RECOGNITION OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE

John O’Neill, Massey University[1]

> E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā maunga, e ngā awaawa, e ngā pataka o ngā taonga tuku iho.
> Tēnā koutou katoa.

I am very grateful to the Council for this opportunity to honour Dame Jean Herbison’s contribution to education. Much of what I shall say today has been shaped by research collaborations and casual conversations about schooling with critically minded colleagues over the years. I’d like to acknowledge three in particular: Ivan Snook for his courageous defence of teaching as an ethical and relational practice; Roseanna Bourke for her infectious curiosity about children’s learning and assessment; and, much more recently, he wāhine toa Mere Berryman, for her hopeful endurance against the iron cage of Pākehā education bureaucracy. Whether I stand on their shoulders or in their shadows, I leave for you to decide.

I never met Jean Herbison: she was ‘before my time’, and she left no lasting research footprint. I know little about her decades as a senior leader and manager in teacher education, vocational training, university governance or national education planning, breaking through masculinist glass ceilings, as she did, with each career advancement. In thinking about how to honour her motivations and achievements, I was fortunate to find a two-and-a-half-hour oral history recording from the Alexander Turnbull Library’s Dames Oral History Project.[2]

Her ‘remembrances’ as she called them brought Jean Herbison’s early living and learning into sharp relief as she reflected in 1993 at the age of 70, on how she became who she was and what she achieved after leaving school, very reluctantly. I now know, for instance, that as a secondary schoolteacher and, later, guidance counsellor, in Christchurch, Jean Herbison was drawn to the ‘non-academic’ adolescents and that, somewhat against the grain of the times, she introduced developmentally oriented, collaborative, project-based curricula to enable them to meaningfully link schooling, everyday life, local community and the world of work.

---

[1] Herbison Lecture, Annual Conference of the New Zealand Council for Research in Education, November 18, 2022. Script version. Not for quotation or distribution without permission.

[2] Herbison, J. M. (1993), October 02 & 03. Interview by S. Fowke [Tape recording]. Dames Oral History Project (OHint-0046/19). Alexander Turnbull Library, Te Puna o Mātauranga o Aotearoa National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.

I suspect, then, that Dame Jean would be greatly interested in how contemporary education research, policy and practice collectively position children and childhood and more particularly, the ways in which schooling practically assists, or not, with equipping them for their psychological, social and economic worlds.

OVERVIEW OF LECTURE

In that spirit, this address will consider:

(i) the complexities of today's childhood worlds;

(ii) the (im)possibilities of research, policy and practice as triangle; and an alternative conception of this cluster of related activities as a form of life. It will then

(iii) draw on recognition theory as a vital counter to our unfortunate reification and alienation of children from their schooling; and, finally, attempt to

(iv) 'walk backwards into the future' of schooling to identify education research, policy and practice insights from our past and present that might afford us greater recognition of children's learning in the future.

In this first part, I want to draw a comparison between the comparatively unadorned, predictable, and 'low-tech' world of young Jean Herbison in the 1920s and 1930s, and the more complex, multifaceted lives of many children growing up today.

LEARNING

In the broadest sense of the term, living is a learning experience:

> *Humans are created as learners*. But we are at the same time also *doomed to be learners*, we have no possibility to avoid learning, although we do not always learn exactly what we ourselves or others have intended. In contemporary societies, we are also *enforced to be learners*. In nearly all countries there is compulsory school attendance, and in addition to this there is a lot that we all have to acquire in order to be able to function in daily life and various specific contexts. It is to a great extent this direct as well as indirect enforcement that in various connections can make learning problematic. We cannot restrict ourselves to learn what we like or meet by chance. Learning is both an individual and a societal matter. (Illeris, 2017, p. 1) (04'47")

By looking back from our twenty first century standpoint to Jean Herbison's childhood learning in early twentieth century, we may be able more easily to 'make the familiar strange' as C. Wright Mills (1959) put it and adopt a reflexive stance toward the often taken-for-granted ways in which children today navigate the demands of both direct and indirect enforcement to learn.

ACHIEVEMENT SOCIETY

In this regard, the Korean-born German philosopher Byung-Chul Han (2015) draws a useful distinction between 'the obedience-subject' and the 'achievement-subject' in his essay, *The Burnout Society*.

> Today's society is no longer Foucault's disciplinary world of hospitals, madhouses, prisons, barracks, and factories. It has long been replaced by another regime, namely a society of fitness studios, office towers, banks, airports, shopping malls and genetic laboratories. Twenty-first-century society is no longer a disciplinary society but an achievement society. Also, its inhabitants are no longer "obedience-subjects" but "achievement-subjects." They are entrepreneurs of themselves. (p. 8)

For Han, disciplinary society was negative, characterised by authority, rules, constant 'may not' prohibitions, and compulsive 'should' exhortations (pp. 8 & 9). In these terms, Jean Herbison's child and adolescent upbringing was most certainly that of an obedience-subject.

