping with the previous extracts, these teacher and student ontologies have epistemological effects. When Helen says that students are "*experts of their own lives"* and that it is important that she *"listen to them",* she positions curriculum content as arising from her students' own interests and experiences. The effects of positioning curriculum content as local and personal shape what it means to know in subject English in significant ways.

The teacher as facilitator and co-constructor of curriculum also has implications for what it means to teach and for teacher knowledge. Reframing teaching in such a way, has been critiqued on the grounds that it de-professionalises teachers (Locke, 2009; Connell, 2015), constructing them as no more than coaches who reign on equal terms with their students. Biesta (2012) for example, argues that teachers need to reclaim their place in the "educational order of things" (p. 45). Biesta is not arguing for a traditional conception of the teacher-centred classroom, he is affirming the fundamental role that teachers play in selecting content as subject experts. To some degree, Helen's position denies her ability to make choices about the disciplinary insights that students may and/or should gain from subject English.

Pleasure Four: The effective teacher who has good outcomes, and related practice: the teacher who helps students at their level by making use of effective teaching strategies.

Our school has committed to lots of PD in literacy across the curriculum, and in culturally responsive pedagogies, and there's what we know about the importance of feedback and feeding-forward so, we know there are things we can do to help student learning. We also focus a lot on using assessment to drive achievement, so I am always tracking results and setting goals for myself and my students. I really like trying out new techniques and seeing if they work and help my student learn. And you get rewarded with good results because students are motivated by doing well. I push them and tell them we will have the best results out of all the Year 11 English classes, and I work hard to make sure that we get there. It's good for me as a teacher as well. It's always hard trying to get that balance between teaching to the test, so to speak, and being more creative and flexible with the class. I think I try to do both things and you can, of course, with the NCEA. It's hard though, sometimes, no matter what you do, students will struggle, but I try anyway, to be a good teacher, to stay on top of what we know about good teaching. Maybe it doesn't always apply to our school but it's important to keep trying.

Given education's progressive backdrop in New Zealand, it is not surprising that teachers will seek progressive identities such as facilitator approaches (Mutch, 2017). While progressivism stands in contrast to accountability discourses, Holloway and Brass (2017) remind us that accountability produces its own pleasures for teachers. In their study, they found that secondary English teachers' sense of themselves as effective teachers was based on performance and that these performance measures often take precedence over their own expertise and experience. Performance measures, then, are ways in which teachers may legitimise the sorts of choices they make.

In this same way, Helen signals a clear commitment to diversity while also taking pleasure in being a teacher who delivers qualifications and gets good results for her students. She notes *professional development in literacy, culturally responsive pedagogies, feedback and feedforward, using achievement data, and setting goals*, as ways of helping students learn. Hall (1996) argues that identity is made possible through specific practices operating in specific contexts. In schools, practices related to professional development strategies, such as the ones that Helen engages in, render a particular identity, the effective teacher, possible.

Foucault argues that external forms of surveillance (like school results) become internalised so that we learn to discipline ourselves (1982). Helen illustrates this internalised discipline when she talks about the need to *"stay on top of what we know about good teaching"* and that she sets *"goals* ***for myself*** *and my students"* (my emphasis). One discourse about teaching that forms teacher professionalism at present is the notion of adaptive expertise (Aitken et al., 2013). The teacher as adaptive expert is embedded in the New Zealand Teacher Standards and "emphasises the context-dependent nature of effective teaching" (p. 4). Indeed, the ability to adapt to context is seen as "the hallmark of the professional teacher" (p. 4). Connell (2015) argues neoliberalism produces its own knowledge about teaching. Notions of adaptive expertise and teaching as inquiry are bolstered by prominent work such as Hattie's *Visible Learning* (2009) which argues that the primary work of teachers is to know the impact of what they do.

This resultant performativity is not necessarily accepted in unproblematised ways, and Helen's acknowledgement that these strategies don't *"always apply to our school"* and that "*sometimes, no matter what you do, students will struggle"* illustrate Hall's assertion that identity involves resistance and accommodation. Secondary English teacher identities are not

stable or necessarily on-going, they are “in constant struggle with, resisting, negotiating, and accommodating the normative and regulative rules.” (Hall, 1996, p. 14).

Concluding Comments

Neoliberal education contexts produce pleasures and subjectivities in secondary English classrooms. These pleasures are connected to compelling ideas about teaching for equity in diverse contexts, teachers as facilitators, teacher autonomy, and effective teaching that produces good results. In Helen’s narrative the ideal English teacher is seen as caring about individual needs, caring about raising achievement, as well as being productive, effective, innovative, and self-improving. Prevailing discourses, particularly those associated with curriculum and assessment policy, have the effect of power by setting norms in secondary English spaces. A further question to ask is what do the teachers not see? And, what do the teachers see as free choice and what do they see as coercion?

