

Researching an everyday teacher in 1940s New Zealand: New liaisons—New stories.

Kerry Bethell

Massey University College of Education

Alison Sewell

Massey University College of Education



Image 1: Audrey Newton and friends – c 1935.

The metaphor of knitting as seen in this image is used here to represent the joining together of two distinct research methodologies.

Photos from Audrey Newton's collection (private ownership).

The growth of interest in historical research into the commonplace provides opportunities to explore the different means through which we can understand the everyday world of teachers. Unlike the 'well-known' in education past, where significant traces of their lives remain in archives and official records, little such evidence exists of the lives and work of 'ordinary' teachers. Traditional biographical approaches are of limited use. Alternative approaches are needed to find teachers' stories of their everyday work.

This paper explores our dynamic research process to piece together a partial story of the work of Miss Audrey Newton, a New Zealand kindergarten teacher in the 1940s. Fragments of evidence including photographs and other personal sources provide previously unknown evidence of Audrey's life over this time and glimpses into her experience of teaching. Also significant was our collaborative relationship that evolved bringing together historical and dialogic methodologies. These newly found sources of data, and our collaborative analysis of them, reveal a fuller and more complex picture of Audrey and of the context in which she taught than first considered.

Keywords: Research collaboration, cultural-historical theory, teachers' work

INTRODUCTION

The growth of interest in historical research into the commonplace provides opportunities to explore new ways to understand the everyday world of teachers. However, it is difficult to research everyday worlds when few material traces remain and when it is rarely possible to interview the teachers or their contemporaries. Historical research has traditionally given emphasis to men as makers of educational history. Women were largely excluded from the historical record. The growth of the women's history since the 1970s has challenged this 'great man' approach to history arguing the need to include the experiences of women into history. Women's lives matter. This recasting of historical scholarship saw growth of research on the work of well-known women teachers, such as Elizabeth Peabody, Susan Isaacs and New Zealand's Sylvia Ashton-Warner. Women portrayed for their masculine qualities of influence, power and 'institution building' (Eisenmann (2001). Other research took as their focus the minutiae of daily life arguing that the experience of common people had long been ignored and sought to give them voice. Questions of agency and resistance formed much of this new work. Women were viewed not as victims but as active participants in shaping the historical record. This new focus called for a new way of researching that, in the paucity of textual sources, recognized and brought to the fore women's experience as the basis for research (Smith, 1987).

The focus of this paper is an everyday teacher in the 1940s—Miss Audrey Newton—a teacher positioned alongside women in educational leadership including Miss Enid Wilson and Miss Elizabeth Stewart Hamilton. To research women's experiences of teaching, required material written by them about their experiences. Central to our emergent methodological approach was the discovery and use of unpublished materials, both organizational and personal. In this paper we trace the development of a new approach to research the everyday work of teachers. We document how data generation and analysis tools were used from two previously distinct research fields: sociocultural and historical/biographical methods to form a new approach to understand the everyday world of teachers. The story we tell of the everyday teacher began to emerge when we found, typically by chance, personal papers and images previously hidden in cupboards and boxes,

their significance previously unrealized. These personal materials contained the essence of Audrey's story of teaching that was about to unfold.

Images from a photograph album compiled by Audrey Newton, a New Zealand kindergarten teacher in the 1940s were first analyzed using historical methods but as new fragments of evidence were found, such as diary entries, personal letters, archival and official records, a previously unknown and richer story of her teaching world in the 1930s and 40s emerged. The story deepens, however, when these fragments of evidence are further analyzed using sociocultural tools, including three foci of analysis (Rogoff, 2003) and when they are subjected to an ongoing 'dialogic inquiry' (Wells, 2001) between Kerry (first author) and Alison (second author and daughter of the subject—Audrey). The social situation and the cultural context of Audrey's teaching were reconstructed when certain observations of her teaching were brought to the foreground for analysis. This emergent, dialogic and collaborative process of bringing together Kerry's understandings of historical/biographical research and Alison's experiences of sociocultural research and her personal recollections, created a far richer and contextualized story of Audrey's everyday work as a teacher.

As researchers with different methodological backgrounds, it is important to explore the new theoretical framework we came to work within. Contemporary sociocultural theorists argue that teacher development is a social and cultural phenomenon. Hedegaard and Fler (2008) argue that development does not exist within the teacher but rather takes place when the teacher participates in the activities of the cultural-historical community - 'trying to understand development by focusing only on the level of the individual ... or only on practice or context are seen as insufficient' (Fler, Hedegaard and Trudge, 2009, 11). Post-Vygotskian theories have raised the significance of cultural-historical explanations of learning and development, using the umbrella term of sociocultural-historical theory (Anning, Cullen and Fler, 2008). Accordingly, we use this term here to acknowledge the important contribution of culture and history to discovering and understanding the story of Audrey's work as a kindergarten teacher in the 1940s.

