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Front cover: Beginning at kindergarten
On a visit to kindergarten, Zeke finds a friend, Narnya-Leigh, with a shared interest in sand and water.

Back cover: A circle of friends in full swing
Four big boys on the move and pushing the limits of balance and physics. From left Zion, Azayliaz (mostly obscured), Ben and Kade.

Contributions
Contributions of articles and photos are welcome from the early childhood community. Please keep copies of any contributions as we cannot guarantee to return what is sent. Cover photos need to be ‘high resolution’.

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Where next for Early Education?

Thank you to those subscribers who have helped us plot the course for another year of Early Education. There was strong support for maintaining the printed version of Early Education and 97% of those responding to our survey indicated they would pay more in order to retain the printed option. We will continue to explore on-line options for 2015. But for 2014, Early Education continues in its familiar printed form. 2014 subscriptions are now due.

Those of us who edit Early Education continue to see its importance in helping to knit together the diverse sections of the early childhood community and ensuring an affordable way that teachers can share their stories, as well as academics bringing their research into the country’s e.c.c. staff rooms for ongoing critique, debate and conversation.

Thank you also those subscribers who recognise that your subscriptions are needed to keep Early Education viable. We appreciate your ongoing commitment.
Hanging on to hope in troubled times

Ethics of care as foundation for pedagogies of relationality

Jenny Ritchie

As a multiplicity of environmental concerns emerge with increasing frequency and intensity, our awareness of the seriousness of the climate crisis deepens. On a daily basis as we witness the increasingly devastating effects of cyclones, droughts, huge floods and bushfires, along with ocean acidification, ozone depletion, freshwater shortages, species habitat destruction and extinction, chemical pollution, resource depletion, and earthquakes; the repercussion of which are exacerbating the impact on communities of the inequity of resource distribution, poverty, and war.

Our reaction to this overwhelming onslaught might be to retreat into our supposedly safe domain as early childhood education practitioners and academics, feel a sense of powerlessness, dismissing these ‘matters of concern’ (Latour, 2004).

Drawing from recent research, this paper focuses on pedagogical strategies to strengthen our relationality as global citizens, in both human and more-than-human realms. These strategies are founded in an ethic of care along with Maori concepts such as arohatanga, kia kikitinga, manaakitanga and wairuatanga.

Early childhood care and education

Almost 30 years ago, Carol Gilligan (1982) described how ethics of justice, care and nonviolence involve the notion of care for self and a recognition that interconnection enables relationality to transcend perceived differentials in ‘power’, inherent in "the vision that everyone will be responded to and included, that no one will be left alone or hurt" (p. 63). She saw the self and other as interdependent, and that “life, however valuable in itself, can only be sustained by care in relationships” (p. 127).

Laurent Daloz (1990) built on this notion of caring for the self as intrinsic to caring for others. For Daloz, “good teaching lies in a willingness to attend and care for what happens in our students, ourselves, and the space between us. Good teaching... is a stance of receptivity, of attunement, of listening”. He wrote that “If learning is about growth and growth is about trust, then teaching is about engendering trust, about nurturance, caring for growth. Teaching is thus preeminently an act of care” (Daloz, 1990, p. 237). Since the growth of trust diminishes "the need to protect a mask, each can afford to hear the other more fully and can learn more deeply. Thus the relationship becomes the caring context for the dialectic, the culture out of which a transforming synthesis can spring” (p. 183).

In exploring an ethic of care, Nel Noddings (1995/2007) argued for this fundamental principle: “Always act so as to establish, maintain, or enhance caring relations” (p. 188). For Noddings, dialogue is the medium for enactment of ethical relationality. “In addition to showing what it means to care, we engage our students in dialogue about caring. On one level, dialogue is such an essential part of caring that we could not model caring without engaging in it”. Further, she said that “Children need to participate in caring [my italics] with adult models who show them how to care, talk with them about the difficulties and rewards of such work, and demonstrate in their own work that caring is important” (Noddings, 1995, p. 191). Noddings positions an ethic of care as central to relationality with Others who are different to ourselves: “In both the ethic of alterity and the ethic of care, we seek to enhance the other's growth, but we do not threaten the other's Otherness, and we do not define for another exactly what he or she must do or be” (p. 196). “The ethic of care binds carers and cared-for in relationships of mutual responsibility” (Noddings, 1995, p. 190). This sits in marked in contrast to the prevailing individualism of Western capitalist endeavor. For Noddings, “a major aim of the ethic of care is to prevent the very separation that induces the dualisms exploiter/exploited, oppressor/oppressed, moral agent/object, and so on” (Noddings, 1995, p. 190). She invites a critical approach which “encourages us to stay in touch with our own feelings and accept our embodied condition” (p. 195), as we simultaneously strive to recognize, non-judgmentally, the emotionality of the

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1 This paper is based on a keynote presentation at the NZARE Early Childhood Special Interest Group hui, in Tauranga on 28th November, 2011.
Other. This is a relationality that is truly alive in responsive engagement between self and Other. This is also the reason why I choose to use the phrase ‘early childhood care’ and ‘education’, re-validating the care as central to our professional practice as teachers (Dalli, 2006).