Helen consistently saw flexibility and autonomy as positive aspects of teaching. However, it may be that flexibility is compelling because it provides the illusion of autonomy in the context of surveillance. In as much as accountability measures produce anxieties about being exposed as an ineffective teacher, flexibility gives teachers some sense of control over what is taught and assessed in their classrooms. While teachers may see high stakes testing as coercive, they see flexibility positively and in terms of professional freedom. It is this very freedom, however, that may close down, rather than open up, curriculum and assessment opportunities for students.

The pleasure in freedom may also turn teachers away from other ways of conceptualising teaching for equity in diverse contexts. Helen’s view of the good teacher as one who is student-

centred meant that content was seen as a function of student interest rather than connected to disciplinary learning. The need for a more responsive (particularly culturally responsive) curriculum is an important one. Curriculum works as a site of reproduction and Helen's desire for a more representative selection of knowledge is good and right. But this responsive and relevant teaching turn privileges the place of students as curriculum consumers and choosers. This emphasis on personal choice has the potential to diminish English's rich centre and to exclude (assumed) irrelevant content in favour of what students know and care about.

This discussion has focused on teacher subjectivities in secondary English classrooms to engage with the question of curriculum content at the level of pleasure. By locating these pleasures in a historical moment, it is possible to dismantle the sorts of truths, norms and practices that prevail at present. This analysis has also opened up possibilities to speak back to the limits inherent in these pleasures, namely those associated with excluding students from certain kinds of curriculum content.

POSSIBILITIES IN THE SECONDARY ENGLISH CLASSROOM

DISCUSSION PART TWO

Introduction

This second discussion piece brings the thesis to a contemplative rest and considers new questions raised, as well as possibilities for subject English. My thesis began with a restless curiosity about how subject English has been recast in utilitarian terms in New Zealand secondary schools. My curiosity rested upon a deeper concern about educational equity and the extent to which contemporary versions of subject English may serve to further reproduce existing social class inequalities. My exploration in this thesis has been further framed by the social vision espoused in *The New Zealand Curriculum* for actively involved and participating citizens (Ministry of Education, 2007). This ideal is embedded in subject English, where the development of critical and creative capacities is positioned as fundamental to the curriculum's overall participatory impetus.

To do this work, I have engaged in a sociological analysis that considers the economic drivers that give form to current curricula, including the policy contexts in Aotearoa New Zealand. I have examined the versions of secondary English that are rendered most likely in these broader contexts. And, in examining these versions, I have focused on their effect on curriculum content and how content may be differentiated for different groups of students. The data and analyses presented here suggest that not all students have access to the same content, specifically complex literary content, and that this phenomenon is structured along social class lines. This finding leads me to claim that subject English requires on-going thought about the

relationship between curriculum and educational equity, as well as curriculum and educated ideals. That is, questions of knowledge and content must remain at the forefront in any discussion about the broader purposes of subject English. Moreover, that the attainment of equity in secondary English classrooms remains complex and requires consideration about how we conceptualise notions of equity and participation in the first place.

Curriculum and educational equity: the complexity of the project

The relationship between curriculum and democracy is an enduring question in educational thought. Philosophers of education have variously argued for a good curriculum that enables social transformation (Freire, 1998, 2001), develops empathy and a common citizenship (Nussbaum, 2010) develops democratic dispositions and a commitment to associated living (Dewey, 1891) and develops caring and nurturing abilities toward others (Noddings, 2013; Roland Martin, 1985). Critical sociological perspectives, which see curriculum as a selection (and exclusion) of knowledge, have offered a vigorous critique about the legitimising role curriculum plays in constituting what counts as worthwhile knowledge (see Apple, 1979; Young, 1977).

Historically, the development of universal education saw access to a common curriculum as a fundamental part of ensuring equality of opportunity as well as an informed citizenry (Pring, 2008). However, notions of a common curriculum have come under increasing pressure for its failure to bring about equitable outcomes, and for its ability to marginalize diverse voices and knowledges (Gay, 2000; May & Sleeter, 2010; Moje, 2007). Traditional forms of curriculum and knowledge have also been challenged by critical pedagogies designed to promote student agency for transformative social change. Critical theorists (McLaren, 1989; Giroux, 1996, hooks 1994) have drawn from Freire's work to argue for a critical curriculum that engages

students with their material realities. The *Chicago Grassroots Curriculum* (2014) for example, is a contemporary example of a critical pedagogy curriculum.