LEARNING AS A DISCIPLINE SUBJECT

In her interview, Herbison recounted the personal philosophy that had sustained her through a long and varied career as a commercial office administrator, school secretary, teacher, counsellor, teacher educator and senior tertiary education executive and governor:

> I've always had a philosophy of why I was doing things. I guess it is to know yourself, accept yourself and be yourself. I now know that for me the potential to be my best self is in here. Now I don't always achieve it but it's there and I just try as hard as I can, failing as I do in many ways to carry that out.

So what can we glean from the structural and cultural backdrops to Jean's everyday learning in her childhood world that may have helped form her approach to life and work in her adult world?

First, perhaps, that her childhood world was essentially mono-ethnic. Two years before she was born, in the *Appendices* to the 1921 census, out of a total recorded Māori population of 52,751 there were only 2,088 persons in the South Island as a whole and approximately 80 in the Counties that make up today's greater Dunedin area where Jean was born (Census and Statistics Office, 1921). Not surprisingly, then, until she took up a senior role at the technical institute in Christchurch in the 1970s (her 50s), the only contact Jean could recall with Māori was in the early 1930s: the four orphaned grandchildren of the Cook Island Māori family who appeared briefly next door before they were sent to the orphanage when their grandmother could no longer cope (The children were two elder sisters followed by Alastair [Ariki] Campbell, and his younger brother. The two boys are in the photograph).

Second, her childhood world was a product of the interwar and Great Depression years before the public health and welfare protections introduced through the Social Security Act of 1938. Jean described a close-knit, normal family that enjoyed each other's company, despite their limited means. Neither parent went beyond primary schooling but each of the children was allowed to attend secondary school "up to a point". At the insistence of her father Jean reluctantly left secondary school at age 15 in 1938 to take up an office secretarial position he had found for her in town.

Third, hers was a patriarchal, disciplinarian household environment with a strictly gendered division of both labour and leisure. Jean's mother (b. 1889) gave birth to six children between 1918 and 1926 and was "worn out really by having children" to the point where in the 1930s she had a "kind of breakdown" at home that required a neighbour to come in and sit with her, and later several other illnesses when one or other of the children had to come home from school. Jean could recall the gendered functionality of the family home, in particular, the two main 'homemaking' domains. One was the kitchen and laundry (her mother's). The other was the back yard vegetable garden (her father's).

The conservative features of family life persisted through Jean's teenage years. The girls received no information "about the physical side of sex" and no encouragement to have boyfriends or bring them home. Paternal authority and discipline came mostly in psychological form. But as Jean conceded, everyone in the family "just accepted it, that that was the way, and that dad was the head of the household and that he mustn't be balked in any way".

Fourth, as in much of Otago and Southland at the time, when Jean was not in school or at home, she was involved in the local Presbyterian congregation: Sunday school, church, Manse social activities, and bible class camps. Although she could not remember her mother or father ever accompanying the children, Sunday school and church were a major influence throughout Jean's childhood and young adulthood to the extent that she felt "deeply involved spiritually, socially and physically".

Jean's reflection on her psychological formation is again characteristic of an 'obedience-subject' living and learning in a 'discipline society': that gnawing feeling of never being good enough and, in response, the compulsion that one must constantly strive throughout life to prove oneself.

> Well one of the things that I think I've inherited as a result of my, and it's not just mine, I think most of the family have inherited, is a lack of confidence. And it seems strange to say that even when you look at the things that each of us have achieved but, basically, there is inside us a feeling that we're not good enough. And I guess there's been a striving there to say, you know, yes, we are good enough and I think that's been part of our inheritance as well.

ACHIEVEMENT SOCIETY, SOCIAL ACCELERATION AND CHILDHOOD

> The overall characteristic of children's learning is that, in line with their development, they are absorbed in capturing the world by which they see themselves surrounded and of which they are a part. (Illeris, 2017, p. 8)

According to the Danish learning theorist, Knud Illeris, children expect to be guided by parents and other adults "as to what and how they should learn" (p. 189). This expectation continues through the adult-determined frameworks they experience in early learning and early school settings. However, what Illeris calls the 'cultural liberation' of late modern society has materially affected learning in childhood. He identifies the disintegration or weakening of some norms and traditions, the pace of technological innovation and adoption, and the ways in which mass media and social media open children to:

> or more often almost force on them – a mass of impulses, including things such as catastrophes, violence and sex; experiences to which they have not previously had access, and which can have strong emotional influences on them, as well as introducing these things in advance of the formation of personal experience, making it more complicated for them later to acquire their own experiences in these spheres. (p. 189)

By the time children are in the youth phase of their life course, "the demands on the formation of identity have undergone an explosive growth in line with cultural liberation" and social fragmentation, because of which "young people must find their own way through their own choices" and struggle with a rapidly changing social world. In this, says Illeris,

> young people are faced with countless possibilities and choices, but also countless limitations given that only a tiny fraction of young people are likely to be able to pursue the idealised consumption-based lifestyles and life pathways they are bombarded with through the media.
>
> If we adults are committed to working in education with a non-romanticised view of childhood today, we surely need to ensure that education enables children to understand and develop the capabilities and capacities to navigate society as it is and as it is becoming.

