ABSTRACT

The relationship of critical theory of education to the practitioners it purports to enlighten, empower and emancipate is a contentious issue. This can partially be attributed to the fact that there is little empirical evidence in education, particularly of a longitudinal nature, that supports the claims of practically transformative benefits for teachers and students provided by the critical perspective or its methods.

This longitudinal study provides an interim report on the relationship of critical curriculum theorising, praxis intentionality and subsequent workplace actions. Two individualised and contrasting case studies of primary school teachers are reported. Of particular interest is the tribulations both women teachers experienced in reflexively inquiring
into a troubling curriculum initiative and then acting upon a critical diagnosis to 'redeem' certain troubling elements of the initiative.

Introduction
According to Wilf Carr (1995a, p. 36) reducing the gap between theory and practice 'for education' is a matter of improving the practical effectiveness of the theories teachers employ in conceptualising their own activities. Carr acknowledges that teachers already have 'extensive theoretical powers.' He maintains that the central aim of any adequate educational theory, if it is to take itself seriously, is to provide educational practitioners with 'intellectual resources' that enable teachers to reflexively reform their own practices. Carr's imperatives for critical educational inquiry are emancipatory. He believes criticism of teacher reliance on 'precedent, habit, and tradition' is needed. They provide an inadequate justification for the implicit values and assumptions all too often employed by teachers in their educational practices. For Carr, to not interrogate teaching conventions in a disciplined and intelligent manner is to further douse the aspirations of critical educational inquiry.

Brian Fay's (1987) metatheory of critical social science is, we believe, one intellectual resource that speaks directly to Carr's (1995a, b) attempts to pragmatically retrieve a critical sensibility for educational inquiry. In particular, Fay's appraisal and subsequent amendment of 'traditional' approaches to critical social science raise the significance in educational inquiry of identifying and examining the 'force' of 'tradition,' 'embodiment,' and 'embeddedness' on practitioner 'reflexivity.' Fay's project also has an emancipatory imperative. He seeks, however, to 'temper' the utopian thrust of much critical social science because it lacks regulatively and normatively. Thus, Fay's reconceived version of critical social science stresses the objectives for inquiry of 'practicality' and 'non-idealism' alongside the objectives of 'scientific' and the 'critical'. Their interrelatedness counters the inadequacies Fay alleges of conventional approaches to critical social science.

This inquiry into the connection of teacher's workplace theorising and intellectual resources provided in a postgraduate "Curriculum Theory" class responds to the lack of empirical support for claims made in the critical discourse of education. Doug White (1995), for example, calls for a mode of critical theorising that strongly connects the empirical analysis and practices of teaching and schooling. Thus, a primary purpose of this inquiry is to furnish evidence to assess the value of intellectual resources, such as Fay's, to teachers' thinking about and acting on 'crisis' circumstances in which they find themselves and their colleagues. In so doing, Carr's imperative for the creation of
an empirical nexus of teacher theorising and provision of intellectual resources is explored within the dual contexts of practising teachers involved in postgraduate studies. Tentative conclusions are made about the adequacy and relevance of Fay's metatheory to teacher self-conceptions of change agency. For it is Fay who brings into sharper intellectual relief how the hold of embeddedness, embodiment, and tradition might reconfigure teacher's emancipatory aspirations. Teacher Theorising and Praxis Intentionality: Some Conceptual Background.

'Oh, it's all very well to sit here and talk about all these interesting things but tomorrow I'll be back in school in my classroom leading a totally different life'.

'Helen', a teacher of some 20 years experiences in Victorian primary schools, echoes a sentiment about the relation of theory and practice well known to academics teaching in postgraduate courses. There is, however, a larger educational context in which Helen's somewhat gloomy remarks require consideration. 'Critical pedagogues', in particular, have had to disarm allegations of a theory-practice gap, rebut the counter criticism of new forms of prescription, demystify its own discourse, clarify its position about being an overly rationalistic repressive myth and, more recently, respond to questions about its gender and cultural exclusivity. Like many of her peers, Helen perceives a loss of professional control in the wake of various economic imperatives currently underwriting centralised policy and curriculum reforms. 'Work' for Helen is not so much the ideas and conversations carried on in her postgraduate studies. Nor is it the 'private' hopes, expectations, anxieties, and frustrations she feels about her Principal, colleagues, and students. Rather, the reality of Helen's professional life is the immediacy of her classroom actions and interactions with children and communication and relationships with colleagues. Apart from a dependence on the experiential wisdom and tacit understandings problematised by Carr (1995a), these remain practically, conceptually, and intellectually unsupported. In short, the separation of Helen's 'private life', professional 'work view' and involvement in postgraduate studies exemplify a fragmentation of identity. Indeed, the milieu of institutional contradictions in which she is embedded, reflexively demand an educative and transformative praxis.

The discourse of critical educational theory often focuses on structural determinants of oppressive workplace conditions. Or, increasingly, it dwells on subjectivities, personal identities, difference, and the loss of the 'other' (McLaren, 1992). Either way these discursive polarisations obscure the dialectical nature of crises that agents like Helen (and her colleagues) confront institutionally on a daily basis in their curriculum and pedagogical work. The 'micro' world of teaching, in fact, cannot be seen outside the 'macro' factors
shaping teaching events and situations. Nevertheless, thinking in binary opposites with their associated values-hierarchies exerts a powerful influence on teacher conceptualisations of practice. For example, the perennial search for the best 'method' of teaching often marginalises the context of learning, be it the student, the classroom and the home circumstance. Binary thinking can obscure from teacher's critical consideration those modes of action and interaction such as sanctioned and unsanctioned forms of communication or association with a range of 'players' in the educational context. They, amongst a range of other professional habits and educational traditions, recursively reconstitute the organisational (school) conventions and institutional (cultural) conditions in which teachers are immersed and find oppressive, demoralising and alienating. In marginalising from the critical discourse of education what Anthony Giddens (1979, 1984) identifies as the 'duality of structure and agency' what is risked empirically 'for' educational inquiry is the experiential 'fodder' of teacher's lives. Thus, this inquiry focuses not only on the experiential and intellectual formulation of a 'praxis intentionality' consistent with teacher's 'personal theorising' about the professional circumstances in which they are socially and historically situated. It also describes teachers actions over a six month period consequent to the formulation of a praxis intentionality. Moreover, in focussing this inquiry into teacher praxis we reveal the ongoing nature of reflexivity about actions as they contingently occur due to a variety of workplace circumstances, demands and events. Fay's (1987, p. 26) objectives of 'scientific, critical, practical, and non-idealistic' inquiry in critical social science require that reflexivity about professional actions and circumstances be inherently and essentially 'contextual, partial, local, and hypothetical' (p. 213). Thus, if Fay is to be taken seriously, any praxis intentionality and subsequent action should satisfy his call for inquiry that is 'self-consciously local, particular, situated, experimental, and physical' (p. 212).

Jean Anyon (1994) neatly sums up the educational and theoretical imperative of Fay's recommendations for inquiry. Anyon maintains that if theory and practice are to be integrated then, like Carr (1995a), practice itself should be a primary resource. 'Socially useful theory', says Anyon, should not be produced primarily by reference to other theories. It should result from a dialogue between one's vision and people's current activities and problems. But, such a 'theory' should not be 'total', nor should it be 'ad-hoc'. Furthermore, Anyon argues that the precepts of a theory ought not contradict or oppose the ways in which a theory is to be executed. A theory must be capable of enactment if it is to be socially useful. It should elucidate the social origins and contours of people's problems without suppressing personal agency. According to Anyon, therefore, a socially useful theory must be capable of enactment and embody the values and goals of the theory; it will identify direct actions to be taken which are read
out of existing social activity.

What Fay is troubled about with the lack of 'situatedness' of most versions of critical social science speaks directly to the importance attached by Anyon to the practicality of theoretical precepts. Fay's examination of 'traditional' approaches to critical social science commences with a critique of certain assumptions about what it is to be human. Thus, Fay (1987, p. 42) delineates the ontological conception of human kind presumed in critical social science. Subsequently, he concerns himself with the aspirations of critical theories and an assessment of their practical achievements and consequences for their 'audiences'. He 'uncovers' the connection, or lack of, between ontological commitments and metatheoretical development. Like Anyon, he argues for conceptual consistency between the precepts of a theory and how they inform metatheoretical development. He concludes most critical theory is 'one-sided' in that it proposes human being as essentially, if not potentially, 'activist.' This activist ontology is manifested metatheoretically in a view of enlightenment, empowerment, and emancipation which rest on values committed to rational self-clarity, collective autonomy, and happiness understood as freedom.

Fay 'tempers' the hubris and telos presumed of critical social science with the recognition that epistemological, therapeutic, ethical, and force constraints 'limit' the 'rationality and change' role assumed ontologically for critical theories and their audiences. Hence, the importance of Fay's objectives of practicality and non idealism in social inquiry. In short, Fay acknowledges that as embodied, embedded, traditional, and historical beings individuals are 'encumbered' and social life is inescapably 'contingent.' Thus, Fay's ontological amendment to current schemes in critical social science unreservedly accepts 'opacity, uncertainty, fragility, and unpredictability in the human enterprise.'

In summary, Fay's metatheoretical reconstruction of critical social science identifies two 'schemes', namely a synthesis of 'basic' and 'supplementary' theories. In effect, Fay's metatheory establishes what can be referred to as the criterion of an adequate critical social science. While Fay acknowledges its incomplete state and need for empirical qualification he concludes, at the theoretical level, it is more regulatively and normatively compelling. He refers to the traditional basic scheme of critical social science as an 'ontology of activity'. Its criteria are theories (and sub-theories) of false consciousness, crisis, education, and transformative action. His supplementary scheme adds the criteria of theories (and sub-theories) of the body, tradition, force, and reflexivity following the metatheoretical inclusion of an 'ontology of embodiment, tradition, historicity, and embeddedness'. The interrelatedness of these five ontological precepts serves to mediate the force of each constituent theory. Thus, in some senses the metatheoretical whole is greater than the sum of the theoretical parts. Not unlike Giddens' 'duality', Fay mediates for educational inquiry the 'traditional' sociological binary of deterministic and subjectivist social explanation.
As such, the interactions of the 'personal,' the 'intellectual,' the organisational/institutional, and the 'practical' occupy a position of prime significance in our theoretical formulation and teaching of the semester long subject 'Curriculum Theory'. It provides the site of this inquiry into the interfaces of teacher thinking, curriculum and policy work, and the social utility of postgraduate studies to redeeming aspects of a 'crisis' situation.

Theorising and construction of the Curriculum Theory subject 'Curriculum Theory' was developed in late 1994 by a University Research Group called 'Critical Constructions in Education.' Where possible its planning included those teachers who intended to enrol in the elective subject in 1995. As theorists, practitioners, and researchers of 'Curriculum Theory" ourselves it presented us with an opportunity to explore how workplace 'personal theorising' of practicing teachers might be illuminated by the intellectual recognition of a 'limits to rationality and change' thesis. Postmodern theorising has ushered in this sensibility. Conscious also of the assertions about the inadequacies of critical theories to invoke a 'better' and just practice our pedagogical intention was to work through the 'repressive myths' alleged by Ellsworth (1989) and others about the critical discourse of education.

Fay's non-utopian insistence on establishing a dialectical arrangement between theory and practice was pivotal in our selection of his text for the unit. We considered Fay's text provided a relatively accessible introduction to the concerns and commitments of critical social science. In our assessment Fay's metatheory also 'bridges' certain modern:postmodern tensions. On one hand he problematises the relation of rationality, understanding and explanation, and change. On the other his version of critical social science retains the centrality to critical social science of certain normative and regulative considerations. Within the critical discourse of education in Australia Fay's text has occupied a reasonably prominent position. But little attention, if any, has been afforded the critical qualifications he proposes through the addition of theories of the body, tradition, force, and reflexivity. We felt these theoretical qualifications might invite insights into questions about agency, structure, rationality and change that, ordinarily, are not problematised.

Curriculum Theory was also devised to highlight certain central critical themes in education such as its historical interests, contemporary developments, and practical concerns. These are detailed elsewhere (Payne & Hickey, 1995). Two written assignments were completed by teachers. The first asked teachers to diagnose a recent school-based curriculum or policy initiative in which they were involved and dissatisfied. A guiding principle of the diagnosis was to identify the moral, social, political, or ecological lack of the initiative. Based on these initial findings the second assignment focussed on the formulation of individual plans for a praxis which
would seek to redeem certain aspects of the lack diagnosed. Herein, is the working definition of praxis intentionality used here. One additional class was conducted following teacher requests for further discussion of the expectations of the second task.

We report on two teacher's praxis intentionality and subsequent actions about a curriculum or policy initiative in which they have been unhappily involved. The initial diagnosis of the initiative could occur at any or all of three interrelated levels of curriculum or policy 'making'.

(i) One level is that of production. Often, curriculum and policy documents, or texts, are developed abstractly in isolation from their operative audiences. At this level teachers could critically analyse a text they had received for what it assumed and implied for everyday teaching and learning.

(ii) Another recommended level was the interpretation of the text. Once a text is received in schools it is subjected to various collegial negotiations about intent, meaning, relevance, value and so on. Received texts are likely to be developed at the operative school level with an eye to what is to be delivered, transmitted or constructed with students. Negotiation, in this context, can mean differing types and extents of communication, deliberation, engagement and agreement between staff.

(iii) A third level focuses on the negotiated texts enactment. Here the text is overtly and covertly received by those whom it purports to 'school', that is the learner. Thus, if they wished, teachers could examine students' reactions, responses and experiences of the curriculum or policy initiative.

The three levels of production, interpretation, and enactment are clearly interrelated. For reasons of manageability, within the time constraints of the semester long 'Curriculum Theory', teachers were encouraged to concentrate on any one of the levels for the initial diagnosis. Teachers were then encouraged to utilise the diagnosis in formulating a second stage praxis plan. The second stage praxis plan asked teachers to strategically consider how they might redeem some of the troubling elements revealed in the first stage diagnosis.

Whether or not action was subsequently taken was a matter beyond the confines of the semester-long subject. There was no expectation from the teachers/researchers that teacher/students would enact the second stage plan. Nevertheless, as researchers we felt it important to investigate the "practical" effect of what we thought was "socially useful theory" (Anyon, 1994) in diminishing the academy:workplace or theory:practice gap.

Methodological considerations

Two teacher's theorising of the initiative diagnosed in the postgraduate subject 'Curriculum Theory' and actions taken in the workplace in the subsequent six months are reported in the form of individual case studies. The method is essentially constructivist (Guba, 1990a, b) but employs a three tiered interpretive strategy. It
culminates in a mode of inquiry that might be referred to as critical constructivist. Its ontology is materialist and historical in that we seek to understand, following Fay (1987), the embedded interactions and embodied actions which inscribe teacher's reflexivity about a workplace crisis they were experiencing and acting on to redeem. Thus, the three-tiered interpretation utilised for these purposes accords with the 'double hermeneutic' employed methodologically in Giddens' (1984) 'duality of structure and agency.' The layering of meanings derived respectively from teacher voice and institutional constraint, thematic interpretation of them according to researcher questions and generalisations across two case study voices creates a dialogue critically relevant to the task of retheorising critical social science and educational praxis (Anyon, 1994; Carr 1995). Its epistemology is interactive and collaborative in that it accommodates the consensual subjectivities of teachers and researchers. The method of inquiry, interpretive processes including iterative writing of drafts by case studies teachers, and its presentation aim to be both reconstructive and transformative.

The findings identify disparate curriculum and policy initiatives diagnosed at different levels. The analytical boundaries for curriculum or policy texts of production, interpretation and enactment dissolved by necessity as teachers grappled with the educational context under scrutiny. The findings aim to accurately represent teacher thinking about problems associated with theorising the initiative, subsequent personal interests and professional commitments. Data were collected from a variety of sources including interviews, participant observations, and teacher's written work.

Interviews were conducted with each teacher during and immediately after the offering of Curriculum Theory. Follow-up interviews were conducted five months after the completion of Curriculum Theory. The first interview was conducted after reading and examining Fay's text. It took the form of an open-ended discussion about professional life and career, intrigue and anxiety about Fay's text and postgraduate studies, and any perceived connection between the two. The second interview was completed after the final written task was completed. It focussed on teacher's responses to Curriculum Theory and sought to clarify each teacher's praxis intentions in redeeming some aspect of the 'crisis'. The third round of interviews were conducted late in the school year. This interview sought only to identify the actions that teachers had taken in the preceding months. Clarification was sought about contextual circumstances that enabled and constrained the taking of action and to what extent the second stage praxis plan had been useful.

There is a twofold purpose to the way in which findings are presented. In general, we present each teacher's 'critical theory' and subsequent actions taken about the troubling curriculum initiative. We reveal the 'tribulations' experienced by teachers in diagnosing the initiative and then acting on it. Of particular interest is how
teachers struggled with and interpreted Fay and selected, rejected and attempted to incorporate his ideas into a personal theory of the troubling elements of the initiative. We seek, therefore, to preserve the authenticity of teacher voice where it best explicates a 'discursive consciousness' (Giddens, 1984, p. 41) of the interfaces between personal experiences and various intellectual resources. A pre-emptive data interpretation strategy was not developed prior to data collection. Irrespective of our intention to 'license' personal theorising the findings presented here are not grounded solely in those personal theories (Payne, 1994). Thus, while authentic teacher 'voice' is retained it is also presented around three organising themes. This provides a second tier of interpretation. In the final section of this paper a third tier of interpretation is offered so as to tie findings back into the premises Carr (1995a) and Anyon (1994) offer and around which this research has been conducted. Based on the actions taken over a six month period a third tier interpretation explores whether or not Fay's metatheory is 'socially useful theory' in the manner signalled by Anyon given the primacy Carr attaches to teachers' critical thinking.

(i) The first organising theme for interpreting authentic student voice focuses on teacher's understandings of Fay.
(ii) The second shows how Fay was used by teachers to illuminate workplace activities.
(iii) The third aims to reveal the tribulations experienced by each teacher in the face of the previous two themes.

Following the first draft of this paper an iterative writing process occurred in re-drafting. Each of the three participants contributed to the data interpretation and write up in an ongoing capacity. Finally, research findings for Sue and 'Helen' are reported individually so as to maintain some unity, or narrative concept of selfhood, (MacIntyre, 1984) of teacher's understandings, tribulations, subsequent 'articulations' (Taylor, 1989, 1991), and consequent "real-world" school-based actions. Each case study is presented under the sub-headings of praxis intentionality and action.

Sue, bullying, and peer mediation
Sue is an advanced skills primary school teacher with about 20 years teaching experience. She is currently teaching a grade 5/6. The school is in the throes of becoming a 'School of the Future' which is part of a major educational reform currently under way in the State of Victoria. School discipline is one element of the reform which 'autonomous' schools are required to undertake in the form of "guided" policy development. Four years ago Sue initiated a change in the school's virtually non-existent welfare and discipline policy. She was keen to implement the decisive discipline approach developed by Bill Rogers. Sue was attracted to Roger's approach in that it promoted student responsibility for the consequences of their own actions.

Under Sue's leadership the school's piloting work in decisive
discipline was showcased nationally and internationally. Despite these plaudits Sue was frustrated with the lack of a cohesive approach by staff in implementing the policy. She presumed that for the policy to be truly effective it had to be adopted and enacted by all staff. Sue believed that a 'narrow version' of the policy is now operating which 'works' for some children and staff.

(i) Praxis intentionality
During the subject "Curriculum Theory" Sue felt Fay 'turned on a light'. Sue's explanations about the difficulties associated with obtaining a whole school discipline policy drew heavily on Fay's 'limits to change' themes of embodiment and embeddedness and, eventually, the notion of reflexivity. Sue's "theory" of the 'imperfect' development and practice of decisive discipline techniques at her school weighed heavily on explaining the 'hold' of tradition. Tradition, she theorised, 'is just one factor which contributes to the limited enactment of the policy'. Bullying in the playground assumed a high level of significance in Sue's thinking. She concluded that bullying was a consequence of 'tradition, embodiment, and embeddedness' to which she attributed the 'failure' of the original policy innovation. Her interests focussed on the role of tradition in relation to the reflexive use of language, authority, distrust, relations of old and young, and teacher biases.

In response to an interview question about the 'idealism' of the initial discipline policy and Sue's expectations of it she responded, '...in hindsight it all went the wrong way, you've got a policy going and we should have started here where I'm at now...I think we went about it the wrong way'. But, given Fay's limits to rationality and change thesis, Sue remarked paradoxically, 'I am not super confident about how we can enact Fay'. Sue's tribulations on this point were exacerbated by the recognition that her colleagues were reeling from the 'enormous professional pressures' being exerted on them through various aspects of school reform. This included frustrations with the decisive discipline policy she was hoping to redeem. Sue's curiosity about the 'body' as providing a different 'site' for understanding the social and school contexts of bullying increased. She avidly pursued the literature on violence and bullying in schools. Her concerns about finding a solution to the inadequacies of the discipline policy were strongly motivated by the plight of 'Daniel', a victim of constant verbal ridicule and physical punishment by his peers. Daniel's 'story' ultimately set the scene for Sue's praxis intentionality.

Sue's praxis intentions focussed on introducing peer mediation to a selected class, rather than the whole school. She realised that, if successful, its introduction 'might partially serve to increase positive participation, dialogue, and democratic and socially just approaches between students in the playground' (emphases Sue's). Sue determined that peer mediation must be critically planned, implemented and appraised, otherwise it could serve 'as a potent reproducer of the
very limitations which Fay describes'.
In planning to 'counter bullying' Sue framed 'boundaries' for the sorts of action she might undertake. Sue acknowledged the need for 'sound and practical solutions requiring creativity and integrity amidst the reality of schooling'. Central to her thinking were issues such as understanding and capitalising on those school 'conditions' that had previously supported Daniel, identifying what disempowering situations could be realistically redeemed, problematising to what extent children, staff, and parents would support peer mediation, and grappling with whether or not the introduction of mediation techniques would withstand the 'press for reproduction'. Sue was deeply concerned about the latter point. Yet she remained confident that her plan for peer mediation with a senior grade would rely on enlisting a few supportive teachers and responsible student mediators.

(ii) Action
Six months later Sue had made significant progress in introducing peer mediation to the school, albeit in the "limited" manner she anticipated at the conclusion of "Curriculum Theory". Sue had developed a small committee to reconsider the existing discipline and welfare policy for students. The new School Principal and a Counsellor were members. She had sent Bill Rogers a copy of her final assignment for "Curriculum Theory" to which Rogers had responded in a five page letter with a series of pointers for her consideration. A return visit by Rogers created "a renewal of interest amongst the staff", but Sue was unsure about "how long that will last".
The co-option and co-operation of the newly appointed Principal was vital to the development of a school policy that confirmed the trialling of peer mediation in the school in 1996. On the same hand, despite her colleagues' renewed interest in Bill Roger's philosophies she felt little action had resulted beyond the brainstorming she had conducted with them. Sue had also asked staff to complete a questionnaire which aimed to identify their assumptions about peer mediation. She concluded they knew very little and didn't readily agree that two parties, in reference to the "bully" and "victim", might be able to come to some sort of agreement.
Sue had decided strategically that she would act directly with sixth grade children. They, she surmised in reference to Fay, were not encumbered by the traditions in which her colleagues were embedded but were sufficiently mature enough to trial peer mediation techniques. On the other hand, Sue explained, for example, that some of her colleagues pejoratively equated peer mediators with a prefect system. Sue recognised the strategic importance of involving the Principal. In fact, her Principal had been "very supportive". He supported the training of children mediators. He had provided resources in the form of Sue's purchase of some books. He agreed to allow Sue to conduct a number of class sessions to sensitize a grade 5/6 to the ideas of conflict and their feelings about it. Sue believed he "threw out his mould from his previous school and embraced our model". Sue also
acknowledged that Principals "have to have one of those plans where you get your zero, one or two points for bonuses".

The peer mediation initiative required the support of the co-ordinator of the 5/6 area who also became increasingly supportive of Sue's endeavors to develop a more meaningful and sensitive approach to student welfare. Sue concluded that she had been able to create a very "keen" environment amongst the 5/6 teachers and students. She noted, in reference to Fay's stress on action that is local and particular, that her Principal was impressed with her ability to develop a project that was "prioritized" and "tight".

Children's responses to Sue's initiatives and actions remained perplexing for her. Deeply affected and motivated by Daniel's plight, Sue was troubled by the lack of sensitivity amongst many of the children with whom she was intending to work. She conceded her earlier optimism in the praxis intentionality stage might have been unfounded. Sue had done some reading about the reluctance of 11-15 year olds to "inform on others or to talk about things". Daniel, himself, had been somewhat of a reluctant participant despite all of Sue's efforts not to focus on him. Sue considered the possibility of implementing peer mediation with a younger, more open cohort. But despite the "cultural" limitations of the older group, she remained committed to implementing it with the 5/6 children "who could model and role play down in the junior grades".

Sue was asked to comment about the extent to which she felt she was an "agent of change". She believed "it could be pretty substantial for kids, but I don't know whether teachers have changed their practice".

In 1996 Sue's Master's research will involve case studies of the implementation of the peer mediation policy. Sue will be investigating the involvement and responses of mediators, bullies, victims and teachers in peer mediation processes of playground incidents.

Helen, good teaching and collegiality

Helen is also a primary school teacher with almost 20 years experience. Her recent years have been spent working with middle school grades. As a senior teacher at a 'School of the Future', Helen is expected to provide leadership in developing and promoting the School's programs. After a turbulent two years culminating in her being made 'in-excess' at her previous school, Helen is eager to consolidate her position and status within her current appointment. Part of this undertaking has led her to pursue post graduate studies.

(i) Praxis intentionality

'Helen's' early concern about the 'Curriculum Theory' was mentioned earlier. Helen's initial intention was to use Fay as an intellectual resource to redeem what she believed was the disempowering trend of new curriculum reforms. Helen viewed the emergence of the National Curriculum in Australia, and its local translation in the State of Victoria; The Curriculum Standard Framework (CSF), as morally and educationally problematic. Central to her concern was its potential to erode and fragment the collegial nature of teachers' work. Helen
was worried that the CSF was 'dictating and constraining what teachers understand to be good teaching'. Helen aimed to "develop collaboration between teachers to share their professional understanding, inform their teaching with knowledge that extends beyond imposed curriculum initiatives, and improve the quality of learning by placing responsibility in the hands of the participants, namely students and teachers". Despite her reservations about the implementation of CSF and the erosion of staff collegiality Helen, pragmatically, believed the opportunity to reconsider "good teaching" had presented itself. In developing her action plan in Curriculum Theory Helen was eager to redeem some of the potentially harmful aspects of these initiatives within her work environment. Working with a select number of her colleagues, Helen planned to resist the disabling of teachers as agents of change and consolidate the collegial imperative she associated with her work. Importantly, Helen's action plan was not forged in dissonance, she knew too well that such an undertaking was destined to fail or be condemned by those to whom she was answerable. Further, Helen recognised that as an employee of the Directorate of School Education she had a professional responsibility to adhere to new policy directions. To this end, Helen's praxis intentionality involved reclaiming definitions of quality educational provision within the bounds of the new curriculum imperatives.

Helen believes teachers have a professional and moral duty to actively review and debate educational issues such as the changing nature of what constitutes good instructional practices. In devising her praxis she identified, as a matter of professional duty, teachers' responsibility to adopt educational practices that were appropriate to the needs of learners, while responding to educational changes. However, despite acknowledging her professional obligations to her employer, the primary source of Helen's anxiety was the system itself. Rather than adopt a confrontationist approach to subverting dominant curriculum imperatives, Helen believed that there was considerable space for teachers to control their professional lives. For Helen, as long as teachers continue to critique their practice and acknowledge the political nature of education they will be able to dilute the impact of non-educational agendas. Thus, in many senses Helen was committed to a form of moral resistance upon which some collegiality might be restored. Her plan involved working with one or two other teachers that she believed shared a similar version of moral resistance or whom had the potential to.

(ii) Action

When it came to implementing her proposed action plan Helen's "inactions" were symptomatic of the very source of her initial concerns. Indeed, after a six month period, such was Helen's lack of translation that she had some difficulty recalling the essence of her proposed praxis. When asked to outline her plan for action during her follow-up interview Helen stated "I'm trying very hard to think back, it seems so long ago. I was going to work with the coordinator..., but
it hasn't really happened". Quite simply, Helen's praxis intentionality had been co-opted by more immediate and presumably important agendas. While Helen revealed some misgivings about neglecting her plan such was the demand placed on her time that she was forced to prioritise her commitments. Rather than deduce the inactuallisation of her plan as a lack of agency Helen views her newer priorities with rational justification. Given that the implementation of her action plan was not a formal component of her studies Helen felt she was unable to devote the time and energy to implement the changes she initially felt were necessary. Importantly, Helen does not connect the non-translation of her action plan as a rejection of Fay's metatheory as a useful interpretative resource.

Helen's decision not to pursue the critical innovation she had planned can partly be explained by the lack of recognition and reward likely to be afforded to such an action. Both explicitly and implicitly, Helen recognised the wisdom of investing her time and energy into areas that were more likely to be rewarded. Indeed, much of her extra-curricula effort was being channelled into the preparation of two submissions aimed at securing funding for the school's literacy program. A successful attempt to obtain competitively sought funds would undoubtedly help both the schools and her personal profile. As part of her career advancement Helen recognised the value of investing energy "where they're holding out the carrot". Notwithstanding this Helen was also acutely aware of the contribution that the procurement of extra funds could have on the delivery of existing programs. "Whilst I have misgivings about the program the proof is in whether the children are literate or not. They've (the Ministry of Education) said they will provide a 0.4 staff person, which is nothing to be sneezed at". Structural impediments appear to militate against Helen's appropriation of critically-informed action. In his 'limits to rationality' thesis Fay goes to great lengths to encapsulate the embeddedness of the human enterprise and how forces that individuals can't control impinge on them both overtly and covertly. For Helen this is lived-out on a daily basis. On the basis of her frustration at not being able to directly initiate anything purposeful on the basis of her own critical theorising Helen concedes, "sure things have changed, but not really because of anything I've done". For Helen, it is futile to initiate a collective critical action because "no one will want to push it". This revelation is not based on her belief that teachers aren't interested in critical ideas and actions but rather that there is little genuine support for them to engage in these. In discussing her involvement in the preparation of the submissions for funding Helen reveals "if I was really 'critical' I would ask myself why the hell I was bothering with them, but you have to look at what they want out of it and also what's in it for you". By her own admission the resulting literacy program will probably be "more recipe focused" which is largely out of her control.

Despite her perceived inability to compete with mainstream educational agendas Helen retains a strong critical commitment to question and challenge the morality of her actions. Acknowledging Fay in the
construction of her ongoing critique Helen claims that this intellectual resource has made a "big difference" to the way she interprets her personal and educational commitments. In her ongoing efforts to mediate the tension between her personal philosophies and structural impediments Helen reveals, "I'll keep coming back to Fay all the time". She believes that Fay assists her in "trying to find a path" between moral and structural warrants. Despite her critical intent Helen recognises the expediency of her actions. "If they're handing it out, you do, you sleep with the enemy". Despite her misgivings about the options she is sometimes forced to exercise Helen believes that to achieve success within the system she is compelled to 'play the game'. "I know it sounds awful, but what can I do about it?".

Teacher thinking and action as reframing critical educational inquiry

On the basis of the two case studies reported above two general conclusions can be made. First, Fay's metatheory is a useful intellectual resource amenable to teachers' intentions to redeem unsatisfactory aspects of a curriculum or policy reforms. Second, there are different extents to which respective praxis intentions have been enacted. The two case studies provide an interesting comparison of the ways in which critical curriculum theorising may, or may not, have been socially useful. There are a variety of circumstantial reasons for this which lend weight to supporting a number of Fay's views. Sue and 'Helen' drew significantly but differentially from Fay's amended metatheoretical scheme in developing a praxis intentionality. Theories of embodiment, tradition, historicity, and embeddedness provided each teacher with rich insights into the nature of the dissatisfactions they experienced. Sue and Helen's capacity to explain their own situatedness in a curriculum or policy innovation was enhanced greatly. Their respective praxis intentionalities and actions signal significant 'moves' in deliberating about previously non-problematised educational circumstances. We also conclude, in general, that the struggle between experiential embeddedness and professional embodiment on one hand and, on the other, the intellectual resource of 'new knowledge' (Giddens, 1984, p. 341) provided by Fay and others was intense, frustrating and, ultimately, enlightening for both Sue and Helen. Finally, Sue exhibited a greater sense of empowerment in the transformative actions she undertook.

The relationship of praxis intentionality and action

Worth reiterating at this point is Fay's recognition of the encumbered nature of human experience. Fay's theoretical acknowledgement of the contingency and historicity of social life should not necessarily be viewed as a compromise of critical aspirations. More appropriately, he provides theoretical legitimacy for realisation that critical interests must ultimately, but not non problematically, be adopted and implemented by historical agents in complex structural/institutional settings.

There is no clear cut conclusion that can be made about the relation of
Sue and Helen's respective praxis intentionalities to the actions they eventually undertook. Sue was enlightened and practically enabled by the intellectual resource of Fay. Of major significance to Sue's empowerment was her ability to incorporate Fay's stress on the importance of taking action at local and particular levels. Her initial perceived need to have all of the staff involved in the uptake of a discipline policy had been a major stumbling block. The realization that particular actions could be strategically focussed provided Sue with a clear sense of purpose and commitment to creating a series of enabling conditions. Her interactions with the Principal and selected colleagues have been positive and supportive, for a variety of reasons which Sue discerned. Sue's ability to foster changed conditions mark out a transformative praxis which, to this point of the study, has been emancipatory.

Helen, on the other hand, was less empowered as a result of her intellectual struggle with Fay. Although Helen appropriated various elements of Fay to consolidate and interpret her personal and educational interests she was unable, or unwilling, to orchestrate accompanying action. For Helen, the structural impediments placed on her by the system in which she was re-establishing herself diverted any commitment to implement her critical action plan. Helen's, reorganisation of priorities further restricted her, this partially as a consequence of not creating, or feeling she could create, an enabling situation. She perceived that her involvement in transformative practices would be overwhelmingly unsupported. Whilst she had serious misgivings about the neglect of the sort of work she had proposed she was forced to dismiss it as a dissociated truth. Needing to consolidate her career standing Helen strategically involved herself in activities that would guarantee recognition within her school's agendas. While she remained interested in Fay for intellectual and emotional reassurances, her perceived need for professional "survival" and advancement assumed greater priority in her immediate actions. Not unlike the conclusions previously drawn by Ellsworth, critical praxis as distinct from critical intentions, was to Helen a repressive myth in that her priorities for change lie elsewhere.

Conclusions

Fay's value as an intellectual resource for praxis appears to lie in his explanations about the contingent nature of individuals' and groups' aspirations on one hand and, on the other, how they are circumscribed by existing social conditions and expectations vested in certain historical conditions. While this realisation might not be new it goes against the grain of temporariness and immediacy that teachers, in this instance, 'feel' as 'experience' of a 'crisis' in the absence of other practical, conceptual, and intellectual resources. We tentatively conclude that there are certain enabling "conditions" that need to be attended to in the flow from praxis intentionality (or teacher theorizing) to empowering action. First, the making of time for teacher reflexivity is crucially important to Carr's [1995a]
acknowledgement that teachers are capable theorists of their own practices. But reflective practice does not occur in vacuum. Teacher reflexivity does require Carr's "intellectual resources". Intellectual resources, with time, enable an "internal dialogue" about grounded work-place practices beyond a dependence on experiential wisdom and habit. On both counts, making time and providing intellectual resources, we conclude that the subject "Curriculum Theory" was enabling for Sue, Helen and a number of other teachers who are not reported here. Of course, the enabling of time and resources is largely a consequence of teachers' preparedness to participate. In the case of Curriculum Theory, participation was enabled by specifying its content as the practical problems teachers were experiencing at that point in their careers. The subject never intended to deliver theories of curriculum developed in abstraction from the teachers attending our classess. Nor did it purport to "apply" theory to practice. "Curriculum Theory", in fact is a misnomer, a more apt title for the subject might have been "Theorising Curriculum". Nevertheless, the contrasting case studies outlined above provide empirical evidence about the lack of any guarantee that teachers' praxis intentionalities, or critically informed teacher theorising, will be enacted in practices. As useful and important as "intellectual resources" might be for "socially useful theory" there are many other variables that need to be considered in unravelling the mysteries of invoking deliberated actions. Teacher's personalities, critical commitments, and relationships with teachers, parents, and children all warrant further scrutiny with regard to identifying enabling and disabling dimensions of professional and personal circumstance. With regard to the creation of enabling circumstances within the professional context and beyond the creation of time and provision of intellectual resources through Curriculum Theory we offer some observations. If change is to be effected by teachers in lesser positions of institutional authority it does need to be critically informed and strategically planned. Particularity of the proposed action is required rather than generality. This might mean that a teacher wishing to introduce limited changes will need to work carefully for extended periods of time with strategically selected and supportive colleagues. A milieu of common interest and rapport needs to be developed even if participants motivations differ. In Sue's case she was able to enlist the support of the Principal thus adding to her own sense of purpose, commitment and acceptance. Helen was unable to generate such a milieu. More precisely, it appears that the form of social associations generated by change agents provide a springboard from which actors feel as if they can make a difference despite the overwhelming and oppressive nature of the "system". Making a difference, however, if it is to be empowering need to be more than a mindgame that takes solace in the refuge of developing a critical consciousness. Our findings show that a tension exists between praxis intentionality and grounded actions. There are a myriad of reasons and
circumstances why action does not necessarily flow from praxis intentionality. Some of these reasons can be gleaned from Helen's case study. Rationality, following Fay, is not the only pre-condition for action nor can it be argued that rationality does claim the high moral, political and educational ground. Many teachers are deeply committed, as Carr (1995a) rightly acknowledges. Enabling circumstances for change remain elusive in a period of educational reform that culminates for many teachers with a time, resource and collegial famine. For Fay (1987, p. 214) a complete critical social theory needs to acknowledge the 'unpredictable, fragile, and limited character of human enterprises' which rest largely in making some (limited) sense of those historical, social, and institutional structures in which, for example, curriculum or policy is produced, interpreted, enacted and evaluated. Among the problems grappled with here and thought to restrict the enactment of a critical theory of education is the concern that enlightenment is not necessarily the prelude to empowerment and emancipation. Enabling and constraining dimensions of interpersonal agency and schooling structures are prevalent and require disclosure in educational research.

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