Still, the aim of infusing a moral dimension to secondary English curriculum remains a complex project. In her review of disciplinary literacy teaching, Moje (2007) notes the difficulty of merging moral and intellectual dimensions of literacy teaching. Although Moje is writing about literacy specifically, she identifies complexities that are nevertheless salient for subject English and its possible relationship to equity. Part of the complexity she identifies are the multiple ways in which socially just curriculum may be achieved. For example, access to expert subject matter, the importance of foregrounding everyday knowledge, access to practical disciplinary knowledge, and access to knowledge as a means to producing knowledge. The presence of multiple ways of thinking about curriculum and social equity suggest that teaching for equity is not straightforward.

As outlined in the *Context* section of the thesis, social realist critiques of contemporary curricula maintain that equity rests on access to disciplinary knowledge for all students. In other words, social realists advocate for a distributional model of justice in relation to content. In the context of subject English, teaching for equity would simply be a matter of ensuring access to complex and valued content. Within this framework, secondary English teaching is seen as an avenue to cultural capital through access to particular types of texts and knowledge forms. This approach to educational equity has some similarities with E D Hirsh's position in *Cultural Literacy* (1987) and his more recent work *Knowledge Deficits* (2006). In both texts Hirsh identifies knowledge rather than skill as the key to academic success in school. On this view, prescribed content is the solution to the competency turn in current curricula.

However, as Donald (1999) writes, the quest for a socially just literacy and English curriculum needs to move beyond mere prescription of the right kind of knowledge. As Abu El-Haj (2006) argues it is more worthy to uncover the "multiple, conflicting notions of justice and difference that operate inside schools" (p. 2). Writing about the search for educational justice, Abu El-Haj argues it is necessary to first discuss what the aims of a socially just education in society might be. This thesis has been concerned with opening a critical conversation about the meanings at stake when we use terms like participation, relevance, inclusion, difference, and equity. Part of my task has been to unravel the assumptions behind those meanings and to question the assumed rationalities behind them. My desire to argue against these contemporary truths is not for the sake of doing so, but to seriously explore their limits in relation to broader education ideals and social equity.

Before considering practice-based or curriculum-based solutions to curriculum equity, therefore, we must first ask questions about what inclusion, participation, and equity might mean in democratic society. It is not until we pay close attention to how teachers and schools make sense and act on these sorts of questions that we can begin to see how difficult a goal justice in education is. Gewirtz (2006) refers to this as a "conflict between dimensions of justice" (p.72) and in relation to subject English, despite well-intentioned objectives, there may be conflicts between the different demands on teachers.

Possibilities: Both diversity and access

There is a tension between providing access to content and providing a diverse and representative selection of content. The latter is seen as an important disruptor of privileged knowledge and its ongoing reproduction. Janks (2010) proposes an interdependent model for critical literacy that seeks to incorporate issues of power, access, design and diversity. The

model is grounded in critical literacy, yet it offers subject English some interesting possibilities for exploring the relationship between curriculum and difference, and curriculum and equity. Relationships that are extremely pertinent to the New Zealand education context.

The interdependent nature of the model means that both access (to content) and diversity (of content) must be present in curriculum design. Janks (2010) maintains that access to valued forms of literacy is important in order to ensure that marginalised students are not further disempowered by being excluded from valued content. Especially so, if this content provides ways to a critical understanding of the world. She argues however, that giving students access without a framework for understanding how these forms of literacy became valued, reproduces power structures between social groups. As Moje (2007) states learners should be given access to mainstream knowledge but must also be provided with opportunities "to question, challenge and reconstruct knowledge" (p. 4). The challenge for secondary English teachers is to "provide access to dominant forms, while at the same time valuing and promoting the diverse languages and literacies of our students and in broader society" (2010, p. 176).

Janks argues that different versions of critical literacy depend on different conceptualisations of the relationship between language and power. The teachers in my study consistently pointed to the need to address diversity as a key marker of the decisions they took. For these teachers, the emphasis was on diversity rather than access. Choosing curriculum content in this way however, frames difference as located in particular social groups who are marked as different. For example, the English curriculum emphasises the need to be gender inclusive and to include examples of Pasifika texts in order to meet the needs of Pasifika students. This discourse of difference, as Abu El-Haj (2006) suggests, impairs any move towards equity because it positions difference as simply located in particular social groups. In the context of secondary

English, this view of difference suggests that providing a diverse range of texts is enough to account for educational equity.

A more critical view frames difference as relational, as the effect of relationships of difference as they occur in social institutions such as schools (Young, 1999). Therefore, it is important to attend to difference while also interrogating our discourses of difference and how they may play out in secondary English. As Janks (2010) argues, language is a way of reproducing relationships of power, and this can happen as a result of both excluding students from complex content *and* failing to address diversity and difference in curriculum design. This is why a more critical model for subject English needs to account for both access and diversity.