In contrast with the excess negativity of the discipline society, Han argues that our present achievement society suffers from an ‘excess of positivity’ (p. 11). Earlier norms and traditions of negative self-discipline and self-constraint have not disappeared but now, in addition, the achievement-subject feels a compulsive freedom to achieve, to sample all available experiences. The achievement subject feels compelled to excessive work and performance but is ‘no-longer-able-to-be-able’ and so suffers from solitary tiredness, creative fatigue, depression and burnout. Moreover “excess positivity also expresses itself as an excess of stimuli, information and impulses” (p.12). Excess in turn affects cognition and attention, leads to continuous multitasking and an erosion of the unique human capacity for ‘contemplative attention’. Instead, the achievement subject experiences hyperattention; “the gaze errs restlessly and finds expression for nothing” (p. 15).

Han describes the *psychological* effects of the achievement society in broadly similar terms to the German sociologist Hartmut Rosa in his major book, *Social Acceleration* (Rosa, 2013). Rosa, however, identifies three *structural* dimensions of social acceleration. First, *technical acceleration*, “the intentional acceleration of goal-directed processes” such as transportation, communication, and production (p. 301). Second, the *acceleration of social change* by which he means the progressive shrinkage of the intervals of time in which one can anticipate stability of experience and expectation with respect to “fashions, lifestyles, work, family structures, political and religious ties, etc.” (p. 301). Third, the *acceleration of the pace of life* “represents a reaction to the scarcity of (uncommitted) time resources” (p. 301). Reactions may be in the form of stress and a lack of time; or an increase in the number of actions or experiences in a given unit of time.

One of the pathologies of social acceleration is the constant fear of “getting left behind” (p. 316). Love, friendship, and achievement all need constant renewal and improvement leading to restlessness and a “restructuring of the order of values as a result of problems with time” (p. 317). These include a tendency to focus on ‘putting out fires’ and short-termism which together “produce the widespread feeling that one no longer has any time for the ‘genuinely important things’ in life” (p. 317).

Now, while neither of these authors speaks directly of children and childhood, they are in my view accurately portraying key elements of the contemporary socio-economic milieu into which our children and young people are born, develop and grow according to Knud Illeris. Equally, we know all too well from local childhood monitoring studies (e.g., *Growing Up in New Zealand* and *Youth 2000*) and system level public health data that children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand, adolescents in particular, face multiple challenges to their health, wellbeing, belonging and identity. These are of orders of magnitude and complexity quite unimaginable in the childhood world of the early twentieth century. As Illeris summarises it, then, at the same time youth has become idealised and commercialised, “the personal and societal problems that attach to youth seem to be steadily increasing” (p. 191).

A perfectly reasonable basic expectation of state education is that the experiences it affords should enable children to develop sufficient autonomy to be able confidently to navigate their early adult life journeys through home, work and community. Such an expectation implies an appreciation by education research, policy and practice of: (i) how home, work and community function as social institutions; (ii) the knowledge, skills and dispositions that children need to be acquire through early learning, schooling and post-compulsory education in order to be capable of exercising individual and collective agency in pursuit of their best life; and (iii) the past, present and foreseeable contextual factors most likely to disrupt those learning processes.

RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE

And so, to the theme of this year’s conference - the nature of the triangular relationships between educational research, policy and practice. In Jean Herbison’s childhood world, the triangle may have simply represented a plane geometric figure or the holy Trinity. In today’s culturally pluralist world, children are just as likely to encounter the triangle as an example of technological innovation in Tāniko weaving border design, or as a personalised narrative of Polynesian tattoo art in the form of a niho, the shark’s tooth.

This alerts us to the need as adult educators to critically examine the assumptions we may be bringing to a beguilingly simple and inviting image that conveys a strong, enduring relational unity of purpose among three clearly defined institutional actors. But at the most basic level, this is a distorted depiction of those involved. Where, for example do professional associations, iwi, hapū, rūnanga, Urban Māori Authorities, businesses, think tanks, lobbyists, charities, voluntary organisations, faith communities, and social enterprises fit in our triangle given that most or all are active in one or more of education research, policy and practice understood as discursive and recursive processes? (e.g. Ball & Junemann, 2012) Most importantly, where do children and whānau fit, with what quality of recognition, and with what authority and influence of individual and collective voice?