Notions of care are intrinsic to Māori conceptualizations such as arāha, manaakitanga, wairuatanga and kaitiakitanga, which recognise our interdependence and interconnectedness as planetary cousins, along with trees, birds, insects, fish and other living creatures, fellow descendants of Papatuanuku and Ranginui, the Earth Mother and Sky Father. Rangimarie Rose Pere defines arāha as the commitment of people related through common ancestry; loyalty; obligation; an inbuilt support system; stability; self-sufficiency; and spiritual protection (Pere, 1982).

Māori, like other Indigenous peoples (Rose, 2002) have unique philosophies of sustainability located in place (Penetito, 2009). In offering manaakitanga, one’s mana is upheld through demonstrating care for others. Wairuatanga recognises the spiritual realm, and the interconnectedness of humans and the more-than-human within this. Kaitiakitanga is the obligation to actively care for the earth, sky, rivers, lakes, forests, wetlands and oceans and all co-habitants of these domains.

Responses to the current ecological crises might include a Western shift to similar forms of bioregional sustainabilities as were/are practiced by Māori and other Indigenous peoples. Bioregionalism is defined by Plant (1991) as “learning to become native to place, fitting ourselves to a particular place, not fitting a place to our pre-determined tastes. It is living within the limits and the gifts provided by a place, creating a way of life that can be passed on to future generations” (p. 216).

Edward Said also called for an “ethic of global caring” (1993, p. 21), and twenty years later, we saw the global ‘Occupy’ movement provide an example of this, as people reacted to the hugely inequitable distribution of economic resources being exacerbated by the greed of late neoliberal capitalism (D’Annibale & McLaren, 2009). In Culture and imperialism, his exposé of the “hegemony of imperial ideology”, Said (1993) called for “critical awareness of the embeddedness of this legacy in our academic canons and their complicity in maintaining hegemonic consent to imperialism” (p. 12). In this country, since 1975, when the then Labour government gave legislative recognition to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, for many of us our particular and unique national response has been proactive decolonisation with Te Tiriti o Waitangi the guiding frame. And from 1996, in early childhood, Te Whāriki, (Ministry of Education, 1996) has served as our map. Te Whāriki remains a profoundly visionary document in its demonstrable recognition of the Tangata Whenua/Tangata Tiriti relationship and validation of relationality aspects such as emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Te Whāriki is indeed a ‘tino taonga’ of early childhood education, valued nationally and internationally.

In research we also should also be enacting this ethic of care in regard to the ‘Other’ (Smith, 1999). I want to acknowledge my longstanding research relationship with Cheryl Rau which has underpinned our three projects funded by the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) (Ritchie, Duhn, Rau, & Craw, 2010; Ritchie & Rau, 2006, 2008). This research has aimed at working with teachers committed to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its expression within Te Whāriki to illuminate pedagogical possibilities of enactment based in this commitment. I honour also the wisdom and work of those wonderful teachers, children and families who have been part of the studies.

Our philosophy for our research methodology has been to engage in a dialogical critical approach, consistent with the work of Noddings (2007), Daloz (1990), and of course, Paulo Freire (1972), whereby we have sought to provide spaces for people to share narratives of their experience (Clandinin, 2007). It has truly been our privilege to have shared these research journeys with our teacher colleagues, children and families, and their wider communities also.

As part of a research collaboration led by Professor Gaile Cannella of the University of North Texas, Cheryl Rau, Mere Skerritt and I have been exploring a Deleuze-Guattarian-inspired “everyday and immanent practice” of ethics which will enable a critical analysis of policy and pedagogical inclusions and exclusions of young children:

Underlying this theory of practice is the view that social organization results from a spontaneous, creative and open-ended process of actualization, in which social forms emerge and transform as an effect of the shifting relations of power that bodies enter into. This view compels a renewed focus on agency and the ethics of relations between bodies. Above all, Deleuze insists that each self has a primary responsibility to cultivate and practice an attitude of relation to others that enables the emergence of ethical social forms (Bignall, 2007, p. 208).