Framed from this sociocultural-historical perspective, the embeddedness of her development in the cultural-historical dialectic is fore-grounded to reveal a more complex story than first considered. The evolution of our new research relationship enabled us to capture the mutually constituting nature of the social interactions and the cultural context of the 1940s to reveal a dynamic representation of Audrey's development as a teacher – development that was far from individual and static.

Two separate, but linked features are told in this paper. The dominant feature reconstructs our unplanned, emergent and collaborative processes involved in bringing together historical/biographical and sociocultural research methods. The process of inter-subjectivity is emphasized to show how new meanings were created in ongoing conversations around the data as it emerged. This emergent story of Audrey's work in teaching forms the second feature of the paper. As we describe the process of bringing together our separate research approaches, we reveal deeper layers of Audrey's work as a kindergarten teacher. Our sociocultural-historical analysis of these data enabled us to see Audrey's development as a kindergarten teacher as a mutually-defined process with the people she worked with. We also saw her work as occurring within the gendered, political and educational context of the 1930s and 40s—a context built around contemporary interest in progressive educational ideals, the primacy of marriage and motherhood, and the increasing employment and educational opportunities for women. Our new research liaisons enabled us to see the 'unseen but imagined view over the horizon' (Clark, 2006, 197). The paper foregrounds one of these two features while temporarily holding the other in the background so as to capture the interplay between our developing research relationship and Audrey's story as it unfolded.

The structure of this paper reflects the development of our collaborative research relationship. The first section of the paper foregrounds the separate nature of our initial research work from which only the bare facts of Audrey's story were revealed. The second section, explores how we began to draw on work together, drawing on our distinct research fields. This early collaboration is then placed in the background to show how it captured a developing narrative around Audrey's experience of teaching, her engagement with mentors, her involvement in a salary claim, her promotion and her resignation. The third section examines the transformation of our research relationship wherein new data generation and analysis tools led us to see the impact of social, cultural and historical context on Audrey's development as a teacher. We then foreground one curriculum innovation Audrey initiated in response to the children's interest in building. The final section takes a meta-perspective of our new research liaisons and considers the nature of its evolution and the value of joint participation that brings together two distinct methodologies. We argue that our new research partnership enabled us to discover the complexities inherent in the everyday work of a teacher. We further argue that by sharing these stories of the past, we can better support the development of teachers' pedagogical repertoire today.

THE UNPLANNED RESEARCH BEGINS

'My mother was a kindergarten teacher' (Alison)

Our research has its origins in 1999 with a chance conversation between Alison and Kerry in the staffroom of our University. Alison, involved in primary teacher education, began to talk about her recollections of her mother's work as a kindergarten teacher in the 1940s. Kerry, an early years teacher educator and historian, with interests in education reform movements and biographical approaches, listened with interest, and offered to see what information could be discovered on her next visit to the archives. A basic search of the Wellington Free Kindergarten Association (WFKA) records in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington revealed bare threads—mainly factual: Audrey had entered kindergarten teacher training in 1938 at the age of 17 years, worked at Ngaio kindergarten and resigned in 1946. It was noted that a Mrs Newton served on the kindergarten committee and Kerry wondered about a possible family connection. Kerry passed the information on to Alison thinking this simple archival search would mark the end of the task.

But Kerry's findings sparked Alison's interest and memory. Her mother had compiled a photo album covering the decade after leaving school which on new viewing was found to include images of Audrey teaching. News of the photos in turn sparked Kerry's interest in the use of visual images as important historical data. The images, once interpreted, had potential to provide clues as to how Audrey perceived and experienced teaching; useful clues for historical analysis. Gaining permission from Audrey's family, Kerry began her own process of historical analysis and research of Audrey's work in kindergarten.

Alison knew little about her mother's teaching and, keen to know more, supported Kerry's interest. She explains further:

I wondered why Mum had gone teaching and why she had resigned. I also wondered if she shared my view that teaching was about a relationship in which both teacher and children can contribute. My respect for Kerry's work as a historian and as a colleague gave me the confidence to share the photos with her—photos that remained in my family home. Surprisingly, looking at these photos with Kerry revealed more about my identity—as a teacher, teacher-educator, researcher, and as her daughter (Alison).

What began as an unplanned project began to evolve in un-anticipated ways. Distinctly

separate and unquestioned research roles initially unfolded: Kerry as ‘the researcher’ and Alison primarily as ‘Audrey’s daughter’ and supplier of information for Kerry.

Kerry widened her archival work further exploring the photos to see what they could tell about how Audrey perceived and experienced teaching, and also how they could be used as the basis for historical analysis in their own right (Rose, 2001). Visual images offer opportunities for exploring both ‘the material realities of schooling’ and ‘social relations and technologies they simultaneously constrain and enable’ (Vick 2009, 82).

Audrey’s photo album covered the period between when she left school in 1937 and her marriage sixteen years later in 1952. Among the over 200 photographs, many of family and friends, were a number that appeared to be of her teaching in kindergarten. With permission from Alison and her father to copy selected photos for research, and after reading further around the use of visual images in historical research, Kerry began the process of analysis and identification using Rose’s (2001) work on visual methodology.