This suggests to me that an appropriate image of the practical relationships between education research, policy and practice is not that of a two-dimensional closed figure, but rather a three-dimensional impossible triangle (Penrose & Penrose, 1958). Indeed, given the number and diversity of institutional and community actors in our space today, it might even be more accurate to extend the metaphor to one of a structure with multiple impossibilities.

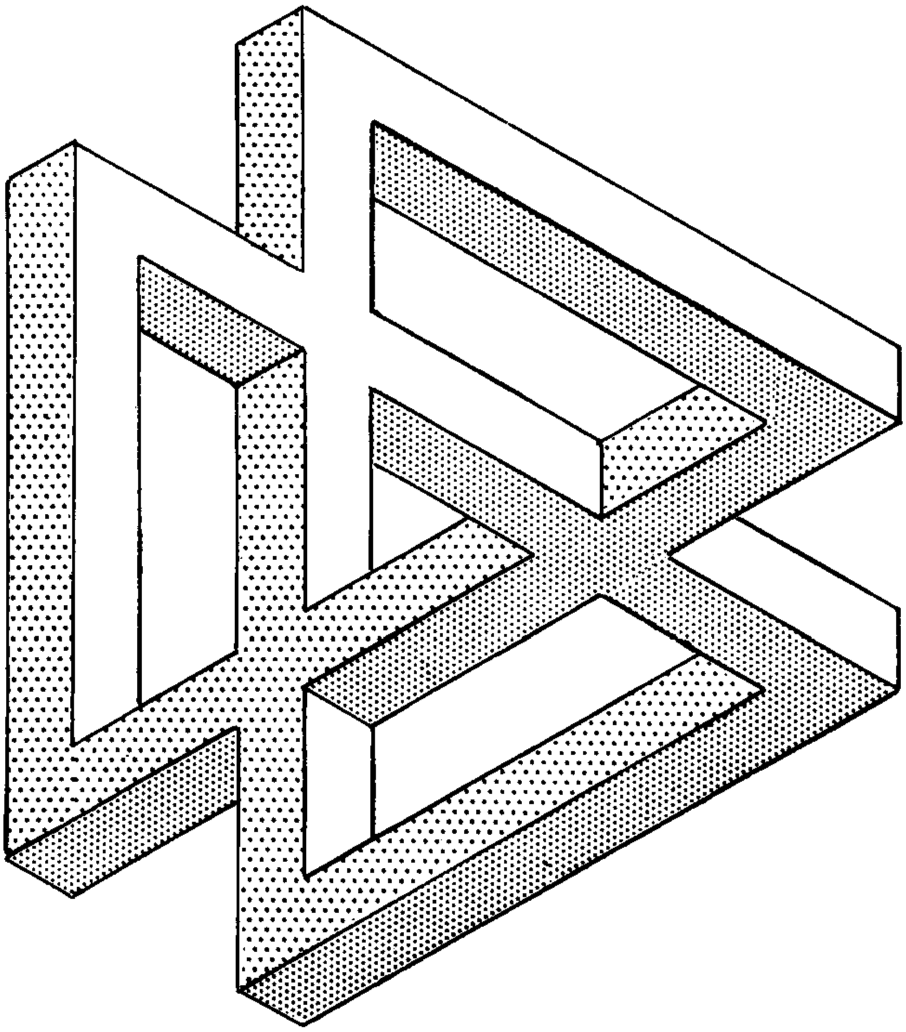

Figure 1 Diagram of structure with multiple impossibilities (Penrose & Penrose, 1958, p. 32)

Such an image, I suggest, gives us a far more realistic sense of what occurs when we ask research, policy and practice to combine. It encourages us to be both critical and pragmatic in debating our ways forward. The history of educational research and reform, here and overseas, tells us much the same.

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND REFORM

The American curriculum historian Herbert Kliebard, for example, observes that a rhetoric and spirit of reform, however, well intentioned, all too often founder on the rocks of teachers' 'practicality ethic':

> Educational reforms involving changes in teaching practice fail with such monotonous regularity because enlightened reform rhetoric and the generosity of spirit that impels people to change things for the better simply comes into direct conflict with institutional realities. Good intentions and even competence notwithstanding, teachers are absolutely required to maintain a precarious order, and only the very courageous are willing to risk its loss. (Kliebard, 2002, p. 137)

More directly relevant to today's focus on children's learning, perhaps, is a gloriously utopian local illustration of exactly Kliebard's point from the 1970s (the high point of our Pākehā social democratic progressive schooling sentiment). Here, an 'enlightened rhetoric and generosity of spirit' informed the new architectural design and construction brief for the whānau house secondary school, with its explicit design for learning.

These schools were to be planned be "guidance-centred rather than subject oriented", to be "a stimulating, challenging and satisfying place to live in and work in all day", to encourage "purpose, spontaneity and a feeling of belonging" and to be "the antithesis of boredom, regimentation and alienation" (p. 7). The whanau house environment was explicitly designed to give each child dignity, self-esteem and feelings of social acceptance.