In light of the current increasing awareness of ecological crisis, and in keeping with Indigenous epistemologies, the ‘Others’ in our frame include the earth and the ‘more-than-human’ with whom we co-inhabit our planet (Haraway, 2008).

Here in New Zealand, the ‘Rena’ ecological crisis near Tauranga has rammed (literally) home to us that our geographical remoteness does not automatically grant us immunity from ecological crises. In a recent talk in London, I asked:

What pedagogical responses are possible in the face of such blatant disrespect and disregard for our positioning as inter-related members of our biosphere? How can it be that the ordinary people of the world have been so dispossessed of the power to protect their children and their land and seas that these disasters are occurring? (Ritchie, 2011, p. 2).
Some answers to these questions are evident in our TLRI research.

The first example comes from Marion Dekker who was head teacher at Maungatapu Kindergarten in Tauranga (Ritchie et al., 2010). Marion picked up on an idea from the teachers of Richard Hudson Kindergarten in Dunedin who had identified in their initial review of current practice, that their 'kindergarten treaty' was an aspect of generating an ethic of caring that they already had in place at their centre, which included five topics to keep children safe and happy, such as not hurting other children.

So this notion of a 'Kindergarten Treaty' idea intrigued Marion, and she wrote:

2/5/08 Ideas and Thoughts for our Treaty Developing a Treaty

We were keen to explore the concepts of manaakitanga through the kindergarten environment by using the Treaty concepts to share ideas such as: care for self/ others and the environment. Through honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Article 2, talks about the care for lands, forests and fisheries. As a team, at the beginning of each new term we talk with the children about a contract which allows them to think about what is okay and not okay behaviour. The children understood the notion of a 'deal' together to keep yourself/others safe, and respecting our environment. Quickly we were able to establish an agreement. Signing the Treaty allowed the children to take ownership to this process and intention of the content, empowering the children to self and peer monitor. We talked with the children about 'What is a Treaty?' and 'Why is it important to have one?'

Maungatapu Kindergarten—creating our treaty

During the data collection stage of our second TLRI project (Ritchie & Rau, 2008), the Māori Queen, Te Arikinui Dame Aitairangi Kahu died. It appeared that for a period of the week of her tangihanga that our entire nation mourned the loss of this beloved leader. Educators, children and their whānau/families participating in the study were clearly touched by this event.

Maungatapu Kindergarten teachers recorded the following mat-time discussion, an example of their proactivity in focussing on this important kaupapa:

Teacher (T): Something special has been happening on the news on TV that is very sad but very special for Māori people. Does anyone know what has been happening?

Child (C): The Māori Queen died. I just knew 'cos Josh told me that the Māori Queen died.

T: Tino pai and that was really, really sad as, you know what? She was a fantastic lady and she was fantastic for the Māori people because she brought everyone together like one big group like a team so they are really going to miss her and it was a really special day for the Māori people.

C: The Māori lady made, the Queen made another lady to get all her people to help.

T: Yes she did and I wonder is there going to be a new Queen or is there going to be a King?

C: A King. Both of them and a new Queen.

T: The Māori Queen has a son, her oldest son, and he's going to be the new Māori King. I was just thinking I noticed on the TV there was something special about where she was living. Did anyone remember what her house looked like?

C: It was like at my brother's school.

T: I think maybe they had a special time when they came together to remember Te Ata but did anyone
remember when they looked at the TV did they see anything special about where she was living?

C: I know about Queens and Kings. Kings and Queens live in castles.

T: Some live in castles but do you know where Dame Te Ata lived? We could see all the Māori people standing together but behind them I could see something that looked a little bit like… (points to kindergarten wharehui).

C: Different.

T: It was a bit different - but look she’s giving you a good clue.

C: Maraee.

T: A maraee that they lived on and on that marae there was a house a special house that they lived in. It was a little bit like our—what’s the name of our beautiful building that we have made here?

C: Carvings. Māori carvings.

In this transcript, we saw the teacher firstly drawing the children’s attention to the significant event of the death of Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu. She then made links to the wharehui that had been constructed at the kindergarten, and encourages children to reflect on tikanga and their own experiences of wharehui.

Galbraith Kindergarten in Ngāruawahia attended the tangihanga of Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu and documented the event by creating a book:

Today our Tamariki had a wonderful discussion about the Māori Queen, Dame Te Atairangikaahu. We talked about her and the tangi and what our children had learned about the Māori Queen and the protocol surrounding her tangi. Our tamariki had the opportunity of being at the centre of it all and for some it was the first time they had experienced a tangi. This was an amazing experience for all of us and may be the only opportunity our tamariki ever have of being at a tangi of this magnitude and importance. To honour Dame Te Atairangikaahu’s memory we made a book of all the newspaper cuttings that children had brought in to kindergarten. Our Friday morning children cut out the clippings and glued them on to cardboard which we laminated.