Further visits to the archives found crucial evidence adding support to earlier readings of the visual images. Alison also discovered diary entries written by Audrey over her first week of kindergarten teacher training. By bringing together these fragments of evidence from the past, both visual and textual, their meaning expanded. Fragments of story lines emerged to illuminate aspects of Audrey’s work as a kindergarten teacher. Short descriptive pieces of historical life narrative contributed new and often surprising information about the everyday work of kindergarten teachers in the 1940s. Themes such as Audrey’s career progress, the centrality of her agency in pedagogical change and curriculum innovation are examined elsewhere (Sewell and Bethell, 2009).



Image 2: Audrey Newton (far right) and school friends.
Photos from Audrey Newton’s collection (private ownership).

Audrey's story: Becoming a kindergarten teacher

The youngest child of a well-established Wellington family, Audrey Newton grew up in the comfortable suburb of Roseneath where she attended Hataitai School. Her secondary education took place at the private girls' school, Queen Margaret College. Audrey's educational achievements were more of a practical nature, such as needlecraft and dressmaking rather than the academic. Upon leaving school, Audrey entered kindergarten teacher training with the Wellington Free Kindergarten Association (WFKA).ⁱ With her mother a council member of the association, and involved in its fundraising and recruiting endeavours, Audrey would have been well aware of kindergarten teaching as an appropriate post-school choice.

In 1938, Audrey satisfied the selection panel that she was aged 17 or over, in good health (having undergone a medical examination), had at least two years secondary schooling, and was of good character. She paid the annual fee of £5/5/0 and commenced training. Later Audrey's records her excitement and tentativeness in her diary:

First day at kindergarten—couldn't stay in bed any longer—up at 6.30—fixed petticoat...and left far too early for Kind[ergarten]. Lovely morning—boat harbour very colourful....arrived too early!! ...met the other four students Marion Webster, Rosemary Jack and Jean Kemp, an awfully nice girl whom I would like to be friends. We *observed!* all the morning. Simply stunning work—awfully thrilled.... Got medically examined for a *Teachers' Profession*. I don't feel like a teacher—yet.ⁱⁱ

On day three, she *'felt quite treacherous when a new little chap hailed me with a 'good morning, teacher' ?* Audrey, along with her fellow students, spent her days assisting in one of six kindergartens that operated in the city during the mornings and in a study and lecture programme in the afternoons.

After two years Audrey, having fulfilled course requirements, graduated in a ceremony at the Banqueting Room at the Exhibition Buildings. Masses of roses and asparagus fern decorated the stage and the tea tables where afternoon tea was served.ⁱⁱⁱ Mrs Peter Fraser, wife of the then Minister of Education, presented the Kindergarten Teaching Diplomas. Audrey took up a position as Assistant Director at Wellington South Kindergarten under responsible to Miss Enid Wilson and later, at Ngaio Kindergarten. In 1942, she was shifted to Berhampore Kindergarten.



Image 3: Audrey Newton and kindergarten children, Photos from Audrey Newton's collection (private ownership).

Audrey embarked upon the obligatory pathway for girls of her class and background, one shaped around prevailing gendered and class relations and, ideologies of domesticity (Beattie, 1995; Bethell, 1998; May, 1997). Domestic ideologies were built on social relations that aligned women with the private sphere of domesticity and men with the public world of work. Two central beliefs were significant: firstly that a fundamental difference existed between men and women and secondly, that these differing identities and accompanying roles were seen to be complementary, in that women's unpaid work in the home supported men's participation in paid work (Bethell, 1998, p. 19). Women were believed to be ideally equipped for kindergarten work because they possessed an innate maternal tendency; kindergarten training being a preparation for marriage and motherhood.

Young women could only enter kindergarten teaching if their fathers were able to financially support them through the two years of training, and to then supplement their small wage. Kindergarten Associations widely promoted the teaching of young children as *preparing* young women for marriage and motherhood giving it a respectability that gained parental and social approval. The then Minister of Education, the Hon. Peter Fraser articulated the prevailing thinking in 1937 to say, 'the girls who volunteered for the work, volunteered, not for a living, but for a mission. No one would question the value of the work.'^{iv}

In this phase the analysis undertaken was tentative. A conference paper was prepared and delivered by Kerry to early childhood teachers and academics at the Early Childhood Symposium in Christchurch in 2002. A year later, Kerry presented to colleagues at Massey University, this time with a greater emphasis on the use of the visual as a research tool. The public telling of Audrey's story brought both interest and recognition and in turn uncovered further sources of data from audience members. A kindergarten colleague and close friend of Audrey's brought valuable new data and assistance in naming some individuals in the images.

This initial phase of the research ended with Kerry and Alison both enrolling in their prospective doctoral studies. Kerry's plans to publish this research were put on hold.