However, as Rae Munro concluded following a two-year case study of efforts to establish a single whānau unit at Penrose High School, unless consideration of institutional realities are integral to the initiative, success is unlikely. In this instance, he identified the school's established expectations of teachers and students: "A degree of autonomy had been assumed which could not be realised in practice. Without such necessary independence the Whanau staff had been presented with the impossible task of literally restructuring secondary schooling" (Munro, 1980, n.p).

The challenges of achieving the distance necessary for genuinely critical reflection and critically informed action on what will benefit children and their learning most, are only compounded by the reality that some of the institutional actors at system level are constitutionally required to be politically deferential, or politically neutral, or politically blind, while others make strategic and tactical choices about whether or not to participate and on what terms. The former Chief Science Advisor identified the Ministry of Education as one government department that was particularly prone to conflating facts and values as evidence in policy formation (Gluckman, 2013), as he put it. Irrespective of whether or not we believe in the possibility of separating facts and values in education, I don't think it's too harsh to suggest that the Chief Science Advisor could reasonably have levelled much the same accusation at parts of the education research community, the education profession, and at fractions of civil society.

Yes, to be sure, we now have a Chief *Education* Science Advisor, but it stretches credibility to suggest that this one part-time, goodwill reliant position is adequate to address the magnitude of structural and political challenges involved. And in any event, if we accept the proposition that underpins the newer social science sub-disciplines such as childhood studies, sociology of childhood and children's geographies, namely that 'children are experts in their own lives', then we need to significantly increase the extent to which their voices are heard and acted on in setting our educational research, policy and practice agenda.

FORMS OF LIFE

At this point then, it may be helpful to move from the concept of educational research, policy and practice as the idealised alignment of disparate institutional activity systems and toward the German philosopher Rahel Jaeggi's concept of forms of life (Jaeggi, 2018).

Jaeggi defines forms of life as clusters of related activities. For her, they concern the "cultural and social reproduction of human life" (p. 3).

> Forms of life are complex bundles (or ensembles) of social practices geared to solving problems that for their part are historically contextualised and normatively constituted. (p. 29)

In terms of the research, policy and practice triangle as a form of life, what interests us is the rationality of the dynamics of its ongoing development. The question of the extent to which it is successful concerns not so much its content, but rather its rationality and success as "an ethical and social learning process" (p. 29). The focus of critique of forms of life is not simply convictions and beliefs (in our case about education) but the substantive "conditions of life that human beings can shape and transform" (p. 29).

For this reason, Jaeggi argues forcefully against 'ethical abstinence', the view that we should just accept the validity of different modes of research, policy and practice as existing alongside each other. Instead, she argues, we should be evaluating them in terms of (i) their ability to solve the problems or periodic crises that these forms of life identify - in our case, do they help children to flourish in and through their learning?; and also (ii) the ideologies and historically contextualised assumptions that frame these problems and crises in the ways they do – topically, for example, how does non-attendance at school come to be framed as an issue of youth, parent and professional pathology, and not a deeper analysis of the ways in which contemporary schooling's obsession with outcomes, standards and benchmarks contributes to the reification of students and the alienation of children from their learning?

FORMS OF CRITIQUE

Jaeggi distinguishes three approaches to critique of forms of life: (i) internal; (ii) external; and (iii) immanent critique. Internal critique would take the framing of educational research, policy and practice problems and their solutions - that is, policy settings, as given (e.g., our now decades long pattern of principal-agent contract evaluations and Education Review Office national reports). External critique would apply external standards to internally framed problems and solutions (e.g., our cyclical Pisa, TiMMS, PiRLS envy-anxiety and policy borrowing from supposedly better performing OECD countries overseas). Jaeggi argues that immanent or transformational critique is "an ethical learning process" (p. 31). Moreover, "the evaluation of forms of life should find its criterion in the subject matter of the problem or in the success of problem-solving processes" (p. 31). And here, I think, the paradigm case for us in education is Kaupapa Māori led research, policy and practice, as evidenced in the recent Te Pae Roa report on the future of kaupapa Māori and Māori medium education, which succinctly defined 'the problem' as follows.