Pera Paekau and Pat Leyland from Bellmont Kindergarten—Te Kupenga in Hamilton described for Cheryl and me how they supported each other and their kindergarten whānau through this period while Pera was deeply involved in the tangi:

Pat: Every day we would dedicate our karakia to Te Atairangikaahu and to Pera, because we missed her, and every day we would talk about what Pera was doing out there and why it was important, and when she came back she could tell us about what did happen. And you sang karanga for us and some of the things that happened for the waka, all those things you did actually in a loud strong voice, and I reckon since that happening you’ve used the reo more and more in the centre. And I think I remember you saying that that was one of the things that gave you so much strength was that whole week of the tangi, and from there the book was made with all the pictures and the children’s words.

I think that was the most exceptional thing was what the children said. And four-year-olds saying something like “The Māori Queen died and she was like the rain and the wind”. That is very, very strong and so even while Pera was away every day we had newspaper cuttings on the board and children would stand there or sit there and talk about what was happening and why people were crying and then they’d talk about their Grandmas or Granddads who died and their dogs who died and pets and I think it helped them understand what it meant for someone to die. And

The Wharehui at Maungatapu Kindergarten

C: A wharehui.

T: Well done and what happens in the wharehui then I wonder?

C: You take your shoes off.

T: You do and why do you take your shoes off?

C: ‘Cos you might get dirty feet. Get the wharehui dirty, it might make it dirty. You might have muddy feet.

T: What do you think they might do in a wharehui? Have you been to a wharehui, J.?

C: It wasn’t a real one it was only at the museum.

T: What did it look like?

C: It was really cold.

T: It was quite cold was it? What did you see in the wharehui?
the parents were involved with the conversations and would come and talk about what the children were saying at home to what was happening there as well.

Children were drawing pictures at home and bringing them in to the kindergarten. Here is one example:

Laura's drawing of the “Māori Queen in her box” on Taupiri Mountain

The following year, through their Tainui connections, Bellmotel Kindergarten -Te Kupenga was invited to attend the unveiling ceremony on the anniversary of the passing of Te Arikinui Dame Te Ataiona. The teachers carefully prepared the children first, practicing what they would experience at the powhiri.

Pat: And then we went to Tiritirangawaewae, we were waiting outside on River Road and then just before we went in they started the ‘HEI RUNGA, HEI RARO’ and two of the boys I was with, their ears pricked up and: “That’s what Pera said”, so it was familiar, and so when they went on everyone was very calm, very peaceful, they weren’t confused. They just followed the grown-ups and sat on chairs and listened and when they got restless we gave them little bags of goodies....

We were a mixed bunch. We were a few Māori and mostly Pākehā, so we kind of stood out a bit because we were very white. Not everybody came so that the people were the ones who wanted to come and the other thing was we’d actually taught them what to do or talk to them about what they were doing; we had the display about the marae out there, and people could see what was happening, and so they were prepared.

Pera: And the thing about it, I’d like to acknowledge the parents, they all wore the black kakahu, you know to show respect ... and it was just beautiful how they just got together as a whanau and we went and it was quietly done, and our tamariki were just ...

Pat: Beautiful. And they were calm, they were very peaceful. No one was running around screaming; they were laughing and talking to each other—but totally at ease. What was also special was our Whaea brought along her daughter and the two of them sat and talked to our Mums about what it meant and I think that’s what they needed to hear was what was going on, what were people saying, what was the procedure, because they were sitting there seeing the whole thing—it’s all very well to talk about it at a distance, but when you’re right there it’s also comforting to have people saying what’s happening—reassuring. Whaea was helping us and guiding us all the while and just reminding us gently all the time, “This is what you need to do.” She was our kaitiaki and it certainly showed in how the parents responded and she would sit and talk to the Mums and explain things to them before, during and after, so this is how it could happen because we had the support and all this aroha just given to us very gently and very lovingly.

It is apparent from the above narratives, the careful, caring way in which these teachers worked on these relationships.

In 2011 several weeks after the groundings of the Rena on the Astrolabe Reef near Tauranga, I revisited the teachers, children and some parents of Papamoa Kindergarten in Tauranga, interested in finding out how they had been responding to their local environmental crisis. The Rena had grounded in the first week of the holidays, which had allowed a little time for the teachers to prepare their approach prior to the recommencement of sessions. They decided to set up some provocations, in order to allow children to express their understandings and feelings regarding what they were experiencing.
At an afternoon mat-time, they recorded the following discussion from the children:

B1: My dinosaur was saving the big shark and he was a rescue dinosaur. And my shark ate the oil.