THE RESEARCH BECOMES COLLABORATIVE

The conversation is becoming ours

In 2008, doctoral studies complete, Kerry invited Alison to co-author the paper she had earlier conceived of but never written. Kerry's motivation stemmed from needing to balance the demands of publishing her doctoral findings with meeting her concern as to how she could meet her commitment to publish Audrey's story. Alison's motivations were twofold: personal interest in her mother's story and to engage in a collaborative exercise as an antidote to the individual pursuit of writing her doctorate.

I saw my role as a supportive one to get 'Kerry's' paper published. It was her paper—I was 'helping her' ... with my memories of Mum and sharing the resources I knew she had kept (Alison).

This marked the beginning of a collaborative relationship as co-researchers. A meeting, later known as the 'big meeting' was held to map out the paper. For Alison, this meeting brought realization that she could bring more to the task than just helping Kerry. She quickly realized the expertise she could contribute to this research.

Kerry also found the 'big meeting' transformative as she too realised the possibilities of a collaborative research relationship. The meeting also gave her greater clarity around her initial

assumption of ‘ownership’ of the data as well as the possibilities of bringing their respective theoretical approaches to the interpretation of the images and newly acquired data. The end of the meeting not just conceptualized one, but two papers.

Fridays at Alison’s home became a regular day for research and writing over 2008 and 2009. In the dialogue that emerged Kerry and Alison began to see Audrey’s teaching as being shaped, and shaped by the social, cultural and historical conventions of that time such as gendered class differences, notions of work and the primacy of marriage and motherhood. The dialogue around the data, using these cultural-historical lenses allowed relevant aspects of the context to be brought into the foreground, and in doing so, extend the earlier interpretations. By drawing on two methodologies a far richer story than first imagined was emerging.

Their earlier roles of Kerry as ‘the historian’ and Alison ‘the subject’s daughter’ also changed as they wrote the two papers.

The conversation became ours... and it continued over the regular Friday meetings. Alison placed Audrey’s photo on the table and we sipped tea using Audrey’s blue Aynsley china to keep her presence to the fore. We ate French pastries starting our own tradition. (Kerry)

Alison was hooking into historical research and Kerry was beginning to see the value of a sociocultural approach to research. To study the interpersonal in regard to Audrey required the need to bring into focus different players: Misses Enid Wilson, the Association’s Director, Elizabeth Stewart Hamilton (Head teacher of Wellington South Kindergarten, Audrey’s mother, Grace Newton, and her friend and ex kindergarten trainee, Loma Jones. To further understand Audrey’s story the cultural-historical context of the times was brought to the foreground. The low salary paid to teachers, although recognised as pin money and not intended as a living wage, had for some time been a matter of concern for the Association and its teachers. Concern at the low numbers of applicants applying to train and the high turnover of teachers was regularly expressed, as was the case at Audrey’s graduation. *‘We are not proud of our salaries paid to our fine teaching staff,’* said Mrs Alfred Kidd, President of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union.^v

Audrey’s story continues: Seeking a salary increase

On one memorable occasion teachers took the matter of their salaries into their own hands. In June 1942, Audrey joined the Directors and Assistant Directors of the five Wellington kindergartens at a special staff meeting. After discussion, the staff unanimously decided: ‘that existing salaries being so far below present day requirements, the council should be approached and be made aware of our position.’ A letter was written and signed by the 11 teaching staff including Audrey Newton, excerpts of which are reported here:

Although we are loath to make demands of this nature at the present time, the staff still feel that they are unable to carry on without further financial assistance... The staff also feel that provision should be made for superannuation... Girls would then feel encouraged to remain in the work, knowing that their financial position was improving with years of service... The staff wishes to assure the Council of their interest in and appreciation of kindergarten work but, conditions remaining as they are, several members feel impelled to resign their positions at an early date. We are confident that your members will realize the urgency of this matter and that in the immediate future more adequate provision will be made.^{vi}

The Council's response was immediate, aware perhaps of wartime wages and increased employment opportunities for women and of the disturbing prospect of losing their few qualified staff. A promise of increased salaries was given pending the action required to raise the necessary funds. In September, staff received their salary increases with a note informing them that no further increases would be considered until February 1944. Audrey Newton's salary increased by almost 50% from £95 to £135 per annum.^{vii}

The decision to ask for salary increases would not have been an easy one to make, especially during wartime when anti-materialistic beliefs abounded. Such industrial action challenged the ladylike, voluntary and charitable nature of kindergarten teachers at this time. The teachers would have required courage and conviction to face Council members, especially in Audrey's case as her own mother, Grace Newton, was one of these worthy women whose voluntary work ensured their positions as kindergarten teachers. As Margaret Tennant argues, while "doing good" for others was a socially sanctioned pretext for women to gather together, but to 'do good' for themselves was not' (Tennant, 1993, 109).

In the reconstruction of this previously forgotten incident, yet more questions emerged such as why Grace Newton, after serving since 1936, resigned from the Council, the same month as the demand came for increased salaries. With her daughter's signature on the letter, did she feel her position as a Council member was untenable? Shortly after this time, the Council set a policy requiring members to resign should their daughter take up studentships or teaching positions. Nor is Audrey's voice heard in the evidence found. Did she sign the letter because she supported the action taken or did she feel she had to comply?

Audrey's story continues: Promotion and resignation

In 1943 Audrey was promoted to Assistant Director of kindergarten teacher training in Wellington. The early 1940s had brought increased student numbers into kindergarten training bringing pressure on Enid Wilson as Director. Despite concern about her youth and experience, Miss Wilson expressed then, and later, her faith in Audrey's capacity saying she 'brings many qualities to the position, despite her youth.'^{viii} A year later, Miss Wilson reported *'the training work has been greatly facilitated by Miss Audrey Newton as Assistant Supervisor. Miss Newton has ably pioneered this new position. She is a young member of staff who shows great promise.'*^{ix}

Loma Jones provides a student's perception of Audrey's work in teacher education.

It is not too much to say that for me personally Audrey was a mentor of great importance in my life. She gave me faith in myself and taught me that I could be a very good kindergartener and I ended up being one of the top students of my year, which for me was a miracle. She was very loveable and loving, and in her lecturing she was incredibly encouraging always and got the best out of all of us as a result.^x

What remains unknown is what Audrey felt about her increased responsibilities. A photo (Figure 3) taken when she was acting as Assistant to Miss Wilson shows a more formal and distant figure than the earlier images of her with children.

Audrey resigned from teaching in 1946. Not excluded from teaching because of marriage or social conventions, rather the result of a conscious decision. Audrey applied for and then

accepted a position as an Occupational Therapist at Timaru Hospital. The choice was hers. Now, nearly 26 years of age, Audrey was leaving not only the kindergarten world, but also the only city and home she had known. It would have been a significant move and her reasons for leaving were undoubtedly complex.

Audrey's six years in kindergarten had brought her personal and professional opportunities growth, tensions and promotion. The Association in their records express regret at her resignation, as did Enid Wilson in her letter to Audrey on her final day:

Over a long period of years I have had to lose many people of my staff who have been valuable and whom I have not wanted to part with both for the work's sake and because of my own personal feelings. Your going is affecting me as deeply as any and much more than many. At the moment I feel bereft. ... All the time I have felt that your possibilities justified any efforts I was called upon to make in contributing to your development. It is hard to part with you so soon though and to face having to cover some of the same ground all over again. Although I shall be glad if I can have the hand of a mature person who can really step into my shoes I scarcely hope to find anyone who will work in such complete harmony as we have.^{xi}

Despite such reassurances, Audrey did not share their confidence in her abilities. Both Loma Jones and Alison comment on the way Audrey saw other people's gifts as superior to hers yet her own gifts to be lacking. The records show that Audrey accepted, but did not seek, promotion. Nor seemingly did she seek to participate in the educational expansion of progressive education on the horizon. Without doubt, her expectations of marriage and motherhood lingered.



Image 4: Audrey Newton third left. Enid Wilson first left. Note Audrey's more formal stance and dress than in Figure 2. Photos from Audrey Newton's collection (private ownership).

The social reconstruction in the post WW2 era brought to the fore such expectations for women. The emphasis on the family as the cornerstone of society became a significant government priority. In 1939 Enid Wilson summed up the work of the kindergarten in society to say:

For this work there is no room for materialism, its basis is a spiritual one and as such it is one of the most important work in the world today and will be one of the great work in the world today and will be one of the great works that will be needed to rebuild the work of tomorrow.^{xii}

Women had two roles in this aspired world—as kindergarten teachers and then as wives and mothers. The primacy of marriage and fulltime domesticity was widely accepted as natural and unchangeable, even when the constant loss of teachers to marriage posed serious problems for the association as expressed in Wilson’s monthly report.

We rejoice with Molly Vickers over her engagement to be married and are happy in the knowledge that we are to retain her on the staff until the end of the year at least. I have confidence in the development of our kindergartens under our present staff but thinking of the future, I cannot help but feel a little apprehensive knowing of all these members of staff we are losing through marriage etc.^{xiii}

Men were coming home from the war, many in need of rehabilitation. Perhaps this was the reason Audrey chose occupational therapy as a new career: a way to contribute to the postwar effort which would draw upon her compassionate nature and creativity. Without evidence such notions are conjecture—they remain possibilities only. However, the importance remains for educational historians to examine teachers’ reasons for leaving the profession (Theobold, 1999).

TRANSFORMATION OF OUR RESEARCH RELATIONSHIP

It was in our talk

As we found new data sources and talked about them we came to realize their significance—not only in deepening the story but also in creating new story lines. Our dialogue became an analysis tool, as well as, a tool to generate new data. We came to see how our dialogue as we analyzed the data using sociocultural conceptual tools actually generated new data; it was bringing together new ideas that neither of us had previously considered nor could have done so alone. We often remarked: *‘it is in the talk’*. Audrey’s story further developed as our research relationship evolved over 2009 and as we worked on two papers and a conference presentation.

The acquisition of new data and the primacy of talk around this are illustrated in the following example. After one of our meetings and with newfound knowledge, Alison looked again through her mother’s personal letters. This time she recognised a kindergarten logo and on opening what turned out to be a four-page letter, saw that Enid Wilson wrote it.

I knew there was a box of Mum’s letters. After a day of working with Kerry, I searched the box out, interested to see if there were any that were relevant to our research. And there it was—a letter penned by Enid Wilson to Mum—written in response to Mum’s letter of resignation. I could hardly contain myself, and desperately wanted to share this new information with Kerry. Within a week a second letter arrived by chance. Again the letter contained new information, but this time written by Mum to a friend nearly six decades earlier (Alison).

We kept talking about what these letters, photos, archival material were saying. We began to

see Audrey's work in its wider context. Positioning her work in the social cultural-historical context opened up new possibilities to discover what it meant to be a 1940s kindergarten teacher, and that in turn brought new sources, new story lines and added understandings. For instance, we came to see how progressive education, upheld by significant New Zealand educators at that time, was an impetus for Audrey's work. The 1930s and 1940s was a period of widespread educational reform in New Zealand. At the forefront of these reforms were the progressive ideas which originated in the child-centred and democratic theories espoused by philosopher John Dewey. Audrey's work became clearer as we explored the activities of a group of teachers from the WFKA with whom Audrey was closely associated. These teachers were committed to progressivist ideals and involved in work in the promotion and implementation of progressive ideals. We came to see the importance of the pedagogical perspectives these teachers, Enid Wilson, Edna (Ted) Scott, Elizabeth Stewart Hamilton, brought to their work and their impact on Audrey curriculum innovation she initiated with children at the Wellington South Kindergarten in relation to a building project.

Audrey's story continues: The building project

Audrey, 20, was in her second year of teaching at the new Wellington South Kindergarten opened in 1936 as the city's first open-air kindergarten under the directorship of Miss Stewart Hamilton. As Assistant Director, Audrey was a dedicated and passionate teacher who loved being with children—always 'getting [them] together through interest'. One such project designed and initiated by her to build on children's interests stimulated by building activity next door, is captured in the image below. The images show children (about 4 years of age), building and painting a house made out of a large wooden packing case. The children can be seen nailing the pre-cut boards for a sloping roof to a frame attached to the packing case. The children are also shown painting the exterior walls of the completed house. Wearing protective aprons, the children use real tools of the trade—planks, hammers, nails, ladder, brushes and paint.

This building project was recorded by Miss Enid Wilson in the Wellington Kindergarten Association records.

At Wellington South, the big children are carrying on an interesting piece of work creating a house out of a large packing case. It has a proper sloping roof (the boards of which have been nailed by the children), two very large cotton reels as chimneys and is at present being painted. This interest arose from watching building operations next door where an additional room has been added to Mr ...home. Miss Newton has shown interest and resourcefulness in developing the children's interest. Dramatic play is being stimulated and interest is always keenest in something the children have created for themselves. ^{xiv}

We read about the educational, social and cultural norms of the 1940s and came to see how the building project emerged in these times. We also recognize the importance of Audrey's mentors to the pedagogical changes she was making as well as their participation in these political, social and educational movements. The work of Rogoff (2003) gave us more sociocultural conceptual tools to make sense of the observations. Her term 'intent participation' captures the notion of young children observing and listening to the real life, work and play activities of their community. We came to see that these children were engaging in intent participation, observing the activities of the next-door builders. We also saw that Audrey's involvement in this project was another form of

intent participation; she too observed and listened with intent to the work and beliefs of her teaching mentors and to the interests of the children (Sewell and Bethell, 2009).

NEW LIAISONS IN RESEARCH

What have we learned?

As we changed from separate roles to joint participation we each contributed to the emergence of a new dialogic methodology. We came to understand more about our respective methodologies but in particular, we came to understand more about and use each other's data sources and analysis tools. Central to this process of change was our mutual respect for each other's research methodologies and our willingness to learn. As illustrated in this paper, Audrey's story developed its richness as our research relationship evolved and transformed. So what have we learned?

We learned that when *dialogue* was ongoing and respectful, it brought together the views/values and perspectives of each of us. Investigating the everyday work of teachers required us to look beyond official data and the fragments that have emerged from our personal collection. By talking about the material and by making public our inquiry, brought in itself new personal and private material. We came to prioritize these materials as important data to enrich the growing story. We experienced the serendipity within data generation; such as private letters written by Audrey about her kindergarten teaching that were received out of the blue. In doing so, it created the fertile 'third space' (Zeichner, 2008) in which new possibilities were formed. Kerry brought her perspectives and understandings of historical biography and kindergarten history and Alison contributed her understandings of sociocultural methodology and recollections of her mother. In this boundary crossing, new liaisons, and new understandings emerged. This knowledge creation process happened, not first in Kerry's mind, and then in Alison's, but 'on the loom between' us as we talked about the data (Cotterill and Letherby, 1993).

We also learned the value of *combining methodologies*. The sociocultural approach provided the all important contextual layers and historical and biographical approaches. The meaning of the photos first examined using historical-biographical methods, expanded when seen alongside personal letters, diary entries and interviews and analysed using the socio-cultural lenses. As we knitted together historical and biographical methods along with the sociocultural approach, to separately foreground the personal, interpersonal and cultural-historical dimensions, we captured glimpses of a far deeper and richer story of Audrey's work. Such new liaisons take into account the cultural, social and historical dimensions of the teachers' everyday activities building a better understanding of the nature and the importance of their work. In so doing, we 'located the historical and the contemporary side-by-side' to see teaching as embedded within a cultural, social, historical context (Fleer, Anning and Cullen, 2009, 187).

Finally, we learned the *power of collaboration* between people with compatible interests and perspectives. We believe that neither of us could have reached the same outcomes as successfully had we worked alone. While a fascinating and energizing project to be involved in, the collaboration was not without its difficulties. For instance, it was on occasion difficult to find time to write, to manage our differing workloads and to overcome geographical distances. We learned the importance of prioritizing, of mutual trust and respect, of careful listening and of positioning our collaborative activities along with the minutiae of university work. We came to see our collaborative engagement in this research as characteristic of the qualities of action research espoused by McNiff and Whitehead (2001) 'non-definitive, generative, transformational and evolutionary processes' (2001, 57).

CONCLUSION

This paper has foregrounded the 'ordinary' female teacher as the subject rather than object of research, thus contributing to new understandings of the everyday world of teaching. Audrey Newton is positioned as an individual social actor who negotiated opportunities and an identity for herself. In addition, the paper responds to the call for 'new liaisons' in research methodologies (Cullen, 2010). The everyday work of a kindergarten teacher, told here, was far richer once Audrey's story discovered in photographic imagery and biography was placed within the social, cultural and historical context of the 1940s. Through the emphasis given to experience as a source of data historical understandings were gained which could not possibly have been obtained through the written word alone.

It has been a fascinating and rewarding project to be involved in, one that evolved over the years and took new and unforeseen directions. Having researched, presented and written together for over two years, a way of working evolved that recognised both our individual research interests and approaches. Our writing became a product of both our ideas. We can now take these new understandings and possibilities inherent in merging research methodologies into future research endeavours. Our collaborative research was a positive experience for us both. For Alison it had particular relevance because '*it was about Mum*'.

The process was sometimes intense, but typically enriching and stimulating ...we both learned so much more about ourselves—as researchers, as women, as teachers and for me—as Audrey's daughter (Alison).

POSTSCRIPT

In 1954, at the age of 34 years, Audrey announced her engagement to Bill Sewell, after a six months courtship. '*I am engaged!!*', she wrote to her friend, Joan '*Now, isn't that wonderful? I just can't believe it myself... Isn't it positively, astonishingly, wonderful.*'^{xv} Enid Wilson provided the flowers for the wedding reception. Two years later, the first of three children, two sons and one daughter was born. Audrey enrolled her children, not in the nearby kindergarten, but in the recently formed Karori Playcentre, perhaps because of the emphasis on the mother-child bond, which meant she could be involved alongside them. Over the next 46 years Audrey centered her life around her family, home crafts, church and developing her interest in and skills as an artist.

Having previously reached the conclusion that Audrey had no further contact with the WFKA, subsequent research has uncovered new data that shows her membership of the Wellington Free Kindergarten Graduates' Association. Historical biographies can only ever be seen as partial and fragmentary. Audrey Newton's story stops here for now; the possibilities for new data, for new interpretations, and for new stories, remain.

REFERENCES

- Anning, A.J. Cullen, J., and Fler, M. (Eds.) (2008). *Early childhood education: Society and culture* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Beattie, B. (1995). *Preschool education in America: The culture of young children from the colonial era to the present*. New Haven: Yale University.
- Bethell, K. (1998). *Skirting the boundaries: The impact of marriage and domesticity on women's perceptions of kindergarten and primary teaching as a career in postwar New Zealand*. Unpublished Masters thesis, Massey University.
- Clark, P.R. (2006). *Writing tools*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.