> Te Pae Roa have come to the view that the issues raised are largely symptomatic of a systemic issue – the Crown's assumed ownership and governance over Kaupapa Māori education and the use of mātauranga Māori (inclusive of te reo Māori) in English-medium settings. (Te Pae Roa, 2022, p. 9)

REIFICATION, ALIENATION AND RECOGNITION

Today the discursive threads of English medium educational research, policy and practice are colourfully adorned with sparkling costume jewellery gems such as 'decolonisation', 'Te Tiriti-led' 'kawangatanga', 'language, culture and identity', 'wellbeing', 'te whare tapa whā', 'whānau', 'mokopuna' and 'ākonga'. It seems reasonable to ask whether and to what extent these represent yet more tactical virtue-signalling, or are instead the 'green shoots' of a critically aware, deepening commitment by Tangata Tiriti to transformation of the basis of learning to one in which children and childhood are given the recognition they deserve. In particular, can educational research, policy and practice as a community manage to find ways to abandon the collective English medium schooling, cognitive outcome-driven obsession of the last four decades? In all my accumulated sadness and frustration, I cannot help but liken this obsession to constantly measuring, weighing and intensively-rearing livestock for (the labour) market. Such an emotive response may be understandable, but it serves no practical use. A more productive approach may be to look deeper and critically beyond the surface features of educational activity, to both their material effects on children, and the causes of these. Here, I believe, the concepts of reification, alienation and recognition are of considerable practical value to us as educators.

Both Jaeggi and Axel Honneth view the central concern of modern social life as freedom through self-realisation; the ability and opportunity to live in a way that is appropriate to pursuing one's best life. They also agree that we can only achieve our freedom socially with and alongside others; that the norms we act on are immanent in our forms of life, communities and social institutions and that these shape our traditions and routine practices. In the case of our conference, that means the (often loosely-, occasionally tightly-) clustered activities of educational research, policy and practice as a form of life. For Honneth, (Honneth, 2008) the pathologies that these social activities produce may lead to reification. In Jaeggi's case (Jaeggi, 2014) to alienation.

REIFICATION

In his recasting of the concept of reification from its historic use in the labour processes of production and commodity exchange, to contemporary anthropological and institutional relations, Honneth describes it as a losing sight of, a forgetting, or denial of our (antecedent) recognition of the essential humanity of other persons (or groups of persons) and also of the natural and social dimensions of the world that in turn are of value to those persons. For Honneth, the social sources of reification, the conditions that enable forgetting or denial of recognition, include practices where observation of ‘the other’ becomes an end in itself or is guided by convictions or ideologies that lead to a denial of recognition, such as stereotyping. Another source is more personal in its effects: denial “that our desires, feeling, and intentions are worthy of articulation” (2008, p. 82). This in turn can lead to self-reification, that is when we believe that our ‘psychic sensations’ are merely objects to be observed, produced, performed or portrayed publicly through institutional practices. Social practices and institutional arrangements can consequently promote both reifying, and self-reifying, behaviour.

ALIENATION

Relatedly, Jaeggi (2014) describes alienation as a ‘relation of relationlessness’, or the absence of meaningful relationship to oneself and to others. Alienation can take the form of ‘living one’s life as an alien’ as she puts it, and as a ‘disturbed appropriation of self and world’. In her analysis of the theory of alienation, Jaeggi (2014) identifies three problematics, First, it shows how individual lives can ‘go wrong’. Apathy, indifference toward life and a feeling of powerlessness negatively affect the individual’s disposition toward the chances of achieving a good life, in general, and personal autonomy, in particular. Second, alienation impairs one’s ability to identify with a form of life, to realise oneself in it and to make one’s life one’s own. Third, it helps describe and explain the workings of capitalist society at large (to which we might add, following Honneth, the social institutions that comprise a particular capitalist society). Jaeggi’s reading of alienation is centrally about “individuals’ relations to the social relationships, practices and institutions within which they lead their lives” (p. 216). On her analysis, “if self-alienation is also alienation in and from the social world, then the problem … can only be solved in, not beyond the world of social practices” (p. 217). She concludes by making a link between the constitution of subjects, and the constitution of institutions, and asks

> How must institutions be constituted so that individuals living within them can understand themselves as the (co-authors) of those institutions and identify with them as agents? What would social institutions look like that could be understood as embodiments of freedom? (p. 220)

This is a challenging enough set of questions if we view the institutions of research, policy and practice as formally separate activity systems. How much more complex is it when we conceive of the clustered activities they undertake as a form of life? Honneth addresses precisely these kinds of questions in his two linked major works, *The Struggle for Recognition: The moral grammar of social conflicts*, and *Freedom's Right: The social foundations of democratic life*.

RECOGNITION

> How do persons develop and maintain their identity, their sense of themselves as practical moral beings with unique characteristics and distinctive places in the social world? The basic answer that Honneth proposes is: individuals only become who they are in and through relations of mutual recognition with others. In short, persons gain subjectivity only intersubjectively. Only when individuals receive positive acknowledgement of their own personal traits, standing and abilities can individuals begin to see themselves as others do and thereby gain an efficacious sense-of-self. (Zurn, 2015, p. 6)

Simply put, *Struggle for Recognition* is focused on the individual's experience of striving and learning to live within society's institutional structures, while *Freedom's Right* is about the practical encouragement of social justice and the ways in which society's institutions encourage or inhibit the individual's self-realisation. It strikes me that the moment of possibility we have reached in education research, policy and practice is one of clarifying what we mean by mutual recognition and institutional self-realisation but that the possibilities that we all hope for will only provide lasting benefits for children and their learning if we are prepared to do the intellectually and emotionally difficult work of socially critical evaluation of our current approaches to defining and addressing educational problems or crises, and taking practical action to reframe these more productively towards the development of socially just educational arrangements for learning.

RELATIONS OF RECOGNITION

Honneth identifies the patterns of intersubjective recognition as love (primary relationships), rights (legal relations) and solidarity (community of value) (p. 129, Figure 2). These recognition patterns cover developmental growth from childhood to adulthood, and in settings from the intimacy and privacy of home to the public sociality of workplace and civic sphere. Primary loving relationships address needs and emotions, provide emotional support and lead to basic self-confidence. Legal rights encourage moral responsibility and provide for self-respect. Solidarity with others in one's communities encourages the development of traits and abilities and with these, self-esteem. Disrespect in the form of physical abuse threatens one's physical integrity. Denial of rights or exclusion threatens one's social integrity, and denigration or insult threatens one's honour and dignity. I don't think it takes much effort to map these abstract patterns of relations of recognition onto our collective knowledge of what education in Aotearoa New Zealand does well, and not well at all, for children and their learning.

FREEDOM

But if these are the material possibilities for recognition, misrecognition and disrespect that children must learn to navigate, what are the institutional arrangements that may better provide for individual self-realisation, freedom and enhanced possibilities of leading an ethical life. On this issue, Honneth argues that "the 'official' spheres of law and morality merely serve as a means of detachment or reflexive examination" (Honneth, 2014, p. 127). By this, I think he means that the sorts of statements we rely on in terms of statutory guidance for adults: (i) children's rights generally (e.g., the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities); (ii) their rights to an education in Aotearoa (e.g., The Education and Training Act 2020); and (iii) the delegated obligations of early learning service and schools to operationalise these, are all of limited utility and effect in terms of what actually takes place in learning interactions.

For Honneth, we can only guarantee freedom (i.e. the possibility of self-realisation and leading an ethical life) by working towards "the spheres of action in which mutually complementary role obligations ensure that individuals can recognize each other's free activities as conditions for the realization of their own aims" (p. 127)

Now, if all this appears hopelessly abstract and removed from the day-to-day pragmatic concerns of education research, policy and practice, let me conclude by identifying some examples from our education history, where I think critically aware and critically engaged educators in Aotearoa have managed to establish precisely the sorts of complementary role obligations that provide for mutuality of recognition and greater freedom in children's learning.

CONCLUSION: ‘WALKING BACKWARDS INTO THE FUTURE’

In *Decolonizing Methodologies,* Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, pp. 185-189) discusses some of the commonalities, differences and tensions between Kaupapa Māori research and Western academic critical theory, noting that through: (i) localisation of the emancipatory goals of critical theory, (ii) strategic positioning of the researchers within these local struggles, (iii) personal positioning and identification of researchers as Māori; and (iv) involving whānau communities in the orientation, decision-making and work, kaupapa Māori research has managed to be critical and emancipatory in the sense of practical, community oriented and community empowering responses to the problems it surfaces.

This begs the question whether local, Aotearoa New Zealand focused, contextualised and reflexive critical theoretical efforts directed at children’s learning can be relevant to what we would all want to see as the more closely interwoven discursive threads of education research, policy and practice. I would argue passionately that it is, and on much same ethical basis to that identified by Māori researchers undertaking kaupapa Māori research. In English medium contexts, we might, then, usefully and humbly reappropriate that indigenous ethic as follows.

> *Any educational research that involves communities should set out to make a positive short or long-term benefit for the people involved through working respectfully with communities, sharing knowledge and processes*.

Fortunately, we do not start here with a blank slate. Some of the English medium educational initiatives that have made the most difference to the learning of children and young people over the decades, have been those where their proponents, on behalf of children, have adopted a broadly critical and reflexive stance toward the prevailing education settlement of the time and have taken more purposive and, often, courageously different paths instead. Let me offer here a few examples of: (i) learning site-based case studies; (ii) national policy innovation; (iii) cultural responsiveness; and (iv) providing opportunity for children’s voices on learning and education to be heard.

(i) case studies

In the Early World, The Hidden Lives of Learners, Colouring in the White Spaces

(ii) National policy innovation

The Early Childhood Curriculum Project, National Education Monitoring Project *(iii) Cultural responsiveness*

Te Kotahitanga, Developing Mathematical Inquiry Communities

(iv) Providing opportunity for children's voices to be heard

Education Matters to Me, Children's informal and everyday learning at home during COVID-19 lockdown, COMPASS

Nel Noddings (2003) famously observed that happiness in schools and classrooms should be a major aim of education. Hartmut Rosa (2019) has argued that the effects of social acceleration and alienation are mitigated when we are able to develop 'resonant' relationship with aspects of our natural, social and cultural worlds. And in a similar vein, Iris Murdoch has written how deep immersion in 'the good' enables us to discern a new reality beyond surface appearances.

> In intellectual disciplines, and in the enjoyment of art and nature we discover value in our ability to forget self, to be realistic, to perceive justly. We use our imagination not just to escape the world but to join it, and this exhilarates us because of the distance between our ordinary dulled consciousness and an apprehension of the real. (Murdoch, 1970, p. 90)

All the local educational initiatives listed on the screen in one way, or another, afford children richer opportunities to develop happiness, resonance, enjoyment and exhilaration in learning. Their originators have engaged in a critical yet practical realignment of immanent research, policy and practice norms over time, and provided learners with positive and engaging experiences of their natural, cultural and social worlds. In doing so they have given them an authentic sense of recognition, ascribed them positive status, and materially enhanced their freedom to learn as children.

Heoi anō.

He whakatauki mō tatou:

I orea te tuatara ka patu ki waho (A problem is solved by continuing to find solutions)

Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa

REFERENCES

Ball, S., & Junemann, C. (2012). *Networks, governance and education*. The Policy Press.

Bishop, R., & Glynn, T. (1999). *Culture counts: Changing power relations in education*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Census and Statistics Office (1921). *Results of a census of the dominion of New Zealand taken for the night of the 17 April 1921*. Appendices. Government Printer.

Department for Education & Ministry of Works and Development (1975). *Secondary schools for tomorrow: A new approach to design and construction.* NZ Department of Education.

Eisner, E. (2005). *The selected works of Elliot W. Eisner.* Routledge.

Flyvbjerg, B. (1998). *Rationality and power: Democracy in practice*. University of Chicago Press.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2001). *Making social science matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*. Cambridge University Press.

Gluckman, P. (2013). *The role of evidence in policy formation and implementation A report from the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor.* Office of the Prime Minister's Science Advisory Committee.

Han, B-C. (2015). *The burnout society*. Stanford Briefs.

Honneth, A. (2008). *Reification: A new look at an old idea*. Oxford University Press

Honneth, A. (1995). *The struggle for recognition: The moral grammar of social conflicts*. Trans. J. Anderson. Polity Press.

Honneth, A. (2014). *Freedom's right: The social foundations of democratic life*. Trans. J. Ganahl. Polity press.

Illeris, K. (2017). *How we learn: Learning and non-learning in school and beyond.* Second edn. Routledge.

Jaeggi, R. (2014). *Alienation*. Trans. F. Neuhouser & A. E. Smith. Columbia University Press.

Jaeggi, R. (2018). *Critique of forms of life*. Trans. C. Cronin. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Kliebard, H. M. (2002). *Changing course: American curriculum reform in the 20th century*. Teachers College Press

Milne, A. (2016). *Colouring in the white spaces. Reclaiming cultural identity in whitestream schools*. Peter Lang.

Mills, C. Wright (1959). *The sociological imagination*. Oxford University Press.

Munro, R. (1980). The Penrose whānau unit: A case study. *Set research information for teachers, number one*, item 2, unpaginated.

Murdoch, I. (1970). *The sovereignty of good*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

New Zealand School Trustees Association & Office of the Children's Commissioner (2018). *Education matters to me: Key insights.* https://www.occ.org.nz/publications/reports/education-matters-to-me-key-insights/

Noddings, N. (2003). *Happiness and education*. Cambridge University Press.

Nuthall, G. (2007). *The hidden lives of learners*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Penrose, L. S., & Penrose, R. (1958). Impossible objects: A special type of visual illusion. *British Journal of Psychology, 49*(1), 31-33.

Richardson, E. (1964). *In the early world*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Rosa, H. (2013). *Social acceleration: A new theory of modernity*. Trans. J. Trejo-Mathys. Columbia University Press.

Rosa, H. (2019). *Resonance: A sociology of our relationship to the world*. Trans. J. C. Wagner. Polity Press.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Zed Books & University of Otago Press.

Somerset, H. D. C. (1974). *Littledene: Patterns of Change*. Second. Edn. New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Taylor, C. (2004). *Modern social imaginaries*. Duke University Press.

Te Pae Roa (2022). *The future of Kaupapa Māori and Māori medium education. Report back and independent advice following Te Pae Roa's engagement process.* https://assets.education.govt.nz/public/Documents/our-work/information-releases/Issue-Specific-release/Grow-Maori-Medium/The-Future-of-Kaupapa-Maori-and-Maori-medium-education-Te-Pae-Roa-April-2022.pdf

Zurn, C. (2015). *Axel Honneth: A critical theory of the social*. Polity Press.