Possibilities: the need for critical versions of participation and inclusion

'The participation turn'

Participation and inclusion as educational outcomes are consistent with the participation turn in contemporary culture. In this context, individuals are not just consumers but contributors and producers of cultural content (Turner, 2009). Advances in technologies and changing economies mean that consumers have become creators of content, as seen in the rise of fan fiction or Web 2.0. Writing about the media, Turner (2009) refers to this condition as a "demotic turn" (p. 2). One in which there is an increased presence of ordinary people, including their opinions and experiences, in what we consume. While the inclusion of ordinary citizens may seem democratic in nature, Turner argues that this kind of participation is economically motivated and often for profit. Turner does not see the demotic turn as fostering democratic notions of inclusion in all aspects of society or for public good. Nor does he see individual expression as necessarily leading to personal empowerment. Those who get to be influencers,

for example, are inevitably limited to certain types of people who will engage a particular demographic.

Cooke and Kothari (2001) also argue that participation is a contemporary orthodoxy, and like Turner, suggest that participation is still governed in particular ways. They argue that participation does not function in ways that are empowering because participation is framed as an individual orientation. This version of participation focuses on aspects such as self-responsibility, initiative, and good citizenship. Cooke and Kothari's argument is provocative and gains traction in relation to the social ideals expressed in *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

The New Zealand Curriculum constructs the ideally educated citizen as one who actively participates and contributes to society. Taking into account New Zealand's diverse population, the document emphasises inclusion as an important aspect of ensuring participation for all. However, a reading of the specific aspects of the vision illustrates Cooke and Kothari's claim that participation is often limited to individualistic outcomes.

> **Confident**: positive in own identity, motivated and reliable, resourceful, enterprising and entrepreneurial, resilient.
>
> **Connected**: Able to relate well to others, effective users of communication tools, connected to the land and environment, members of communities, international citizens.
>
> **Actively involved**: participants in a range of lifelong contexts, contributors to the well-being of New Zealand – social, cultural, economic, and environmental.
>
> **Life-long learners**: literate and numerate, critical and creative thinkers, active seekers, users and creators of knowledge, informed decision-makers.
>
> *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007, p. 8)

The elaboration of each competency suggests a particular version of the participating citizen. Within this framing, individuals are seen as needing to be the right type of *individual*: positive in own identity, motivated and reliable, resourceful, enterprising and entrepreneurial, resilient, in order to successfully participate in society. The rest of the elaborations follow a very similar construction in which students are encouraged to make themselves particular sorts of participants or risk not being included. In Learning area English, the language is similar again, "to be successful participants, [students] need to be effective oral, written, and visual communicators who are able to think critically and in-depth" (p. 18). If these framings of participation and inclusion are limited to individualistic parameters, how might we imagine new version of participation and inclusion and what might these mean for subject English?

Critical versions of participation and inclusion

If notions of participation and inclusion are captured by neoliberal discourses, what might democratic versions look like and what might they mean for subject English? Drawing from a Deweyan perspective of participatory democracy, Carr and Hartnett (1996) argue that democratic forms of participation are connected to a public good rather than individual pursuits. In their view, a strong democratic society creates opportunities that challenge and critique the status quo. There is an important looseness advocated here; Carr and Hartnett argue that education should not offer a single account of society. Rather, the work of education should be to offer "principles, structures and practices that ensure the process of contestation that will ensure the debates about a good society will happen" (p. 96). Participation in this view, creates the conditions for citizens to understand and contest all aspects of social life, including the political contexts that govern their lives.

Central to Carr and Hartnett's argument is that democratic participation requires a re-thinking of people from individualistic beings to democratic ones. In the context of secondary English, critical versions of participation and inclusion for a democratic ontology may well rest on epistemological considerations as well. Individualistic framings of participation and inclusion, for example, go hand in hand with personalised learning and relevant content. To participate in this sense, is simply to have a collection of students who individually pursue what they are personally interested. However, a Deweyan view of the social individual, one who contributes to the overall growth of society, requires an education system that "gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships" (1916, p. 99). In other words, how might we conceptualise subject English curriculum so that it embodies the Creature's pursuit of knowledge as opposed to Victor's pursuit of knowledge? Biesta (2014) for example, argues for knowledge that gives us "exposure towards the world" (p. 13) rather than knowledge that turns us towards ourselves.

What does this kind of curriculum knowledge look like for subject English? What kind of knowledge is more likely to foster active and collective political participation rather than solely individualistic, enterprising pursuits? From this position, the question of who has access to what curriculum content in secondary English classrooms takes on a different and more urgent meaning. One in which the pursuit of educational equity and educated ideals are inexorably tied to questions of knowledge, curriculum, and content.

Drawing Conclusions

This thesis has shown that teaching for equity and for a broader social vision in the secondary English classroom is complex and enmeshed in multiple contexts. This finding does not undermine the pursuit of educational equity but acknowledges the difficulty of ensuring

equitable practices in education. These complexities also highlight the multifaceted and often contradictory nature of any notion of equity in practice. As Gewirtz (2006) argues "any meaningful discussion of what counts as justice needs to engage with concrete practical dilemmas and not merely abstract conceptualisations" (p.70). This thesis does not intend to provide a normative account of which educational policies will ensure educational equity or what practices need to be employed by secondary English teachers. Rather, I have attempted to consider the various discourses in policy, curriculum and practice, which construct equitable educational practices in secondary English classrooms. From this exploration, there are some small conclusions that can be drawn.

Secondary English is a contested space, sort of

Subject English is an unsettled and shifting space, but its parameters are nevertheless shaped and constrained by contemporary curriculum regimes. The current regime emphasises competencies and instrumentalised forms of knowledge, personalised and co-constructivist ways of teaching and learning. These imperatives do not just shape identities and content in secondary English classrooms, they also shape versions of broader education ideals such as educational equity, participation, inclusion, and difference. Discussion is required about the sorts of meanings that are at stake when teachers make curriculum decisions and differentiate content in particular ways for particular groups of students. Discussion about subject English should also take into account broader contexts and regimes so that secondary English teachers are in a position to argue against sanctioned norms and practices.

Secondary English teachers' experiences should inform secondary English research

A complex understanding of secondary English requires a rigorous engagement with teacher subjectivity and experiences. Secondary English teaching produces norms, practices, tensions,

anxieties, risks, and pleasures that actively mediate curriculum decision-making. Regimes of accountability shape the sorts of content that teachers make available to students but so do regimes of pleasure. Questions about secondary English curriculum should therefore seek to examine why it is that some versions of subject English are more compelling to teachers. Furthermore, given the current prominence of positioning teachers as facilitators rather than subject experts, discussion is also required about the effects on content when we diminish the role of the teacher as subject expert.

The relationship between curriculum and the educated ideal is complex

The New Zealand Curriculum positions competencies rather than curriculum content as fundamental to the development of its social vision. However, my findings suggest that enacting social and educated ideals is not straightforward and that it is connected with issues of access to content. Educational equity and ideals are often seen as achieved through policy, practices, and interventions on students who are at risk of failure, rather than seriously engaging with structural issues of inequality. What versions of inclusion and participation are possible in secondary English classrooms? How might access to content be a mediator of inclusion and participation?

The knowledge question must remain central in discussions about subject English

Aspects such as outcomes-based education and a competency-focused curriculum actively work to turn us away from conversations about curriculum knowledge. However, in the context of a curriculum that staunchly asserts a social vision and educated ideal we need to ask questions about the forms of subject English curriculum, knowledge, and content that are most likely to foster these ideals and vision. Although the question of what counts as knowledge in secondary English may remain complex and sticky, it remains important to ask questions about

knowledge, and to consider the effects of exclusion from certain types of knowledge on already existing social and educational inequalities. Questions about curriculum, knowledge and content should also remain central in relation to the stated achievement objectives and outcomes in the curriculum. What is the best knowledge and what is the best content for those achievement objectives?

CONCLUSION

If each day falls

If each day falls
inside each night,
there exists a well
where clarity is imprisoned.

We need to sit on the rim
of the well of darkness
and fish for fallen light
with patience.

(Pablo Neruda, 1988, p. 32)

Dwelling in the darkness and searching for fallen light

This thesis has been a labour of turning restlessness into patience. Like a slow excavation or panning for gold, the work has been a process of gently sifting through data and theory to see more, and in new ways. Tamboukou (2008) describes the process as "looking for insignificant details, bringing into light un-thought of contours of various ways, discourses and practices that humans have used to make sense of themselves and the world" (p. 88). In this spirit, I have sought to illuminate the context in which secondary English takes place in Aotearoa New Zealand. By showing how subject English is produced through broader discursive contexts, I

have been able to interrogate both the practices *and* the contexts that make versions of subject English possible.

Despite these insights, I have resisted the impulse to find a solution or answer to the problems I have tried to unravel. Instead, I have identified and analysed the complexities and tensions present in the relationships between subject English and educational equity. The lack of a definitive or settling denouement is grounded in one of the thesis' aims to question contemporary rationalities, rather than to offer a definitive account of subject English or educational equity. As Tamboukou (2008) argues, it is in facing down contemporary reasoning that some practices may be amended. In the context of this work, I have sought to interrogate and problematise how the seemingly desirable ideals of choice, flexibility, participation, and inclusion play out in secondary English classrooms. In doing so, I have opened the possibility for reclaiming and reimagining subject English as a project that goes beyond its neoliberal capture. As such – through the slow process of searching for fallen light – I hope my thesis contributes to subject English dialogue, practice, and research.

EPILOGUE

Ana

i

Afternoon classes come with a pungent mixture of sweat and Lynx. Red and sweaty, the boys pass around the spray-on deodorant with faithful observance. Despite the stench, the ritual makes Ana smile. There is a sense of duty and discipline tied to the act – even if it makes the room smell worse. Sione throws the Lynx in his bag and sits down at his desk.

'What are we doing today, Miss?'
'The novel.'
'Again?'
'Of course.'

Ana takes literature seriously. Her mother once told her that stories are all we have. But the novel is not an easy sell to the class. There are too many pages, too many difficult words. It's the same every year. For a moment, Ana imagines a different class, one in which the balance between literature and student might be more stable. She decides to deal to her anxiety with the same commitment the boys give to spray-on deodorant. Abandoning literature is not an option. She is not that teacher.

ii

The large screen in the staffroom screams numbers and targets. Bold and red font lend weight to the occasion. The principal outlines the planned targets for the following year. He says the targets are in line with Ministry objectives and with other schools of similar decile. So, the first internal assessments will be held within the first four weeks of the school year. A pressured start, he concedes, but it's important that teachers commit to the targets and ensure they are met. The targets inhabit the principal's body. He pauses. He shifts. He gathers his thoughts. He will be following results closely.

Ana enjoys teaching the second Terminator film, Judgement Day. It is thematically accessible, and students sway with the action. In a pivotal scene, Sarah Connor carves the words 'no fate' onto a picnic table. Ana looks at the targets on the screen and thinks about the future of her subject. She closes her eyes. She worries. She wonders. What will her results be like?

The detonated targets spread like a mushroom cloud in the dully painted and worn-out staffroom.

iii

Kahu never turns up in correct uniform, there is always something missing or adapted so that he carries a fashionable air about him. He wears his straight hair down to his shoulders and his fingernails are painted pink. Though he is never teased, he is a loner. He sits in front of Ana, rolling his eyes and sighing as she asks about his upcoming assessment. "There's so much on, Miss."

Ana asks if he has chosen a theme for his essay. Kahu pulls a historical romance from his bag and places it on his desk. "Love" He says. "Love is so big." Ana says back. Kahu thinks for a moment. He will use the romance novel and a couple of love songs. "Love is everything." He reasons. Choice and interest are difficult to argue against. Ana feels the pull of a student-centered curriculum. She is that teacher.

Kahu's pink nails shimmer in the light and Ana wonders what uniform arrangement he will wear tomorrow. There is pleasure in discovery, Ana thinks. She wants to be that teacher too.

iv

Departmental meetings always take place in the English resource room. The room in the belly of the building relies on artificial light. Cold in winter and steaming in summer, Ana's eyes always need adjusting coming in and going out. She thinks of the resource room as a different land within the school, a place where English sits at the centre.

The Head of Department begins the meeting by pointing to a pile of photocopied short stories on the resource room bench. Short stories will replace longer texts. "It's about meeting student need…providing text students can deal with…making sure they get some credits…not overwhelming them with too much..." The justifications fall about the room in a plain and self-evident manner; the orthodoxy scooped-up by welcoming arms.

Ana looks at the short stories and knows the balance has tipped. It is not that this turn has come without warning. It hasn't. It's the way the neatly arranged piles of paper mark the room

in a decisive and declarative manner. Like commandments on stone slabs; they announce the beginning of a New Word-Order.

v

No extended texts. No novels. It seems like a death to Ana. Over the next few months, she stops teaching literature and poetry and turns her focus to short stories instead. She plans new units with frail but measurable outcomes. She makes sure texts are personally relevant to students and develops a reputation as a good teacher with good outcomes. She keeps achievement statistics in her head.

vi

The teacher Ana thought she would be is nowhere to be found. She looks at the bright posters and student work on her classroom walls knowing they are not enough to hide the peeling paint underneath. They are a rug thrown over an old floor, the room done up like the homes of the proud poor. At least the desks are clean and graffiti-free, Ana thinks. She decided there would be no graffiti on her desks the day she had seen a lazily drawn penis with the words "suck my cock" on one of her desks. It wasn't the drawing or the words that particularly offended her; it was the imposition in a shared space.

Ana hears her students making their way up to class. The fast-growing rumble only heightens Ana's sense of duty. She has never been released from the responsibility her job entails or the biting awareness of how difficult teaching is. It is always hard.

Ana arranges the short stories on her desk. One set for each class. She has been here before, in this state of falling. Across the hall, her colleague writes learning outcomes on the whiteboard. We are all falling, Ana whispers.

Ana takes the short stories and puts them back in her cupboard. She places a copy of the novel on each of her students' desks. The teacher Ana thought she would be is somewhere to be found. She inhabits Ana once again and Ana moves in her classroom as she needs to. She feels the growing rumble beneath her feet and scans her desks for graffiti, for imposition. She decides to wrestle against the reasoning and the justifications – to find a way to resist resolution and righteousness.

If she stands back, she can see more. If she opens her arms, she can hold more.

It is always hard. This, at least, she can know.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

PRINCIPAL AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title: Literacy and Teaching English in Secondary Schools

Researcher: Claudia Rozas Gomez

To the Principal and the School Board of Trustees.

My name is Claudia Rozas Gomez and I teach at the Faculty of Education in the Graduate Diploma of Secondary Teaching. Prior to that I taught secondary English in Auckland for six years. I am also a post-graduate student at the University of Auckland, working towards a Doctoral thesis in the Faculty of Education. I am conducting research with regard to English departments' beliefs and practices in catering for differing student needs within the prescribed English curriculum. In particular I would like to investigate the sorts of alternative English programmes that are offered to students who are not achieving in mainstream English programmes and the extent to which they involve a critical literacy component. I am also interested in how English teachers make sense and make decisions about the kind of English programmes they deliver to underachieving students.

I am seeking permission for the Head of English of your school to participate in completing an anonymous questionnaire and would appreciate it if you, as the principal could pass onto them the appropriate information, including the Participation Information Sheet, Survey and the return addressed envelope provided. The survey should take approximately 30 minutes and can be completed at a time convenient to the participant. In addition, I wish to invite some Heads

of English or teachers of alternative English programmes within English Departments to participate in an interview to discuss the alternative English programme delivered to students. This would be voluntary. In the case of the heads of department, in order to retain school anonymity, I would ask that they indicate their willingness to participate in the interview in a separate email to me, or for other programme teachers, they would be contacted by me outside of school hours. I am also seeking your assurance that a teacher's decision to participate or not participate in the research will not affect their standing in the school.

You may request that any information traceable to the school be withdrawn at any time up until four weeks after the interview without giving a reason. Throughout the project data will be stored within a locked cabinet in my office at the University of Auckland. The data will remain there for six years at which point it will be destroyed. During this time data may be used in related refereed scholarly journal articles presented for publication. The school will not be identified in any way in these publications, nor in the final report, a copy of which may be accessed through the University of Auckland Library.

I sincerely hope you can support this research, which seeks to investigate how we, as educators cater for the needs of students who are underachieving in mainstream English. Thank you so much for your time.

Claudia Rozas G.

If you have any queries please contact:

Researcher name and contacts	**My supervisor is:**	**The Head of School is:**
Claudia Rozas Gomez Faculty of Education The University of Auckland Private Bag 92601 Symonds Street Auckland 1150 Phone: 6238899 ext 48396	Dr Maxine Stephenson Faculty of Education The University of Auckland Private Bag 92601 Symonds Street Auckland 1150 Phone: 6238899 ext 87906	Dr Airini School of Critical Studies in Education Faculty of Education The University of Auckland Private Bag 92601 Symonds Street Auckland 1150 Phone: 6238899 ext 48826

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact:

The Chair The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee

Office of the Vice Chancellor

Research Office

Level 2, 76 Symonds Street

Auckland.

Tel: 373-7599 extn. 87830

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 15/08/2008 for a period of 3 years, from 15/08/2008

Reference2008/152

Appendix B

PRINCIPAL/BOARD OF TRUSTEES CONSENT FORM

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS

Title: Literacy and teaching English in secondary schools

Researcher: Claudia Rozas Gomez

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.

- I understand that the school will not be identified in any way in the publication of the research findings.

- I understand that participants may withdraw any information traceable to the school at any time up until four weeks after the interview without giving a reason.

- I understand that throughout the project data will be stored within a locked cabinet in the office of the researcher at the University of Auckland and that, after six years the data will be destroyed.

- I understand that at the conclusion of the research the full final report of the findings will be available through the University of Auckland library.

- I give an assurance that a teacher's decision to participate or not participate will not affect their standing within the school.

- I agree to Claudia Rozas Gomez conducting this research within the school and to the findings being presented as a research project for Doctoral study coursework.

  Signed:

  Name:

  (Please print clearly)

  Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE 15/08/2008 for a period of 3 years, from 15/08/2008 Reference No.2008/152

Appendix C

HEAD OF ENGLISH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title: Literacy and teaching English in secondary schools

Researcher: Claudia Rozas Gomez

To the Head of English

Thank you for expressing interest in this research project.

My name is Claudia Rozas Gomez and I teach at the Faculty of Education in the Graduate Diploma of Secondary Teaching. Prior to that I taught secondary English in Auckland for six years. I am also a post-graduate student at the University of Auckland, working towards a Doctoral thesis in the Faculty of Education. I am conducting research with regard to English departments' beliefs and practices in catering for differing student needs within the prescribed English curriculum. In particular I would like to investigate the sorts of alternative English programmes that are offered to students who are not achieving in mainstream English programmes and the extent to which they involve a critical literacy component. I am also interested in how English teachers make sense of and make decisions about the kind of English programmes they deliver to underachieving students.

I would like to invite you to participate in this project and would appreciate any assistance you can offer me. Participation is completely voluntary. The principal of the school has assured that participation or non-participation in the project will not affect your standing at school. If you agree to participate, I would ask that you complete the enclosed anonymous survey and return it to me, in the envelope provided. This should take approximately 30 minutes.

In addition, I would like to meet to discuss these issues with some teachers in a follow up interview with you and/or the teacher in charge of any alternative English programmes. These will be held at a time and place agreed on by you, and will be audio taped. Electronic devices may be switched off at

any time at your request. The interview will take approximately 1 hour. Copies of audio-tapes will be made available to participants on request, but transcripts will not be available for editing. If you are prepared to take part in the interview, please respond to me on the email address provided at the bottom of the survey. If more teachers volunteer than I require for the study, I shall select teachers using a random procedure. The surveys, tapes and transcripts will be kept in a secure cabinet in my office at the University of Auckland for six years at which point they will be they will be destroyed. During this time data may be used in related refereed scholarly journal articles presented for publication. You will not be identified in any way and your name or the name of the school will not be used in these publications or in the final report. Please note that the Consent Forms enclosed are only to be used if you agree to participate in the interview, should you wish to complete and return the survey only, a consent form will not be needed.

You will have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time, and the right to withdraw any information traceable to you without giving a reason up until four weeks after the interview. A copy of the full final report of the project will be available through the University of Auckland library.

Thank you so much for your time.

Claudia Rozas G.

If you have any queries please contact:

Researcher name and contacts	**My supervisor is:**	**The Head of School is:**
Claudia Rozas Gomez Faculty of Education The University of Auckland Private Bag 92601 Symonds Street Auckland 1150 Phone: 6238899 ext 48396	Dr Maxine Stephenson Faculty of Education The University of Auckland Private Bag 92601 Symonds Street Auckland 1150 Phone: 6238899 ext 87906	Dr Airini School of Critical Studies in Education Faculty of Education The University of Auckland Private Bag 92601 Symonds Street Auckland 1150 Phone: 6238899 ext 48826

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact:

The Chair The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee

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APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 15/08/2008 for a period of 3 years, from 15/08/2008 Reference 2008/152

Appendix D

HEAD OF ENGLISH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS

Title: Literacy and teaching English in secondary schools

Researcher: Claudia Rozas Gomez

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.

- I understand that my name will not be used in the publication of the research findings and that in all ways my anonymity will be protected.

- I understand that I may withdraw any information traceable to me at any time up until four weeks after the interview without giving a reason.

- I understand that throughout the project data will be stored within a locked cabinet in the office of the researcher at the University of Auckland and that, after six years the data will be destroyed.

- I understand that at the conclusion of the research the full final report of the findings will be available through the University of Auckland library.

- I agree to take part in the research

- I agree to be audio-taped and would/would not like to have a copy of the tape recording.

Name:

(Please print clearly)

Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE 15/ 08 / 2008 for a period of 3 years, from 15/08/2008 Reference No. 2088/152

Appendix E

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Starter questions for semi-structured interviews:

1. How long have you had an alternative English programme running in your school?

2. What were the kinds of things that you took into account when designing the AEP?

3. What are some of the reasons the programme was set up?

4. What are the sorts of literacies you think are necessary for young people?

5. What texts do you use in your AEP?

6. How do you assess the effectiveness of the programme?

7. Is there a qualification attached to the AEP?

8. Is there a sense that providing an AEP is fairer for students not achieving in mainstream English curriculum?

9. In what ways and to what extent do you think that providing an AEP goes some way in achieving equity for all students in your school?

Appendix F

SUPPORT STAFF CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

RESEARCH PROJECT – *Literacy and Teaching English in Secondary Schools*

RESEARCHER - Claudia Rozas Gomez

I agree to transcribe the data collected from the audio-taped interviews with participants.

I understand that the information contained within the data is absolutely confidential and may not be disclosed to, or discussed with, any person other than the researcher Claudia Rozas Gomez.

Name……..

Professional title……

Date…….

Signed……