- Cotterill, P. and Letherby, G. (1993). Weaving stories: Personal auto/biographies in feminist research. *Sociology*, 27 (14), 227–37.
- Cullen, J. (2010, January). Diverse perspectives, diverse methodologies: Kaleidoscopes, mosaics and prisms. ISCAR Regional one day conference, Monash University, Frankston, Melbourne.
- Eisenmann, L. (2001). 'Creating a framework for interpreting US women's educational history: Lessons from historical lexicography.' *History of Education*, 30 (5), 453–470.
- Fleer, M., Hedegaard, M., and Tudge, J. (2009). Constructing childhood: Global-local policies and practices. In M. Fleer, M. Hedegaard, and J. Tudge (Eds.), *Childhood studies and the impact of globalisation: Policies and practices at global and local levels*. New York: Routledge.
- Hedegaard, M., and Fleer, M. (2008). *Studying children: A cultural-historical approach*. England: Open University.
- May, H. (1997). *The discovery of early childhood: The development of services for the care and education of very young children, mid eighteenth century Europe to mid twentieth century New Zealand*. Auckland: Auckland University and Bridget Williams Books with New Zealand Council for Educational Research.
- McNiff, J., and Whitehead, J. (2002). *Action research: Principles and practice*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Middleton, S and May, H. (1997). *Teachers talk teaching 1915–1995: Early childhood, school and teachers' colleges*. Palmerston North: Dunmore.
- Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*, Oxford: Oxford University.
- Rogoff, B. (1998). Cognition as a collaborative process. In W. Damon, D. Kuhn, and R.S. Siegler (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol 2. Cognition, perception and language* (pp. 679–744). New York: Wiley.
- Rose, G. (2001). *Visual methodologies*. London: Sage.
- Sewell, A., and Bethell, K. (2009). Building interests: A 1940s story of curriculum innovation and contemporary connections. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work*, 6 (2), 93–110.
- Smith, D. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology*. Milton Keynes: Open University.
- Tennant, M. (1993). Welfare organisations. In A. Else (Ed.) *Women together a history of women's organisations in New Zealand Ngā Ropu Wāhine o Te Motu* (pp. 109–119). Wellington: Daphne Brasell Associates and Historical Branch Department of Internal Affairs.
- Theobald, M. (1999). Memory and oral history. In K. Weiler and S. Middleton, (Eds.) *Telling women's lives: Narrative inquiries in the history of women's education*. Buckingham: Open University.
- Vick, M. (2009). Re-imagining teachers' work: Photographs of Blackfriars' School, Sydney, 1913–1925 as representations of an educational alternative. *History of Education Review*, 38 (2), 82–93.
- Wells, G. (2001). The case for dialogic inquiry. In G. Wells (Ed.), *Action, talk and text: Learning and teaching through inquiry* (pp. 171–194). New York: Teachers College.
- Zeichner, K. (2008, September). Creating third spaces in the education of teachers and educational researchers. Paper presented at the *British Educational Research Association Annual Conference*, Edinburgh, Scotland.

AUTHORS

Dr. Kerry Bethell, Senior Lecturer, School of Arts, Development and Health Education, College of Education, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand. Her research interests include the broad historical and social origins of educational provision for young children with particular regard to the work of teachers and the ways women historically have been represented and presented in history. She is committed to the recovery of teachers' stories and the development of

new theoretical and methodological frameworks for this work.

Email: k.bethell@massey.ac.nz

Dr. Alison Sewell, Senior Lecturer, School of Educational Studies, College of Education, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand. Her teaching and research interests include the implementation of sociocultural approaches to learning and teaching in primary school settings, the professional learning of primary teachers and social science education. She is committed to promoting teachers' engagement with outcomes-linked evidence and supporting their inquiries into their own practice. From this research, particular interests have developed in recovering teachers' stories from the past as well as working with teachers to frame their stories of current innovation.

Email: a.m.sewell@massey.ac.nz

NOTE

ⁱ In 1938, the Free Kindergarten movement in New Zealand operated as a philanthropic organisation in the four main cities of Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland. These associations provided sessional programmes for three and four year olds. The Wellington Kindergarten Association operated six kindergartens in the city.

ⁱⁱ Audrey Newton diary entry, 1938. Audrey Newton collection. Private possession. The fourth student was Margaret Hoddy.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hall of Hope' Unidentified newspaper, November 24, 1939. Scrapbook 1931-1948, MSY-1922, Alexander Turnbull Library.

^{iv} Unsourced newspaper clipping. Centenary Part Kindergarten Movement, August 1937, MSY-1922, Alexander Turnbull Library.

^v Hall of Hope' Scrapbook 1931-1948, MSY-1922, Alexander Turnbull Library.

^{vi} Letter, Edna Scott (and others) to Mrs Doctor, Wellington, 5th June, 1942, WFKA Council Minutes, March 1941-October, 1942. MSY-1905, Alexander Turnbull Library.

^{vii} WFKA Council Minutes, March 1940-October, 1942. MSY-1905, Alexander Turnbull Library.

^{viii} WFKA Council Report Book 1936. MSY-1905, Alexander Turnbull Library.

^{ix} Enid Wilson Report to the WFKA Monthly meeting for May 1943, MSY-1905, Alexander Turnbull Library.

^x Interview Kerry Bethell with Loma Jones, 2001, in private ownership.

^{xi} Letter Enid Wilson to Audrey Newton, 29th May, 1946, Audrey Newton Collection.

^{xii} Enid Wilson, Report to the WKA Monthly Meeting for May 1939. MSY-1905 Alexander Turnbull Library.

^{xiii} Enid Wilson, Report to the WKA Monthly Meeting for August 1939, MSY-1905, Alexander Turnbull Library.

^{xiv} Enid Wilson Report to the WFKA Monthly meeting for April 1940.

^{xv} Letter from Audrey Newton to Joan Fairhurst, undated, 1946, Audrey Newton Collection.