B2: Containers have fallen off the boat. Though, the red boat that’s stuck. The Rena. It’s going side-to-side and they’re going to get the oil out. Rena’s friends are going to help her.

L: The Rena spilled. All the oil went out of the boat into the water.

N: There were 100 boxes and it killed a duck. Uncle Blake’s car floated away.

J: The boat got stuck. My dinosaur saved the whales and the boats and stingray and the dolphin. The penguins were covered in oil too.

D: I saw a black bird covered in the oil on the beach.

The disturbing sight of oil-coated birds provoked several children to produce stories where imaginary creatures rescue the situation. Later the children were observed enacting similar themes outside in the kindergarten river.

B1: Look at all the oil in the water (pretending stones are oil). I’m the rescue man (picking stones up).

[B1 and A go inside and bring out sea creatures and dinosaurs.]

B1: Mine’s a rescue dinosaur. It’s eating the oil, so is the stingray.

J: My dinosaur is picking up the oil and bouncing it on the rocks.

A: Help! Help! My whale is stuck in the oil.

J: I’ll help you.

Children attending a morning session shared their understandings of the situation:

J: The shells are talking to us from the ocean. Telling us the stories. These are magic shells. This one is saying there is oil on the dolphins and the crabs. My friend Mike has got a big burroo and he can get the oil.

B: I want to get out of this water. I want to move to a different beach. Do you know where Bay Farm is? There’s a bridge and lots of water, clean water.

J: More containers are tipping off. We need lots of big boats to help.

B: He was a big fella and he got too drunk... Too fat to drive the boat. The police took him cos he crashed the boat. He can’t see.

M: Maybe he fell asleep.

J: Look what happened and that bird! Oil.

J2: Maybe his curtains were shut.

D: Maybe some water splashed onto his window so he couldn’t see.

S: The guys didn’t see where the reef was.

B: We can’t go to our beach. We will have to go to M’s Spain beach.

S: Do you know why the boat got stuck in the ocean? Because the reef is so big in the ocean...

D: The sea told me there is oil in the sea.

S: The boat got stuck, the reef made it stop.

Teacher: What’s a reef?

S: A mountain under the sea.

E: The oil has come in on the rocks.

T: The other boat is pumping oil off the boat.

K: How can they clean up the oil? Maybe all the māori and army will pick the oil off the beach and the rubbish trucks.

M2: I saw big lumps in the water.

C: You can’t swim in it or you’ll die.

M: I am sad about the oil.

T: Why are you sad?

M: Because there’s a big crack.

T: What do you think will happen to the crack?

M: The oil will come and go in a big hole.

These teachers created openings for children to express not only their theories, but also their feelings and concerns. On the Monday before I visited, they had been on an excursion for a walk around Mauao, (Mt Maunganui) encountering first hand Air Force personnel engaged in clean-up procedures. In their first four days these Air Force volunteers had picked up two and half tonnes of oil-impregnated sand.

During my visit, photos from their excursion were being circulated as further provocation. Children had produced pictures and stories. Their understandings were complex and detailed, and their art stories, dialogue and play demonstrates the resonance that they feel for their beach, the sea and its creatures.

The teachers gently opened up space for the children to explore their feelings and understandings in relation to the desecration of their foreshore and the ocean birds and other creatures whose lives were destroyed. The sense of connection was evident, as was the children’s grief at the loss. This embodied connectedness with our places is a source of collective healing enacted through an ethic of mutual care. It resonates with Australian anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose’s work drawing on the knowledge of Australian Indigenous peoples (Rose, 2002). This notion of an ethic of care is embedded within pedigrees of place and enacted through kāinga Māori conceptualisations (Ritchie & Rau, 2013a, 2013b).

This connectivity is potentially empowering. It enables a
becoming that calls us to take care of the places and people with whom we are connected. It offers an expanded concept of self, and thus an expanded concept of self-interest. It reconfigures dialogue to include place, and brings us face to face with the real here and now of our lives. A permeable and becoming self is an unfinished project and thus invites considerations of mutual care. An ethic of care could thrust itself into our bodies and minds through awareness of our own unfinished vulnerability. Ecological selves require an ecological dialogue in order to sustain the country in the self and the self in the country. The early childhood care and education sector is ideally positioned to provide children and families with support in enhancing this dialogue of caring for self, others and the environment.

References:


