The Crystallizing Teacher: 
A Performative and Critical Autoethnography 
of Conscientization Revealing 
Whiteness in Australian Schools

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

March, 2021
Abstract

I am compelled to write this thesis, called by a professional and moral obligation. This thesis is an act of love bearing witness to dominance in Australian schools where dominance is embedded and normalised in epistemologies of racism and neoliberalism.

This thesis emerges from my doctoral study which began with noticing two critical incidents in my teaching career. Working autoethnographically, both critical incidents expose whiteness in my own experiences in Australian schools and neoliberalism’s stifling impact on my agency as a progressive teacher.

This thesis reports on research that is underpinned by Paulo Freire’s conscientization and is performative and critical autoethnographic research. Through conscientization I recognise my integrated duality of teacher-as-researcher; I am object and subject. As teacher I submit myself to questioning, as researcher I notice and take cognizance of things, and as both teacher and researcher I intervene in praxis. I apply conscientization and aim to decolonise praxis in the field of education, enliven radical hope, and engage in acts of self, other and world transformation. Whiteness is revealed as I ask questions about my personal identity, my identity formation, and the impact of my identity on my praxis. Working outward from my praxis, I ask questions about school education in Australia that make visible the forces of dominant whiteness and neoliberalism on school pedagogy, curriculum, initial teacher education and teacher professional development.

This thesis identifies an array of models of reflective practice in the field of education and I categorise these models as technical reflection, practical reflection, or critical reflection. I suggest teacher employers prefer technical models of reflection which align with purpose and procedures of neoliberalism
and which typically strip both teacher voice and contextual details from data sets. Such models of reflective practice stifle the qualities of the progressive teacher that Freire lists as, *inter alia*, courage, humility, tolerance, and engaging in performances of armed love. I suggest technical models of reflective practice would have failed to bear witness to dominance in Australian schools, and that my doctoral research required the development of a model of critical reflective practice. This thesis reports on the model of critical reflective practice I developed which is underpinned by the purpose and methods of Freire’s conscientization, Tricia Kress’ critical praxis research, and Gillie Bolton’s through-the-mirror-writing. My application of five stages of through-the-mirror-writing generates mystories in a process involving emic and etic work.

Throughout my study I was emic as I submitted myself to questioning and worked with insider knowledge of my experiences to develop performative representations of these experiences. I was etic as I returned to the performative representations, further questioning, and analysing them to develop critical understandings of dominance and resistance in schools.

I performatively represent my experiences in Australian schools through mystories. The mystories crystallize deep and complex understandings of dominance and resistance. These understandings function like dendritic crystals, branching from the two critical incidents that I noticed in my teaching career and, like the process of conscientization, will contribute to a lifelong odyssey of learning. Taken singularly or as a series of texts, each mystery of dendritic crystal constructs knowledge in a non-linear, iterative, and improvisational process by rubbing against/with/through each other. This process attracts and repels, yields, and resists knowledge claims through performative representations of multiple texts written in multiple genres.
Statement of originality

Some parts of this thesis reproduce work that I have previously published, or submitted for publication, and that are listed below; however, the publications and this thesis have not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief the thesis contains no other material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

The referencing and citing system used in this dissertation follows the procedures as per the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) Seventh Edition.

I give permission for this copy, after being deposited in the Griffith University library, to be available for photocopy and loan.

Signed
Craig Wood
(#s822958)

Date 11 March 2021
Acknowledgements

I was born on the traditional lands of the Kaurnu People. I grew up playing on the traditional lands and in the waters of the Kaurnu People and the Ngerindjeri People, near the southern coastline of central Australia. I now live and work on the traditional lands of the Jagera and Turrbal Peoples, about halfway along Australia’s eastern coast. I begin this thesis paying my respect to elders past, present, and emerging of these First Peoples, and I express sorrow at the transgenerational failure of Australian schools to enact a curriculum that is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ narratives, that is culturally appropriate, and that meets the diverse learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. My commitment in undertaking this doctoral study is to be walking decolonised steps towards reconciliation.

I have been blessed to be accompanied and guided on this journey by Associate Professor Madonna Stinson and Dr Harry Van Issum as my supervisors. From the early phases of my candidature, Madonna encouraged me to start writing, submit my work for publication, and present at international conferences. One of the first pieces we shared was a series of memos-to-me, where I wrote as both subject and object of the research. As Madonna continued to encourage my writing, the memos-to-me transformed to become Conversations with Myself which appears in the findings section of this thesis.

Undertaking this PhD research as a part time doctoral candidate has been been challenging. More than planning data collection phases, completing ethics applications, approving financial remittances, discussing analysis, and reviewing drafts, I am very grateful for Madonnna and Harry’s ability to keep calm and carry on in the face of my frequent outbursts of irritation about being made subordinate to neo-managerial practices of the university, which were
eroding my scarce time to work. For all hours spent attending to duplicated or triplicated, and uploaded and downloaded, and reloaded processes, thank you.

I am immensely grateful for Madonna and Harry’s supervision, wisdom, counsel, and patience, for knowing when and how to push me, as well as respecting my work-life-study balance and their understanding that my agreed timelines were more aspirational targets than enforceable obligations. The meals and conversations that we have shared over this journey have been a pleasure.

Initially my research was supervised by Professor Michael Balfour and Associate Professor Penny Bundy. I am thankful for Michael’s probing questions that began to planting seeds in my early candidature phase of research. Michael suggested at some point I might use my research to devise a performance piece. Five years later, my performance of *Waking up to Memmi* won an Australian Association for Research in Education award. I thank James Trigg for his artistry, scholarship, friendship, and generosity in directing my performance. Associate Professor Penny Bundy recommended readings that introduced me to autoethnography and crystallization, and I also acknowledge and appreciate Dr Marcus Campbell introducing me to the work of Robin DiAngelo that continues to shape my thinking.

As a part time doctoral candidate, undertaking the writing of a PhD thesis has been an exhausting process. I am thankful for the support from many colleagues, friends, and family. You can stop asking when I will be finished. Now. I am finished now🔥. I am particularly grateful for the understanding afforded to me by Kate Ruttiman and Graham Moloney, General Secretaries of
my employer, the Queensland Teachers’ Union of Employees, and the kindness of my colleagues who regularly checked on my well-being 😊 + 🌐.

Online communities became an excellent support mechanism for this otherwise isolated part time PhD candidate. I express deep gratitude to the Critical Autoethnography Facebook community. Exchanging ideas with critical social researchers, celebrating each other’s work, or the simplest 🙏❤️😭😂😢 could feel like the warmest of embraces. I am proud to be a part of this rich community of scholars, and I continue to be amazed at the depth, insight, and beauty of the epistemological and methodological work that the group contributes to research. There are also many anonymous PhD candidates whose twitter posts that used #PhDlife; #PhDchat; #PhDweekend; #PhDvacation; and others provided solidarity and helped me push through challenging times.

I recognise that my isolation has, from time to time, been my own doing. Throughout my PhD candidature I have had the good fortune to undertake several #PhDvacations to Kythira, Greece. My favourite beach overlooks the waters where Aphrodite first emerged from the sea, and my favourite bar overlooks the bay where Helen of Sparta and Paris of Troy paused to honeymoon while sailing to Troy. I thank Μίνα Μιράντι for the use of his property in the village of Φράτσια for a large part of 2016 which enabled me to undertake focused work. It would be remiss of me not to recognise the many hours spent working at Βίτσιο in Λιβόδι, and Μπάντα Λάντρα and Fox Anglais in Καψάλι, and the many megabytes worth of wifi uploads and downloads at those establishments. Σας ευχαριστώ Μίνα, Σπίρο, Αντώνης και Άρης.

As I write this acknowledgement humanity is enduring a global health pandemic, and phrases like ‘social distancing’ and ‘self isolation’ have entered
the public vernacular. For PhD candidates, these phrases describe lived experience lasting, in my case, more than six years. There is a selfishness in undertaking a PhD. To my family, especially my wife Maria, thank you for enduring this period in our lives of weekend and late-night absences and suitcases packed with books and notepads.
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACARA</td>
<td>Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACSA</td>
<td>Australian Curriculum Studies Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AITSL</td>
<td>Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APR</td>
<td>Annual Performance Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPR</td>
<td>Critical Praxis Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPF</td>
<td>Developing Performance Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EATSIEPEC</td>
<td>Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Early Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EATSIPS</td>
<td>Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCEEECDYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPLAN</td>
<td>National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCB</td>
<td>National Curriculum Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSECHR</td>
<td>National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PST</td>
<td>Professional Standards for Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QCT</td>
<td>Queensland College of Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QTU</td>
<td>Queensland Teachers Union of Employees</td>
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List of publications
Throughout my doctoral candidature, I have published, and submitted for publication, peer-reviewed material that has emerged from and informed my processes of thinking and writing. Extracts from this published material appear in this thesis and are referenced as:


Introduction

There can be no love where there is domination. And anytime we do the work of love we are doing the work of ending domination.

(hooks, 2013, p. 37)

The struggle against racism must also include the fight to de-racialise micro and macro social formations left to us by colonisation which continue to effect and shape the lives of my people.

(Rigney, 1997, p. 113)

The decolonising classroom is the place where we can change the world. We, teachers, decolonising intellectuals of all stripes, must be hope, not the farce against which Paulo Freire (1970) warned educators even before the takeover of neoliberalism.

(Diversi & Moreira, 2018, p. 90)

As I continue to teach, I continue to search and re-search. I teach because I search, because I question, and because I submit myself to questioning. I research because I notice things, take cognizance of them. And in so doing, I intervene. And intervening, I educate and educate myself.

(Freire, 1998a, p. 35)

This doctoral thesis is my representation of an act of love; this is a struggle against racism in an activist’s pursuit of decolonised and radical hope; this is a performative and critical autoethnographic research project framed by Paulo Freire’s (1998a) conscientização (conscientization). This thesis is a representation of critical self-questioning that Freire embeds in praxis-based teacher research in which he defines praxis as “the authentic union of action and reflection” (Freire, 1998b, p. 515). Freire’s insights encapsulate my purpose for conducting this research in which I perform the dual roles of the questioning teacher and cognizant researcher. I notice, submit myself to questioning, take cognizance, intervene to educate, and
intervene as a contribution to the struggle of disrupting colonialism in the field of education in Australia.

At the time I began my PhD candidature, I attended an Applied Theatre Symposium hosted by the University of Auckland, Aotearoa / New Zealand. The photo on the inside cover of this thesis, reproduced below as Figure 1, was captured at the conference. The photo emerged from a workshop in that I participated which was facilitated by Kat Thomas and titled “Intimate aesthetic revolutions: The making of hope”. In the workshop I shared a critical incident from my teaching, that I refer to throughout this thesis as *Mystery of Sal*, and which I now consider to be a revelation of whiteness in my praxis. I was partnered with Associate Professor Hilary Halba, and as I narrated *Mystery of Sal*, Halba was tasked with interpreting the story and creating a representation of it through facepaint. I then recorded Halba’s verbal exegesis of her interpretation, and I reproduce her interpretation of the mystery with her permission.

**Figure 1. A representation of performed and critical autoethnography**

![Figure 1](image.png)

Associate Professor Halba's interpretation of Mystery of Sal

What you started talking about was something quite demarcated, so I made a demarcated line down the middle. And you were talking about 1.4 and 2.4, which are the Professional Standards for Teachers. There was a sense of requiring compliance with these, so it seemed to be quite a linear, symmetrical, quite a structured thing.

But then all of a sudden, something happened.

One of your students, a young Indigenous woman, refused to do her examination. So there was a sense of dismay. So I put an exclamation point here and that somewhat imbalanced that structure. And on the other side, there was you. I tried to make a spiral pattern, but it didn't quite work. It got a bit blobby. But that was you going, "Yeah, good on you girl."

There was also talking a little bit about Australian history, and I put some orange there, because it occurred to me, this sort of red, orange, country.

But then, what you started talking about thereafter, was the messiness or blurriness that occurred. The structure actually, with people's proclivities and predispositions, and needs and values and wants, everything became blurred. And all of these nice, neat, formulaic structures, started blurring together.

But out of it, we still have got 1.4 and 2.4, sticking out like traffic lights, going, "No, comply with me, comply with me." In amongst all of this messiness of human behaviour within demarcated structures.

I had already noticed and begun to submit the critical incident in my teaching to questions about identity and praxis, but the collegial process of the workshop enhanced my critical reflective thinking about this moment. My storying of the incident, and then hearing a colleague's interpretation of the story, added layers of understandings of school education in Australia, like the messiness of lived experience resisting forced compliance and measurement of linear structures.

Moreover, through participating in the facepaint workshop, I recognised an additional visual representation of how the story could be interpreted as a performative and critical autoethnographic interrogation of both teacher–practice and teacher–research that resists formulaic structures. To that end, as a product from the
workshop, Figure 1 marks a moment in my research process when I began to consider performative methods. The facepaint activity represents both a metaphoric and literal scar, bearing witness to lived experiences of whiteness in Australian education.

In *The Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire discusses the tapestry of his life experiences, consisting of bits and pieces from childhood, adolescence, and onward, which has enveloped him and contributed to shaping his identity (1994, p. 17). Similarly, throughout this thesis, I reclaim stories, like *Mystery of Sal*, that represent memories of my experiences as a child–student, adult–teacher, teacher–unionist, and teacher–researcher. These reclaimed stories lead to understandings of racialised and imbalanced power relationships in education in Australia. Described by Laura L. Ellingson as “scraps of data” (2009, p. 99), my reclaimed stories are drawn from 12 years of participating in education as a school student, five years in tertiary education, and then more than 20 years of professional and industrial work in the field of education in Australia.

For most of my career I have been a secondary school teacher, typically employed in urban schools as a teacher of Arts, English, and Humanities subjects. I have an activist's commitment to left-leaning, progressive issues of pedagogy, curriculum, and social justice. I have been a teacher union workplace representative since my second year of teaching and, when I began my doctoral studies, I was also employed by my union, the Queensland Teachers’ Union of Employees (QTU), on a temporary contract as a Research Officer. Throughout my PhD candidature I have continued to both work as a secondary school teacher and serve in a variety of elected positions within the QTU's structures. In May 2018, following an open merit selection process, I was appointed as a permanent Research Officer of the QTU. This doctoral research has enhanced my position as a Research Officer because I
have developed critical research skills and strengthened my voice in a role through which I seek to build communities of interest with the dual aims of empowering teachers’ voices and decolonising education praxis.

I have undertaken this doctoral research mostly as a part-time candidate and while maintaining full-time employment in the field of education in Australia. The exception is a nine-month gap during which time I engaged in special leave without pay from my employment to conduct a phase of data collection. I recognise the economic privilege that enabled me to take this leave, as well as the generosity of people in Kythira, Greece, the island of my wife’s ancestors, where I was able to engage in this focussed period of work.

The impetuses for this research were two professional experiences through which I noticed racialised imbalances of power in the field of education in Australia. Throughout this thesis, I refer to the experiences as *Mystery of Sal*, which was performed earlier as a representation on a critical incident in my teaching, and *Mystery of Gandu Jarjum*, which represents some of the work of the QTU. Following these experiences, my process of conscientization has deepened my understanding of epistemologies of power which include whiteness as a force of colonial oppression in the field of education and specifically in Australian schools. By submitting myself to questioning, I have seen whiteness revealed as an agent that marginalises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, histories, and understandings, and that seeks to reduce the aims of education from a social investment that strengthens democracy, into racialised and institutionalised skilling of the next generation of workers (Apple, 2018; Biesta, 2013; Gillard, 2010; McLaren, 2015; Nakata, 2007; Rigney, 1997; Wrigley, 2006). Throughout my PhD candidature, I have written about the impact of some of these power relationships on my praxis (Wood, 2018b; Wood, 2019; Martin & Wood, forthcoming), adding my voice to calls for teachers to
empower themselves and the teaching profession by resisting forces of teacher oppression (Berry, 2016; Hogarth, 2017; Ritchie, 2001; Sahlberg, 2016).

My process of conscientization has provided me with deepened and complex understandings of epistemologies of power and the impact of whiteness, colonialism, and neoliberalism on my praxis in education. Ellingson (2009) and Richardson (2000) describe this approach to the production of knowledge as crystallization, hence my title for this thesis, *The Crystallizing Teacher*. Throughout this thesis I refer to thecrystallizingteacher as all lower case and one word, in recognition of a blogsite that I created during the research process. The longer URL of the blogsite is https://thecrystallizingteacher.wordpress.com and this remains a live site. In chapter 4, I discuss my use of blogging as one phase in my method of data collection and that involved the blogsite.

I know that many teaching colleagues in Australia will be familiar with Howard Gardner’s use of the term crystallizing experiences (Gardner, 1983). In his theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner proposes that there are moments in a person’s life that affirm their individual gifts or intelligence type. Indeed, some of the mysteries in this thesis are the type of crystallizing experiences that Gardner refers to; however, I am using the term crystallizing as a research method that has been developed by Laurel Richardson (2000) and Laura Ellingson (2009) as a way of finding meaning in lived experience, like experiences of teaching and learning, and in so doing challenging traditional western understandings of social science research. Ellingson (2009) observes that crystallization is not widely used beyond the fields of ethnography and autoethnography, and that it is not research concerned with generating singular, universal truths. Rather, crystallization generates multiple representations of dynamic phenomena and opens these to multiple interpretations.
Applying crystallization as a metaphor to social science research, Richardson (2000) says crystals,

combine symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns and arrays of casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose...

(Richardson, 2000, p. 934)

I locate my doctoral research in the broad methodological field of performative and critical autoethnography that enables an investigation of personal stories within a cultural framework as defined by Adams, Holman-Jones, and Ellis (2015), Chang (2008), Denzin (2018), Ellis (2004), Hughes and Pennington (2017), Iosefi (2016b), Mackinlay (2019), Poulos, 2021, Spry (2001), and Upshaw (2017). This research is a performative and critical autoethnography which considers how personal identity is shaped by historical and socio-political forces of coloniality in education, and how identity shapes teacher praxis in the field of education (Dyson, 2007; Freire, 1994; Hogarth, 2018; Lennon, 2015; Martin & Wood, forthcoming; Upshaw, 2020).

In the introduction to the special issue of *International Journal of Multicultural Education* on critical autoethnography in pursuit of educational equity, Marx, Pennington, and Chang (2017) note, “the power critical autoethnography can have for illuminating privilege, power, and marginalization in educational contexts including the areas of teaching, learning, and policy” (p. 3). In this performative and critical autoethnography, I consider my experiences as a child-student, adult teacher, teacher unionist, and teacher-researcher in the wider field of education in Australia and the institutionalised, socio-political experience of education.

As performative and critical autoethnographic research, drawing on processes of conscientization, this research is a political act of resistance and intervention; it is
an activist’s critical praxis research (CPR). I am not only attempting to notice whiteness in my praxis in the field of education with the aim of educating myself (Freire, 1998a, p. 35), but I do so with the intention of revealing and challenging dominance. Tricia Kress tells us in Critical Praxis Research that the ultimate goal of CPR is to “develop new understanding of Self/Other and the world in order to bring about change – to our research practice, our pedagogy, and hopefully society” (Kress, 2011, p. 140). As I educate and intervene, disrupting traditional western scholarship and decolonising my praxis in the field of education, I also seek allies to similarly reveal and disrupt whiteness as a force that perpetuates colonial micro and macro social formations (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; Diversi & Moreira, 2018; DiAngelo, 2018; Fanon, 1968; Freire, 1994; Leonardo, 2016; Moreton-Robinson, 1999; Rigney, 1997). My learning from, and contribution to, the continued work of the QTU is an example of this (Queensland Teacher Union, 2019a).

This doctoral thesis is a representation of my continuing interventions into teacher and teacher-researcher praxis that aim to “deconstruct and racialise whiteness to offer useful insights about power relations in Australian society which can inform practice and theory” (Moreton-Robinson, 1999, p.35). A broader aim of this thesis is the culmination of a continuing process described by bell hooks (2013) and quoted at the start of this chapter as, “the work of love” (p. 37). The thesis documents the critical reflective research that I have undertaken into my praxis in the field of education that aims to critically intervene and disrupt whiteness and systemic racism described by bell hooks (2013) as, “ending domination” (p. 37). In Writing Beyond Race, bell hooks (2013) states,
Imprinted on the consciousness of every white child at birth, reinforced by the culture, white supremacist thinking tends to function unconsciously. This is the primary reason it is so difficult to challenge and change. (bell hooks, 2013, p. 3)

In this research I assume the roles described by Horsfall and Higgs, (2012), and Schwandt (2007) as both ‘object’ and ‘subject’. My experiences in Australian schools, performatively represented through mystories, are the object of the research, but as the storyteller and reflexive researcher I am also the subject of the research. Denzin (2013) defines mystories as “simultaneously a personal mythology, a public story, a personal narrative, and a performance that critiques” (p. 133) and they are a way “of making visible the oppressive structures of the culture” (p. 139). My writing, prompted by my activist pursuit of social justice, is typically emic because I am an insider to the research and, like Freire (1998a), I assert that, “I am not impartial or objective; not a fixed observer of facts and happenings” (p. 22). From my emic position I can identify themes and patterns in the mystories, and then return to the stories from an etic position to develop themes. Writing in Light in the Dark, Gloria Anzaldua (2015) refers to emic positioning as talking with stories and etic positioning as talking about stories (p. 5).

Writing about Aboriginal storying, Blair (2015) identifies the importance of story as integral in the process of Indigenous knowledges. Phillips and Bunda (2018, p. 43) offer storying as a process to: (i) nourish thought, body, and soul; (ii) claim voice in the silenced margins; (iii) embody relational meaning making; (iv) transcend past and present delineation; and (V) enact collective ownership and authorship. In an attempt to generate a deeper understanding of my teacher and teacher-researcher praxis I have critically reflected on my experiences in Australian education and performatively represent these reflections through mystories.
The research site is specific to my praxis in the field of education in Australia. The research is deeply personal in its revelations of how I have been shaped and influenced and therefore it may be little benefit to others by way of a contribution to knowledge. On the other hand, working autoethnographically, my personal experiences reveal a culture of systemic whiteness in school curriculum and pedagogy, as well as in initial teacher education and teacher professional development. Moreover, the CPR methods that I have developed may be of use to other teachers and researchers, particularly in the field of reflective practice, critical pedagogy, professional development, and researchers with an interest in the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. To that end, I welcome the opportunity to develop professional communities of interest to develop collegial models of practice that align with the CPR goals of self/other/world transformation. I began this chapter citing Marcello Diversi and Claudio Moreira’s (2018) call to decolonising teachers. Earlier, Joe Kincheloe noted,

> The plethora of small changes made by critical teacher researchers around the world in individual classrooms may bring about far more authentic educational reform than the grandiose policies formulated in state or national capitals.  
> (Kincheloe, 1991, p. 14)

This thesis reports on my critical self-reflective doctoral research that has begun to intervene in my own praxis in the field of education by cultivating my voice. My CPR contrasts with other models of teacher professional development that are described variously by Kincheloe (1991), Kress and Frazier-Booth (2018), Mitchie (2012), and Sahlberg (2016) as being generated by neoliberal education reforms that reduce acts of professional development to banks of risk adverse vocational skills and teacher scripts to be rehearsed by teachers and delivered in their schools. Like Freire (1998) and Wrigley (2006), I view such models of professional development
as an assault on teacher autonomy that leads to deprofessionalisation and lowering of teacher morale. Hence, I sought a critical model of teacher professional development that would develop understandings of the interconnectivity between the personal, the professional, and the socio-political, and where my discipline for self-study would open pathways in the political struggle for resistance and freedom (Freire, 1998). In this critical reflective teacher research, I have assumed agency to select the things about teacher praxis that I took cognizance of and that I have chosen to ask questions about; I have selected the method in which I will conduct the questioning; and I have selected how to intervene and educate myself. Through this empowering process I now select how I will apply my learnings in the field of education.

Research questions

The impetuses for this research were the events that I have subsequently written about in this thesis as *Mystory of Sal* and *Mystory of Gandu Jarjum*. I was initially guided by the question:

> How do my experiences of contemporary school education in Australia reveal the impact of whiteness on my praxis?

Throughout my process of conscientization I continued to ask questions and generate multiple texts in a way of working that was non-linear and iterative. The aims of my research broadened as my cognizance increasingly revealed the impacts of socio-political forces of whiteness. For example, I became increasingly cognizant of processes of identity formation, which were occurring in my own learning as a child-student, and which have subsequently impacted upon my praxis as an adult-teacher and teacher-researcher. With this cognizance, I became aware that the first research question needed to be expanded into three sub-questions.
Question 1a seeks understandings of how the wider socio-political context shapes my personal identity, and asks,

*How have my experiences of contemporary Australian education shaped my identity?*

Question 1b connects the personal and the professional, and asks,

*How does my identity impact on my praxis in education?*

Question 1c interrogates my professional praxis to reveal the wider socio-political, and insodoing demonstrates a way that whiteness is replicated. This question is,

*How do my experiences of contemporary Australian education, including my praxis, reveal whiteness in education?*

As I began to interrogate my experiences and praxis, I also sought an effective research method which led to the formation of a second question,

*How can critical praxis research reveal hegemonic forces like whiteness in teacher research that is undertaken in an Australian context?*

This thesis also reports on 25 aims of the research. The emergence of each individual aim was not apparent at the commencement of the research. My non-linear and iterative approach to undertaking this research and writing this thesis meant that I continued to critically and reflexively revisit knowledge that had been constructed from earlier phases of my research. Some of the 25 aims of the research were only revealed as I subjected earlier phases of the research to questioning. I
have organised these aims of this research by applying the broader aims of CPR that are self/other/world transformation.

Figure 2, below, categorises the 25 aims of the research in relation to the research questions and broader aims of CPR. The research questions are presented on the X axis of Figure 2, and the CPR aims are presented on the Y axis.

Aims 1 and 2 of the research are relevant to all the research questions, and both aims 10 and 11 are repeated. The aims of research questions 1a and 1b appear as specific to identity and transformation of self. Aims 12 to 20 relate to transformation of others and are premised on the use of story and research to build community. Through the building of community, the transformation of world becomes a possibility through realising aims 10 and 21 to 25 of this research.
**Figure 2. Research questions and aims of the crystallizing teacher**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transformation of Self</th>
<th>Transformation of Others</th>
<th>Transformation of the Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis.</td>
<td>13. Seek trustworthiness of accounts.</td>
<td>(10.) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity.</td>
<td>15. Create stories that resonate with an audience.</td>
<td>23. Reveal dominant whiteness in schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Understand how my identity impacts on my professional narrative.</td>
<td>16. Apply critical social analysis to action.</td>
<td>24. Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege of silence voices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience.</td>
<td>17. Identify political nature of language, and then use language for liberation.</td>
<td>25. Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Throughout this thesis I use footnotes to indicate connections back to the 25 aims of the research.

**Organisation of thesis**

This thesis attempts to illuminate my odyssey towards achieving the 25 aims of the research and is presented in three parts incorporating eight chapters. Following this introduction, Part I applies dendritic agates as a metaphor for branches of crystals that form in a host, often volcanic, rock. Dendritic agates are typically colourless or white and, in crystal healing, they can be used to aid self examination. Part I includes two chapters and begins with an overview of the research context, specifically education policies in Australian schools which enshrine hegemony and erode teacher empowerment. In chapter 2 I discuss the conceptual framework for this research, and I include a discussion on the three components of conscientization: reflexivity, social critical analysis, and activism. I discuss critical whiteness studies as social-critical analysis, and I then turn to activist research and decolonising praxis. I conclude chapter 2 with a discussion on models of critical pedagogies of hope.

Part II draws on polymorphism as a metaphor for the process in which particular matter has the capacity to crystallize in more than one form, usually in response to different environmental conditions. Part II incorporates three chapters that are method, data collection and analysis, and an ethical framework that I developed to guide my researcher decision-making process throughout this research. In chapter 3 I discuss research method as crystallizing, autoethnographic, and CPR. In this chapter I also compare various models of reflective practice and discuss personal narrative, reclaimed story and mystory, and I conclude the chapter proposing alternative methodological approaches that could be undertaken in further
research. In chapter 4 I discuss three phases of data collection and the data analysis methods I applied throughout this research. This chapter is structured by my application of Gillie Bolton’s (2010) five stage process of through-the-mirror-writing. In chapter 5 I provide the ethical framework that supported my decision making throughout the research and I consider issues of cultural appropriateness, and ethical issues related to characters, places, and experiences that are embedded in my teacher narrative. This chapter also reports on ethical issues pertaining to research informants, and the storage and management of collected data.

Part III is framed by my reflections and refractions arising from the crystallizing processes of creating and analysing the mysteries, and this part incorporates three chapters. In chapter 6 I illuminate the findings of the research through an emic and etic discussion on six mysteries and a reflexive conversation with myself where I play the roles of both subject and object of the research. This chapter then opens to include crystallizing conversations with colleagues and ends with the reproduction of two peer-reviewed journal articles arising from this research and a book chapter that has been submitted for publication. These contributions to the field of research were identified in the list of publications at the beginning of this thesis. Chapter 7 is my concluding chapter that locates my findings in the context of the 25 aims of the research. Chapter 8 is a performative epilogue to this thesis.

Figure 3, below, is a model of the crystallizing teacher that represents the interconnectivity of the epistemological and methodological concepts that underpin and communicate this CPR. Figure 3 shows the concentric lenses that I have applied that frame then reframe, and position and reposition me as both object and subject of this research.
Figure 3. Epistemology and method of the crystallizing teacher

Figure 3 shows the core of this research is Mystery of Sal and Mystery of Gandu Jarjum which are dendritic crystals, and from these two mysteries there are multiple branches forming new crystals, often maintaining a symmetrical pattern. Figure 3 shows seven other mystery crystals emerging from the original two, and in chapter 4 I will discuss how I cultivated the growth of these mysteries.

The nine mysteries are surrounded by a series of lenses, and the first is my lens of conscientization, through which I have begun to create meaning. I use mysteries as a considered response to research question two, because the
mystories are performative representations of my experiences which promote activist transformation framed through the lens of conscientization. Like Denzin (2018), Ellingson (2009), Pelias (2019), Richardson (2000), Spry (2016), and Upshaw (2018), I recognise multiple meanings can be generated from performances of texts. I apply a lens of CPR to investigate how my lived experiences as a child-student, adult-teacher, teacher-unionist, and teacher-researcher impact upon my current praxis. Furthermore, I have applied a lens of critical whiteness and anti-racist hope as a conceptual frame that offers an epistemological understanding of my critical reflections. The lens of critical whiteness and anti-racist hope supports my understanding of how dominant forces are replicated in the field of education in Australian, and it reveals barriers that hegemonic forces replicate to thwart enactments of antiracism and hope. The fourth lens views this research through performative and critical autoethnographic representations of the mystories.

The nine mystories that are identified in Figure 3 appear throughout this thesis. Table 1, below, draws from the representation of data demonstrated in Clough (2002). The table reports on the initial data sources for each mystory, the meaning embedded in the data, namely the what of each mystory, and the performative representation, or the how of each mystory. As crystallization, the table shows multiple texts that have been created from an array of reclaimed stories as autoethnographic data which prompt multiple understandings. The final column identifies the location of each mystory in this thesis.
Table 1. Mystories as data in the crystallizing teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mystery</th>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>What of story (Unit of meaning)</th>
<th>How of story (Data method)</th>
<th>Location in thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with myself</td>
<td>Critical teacher journals, Reflexive data analysis,</td>
<td>Emerging findings from the research</td>
<td>Interview between object and subject of the research</td>
<td>Findings, chapter 6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… from pre-service teacher training</td>
<td>Online artefacts, Memory</td>
<td>Inadequacies of pre-service teacher training</td>
<td>Pre-service teachers’ reflective journals</td>
<td>Findings, chapter 6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… of a field trip</td>
<td>Curriculum, Gary Crew’s Inner Circle</td>
<td>Approaches to curriculum and pedagogy</td>
<td>Interwoven transcript of teacher interviews</td>
<td>Findings, chapter 6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… of EATSIPS</td>
<td>Department of Education publication, Curriculum, Memory</td>
<td>Whiteness in school priorities</td>
<td>Play script of staff meeting</td>
<td>Findings, chapter 6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… of Gandu Jarjum</td>
<td>Online artefacts, Memory, Letter</td>
<td>Decolonising self</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>Research context, chapter 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… of learning Burke and Wills</td>
<td>Walking, Memory, Online artefacts</td>
<td>Whiteness in curriculum</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>Conceptual framework, chapter 2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… of le garçon et la balon rouge</td>
<td>Meeting reflection, Email exchange</td>
<td>Decolonising research</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>Ethics, chapter 5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… of Mattias</td>
<td>Photograph, Memory</td>
<td>Teacher student relationships and hope</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>Findings, chapter 6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… of Sal</td>
<td>Co-construction of story</td>
<td>Teacher struggle to make meaning of lived experience</td>
<td>Face paint exegesis</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… of Sal</td>
<td>Narrated memory</td>
<td>Teacher struggle to make meaning of lived experience</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>Research context, chapter 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… of Sal</td>
<td>Curriculum, School work program, Teacher resources, Imagination</td>
<td>Whiteness in pedagogy</td>
<td>Multivocal poem</td>
<td>Conceptual Framework, chapter 2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… of Sal</td>
<td>Curriculum, School work program, Teacher resources, Imagination</td>
<td>Critical incident revealing whiteness in praxis</td>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>Findings, chapter 6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… of Sandy Creek</td>
<td>Conference notes, PowerPoint on conference website</td>
<td>Awakening to superiority of Indigenous knowledges</td>
<td>Reflective prose</td>
<td>Research context, chapter 1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Throughout this thesis I refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, knowledges, stories, and histories. I acknowledge terms used elsewhere including Indigenous, for example the United Nations’ Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. First Peoples and First Nations are terms that also appear, and the terms disrupt post-colonial narratives which seek to maintain white dominance through promulgating a racialised interpretation of history as universal truth. ‘Peoples’ is very deliberately a multi-plural form of the word people and affirms decolonised socio-historical understandings that there were many diverse peoples living with the land, seas and waterways of Australia before boats began arriving from Europe. I recognise that prior to European invasion there were more than 750,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in over 500 groups throughout the lands that would become known as Australia (Australians Together, 2019). However, this research is specific to education in Australia, and naming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and specific language groups, rather than applying the terms Indigenous, First Peoples, or First Nations, is my attempt to respectfully name traditional custodians of Australia.

I use standard Australian English spelling and for consistency this includes editing quotes that I have cited from the field of literature. The exception to this is my use of the words conscientization and crystallizing, where I have maintained the use of a letter Z instead of an S. In its native Portuguese form, the language of Freire, conscientização (conscientization) uses a Z instead of an S. Similarly, my use of crystallizing maintains the letter Z instead of an S, whereby the spelling recognises scholarship originating from the United States of America and the origins of the term crystallizing as method.
I maintain the use of the word teacher in the title of this thesis but recognise my changing role in the field of education necessitates expanding an understanding of the notion of teacher from a post-industrial western understanding of the term. I noted previously that I continue to work in the field of education, currently as Research Officer of the QTU. This role includes contributing to educational research and policy development relevant to school curriculum and pedagogy. Moreover, my commitment to decolonise my own praxis and to build community with others has been reinforced by this research, albeit in a different context that may yet prove to expedite some of the transformational aims of self/other/world.
PART I  

**DENDRITIC AGATES**

… crystals forming in a host rock and used to aid self examination.
1. Research context

The context of this research is specific to Australian schools. Working autoethnographically, I begin this chapter with a discussion on the importance of this research and the two main impetuses for this research that are *Mystery of Sal* and *Mystery of Gandu Jarjum*. In the following sections I provide an overview of the socio-political frame of Australian schooling and the impact of neoliberal education policy as a contemporary form of colonialism. I then turn specifically to the impact of neoliberalism enshrined in the Australian Curriculum that replicates colonial power and marginalises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, histories, and stories. Next, I discuss Australia’s Professional Standards for Teachers (PST) that further replicate power and render the PST of limited use to this research. I add education policy initiatives that are specific to the state of Queensland, and then turn to a Queensland curriculum initiative, *Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools*. I conclude this chapter with a discussion on Indigenous knowledges in the context of my aim to decolonise praxis.

1.1 Importance of this research

We cannot will our racist logics away. We need to work hard to eradicate them. We need to struggle with formidable resolve in order to overcome that which we are afraid to confirm exists let alone confront in the battleground for our souls.

(McLaren, 1998, p. 63)

I am committed to decolonising praxis within the field of education, including my roles as a teacher-unionist and teacher-researcher, and contributing to acts of
self/other/world transformation. Recalling aims 9, 11, and 22-25\(^1\) of this research, I accept McLaren’s (1998) challenge to work hard to eradicate racist logics and confront the battleground for my soul. Moreover, Kennedy (2009) opines the work of a national curriculum is the task of “capturing a nation’s soul” (p.6), and in accordance with aims 16, and 18-19\(^2\) of this research, I seek allies and communities of interest that will recognise the need for both individual agency and collective activism from within the field of education to redress the politics of exclusion, epistemological racism, and systemic inequalities in knowledge production that has been identified in the field of research by Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2016), Dei (2008), Denzin (2018), Diversi and Moreira (2018), Fanon (1968), Giroux (2011), Hogarth (2018), Kincheloe (1991), Leonardo (2016), Moreton-Robinson (1999), Nakata (2007), Sarra (2011), and others.

Drawing on Robin DiAngelo’s (2018, p. 34) *White Fragility* and the white racial frame, I am cognisant that the mysteries included as data in this thesis are drawn from thousands of stored bits of cultural information, continuing to act explicitly and implicitly, and influence me as a white, middle-class, able-bodied, tertiary educated, English speaking, property owning, urban, and heterosexual man. This research has supported me to work towards aims 3-5\(^3\) by making visible bits of the white racial frame impacting on my identity over a period of more than twenty years in the field of education as I have performed roles including Performing Arts teacher, Humanities teacher, English teacher, Science teacher (but for one year only), behaviour

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\(^1\) Research aim 9: Intervene and improve practice; (11) Resist dominant forces; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools; (24) Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.

\(^2\) Research aim 16: Apply critical social analysis to action; (18) Seek allies; (19) Build communities of interest to decolonise praxis.

\(^3\) Research aim 3: Understand my identity; (4) Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity; (5) Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative.
specialist teacher, school and regional representative football coach, senior teacher, beginning teacher, pre-service teacher, supervisor of pre-service teachers, teacher union representative, education researcher, and teacher union official; and I have worked in Queensland, Australia, as well as in England, taking up roles in primary schools, secondary schools, teacher training institutions, and professional and industrial organisations.

I became aware of the importance to undertake this research following the two critical incidents in my teaching, *Mystery of Sal* and *Mystery of Gandu Jarjum*. Drawing on Freire’s (1998a) process of conscientization, these are stories that I noticed, questioned, took cognizance of, and that have begun to lead to critical, decolonising interventions in my praxis. *Mystery of Sal* is about an incident with a student whom I taught some years ago and *Mystery of Gandu Jarjum* introduces my teacher union’s committee of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators.

1.1.1 Mystery of Sal

**Mystery of Sal**

*Our class had worked on Wesley Enoch and Debra Mailman’s play Seven Stages of Grieving about First Peoples and reconciliation throughout the term.*

*We’d had great class conversations along the way about families, grief, success, reconciliation, and other issues from the play.*

*Two days before our group assessment piece, I was predicting at least 80% of the class would be in ‘A’ and ‘B’ level of achievement bands. So confident in my students, and not without pride, I’d even invited the year 10 Deputy Principal along to watch.*

*I don’t know what happened. I don’t understand why Sal, a First Peoples student, refused to perform.*

*Instead of achieving at least a ‘B’ result, Sal will end up with a ‘D’ for the semester.*
When I have shared this episode with colleagues, I am sometimes asked why Sal made a choice to refuse to participate in the assessment item. I make no claim to understand Sal’s motivation in this thesis, and I will not provide a definitive response to that specific question. Rather, emerging from this mystery, and underpinning the importance of this research, is the realisation that there might be something more at stake than one student’s participation in assessment. Framing my questioning with a critical lens of whiteness studies, I am problematizing praxis in an attempt to understand the teacher’s contribution to the critical incident. Working autoethnographically, the first aim of this research is to educate myself⁴ and, specifically in the context of aim 2⁵, to understand the historical and socio-political forces of colonialism that continue to operate in Australian schools.

*Mystery of Sal* prompts to me to critically reflect on how my whiteness impacted on Sal’s learning and to wonder how I could have better used *Seven Stages of Grieving* as a text to enact an antiracist, pedagogy of hope more effectively. I am prompted to wonder about the cultural appropriateness of my choice as a white, male teacher to select *Seven Stages of Grieving* as a text to study. Further, I wonder about the degree to which my pedagogical praxis was inclusive of multiple perspectives in our conversations about families, grief, success, and reconciliation. I wonder what Sal and other students were experiencing but that I was unconscious to, and question whether I was perpetuating, “difference as deficit rather than difference as nourishment, creativity, quality” (Blair, 2015, p. 203). Most of all, I now wonder to what degree Sal and other students were experiencing bell hooks’ (2013) notion of domination in my classes. I framed these wonderings in

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⁴ Research aim 1: Educate myself.
⁵ Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis.
Wood (2017) by Elliot Eisner’s (1991) notion of the educational connoisseur and I reproduce sections of that article in both conceptual framework and findings chapters of this thesis. I also note the contribution of Gower and Byrne (2012) in defining cultural competence as developing,

an informed position based on an understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal issues, culture and way of life that enables confident and effective interaction with Aboriginal people and the wider society.

(Gower & Byrne, 2012, p. 380).

Aims 6-86 of this research lead me to ask questions that illuminate dominant narratives that have shaped my teaching practice and that I hitherto have been replicating to the detriment of my students (bell hooks, 2013; DiAngelo, 2018; Hogarth, 2019; Leonardo, 2016; McLaren, 2000; Moreton-Robinson, 2011). I now wonder about conceptions of dominance and otherness. As a white, heterosexual, English speaking, able-bodied man in Australia, I embody a representation of dominant power7, whereas some of the characters in Seven Stages of Grieving may have been viewed as a representation of a disempowered ‘other’. Such representations may have further contributed to negative perceptions and deficit thinking of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Sarra, 2011), further marginalising Sal and leading to what appeared to be disengagement from education but may have been a peaceful act of civil disobedience and protest against whiteness (Diversi & Moreira, 2018).

Mystery of Sal might be recognised by teaching colleagues as the story of a student refusing to participate in an assessment item. In this research, Mystery of Sal has helped me begin to understand the pervasiveness of white domination as a

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6 Research aim 6: Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience; (7) Deepen understandings of praxis; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis.

7 Research aim 5: Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative.
force described by Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson (2016), Hogarth (2019) and Nakata (2007) as colonial oppression and epistemological racism that continues in Australian schools. Gloria Anzaldua (2015) writes of colonialism, “… we are being taught secondhand our cultural roots twice removed by whites. The essence of colonisation: rip off a culture then regurgitate its white version to the ‘natives’” (p. 48).

1.1.2 Mystery of Gandu Jarjum

Following the critical incident that was the Mystery of Sal, in my roles with the QTU I have had opportunities work alongside of Gandu Jarjum, the Union’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators committee. I attest that my time spent with Gandu Jarjum remains the best professional development I expect that I will ever undertake. This work afforded me both professional learning and personal growth and, together with Mystery of Sal, has “compelled me to struggle with formidable resolve in order to overcome that which we are afraid to confirm exists” (McLaren, 1998, p. 63).

Mystery of Gandu Jarjum

In 2013 I was appointed to a twelve month contract with my trade union, Queensland Teachers’ Union (QTU), and returned to this role in 2015.

A part of my role was to provide secretarial support for the QTU’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education committee, Gandu Jarjum.

Together, among the achievements of the committee, we have drafted submissions to government, achieved affirmative action rule changes within the Union, developed a QTU Reconciliation Action Plan, and convened an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Educators’ Conference for QTU members.

The work continues...
In *Mystery of Gandu Jarjum*, I recognise my good fortune in having the opportunity to work alongside of my teacher union’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education committee. While not explicitly discussing *Mystery of Sal* with the committee, I have gained an insight into the continual epistemological racism that systemically marginalises Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and an understanding of how this affects teachers, students, and communities. The personal experiences that the committee has afforded me have been deeply transformational. I am honoured by the trust that the committee has shown me, with invitations to speak as an ally in the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education policy within the QTU and the broader education community. Gandu Jarjum’s letter of support for this research undertaking appears, with the Chair’s consent, in Appendix A of this thesis.

As I listened to my QTU colleagues discussing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, I became increasingly aware of limitations in my understanding of the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as well as gaps in my curriculum knowledge to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in my classes in culturally appropriate ways. Further, I am increasingly aware of the absence of quality professional development to support my practice. More alarmingly, I am increasingly aware of the omissions that exist in my personal learning about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, culture, and language.

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8 Research aims 1: Educate myself; (2) Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (16) Apply critical social analysis to action; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.

9 Research aim 8: Reveal whiteness shaping my praxis.
I recall that my undergraduate education degree included a mere 10-credit points of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives out of a 320-credit point degree, and I have experienced no quality professional development in the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education as an employee of Education Queensland in two decades with that organisation. My experience of a lack of professional learning mirrors that of teachers reported in Buxton (2017), Ma Rhea, Anderson and Atkinson (2013), Moodie (2017), Moodie and Patrick (2017), Moreton-Robinson, Singh, Kolopenuk, and Robinson (2012), and the teachers surveyed in Luke et al. (2011) who report “a lack of sufficient pre and in-service training preparation in Indigenous education” (p. 230). These collective experiences suggest that there is a failure to appropriately educate and provide continual professional renewal at a systemic level, leading Ma Rhea (2015) to suggest,

... a significant change is needed to disrupt the assumption up until relatively recently that a good generalist teacher would have sufficient skills to address the needs of Indigenous students.

(Ma Rhea, 2015, p. 79)

My personal and professional response to Mystery of Sal and Mystery of Gandu Jarjum is that I am compelled to find my own ways to illuminate the influences on my identity, understand how these influences shape my praxis, then work to improve my praxis and develop communities of interest that will support colleagues to improve their own cultural competence. Nerida Blair posits,

In order for teachers to confidently engage with embedding Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum they need to know themselves inside and out. They need to know and understand, to critically reflect and engage with constantly evolving ideas.

10 Research aim 3: Understand my identity; (5) Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative; (7) Deepen understandings of praxis; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (9) Intervene and improve praxis; (19) Build communities of interest to decolonise praxis.
They need to do this in a space that is outside of their own ontological frameworks.

(Blair, 2015, p. 192)

Both *Mystery of Sal* and *Mystery of Gandu Jarjum* triggered the process of deep personal and professional conscientization, raising my critical awareness of the impact of whiteness in my praxis, as well as the impact of systemic and epistemological racism more broadly in education in Australian schools. My co-constructed story of Sal that appeared in the introduction of this thesis, recognised the messiness and blurriness of lived experiences and, while my initial teacher reflections were guided by the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, I found the rigidity of such formulaic structures failed to meet my need to understand and intervene in my praxis. I will return to the PST after a brief discussion on the context of school education in Australia.

1.2 Australian schools and education policies

In Australia, school education is the constitutional responsibility of the states (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010). However, in recent decades federal governments have attempted to shape and implement a national approach to education policy in a manner described by Lewis, Savage and Holloway (2019) as “political rationality based on standardisation (that) has arguably been mediated by a continued tendency towards bipartisan, unilateral and centralising schooling reforms by successive federal governments since the 1980s” (p. 13). For example, in 2007 the Rudd-Labor Government was elected with promises that included delivering an education revolution but their revolution, and that of subsequent federal governments, has simply continued the pursuit of neoliberal education policies.
Writing in *Globalisation and education*, Bob Lingard (2021) describes neoliberalism as a socio-political ideology that privileges the market over the state, and competition over collaboration. Some of the observable impacts of neoliberalism include repositioning of citizens as consumers of state-delivered services, growing social inequality, and a democratic deficit (Lingard, 2021, p. 2). The field of education research has reported the global impact of neoliberal policies (Apple, 2018; Biesta, 2013; McDermott, 2015; Mitchie, 2012; Orelus, 2013; Sahlberg, 2009; and Wrigley, 2006). Neoliberalism in the context of Australian education has been described in Connell (2013), Hogarth (2018), Leistyna (2007), Lingard (2009), Reid (2009), Rizvi and Lingard (2010), and Savage (2016). I have also made contributions that report on adverse impacts of neoliberal education reforms on teachers and pedagogy in *The Last Days of Education?* (Wood, 2018b) and *The secret art of pedagogical alchemy* (Wood, 2019) and I concur with Apple (2018), Hogarth (2018), and Sahlberg (2016) that one of the qualities of neoliberalism in education is a standardisation of policies\(^\text{11}\).

Two notable examples of neoliberalism in Australian schools, that emerged from the Rudd-Labor Government’s education revolution, are the establishment of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) that has carriage of the Australian Curriculum, and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) that oversees the development of the PST. I will discuss both in this section as well as the implementation of further education policy specific to Queensland schools.

In Australia, ACARA develop the Australian Curriculum that reduces teaching and learning to an increasingly narrow curriculum, privileging hegemonic knowledge

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\(^{11}\) Research aim 11: Resist dominant forces; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.
while marginalising diverse voices and student individuality. Hegemonic knowledge is positioned by dominant forces of power as universal truth and it is reified through curriculum and assessed using standardised tests (Apple, 2013; Hogarth, 2018; Sahlberg, 2009; Wrigley, 2006). Similarly, AITSL have developed the PST that reduce the complexities of teaching to standardised descriptors, stripping away teacher professionalism and pedagogical innovation, while privileging low risk approaches to teaching that result in decontextualized, impersonal and irrelevant learning (Biesta, 2013; Crowther & Boyne, 2016; Evers & Kneyber, 2016; Lewis & Lingard, 2015).

In limiting my discussion on neoliberalism to the Australian Curriculum and PST, I am making a deliberate choice to not discuss the implementation of standardised testing, and namely the National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). Results of NAPLAN are frequently reported to compare the educational performance of states and territories as well as student cohorts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Such reporting typically reproduces deficit thinking, described by Solorzano and Yosso (2016) as racism maintaining hegemonic narratives with “mono-vocal stories about the low education achievement and attainment of student of colour” (p. 130), and by Diversi and Moreira (2018) as the “Master’s Tool to justify inequality” (p. 72).

1.2.1 Australian Curriculum

In 2008, the Rudd-Labor Government established the National Curriculum Board (NCB), later to become ACARA. The NCB began the process of creating a national curriculum in four subject areas: English, Maths, the sciences and History and it included three cross-curriculum dimensions that were: Aboriginal and Torres
 Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia, and Sustainability. There were also ten general capabilities aiming to develop knowledge, skills and understanding (NCB, 2009); however, in 2011 the general capabilities were refined from a list of ten to seven and include: Literacy, Numeracy, ICT competence, Critical and creative thinking, Personal and social capability, Ethical behaviour, and Intercultural understanding (MCEECDYA, 2011).

In 2013, the newly elected Abbott-Liberal/National Government began to implement its pre-election commitment to review the Australian Curriculum. The Abbott Government’s review of the Australian Curriculum made 30 recommendations (Australian Government, 2014). Recommendations 15 and 17 explicitly demonstrate epistemological racism and reification of colonial thinking that is enshrined in the empiricist and academic rationalist model of Australian Curriculum.

Recommendation 15 includes a call for ACARA to,

better recognise the contribution of Western civilisation, our Judeo-Christian heritage, the role of economic development and industry and the democratic underpinning of the British system of government to Australia’s development.

(Australian Government, 2014, p. 246)

Recommendation 17 calls for ACARA to,

reconceptualise the cross-curriculum priorities and instead embed teaching and learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia, and sustainability explicitly, and only where educationally relevant, in the mandatory content of the curriculum.


I concur with Lingard (2014), that described the review’s recommendations as a neoconservative stance in terms of knowledge production and epistemological
framing. Moreover, I assert that the phrase used in recommendation 17, “only where educationally relevant,” is blind to enrolment data in public schools.

The Report on Government Services (2019) shows that the fulltime equivalent student enrolment in Australian state schools includes 7.2% of students identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Moreover, “From 2014 to 2017, Indigenous student enrolments (full and part-time) in Queensland schools grew by 13.1 percent compared to 4.3 percent for all students in Queensland” (Australian Government, 2018, p.2). In Queensland state schools, the fulltime equivalent student enrolment increases to 9.9% of students identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander of Queensland’s total public school enrolments. This means there were 53,559 full-time equivalent students identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander enrolled in a Queensland state school in 2017 (Productivity Commission, 2019, Table 4A.5). At the time I left my school to take up my permanent role with the QTU, the enrolment figures in my own school indicated that approximately 9.0% of students identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Supported by these statistics, I take the view that developing pedagogical practice which resists dominant forces, addresses inherent epistemological racism in curriculum, destabilises whiteness, and builds momentum towards reconciliation between Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples is both a “professional and moral” responsibility (Orelus, 2013, p. 47). I agree with the Queensland Department of Education and Training’s

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12 Research aim 11: Resist dominant forces.
13 Research aim 20: Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools.
14 Research aim 10: Deconstruct and racialize whiteness.
15 Research aim 25: Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.
(2011) *Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Guide for School Learning*

Communities that asserts,

> Weaving the Indigenous story into the fabric of education through teaching about Indigenous cultures and perspectives in schools has been identified nationally as key to improving outcomes for Indigenous peoples …

> Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives will enhance the educational experiences for non-Indigenous students as well. It will not only give them a more accurate and richer understanding of Australia’s history and culture, it will help them to understand how we got to where we are today; and how we might move forward together. It’s about reconciliation.

>(Department of Education and Training, 2011, p. 9)

Contrary to recommendation 17 of the Review of Australian Curriculum, I hold the view that teaching and learning about diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures in all Australian state schools is always educationally relevant.

### 1.2.2 Australian professional standards for teachers

In addition to creating ACARA, in 2010 the Rudd-Labor Government established the AITSL. This body is governed by a board whose members are appointed by, and that reports to, the Australian Government’s Minister for Education. At the start of 2020, the AITSL board consisted of representatives of employers and academics as well as one teacher-coach and one school principal, but the board includes no democratically elected representative from the profession (AITSL, 2020). Moreover, there are no appointments to the board of people who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Australian teachers and school leaders do not pay a registration or subscription fee to AITSL, rather the teacher
registration authorities of Australia’s six states and two territories affiliate with the national body.

One of the functions of AITSL is to oversee the implementation of PST that are described at four levels: Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished, and Lead Teacher. There are seven PSTs that are further divided into descriptors (AITSL, 2012).

The PST descriptors include 1.4 that is strategies for teaching Aboriginal students and/or Torres Strait Islander students, and 2.4 that is understanding and respecting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and languages. Table 2, below, reproduces standards 1.4 and 2.4 at the four levels.

**Table 2. AITSL’s Professional Standards for Teachers 1.4 and 2.4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>GRADUATE</th>
<th>PROFICIENT</th>
<th>HIGHLY ACCOMPLISHED</th>
<th>LEAD TEACHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity, and linguistic background on the education of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.</td>
<td>Design and implement effective teaching strategies that are responsive to the local community and cultural setting, linguistic background and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.</td>
<td>Provide advice and support colleagues in the implementation of effective teaching strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students using knowledge of and support from community representatives.</td>
<td>Develop teaching programs that support equitable and ongoing participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by engaging in collaborative relationships with community representatives and parents/carers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Demonstrate broad knowledge of, understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages.</td>
<td>Provide opportunities for students to develop understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages.</td>
<td>Support colleagues with providing opportunities for students to develop understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages.</td>
<td>Lead initiatives to assist colleagues with opportunities for students to develop understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Adapted from Australian Professional Standards for Teachers by AITSL, 2012.*
Table 2 shows a progression through PST (1.4) from demonstrating “broad knowledge and understanding” at Graduate level, to “engaging in collaborative relationships with community” at Lead Teacher level. To progress through the continuum to Lead Teacher, teachers are required to demonstrate an increased understanding and inclusion of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities into teaching programs. Professional Standard for Teachers (2.4) shows a progression from demonstrating “broad knowledge and understanding” at Graduate level, to “Lead initiatives to assist colleagues” at Lead Teacher level. This standard calls for increasing professional capacity from one’s own broad knowledge to becoming a professional resource that enables improvements in the implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and languages in schools.

Ma Rhea, Anderson and Atkinson (2012) and Moreton-Robinson, Singh, Kolopenuk, Robinson, (2012) report on Australian teachers’ capacity to demonstrate the PST, and specifically 1.4 and 2.4. They found a pattern of limitations in the practices of the Australian teaching workforce pertaining to teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Moreover, the study found that this pattern is evident at the national, systemic, and local levels, and that there is a need to provide specific professional development for teachers in the areas of PST 1.4 and 2.4. However, bell hooks (2013) notes that it is the pervasiveness of dominator thinking that throws up strong resistance to cultivate critical consciousness. Perhaps for this reason, like the undergraduate teachers identified by Rom (2017), I felt underprepared to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. Moreover, like many teachers identified in Ma Rhea, Anderson and Atkinson (2012), my access to quality professional development related to PST 1.4 and 2.4 in my
twenty years in public education has been, “patchy, ad hoc and lacking in cohesiveness” (Ma Rhea, Anderson & Atkinson, 2012, p. 52). Further, like the attitudes of non-Indigenous teachers reported in Buxton (2015), Yunkaporta and McGinty (2009), Moodie and Patrick (2017), I acknowledge that prior to working with Gandu Jarjum, I had approached work in these descriptors with, “fear and resistance” (Ma Rhea, Anderson & Atkinson, 2012, p. 52).

I originally sought to frame reflections on Mystory of Sal with the formulaic structures of the PST. However, my co-construction of the mystery with Associate Professor Hillary Halba began to disrupt this thinking. Some weeks later, in a casual conversation with a colleague who now holds a senior position within Queensland’s Department of Education, I was encouraged to critically reflect on the PST. In that colleagues’ view, AITSL’s standardised template would not satisfactorily meet the aims of my research.

This conversation was a moment of epiphany in my research. Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) describe an epiphany as a moment of transformative, self-claimed phenomena. I had already shifted questions from the incident with Sal on to my identity and teacher praxis, but I was now cognizant of a need to open my researcher gaze beyond classroom praxis and question the systemic instruments of education policy in Australian schools, and the historical and socio-political forces that shape schooling and national policies. This epiphany awakened me to understand that decolonising praxis meant that no part of the education system was fixed nor exempt from being submitted to questioning, including this research as a scholarly activity being undertaken within the western academy. I was awakened to

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16 Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (21) Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education; (24); Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.
the existence of multiple truth and was cognisant that nothing is stable (Diversi & Moreira, 2018; Ellingson, 2009; Spry, 2016). Maxine Greene (1978) writes in *Landscapes of Learning* that the wide-awake teacher plays her part in the process of, “liberating and arousing” and committing herself, “to each person’s potentiality for overcoming helplessness and submergence, for looking through his or her own eyes at the shared reality” (p. 51).

As I submitted the PST to questioning, I realised that my colleague was correct; the standards would fail to support my aim to decolonise praxis. There is nothing uniquely Australian about the PST; they are a set of standardised descriptors purporting to deliver accountability and emanating from the global neoliberal education reform project (Sahlberg, 2009; Lewis, Savage & Holloway, 2019). Applying Kincheloe’s (1991) critical writing on teacher professional development to PST and online tools, I have moved my research beyond AITSL’s devices that are used to “study down” the subordinate teaching profession, and “later using their information to manipulate and control them” (p. 13). Rather, I am applying methods of CPR to reveal hegemony, empower practitioners, and lead to self/other/world transformation Kress (2011)\(^\text{17}\). I apply the term hegemony to describe,

> the process whereby ideas, structures, and actions that benefit a small minority in power are viewed by the majority of people as wholly natural, preordained, and work for their own good. (Brookfield, 2017, p. 16).

By applying a lens of critical whiteness studies to my CPR, greater depth of critical understandings of education praxis have been revealed than a focussed study relying on the PST would have been capable of achieving. While AITSL

\(^{17}\)Research aim 11: Resist dominant forces; (16) Apply critical social analysis to action; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools.
provide online professional tools and illustrations of practice that offer a source of data collection to assist teachers to reflect on practice (AITSL, 2017), my process of conscientization and development of the mysteries of school education in Australia, offer contextual insights into teaching praxis that are thicker and richer, and that offer the opportunity to reveal deeper, racialised understandings of power in schools than AITSL’s online tools. I have, as Moreton-Robinson (1999) suggests, racialised whiteness to find “insights about power relations in Australian society” to “inform practice and theory” (p. 35).

1.2.3 Pedagogical and practitioner policy

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports that many of its member nations are pursuing a policy agenda of teacher improvement, and notes, “Australia’s schools have positive learning environments, strong pedagogical leadership and well-prepared teachers” (OECD, 2013, p. 4). In Queensland, teachers are required to maintain state-based registration with the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT). The QCT introduced ten Professional Standards in 2006 which included Standard 10: Commit to reflective practice and ongoing professional renewal. Following the introduction in 2010 of the seven Australian PST, the QCT now use these standards as a basis for teacher registration in Queensland. The seven PST are grouped in three areas that are: Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice, and Professional Engagement. As I described in the previous section, my initial intention was to be guided by two standards that form Professional Knowledge: Standard 1 - Know students and how they learn, and Standard 2 - Know the content and how to teach it, in particular PST 1.4 and 2.4.
In addition to the individual demonstrating the seven PST, in Queensland state schools, teachers are required to participate in the Annual Performance Review (APR). This is a process that establishes career goals and plans to build an individual’s capability across a cycle of three phases. The cycles include: (i) Reflection and goal setting, (ii) Professional practice and learning, and (iii) Feedback and review. My experience with the APR has been interrupted by my transition out of a classroom teaching role to undertake positions with my teacher union as well as undertaking this doctoral research. Consequently, while other teachers at my school progressed through APR and its predecessor, Developing Performance Framework (DPF), I remained at phase one that is goal setting. However, a similar process is undertaken with officers of the QTU with our line managers, and the aims of this research as well as my commitment to undertake further research are identified as supported goals with my employer.

The third significant public policy related to professional development of Queensland’s state school teachers is that schools are required to adopt a pedagogical framework. In 2013, my school adopted Marzano’s *Art and Science of Teaching* as our pedagogical framework. The two components of Marzano’s framework are ‘science’ that is teachers having an array of pedagogical tools at their disposal, and ‘art’ that is knowing which tool to apply at a given teaching moment. The *Art and Science of Teaching* framework is arranged in nine design questions that are used to categorise 41 elements. For example, design question 8 - *establishing and maintaining effective relationships with students*, includes three elements that are: element 36 - *understanding students’ interests and backgrounds*; element 37 - *using verbal and nonverbal behaviours that indicate affection for students*; and element 38 - *displaying objectivity and control* (Marzano, 2007). I
1.3 Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Curriculum

Another Queensland specific initiative, that commenced in 2004, is Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools (EATSIPS) which is a set of guidelines for teachers and school leaders. From 2008, the Queensland government allocated funding to employ six project officers whose role was to support the implementation of EATSIPS across the state, specifically in 42 trial schools, that had supported the emergence of the EATSIPS framework (Department of Education and Training, 2011, p. 10).

The EATSIPS framework emerges from the space referred to by Yunipingu in Craven (1989) as the third space between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being and non-Indigenous epistemologies. EATSIPS prompts movement towards the third space through: (i) personal reflections on our personal histories, attitudes, and perceptions; (ii) developing a whole-school ethos with accountabilities in curriculum and pedagogy, organisational environment, and community partnerships; and (iii) creating classroom ethos by understanding the impact of pedagogy and practice on student participation and outcomes (Department of Education and Training, 2011, p. 13). There are then ten ways to perform EATSIPS that are:

- understanding Indigenous knowledge frameworks;
- awareness of organisational environment;
- developing strong community partnerships;
• professional and personal accountabilities;
• planning, developing and evaluating curriculum materials;
• assessment and reporting;
• understanding students and their communities;
• understanding language and appropriate language use;
• understanding Indigenous protocols, and
• critical understanding and review of texts.

I am cognizant that *Mystery of Sal* represents a clear need to have undertaken professional development like the EATSIPS program. However, my experience of EATSIPS, represented in *Mystery of EATSIPS*, shows a lack of authenticity in the systemic implementation of the program, despite the rich personal and historical constructions of knowledge that are potentially afforded by the program. Moreover, the EATSIPS framework provides a critical reflective framework that could have supported my understanding of coloniser thinking and whiteness, and that could have improved my cultural capability\(^{18}\). In turn, such earlier changes to my praxis may have prevented the pedagogical choices I made that led to *Mystery of Sal*.

Quality professional development programs that support teachers’ cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogies in schools are available throughout Australian school systems although, as *Mystery of EATSIPS* also suggests, funding and systemic access to the programs is limited\(^ {19}\). Some rare exceptions are the recent action of the QTU to provide BlackCard Cultural Capability Training to all employees of the Union as well as to support QTU members, who are

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\(^{18}\) Research aim 6: Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness.

\(^{19}\) Research aim 24: Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices.
employed as teachers, heads of program, and school leaders (Queensland Teachers’ Union, 2019b). BlackCard Cultural Capability Training aims to develop a commitment to “undertake the same obligations and responsibilities to the land and to each other as Aboriginal people have practiced for thousands of years” (BlackCard, 2019). The Stronger Smarter Institute also provides a current example of a professional learning that is available to self selecting school leaders throughout Australia. Stronger Smarter offers face to face teaching and online courses to school leaders aiming to create “positive changes in education” by having “high expectations relationships” and to “promote positive identities and excellence in schools” (Stronger Smarter, 2019).

An example of the Australian government defunding a professional learning package is the What Works, program, developed by Ainsworth and McRae, that offered online learning materials and facilitators to support participants. While funding for What Works has ceased, the resources remain online and are focussed on addressing educational disadvantage and improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through a three-step process including: (i) building awareness; (ii) forming partnerships; and (iii) working systematically (Ainsworth & McRae, 2009).

In Queensland, the systemic implementation of EATSIPS is another example of the continuation of colonialism in school education. In 2011, Queensland’s, then, Minister for Education claimed EATSIPS was a priority; however, within six months of the EATSIPS launch that Minister moved from Education to the Health portfolio and within twelve months of the EATSIPS launch the Bligh Government that he represented was voted out of office. In 2013 the newly elected and conservative Newman Government launched its own plan, Solid Partners, Solid Futures which
aimed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from early childhood through to employment. Whereas EATSIPS aimed to move non-Indigenous teachers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples toward third spaces of reconciliation, *Solid Partners, Solid Futures* returned Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy to deficit thinking in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are positioned as the problem to be solved. *Solid Partners, Solid Futures* committed to Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Early Childhood (EATSIP E) insofar as it was to be a key initiative designed to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolment in early childhood programs, but its 11 key initiatives for schools deleted all references to EATSIPS as a priority. Instead, *Solid Partners, Solid Futures* limited pre-service teacher training to “final year pre-service teachers electing to teach” (italics for emphasis) in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community schools” and reduced continuing professional development to an unspecified “professional learning and an online resource” not for personal reflection, whole school, or class ethos, but for students who speak English as an additional language or dialect (Queensland Government, 2013, p. 14)²⁰.

### 1.4 Indigenous knowledges

In the months immediately before I commenced my PhD candidature, I attended the 2013 Biennial Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) Conference. *Mystery of Sandy Creek* is a partial representation of my recollections of Associate Professor John Bradley’s conference keynote address that challenged the perceptions of conference delegates like me who, prior to his keynote, perceived

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²⁰ Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democractice, anti-racist pedagogy of hope; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education.
Indigenous knowledges like those reported in McLaughlin and Whatman (2015), “to be out there, exotic in nature and outside the Australian daily experiences” (p.4).

Associate Professor Bradley’s keynote address was an epiphany moment that questioned my assumptions of the superiority of western knowledges over Indigenous knowledges, as well as how these assumptions had emerged in my thinking\(^{21}\).

Two years later, Professor Lester-Irabinna Rigney delivered a keynote address at the 2015 ACSA Biennial Conference and further challenged delegates with an understanding of curriculum and the observation that curriculum did not arrive on a boat from Europe. Rigney (2015) was challenging colonial thinking of Terra

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\(^{21}\) Research aim 9: Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools.
Nullius that fails to understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as people of learning, and whose 60,000 year heritage embodies a curriculum of knowledge and understanding that is deeply connected with the local lands, seas, waterways, and skies. Rigney (2015) lamented that the deep curriculum knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is not valued by western schools, thus diminishing what Pierre Bourdieu (1986) calls the ‘cultural capital’.

In *Pedagogy of the City*, Paulo Freire (1993) notes there are multiple ways of knowing that have a socio-historical construction, writing “knowledge is socially created, invented and reinvented and is learned. Knowledge is produced” (p. 117). In her seminal work *Decolonising Methodologies*, Linda Tuhwai Smith writes,

> the globalisation of knowledge and western culture constantly reaffirms the West’s view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge, the orbiter of what counts as knowledge and the source of ‘civilised’ knowledge.

(Smith, 1999, p. 63).

Smith (1999) further offers the process of decolonising knowledge is not a rejection of western knowledge, rather a recognition that western knowledge is not neutral. She opines that positivist, empirical epistemologies and methodologies are often so ingrained in western knowledge that it takes an outsider, Indigenous knowledge, to reveal them.

Comparing Indigenous and western knowledges, Blair (2015) notes, “Australian Indigenous Knowings are fundamentally different to Western knowledges. They are different but not inferior and not superior” (p. 193). Nakata (2007) identifies epistemological differences including who can be the knower, what can be known, what constitutes knowledge, what constitutes truth, and what constitutes evidence.

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22 Research aim 23: Reveal dominant whiteness in schools.
23 Research aim 21: Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
Bayes (2015) adds Indigenous knowledges are more holistic than western modern science, linked to unified cosmologies of being, collectively generated, and contextually, rather than universally, understood. Referencing Williamson and Dalal (2007), Department of Education and Training’s (2011) EATSIPS guide also notes western knowledge systems are “scientific and disciplinary” whereas Indigenous knowledge is “responsive, active eco-logical that views ‘language, land, and identity as interdependent in a unique way and constantly renewed and reconfigured’” (p. 9).

Returning to the failings of initial teacher education in Australia, Gower and Byrne (2012) posit in teacher education “Western academic knowledge needs to be coupled with Indigenous studies and practical experience of working with Indigenous people so that students develop appropriate levels of ‘cultural competence’” (p. 381)\(^\text{24}\).

I make no claim that this thesis reports Indigenous research, although I do draw parallels between conscientization and some Indigenous knowledges. Lester-Irabina Rigney (1999) posits three qualities of Indigenous research that are: (i) research as a political act of resistance; (ii) research that has integrity, and (iii) research that is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ voices. While this research, as a decolonising act of conscientization is inherently political and activist, I note the omission of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ voices. This research is not about Sal as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student, but my teacher praxis within the school system that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students navigate\(^\text{25}\).

\(^{24}\) Research aim 17: Identify political nature of language, then use language for liberation; (21) Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.

\(^{25}\) Research aim 8: Reveal whiteness shaping my praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education; (24) Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices.
Western scholarship that applies models of reflective practice typically traces the origins of the method through a colonial lens, recognising the twentieth century influence of John Dewey or further back through the Eurocentric canon to the Ancient Greek philosopher Socrates (Chester, 2012; Schon, 1983; Taylor, 1998; White, 2002; Wood, 2018b). Thus, while this doctoral research is not Indigenous Research, I recognise parallel Indigenous knowledges that I have been honoured to have had shared with me. As a process of conscientization that decolonises my research conducted within the western academy, I briefly describe some parallel Indigenous knowledges. The paragraphs that follow in this chapter are included with permission and recognition of both ancestral laws of representation and ownership of the knowledges remaining the property of the Indigenous peoples (Gower & Byrne, 2012).

I have been fortunate to listen to Dr Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr, who was also a keynote speaker at the 2013 ACSA conference that I attended in Darwin some months before I commenced my doctoral research. Dr Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr gifts us the word ‘dadirri’ from the Ngangikurungkurr tribe. The Miriam Rose Foundation website records her explanation, “Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and calls to us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. It is something like what you call ‘contemplation’” (miriamrosefoundation, 1998), and, as I explain in chapter 4, is something like I have experienced in Kythira, Greece. The reflective nature of dadirri differs from conscientization in that the former is contemplation with stillness and calmness with the natural environment, whereas this research includes contemplation that is charged with activist intent to change the social world.
Five years later, at an autoethnography conference in Auckland, Aotearoa, I was introduced to the Indigenous scholarship of both Haami Hawkins (Hawkins, 2018) and Dr David Taufui Mikato Fa’avae (Fa’avae, 2018). Both scholars demonstrated Indigenous knowledges that resemble, and predate, the emergence of autoethnography in the western academy, and both have since published their work in *Wayfinding and Critical Autoethnography*, which is a book of edited chapters from the conference.

Hawkins introduced the conference to the notion of ways of knowing and meaningful being as Rangahau (Maori inquiry), that helps us to see the unseen. He has since written about “The indwelling spirit of Rangahau” as Wayfinding Kurahuna in *Wayfinding and Critical Autoethnography* (Hawkins, 2021) in which he traces the origins of rangahau to creation narratives and he reflects on the autoethnography conference in Auckland writing,

> “Is this really a Western qualitative research methodology?” I asked myself. “It seems very familiar.” I feel like my stories and the work I have been doing could fit comfortably into this space. But, I don’t call what I do critical autoethnography. What I do I call rangahau.  

(Hawkins, 2018, p. 87)

Dr David Taufui Mikato Fa’avae, a Tongan man, gifted delegates at the same conference with Tongan language and knowledge concepts. His presentation considered socio-cultural influences and constructions of Tongan masculine identities through a process termed talanoa ‘I tatala’, that Dr Fa’avae explained is understanding and unfolding layers of stories through sharing stories and experiences. His subsequent contribution to *Wayfinding and Critical Autoethnography*, titled “Critical autoethnographic encounters in the moana: Wayfinding the intersections of to’utangata Tonga and indigenous masculinities”
considers identity constructions and relationships to time, place, and culture in an ever-changing world (Fa’avae, 2021).

I conclude this chapter returning to the writings of Gloria Anzaldúa (2015) who provides insight into the Coyolxauhqui Peoples’ struggle to reconstruct oneself. Anzaldúa discusses the process in her struggle that includes her impulse to use writing to make sense meaning and create herself as a knowledge producing act. Further, Anzaldúa asserts the methodological importance of imagination, in contrast to empirical positivism that dominates western thinking and the academy, and as a way to “open the road to both personal and societal change – transformation of self, consciousness, community, culture, society” (p. 44).

1.5 Summary of research context

This first chapter of my thesis, like dendritic agates, shows crystals beginning to form which aid my self examination and reveal dominance in Australian schools. Throughout this chapter I have discussed the manifestation of dominance in Australian schools generated by and replicated through systemic education policies and the influence of those policies on teacher praxis. Dominance that is generated by neoliberalism, strips autonomous decision-making from the teaching profession and is a barrier to deconstructing and critiquing whiteness and enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogies of hope.

My discussion of education policy has supported my construction of knowledge about hegemony shaping white identities which are replicated in schools and are a barrier to resistance praxis. This knowledge supports my CPR aims for transformation of self and understandings of identity formation, my identity’s impact on my praxis, and how my experiences reveal whiteness in Australian schools. This
section has supported the forming of crystals that develop my transformation of self and world.

1.5.1 Transformation of self

Throughout this chapter, I have reported the beginnings of my process of conscientization through which gaps in my critical consciousness have been noticed and questioned. As CPR representations of data, *Mystery of Sal* and *Mystery of Gandu Jarjum* have been transformational. Through noticing these mysteries as critical incidents, and submitting myself to questions, I have become cognizant of whiteness shaping my identity and that whiteness deeply influencing my professional knowledge and skills. I have then noticed the impact of whiteness as a gap in my critical consciousness which resulted in me reinforcing coloniser thinking which privileges white students and marginalises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. With this new knowledge and my commitment to progressive education and social justice, I have felt a moral obligation to intervene and educate myself. As Nerida Blair writes,

> As teachers we must be bold and brave and look inside ourselves at our values, our experiences, if we are to grow and nourish our own identities and the roles we play in modelling effective, quality teaching practice for all students.  
> (Blair, 2015, p. 193)

1.5.2 Transformation of other

After discussing *Mystery of Sal* and *Mystery of Gandum Jarjum*, this chapter considered neoliberal education policies in Australia. I acknowledge that, given the single-(n) nature of this CPR, this research risks reinforcing the findings of Ma Rea,

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26 Research aim 1: Educate myself.
Anderson, and Atkinson (2012) regarding Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander teacher professional development being patchy and ad hoc. On the other hand, becoming a more effective practitioner of the PST means “supporting colleagues”, “leading initiatives”, and “engaging in collaborative relationships” (AITSL, 2012). To that end, while my CPR has moved beyond the PST, decolonising praxis means developing culturally appropriate knowledge and pedagogical skills and supporting colleagues to do likewise. Improving praxis also means seeking out professional allies with the aim to act collectively to decolonise education and perhaps leading to dismantling hegemonic education policy initiatives while promoting authentic professional development of teachers. I am inspired to develop communities of interest that pursue transformation of others and the world. As Stewart-Harawira (2005) notes, collective actions that are geared towards social transformation might, be made visible in our private lives, our public action, and in our classrooms. And that ultimately, through the collective efforts of we, the multitude, a new way of being in the world will be achieved – together.

(Stewart-Harawira, 2005, p. 161)

1.5.3 Transformation of world

In addition to PST, this chapter discussed curriculum and included critical reflections on EATSIPS that showed examples of hegemonic forces marginalising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges. The final section of this chapter sought to disrupt western and positivist ways of knowing and working by embracing Indigenous knowledges. Recentring constructions of knowledge and embracing Indigenous knowledges is an aim of this research and the following chapter continues to develop my crystallization and pursuit of the aims to transform
self/other/world with a conceptual framework for my research that is critical and activist.
2. Conceptual framework

In this conceptual framework chapter, I seek to develop answers to research questions about whiteness as an agent that shapes identity, teacher praxis, and experiences in Australian schools, as well as develop a method of CPR that bears witness to dominance in Australian schools and stands as an act of resistance to whiteness.

I begin this conceptual framework chapter with a discussion on Freirean conscientization that consists of reflection, social critical analysis, and transformative activism. The chapter frames the research through a lens of critical whiteness studies and demonstrates whiteness in an example of my own learning in primary school with *Mystery of learning Burke and Wills*. In the third and fourth sections of the chapter I further locate conscientization as activist research that is supported by decolonising praxis. I draw on eight criteria for activist research, and then discuss majoritarian and counter-narratives in the section on decolonising activism that includes a polyvocal and performative representation of *Mystery of Sal*. I end this chapter with a discussion on anti-racist hope in schools.

2.1 Conscientization

There can be no conscientization of the people without a radical denunciation of dehumanizing structures, accompanied by the proclamation of a new reality to be created by (humankind).

(Freire, 1998b, p. 514)

This doctoral research adopts Freirean scholarship which embraces hope and liberatory activism as a conceptual framework. Paulo Freire’s (1998a) *Pedagogy of Freedom* is part of the canon of works by the influential Brazilian educator that includes, English translations of, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970); *Education: The
practice of freedom (1976); A Pedagogy for Liberation (1987) co-authored with Ira Shor; Pedagogy of the City (1993); Pedagogy of Hope (1994); and Pedagogy of the Heart (1997), co-authored with Ana Maria Araújo Freire; and Pedagogy of Freedom (1998) that was published posthumously. Throughout his work, Paulo Freire called for education that balanced power relationships between students and their teachers, and that empowered those who are oppressed to lay claim to their own sense of humanity27.

I began the introduction to thesis citing Freire’s notion of conscientization and the inherent verbs embedded in both the act of teaching and researching. Further to the Indigenous knowledges underpinning the work of Haami Hawkins, David Fa’avae, and Gloria Anzaldua, which I referred to in the previous chapter, I liken my process of conscientization to the work of Ippolito and Schecter (2012) as a “process whereby teachers developed a fuller understanding of the broader socio-political context of and potential contradictions in their own work as educators” (p. 618)28. Therefore, in response to my second research question, as a model of CPR, conscientization can reveal whiteness in teacher praxis and in the field of education in Australian schools.

I begin this section advancing understandings of conscientization as a theory of praxis including Freire’s radical call to proclaim new realities. Freire states, “conscientization is first of all the effort to enlighten (people) about the obstacles preventing them from a clear perception of reality.” (Freire, 1998b, p. 517) and to this end, conscientization identifies majoritarian narratives, awakens people to the impact of such narratives, and denounces such narratives’ claims to truth. Steele (2013, p.

27 Research aim 9: Intervene and improve praxis; (11) Resist dominant forces; (16) Apply social critical analysis to action; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacing democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.

28 Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis.
209) agrees, noting conscientization’s process of becoming educated and liberated from dominant ideology creates challenges to the status quo. Conscientization is both a conceptual framework and research method, it is a way of thinking and a way of doing, but Paulo Freire dismisses binary thinking that separates theory and practice. In *Pedagogy of the City* (1993) Freire posits,

> Practice does not by itself represent a theory about itself. But without practice theory runs the risk of wasting time, of diminishing its own validity as well as the possibility of remaking itself.


Like Ellis (2012) and Stage, Muller, Kinzie and Simmons (1998), I consider Freire’s conscientization a conceptual framework to underpin research because conscientization frames the doing of this praxis-based research which includes reflections on actions, critical analysis of sociocultural realities, and ultimately intervention and transformation. Swick (2013) observes the synergetic effect of critical theory being interwoven with activists’ practice, stating,

> The process of conscientization moves beyond mere awareness, beyond a naïve consciousness, to a state where humans use their critical thinking skills to become active participants in the struggle for liberation.

(Swick, 2013, p. 45).

Jones (2016) adds,

> This is the apex of conscientization through which one realizes not only one’s place in the world, but one’s ability to act on and shape the world as opposed to being shaped by the world.

(Jones, 2016, p. 67).

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29 Research aim 4: Understanding factors contributing to the shaping of my identity; (17) Identify political nature of language then use language for liberation; (24) Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices.
This fundamental aim of conscientization, applying critical social analysis to action\textsuperscript{30}, is described by Macedo (2014), whereby it,

... exposes and engages the relations between the oppressor and the oppressed. Its central educational objective is to awaken in the oppressed the knowledge, creativity and constant critical reflexive capacities necessary to demystify and understand the power relations responsible for their marginalization and, through this recognition, begin a project of liberation.

(Macedo, 2014, p. 179)

Without dismissing Macedo’s contribution to understanding conscientization, I agree with the Workers Solidarity Movement (2012) that assuming the existence of an oppressor and oppressed dichotomy as two homogenous groups, is overly simplistic. bell hooks (2013) adds that such binary thinking “heightens the awareness that there is no simplistic way to identify victims and victimizers, although there are indeed degrees of accountability” (p. 32). Binary thinking essentialises groups, failing to acknowledge the impact of intersectionality of class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, education, and more (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012). A danger of essentialising whiteness is recognised by Riggs (2007) who attributes part of the power of whiteness to its ability to absorb difference and appear universal.

I do not absolve myself from the privileges that whiteness affords me, but to support this CPR, I position myself as oppressed by whiteness insofar as the invisibility of the force has denied my knowledge of power relations\textsuperscript{31}. By adopting this approach, I am awakened to whiteness shaping my identity, praxis, and experiences in Australian schools and I increase my capacity to work towards decolonising liberation and enactments of democratic and anti-racist pedagogies of

\textsuperscript{30} Research aim 16: Apply critical social analysis to action.

\textsuperscript{31} Research aim 7: Deepen understandings of praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialize whiteness.
hope. Recognising my relationships to power in the world is important in the decolonising project. Writing about conscientization, Jones (2016, p. 63) asserts being \textit{in} the world includes one’s efforts to, “critically evaluate their own values and beliefs” because, “one cannot understand one’s relationship in and with the world without this kind of self–analysis.” Brookfield (2017) adds, “the dark irony of hegemony is that teachers take pride in acting on the very assumptions that work to enslave them” (p. 17).

Freire (1998b) asserts that conscientization is unique to human beings as the only species capable of being \textit{in} the world and \textit{with} the world. Humans function \textit{in} the world, attending to their individual survival needs, relational needs, educational needs, and others’ needs. Unlike other animals, humans are \textit{with} the world when they engage in reflective actions of, “objectifying either themselves or the world,” to not do so, humans, “would be limited to being in the world lacking both self-knowledge and knowledge of the world,” (Freire, 1998b, p. 499) and that such reflective action can result in “profoundly transforming action upon the determining of reality” (p. 500). Conscientization in teacher praxis is the process of functioning \textit{in} the world, class by class, term by term, and year by year, but simultaneously functioning \textit{with} the world where the teacher notices things, takes cognizance of them, asks questions, and intervenes. The intervention is action arising from the reflection, so that the teacher is educated and enlivens possibilities of utopian hope.

An example of a teacher functioning \textit{in} but not \textit{with} the world is addressed in Wood (2018b). I began that process of teacher reflection confident that I would find examples of Maxine Greene’s (1978) wide-awakedness and critical pedagogies

\footnotesize
\begin{enumerate}
\item Research aim 20: Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope.
\item Research aim 16: Apply critical social analysis to action; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.
\end{enumerate}
espoused by Henry Giroux (2011) and Peter McLaren (1998) deeply embedded in my teaching. Once I began objectifying my praxis, and being with the world, I became alarmed to realise my students were not experiencing curriculum in the way that I was intending to enact. My process of reflection led to a melancholic epiphany when I realised that I wasn’t the Socratic teacher I thought, a melancholy that turned to anger as I began to realise how far my teaching, actions in the world, had strayed from the reconceptualist models of curriculum I aspire to enact. My anger intensified as I continued to objectify my teaching, undertaking reflections with the world, and realised the disruption to my teaching was the result of the pervasiveness of neoliberal education reforms, pursued by the vested interest of global capital and its conservative political allies. Hitherto I had thought that I was wideawake to these interests and agenda.

Conscientization enlivens the activist pursuit of radical reimaginings of democratic and utopian communities of empowered citizens. As research, conscientization does not end at the point of dissemination of the research, rather teacher researchers, CPR, and Freirian teachers, continue to ask questions of identity and experience in an eternal struggle to challenge hegemonic forces like whiteness, and realise the goals of pedagogies of hope\textsuperscript{34}. Thus, I conclude Wood (2018b) with an epilogue that calls for teacher resistance to the neoliberal education reform agenda, and that work continues in my work with my teacher union and segues to the current research. My CPR, specific to the oppressive force of whiteness and neocolonialism in schools, is a new phase of my conscientization through which I am identifying deep and critical knowledge of my identity and

\textsuperscript{34} Research aim 1: Educate myself; (9) Intervent and improve praxis; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.
context, as well as developing a method to continue to ask questions and continue my activist intent of self/other/world transformation\textsuperscript{35}.

\subsection*{2.2 Critical whiteness studies}

As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something which puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage.

(McIntosh, 1992, p. 30)

Buchanan (2018) locates whiteness studies as a sub-branch of postcolonial studies which develops notions of all social research as political and value laden, and in which there is no fixed ‘truth’ (McLaren, 2006). Central to this is Edward Said’s (1978) concept of orientalism, in which Said identifies the practice of western scholarship that represents the eastern world as something that is ‘other’. The practice of orientalism creates dominant narratives that normalise western culture, while others are marginalised through depictions of quaintness or exoticism. Dominance represents a centralising of power in the production of knowledge, while there is a disempowerment of those whose ways of knowing and lived experience is ‘other’ or is represented in alternative narratives (Freire, 1993; hooks, 2003; Kincheloe, 1991)\textsuperscript{36}.

Whiteness studies reveals privilege by problematizing western structures and viewing those structures as ‘other’ rather than a practice of normalcy. Moreton-Robinson (1999) states, “Unlike ‘Aboriginality’ the presence of whiteness in texts has rarely received scholarly attention because it is often invisible and normalised to its producers” (p. 31) Rodriguez (2000) agrees, identifying whiteness as a project of

\textsuperscript{35} Research aim 4: Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity; (11) Resist dominant forces.

\textsuperscript{36} Research aim 17: Identify political nature of language, and then use language for liberation.
“maintaining colourless its colour (and hence its values, belief systems, privileges, histories, experiences, and modes of operation) behind its constant constructions of otherness” (p. 1). Delgado and Stefanic (2012) explain that whites believe that there is a universally valid truth, an ideal way of knowing and being, and Buchanan (2018) adds the term race is rarely ever applied to white peoples, as though race is something that ‘others’ people from central positions of power. The inherent invisibility of whiteness in school education is explained by Grant and Acosta (2008), “… the issue of teacher capacity often centred on the capacity of white teachers to teach white students without much attention to the racism embedded within this thinking” (p. 181)\(^\text{37}\).

I began this chapter identifying reflection, socially critical analysis, and activism as three components of conscientization. This section turns to the second component in which I view my child-student experiences of school education as a practice of ‘other’ through *Mystery of learning Burke and Wills* which bears testimony to the impact of whiteness on my own primary schooling. I then reflect on this mystery as I consider the aims of the critical whiteness studies movement in a discussion that draws on key contributions to the movement as well as identifying its contested ideas. I then discuss critical whiteness studies specifically in the field of education.

### 2.2.1 Mystery of learning Burke and Wills

*Mystery of learning Burke and Wills* is a story from my child-student experiences and demonstrates the imprinting of whiteness on the consciousness of students through school curriculum. Peter McLaren (1997) writes, “whites need to do

\(^{37}\) Research aim 23: Reveal dominant whiteness in schools.
more than remember history of colonialism as it affected the oppressed; they need to critically re-member such history” (p. 151), and Joe Kincheloe adds (2007)

In the epistemological domain white, male, class-elitist, heterosexist, imperial and colonial privilege often operates by asserting the power to claim objectivity and neutrality. Indeed the owners of such privilege often own the “franchise” on reason, rationality and truth.

(Kincheloe, 2007, p. 19)38

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My primary school was next door to The Old Gum Tree, the site where, on 28 December 1836, Governor Hindmarsh proclaimed South Australia a free state in the name of King William IV. The Old Gum Tree is a fifteen minute walk inland from Holdfast Bay, where the flagship Buffalo landed the English fleet of free settlers. A replica of the vessel is now permanently moored in the Patawalonga, the inlet that links Sturt River to the bay, and that on a hot day can positively stink.

One of my favourite units of work we studied in primary school was The Explorers. Over the weeks that we were studying The Explorers, there was an ABC documentary series and I was given the series’ book as a gift to help me with a class project.

I was always going to pick Burke and Wills for the assignment. There was something that fascinated me about their story; a story that was doomed to fail as they sought to be the first men to walk from the south of the Australian continent to its north, and in so doing establishing an inland trade route.

Burke and Wills are believed to have reached the Gulf of Carpentaria, and returned as far south as the Dig Tree. Their supply team, having waited for months for Burke and Wills return, decided the explorers must have perished. The supply team decided to return to Melbourne, but first buried supplies beneath the Dig Tree, so named because the European supply team carved on a nearby tree “Dig here”.

Mystery of learning Burke and Wills is a critical story of institutionalised whiteness in my schooling, replicating majoritarian colonial narratives which shaped learning in my childhood years. It is the story of colonial dominance where there is no place for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, specifically Kaurnu peoples’, counter-narratives. I have no memory of learning about the names of the traditional

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38 Research aim 16: Apply critical social analysis to action.
custodians of the countries that Burke and Wills walked through, and it was 32 years after the story that I have learnt that the Kaurnu people are the traditional owners of the land that my primary school occupied\(^\text{39}\).

If there is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence in *Mystery of learning Burke and Wills*, it is in the name ‘Patawalonga’ that my childhood memories attach the negative stink to. The colonial curriculum of my schooling focused on Governor Hindmarsh and the Old Gum Tree and consequently we were never taught local science and history, that for tens of thousands of years the Patawalonga was a tidal estuary and a place for fishing, but that Europeans had dammed to make Sturt Creek, named after the Briton Charles Sturt, more navigable.

Similarly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are almost entirely silenced in *Mystery of learning of Burke and Wills*. Any presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is as an invisible, yet ominous, looming, and savage threat to the brave British protagonists of the story. There is no sense of Burke and Wills walking from one nation to the next, their relationships with or use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ecological Indigenous knowledges. Moreover, the idea of “Dig here” positions the Yandruwandha people as illiterate, unable to read that food supplies are available here. The extension of this position is the Yandruwandha people would steal the supplies of the brave explorers if they were literate.

A counter-narrative of the story of Burke and Wills is provided in Clark & Cahir’s edited text *The Aboriginal Story of Burke and Wills: Forgotten narratives*. Chapters in Clark and Cahir (2013) offer counter narratives that decolonise my 1980s primary school learning. My process of conscientization is a process that

\(^{39}\) Research aim 4: Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools; (24) Identify manifestation of whiteness that privilege or silence voices.
includes questioning and that is similarly documented in Reynolds (1999). In *Mystery of learning Burke and Wills* I become cognisant of the inscriptions of white, colonial narratives on my consciousness that hitherto build empathy with the courageous white explorers. The mystery opens me to alternative narratives and respect for the Yandruwandha people.\(^4\)

### 2.2.2 Decentering an epistemology of whiteness

*Mystery of learning about Burke and Wills* is a moment of experience from my primary school curriculum that demonstrates a racialised epistemology of whiteness. The white, British colonial history reinscribes a political construction of history as a universal truth to the advantage of whites. Kincheloe and Steinberg (2000) and Owen (2007) assert the purpose of whiteness studies is to expose and disrupt power imbalances created by white privilege. In so doing, critical whiteness studies offer the potential to reveal privileges bestowed on white people, although the origins of whiteness as an economic, social, or political system are contested. Kincheloe and Steinberg (2000) assert whiteness is fluid, ever shifting and reinscribing itself to maintain dominance in response to demographic, political and economic change.

Harvey (2007), Leonardo (2009), and Wojeki (2007) note that, as an emerging research method, critical whiteness studies has not yet settled its fault lines; however, proponents are united in their commitment to decentre the white subject. The field of critical whiteness studies often credits the contributions of Theordore Allen’s (1976), *The Invention of the White Race*; David Roediger’s (1991) *The wages of whiteness* that considers the economic roots of whiteness; and Ruth Frankenberg’s (1993) *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of*

\(^4\) Research aim 6: Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience.
whiteness, that considers gender and whiteness (DiAngelo, 2018; Garner, 2007; Gilborn, 2005; Leonardo, 2009). I began this section on critical whiteness studies citing Peggy McIntosh and I recognise one of her contributions, White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack, has been cited in more than 4500 publications (googlescholar).

DiAngelo (2018), Harris (1995) and Roedigger (2007) trace the economic origins of whiteness to workers' wages, slavery, and property ownership. Owen (2007) observes an ontology of whiteness as a social phenomenon replicated through “physical and psychic violence of enslavement, genocide and exploitation” (p. 206), and Leonardo (2009) adds whiteness emerged to unify populations of colonisers. Delgado and Stefanic (2012) agree, adding the social system is like a two headed hydra, one an oppressor and the other affords advantages and benefits to the dominant race. bell hooks (2013) opines whiteness serves a political purpose whereby white supremacist thinking continues to be the invisible and visible glue that keeps white folks connected irrespective of many other differences” (p. 3). McLaren (1998) offers an all-encompassing view, defining whiteness as “a sociohistorical form of consciousness, given birth at the nexus of capitalism, colonial rule, and the emergent relationships among dominant and subordinate groups” (p. 66). Taylor (2016) observes whiteness as ingrained in political, economic, legal, and educational structures but, as has been discussed earlier, also notes the invisibility of whiteness to those who benefit most.

In education, McLaren (1998) posits students from dominant cultures, like me as a child-student whose histories, language and culture are reified and replicated in experiences like Mystery of learning Burke and Wills, benefit from unearned cultural capital over students from subaltern groups. Freire (1993) describes the cultural
capital that my whiteness afforded me with as a child-student, writing about the privilege of “bookish intellectualism over knowledge garnered from lived experiences” (p. 16), and that this typically advantages middle class students. As a white man with Anglo ancestry, I can identify with protagonists in the white history of Burke and Wills that is reified in curriculum. I now recognise the psychic violence that this episode of curriculum represents to students who identify as First Peoples, especially a Kaunu person.

Bourdieu (1986) identifies cultural capital that is afforded to groups within a society, that affords unearned privilege to some based on their accrual of capital. Peggy McIntosh (1992) identifies 26 conditions that attach privilege to skin pigmentation benefitting white people in education, financial services, geographic residence, healthcare, language, law and order, peer associations, and professional life. Of the privilege that her list reveals, McIntosh (1992) reflexively writes, “the pressure to avoid it is great, for in facing it I must give up the myth of meritocracy” (p.31).

Giroux (1997) posits the primary aim of critical whiteness studies is, “to unveil the rhetorical, political, cultural and social mechanisms through which ‘whiteness’ is both invented and used to mask its power and privilege” (p. 382). However, as I revealed in chapter 1, the dominant power of whiteness throws up strong resistance. Robin DiAngelo agrees, writing,

For those of us who work to raise the racial consciousness of whites, simply getting whites to acknowledge that our race gives us advantages is a major effort. The defensiveness, denial, and resistance are deep.

(DiAngelo, 2018, p. 63),

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41 Research aim 9: Deconstruct and racialise whiteness.
The resistance of whiteness begins to be explained by Leonardo (2016) stating, “In order for white racial hegemony to saturate everyday life, it has to be secured by a process of domination” (p. 265). hooks (2013), Leonardo (2009), and Smith (1999) state that white domination results from reifying white knowledge to the status of truth, while those whose lived experience is represented by alternative narratives, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, histories, cultures and languages, exist on the margins. Mystery of learning Burke and Wills bears witness to alternative knowings being entirely omitted from Australian curricula. DiAngelo (2018) asserts naming whiteness “makes the system visible and shifts the locus of change onto white people where it belongs” (p. 33). This accords with the earlier writings of Peter McLaren (1998) that calls for school curriculum and pedagogy to be a space of hope and encouragement where whiteness is made, more visible in order to unveil its discourses, its hidden transcripts, its social practices, and the historical and material conditions that conceal its incessant and compulsive practices of domination.

McLaren (1998, p. 238)\textsuperscript{42}

Durie (1999) Pennington and Prater (2016), and Schlunke (1999) also identify a dilemma that white scholars experience, in that writing about whiteness takes space for white voices and risks recentring whiteness. Leonardo (2009) proposes a resolution to the dilemma, observing that while white scholars continue to undertake work on their own positionality and privileges, they are also working towards using “their advantages responsibly to create an alternative racial arrangement that is less oppressive” (p. 98).

\textsuperscript{42} Research aim 24: Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices.
Throughout this section I have shown the imprinting of whiteness through *Mystery of learning Burke and Wills*, and I have discussed decentring an epistemology of whiteness. Further to Leonardo’s (2009) notion of the importance of reflexive white scholars, DiAngelo (2018) adds white scholars studying whiteness, “points us in the direction of lifelong work that is uniquely ours, challenging our complicity with and investment in racism” (p. 33). The commitment to lifelong work is central to conscientization and crystallization.

### 2.3 Activist research

Philosophers have only interpreted the world differently; the point is to change it.

(Karl Marx’ epitaph)

Reflecting on Marx’ epitaph, Oslender and Reiter (2015) posit that social researchers are called to move beyond interpreting social data and towards the activist goal of transformation of the social world. Hale (2008) asserts rigour in activist research is demonstrated through “a deeper and more sustained analysis of the socio-political conditions that frame the research question and the research process” (p. 13). DeMeulenaere and Cann (2013) add activist research is a democratic and ethical undertaking in the, “pursuit of justice – racial, gender, and economic justice, for example – in schools” (p. 556). In his *Qualitative Manifesto*, Norman Denzin writes,

Today we are called to change the world, and to change in ways that resist injustice while celebrating freedom, and full, inclusive, participatory democracy.

(Denzin, 2010, p. 32)
Dryness (2008) identifies two schools of activist research and places them as points on a continuum. The first point accords with Marx’ epitaph, noting the direct and influential involvement of researchers as agents of social change. The second position is cultural critique that Dryness opines is just as politically useful, especially to press reflexivity in activist research and mitigate researcher positions of privilege that speak for the subaltern and in doing so further silence the voices that most need to be heard.

Wherever the activist researcher might be located on Dryness’ continuum, Sullivan (2015) asserts,

> If we hope to institute just, compassionate, and forward looking answers to many of the challenges we face, we will have to do this important work or have it done for us in less progressive, democratic and forward looking ways.

(Sullivan, 2015, p. 331)

Oslander and Reiter (2015) and Nabudere (2008) acknowledge Freire’s conscientizacao as an example of activist research that pursues the goal of social transformation. Boumlik and Schwartz (2016) similarly recognise conscientization in which “human beings as active agents who transform their own world,” through a “process of awareness and transformative learning,” that is “developed through a process of critical reflection and dialogue culminating in action or praxis” (p. 322).

Sherilyn Lennon (2015) demonstrates conscientization as critical activist teacher research that reveals hegemony in Australian schools. Whereas my research focuses on revealing whiteness and colonial oppression in the field of education, Lennon revealed multiple sources of dominant patriarchal forces impacting on the educational experience of students and their teachers in a Queensland school that was located in a regional, farming community. Beyond revealing hegemony, Lennon
(2015) pursues transformative goals of unsettling patriarchy at multiple levels in the school and wider community. In so doing, Lennon demonstrated eight criteria of activist research, offered by Oslender and Reiter (2015, pp. ix-xi).

Figure 4, below, identifies qualities of activist research and provides examples of peer-reviewed activist research to enliven Oslender and Reiter's (2015) eight criteria, as well as positioning the examples on the activist research continuum posited in Dryness (2008).

**Figure 4. Qualities of activist research**

![Figure 4](image-url)

i. **Reflexivity.** Activist researchers demonstrate critical self awareness of their own positionality throughout the research process, including in the dissemination of the research, and identify their gendered, racialised, national, and class-based dimensions (Oslender & Reiter, 2015, p. xii). Dutta and Basu (2013) is an example of
scholarly activism that reconsiders positionality of the researchers as third world healthcare workers functioning in the Eurocentric academy. Their research is activist in the field where Dutta and Basu conduct interventionist healthcare which generates social change and is simultaneously activist in the transformation of identity and representation of performers in the research, that includes Dutta and Basu performing the dual roles as both researchers and writers. Unlike Dutta and Basu (2013), this research is not research directly from the field, although chapter six includes Conversations with myself that demonstrates critical self awareness of my shifting positionality throughout the research.

  ii. Social science methods. Oslender and Reiter (2015) call for activist researchers to adopt research methods that challenge the boundaries of social science research. Hale (2008) notes the diverse methods employed in the field of activist scholarship is “fully open to contradiction, serendipity, and reflexive critique” (p. 3) and cites examples of scholarship that could be framed as action research, participatory action research, collaborative research, grounded theory, and public intellectual work. Iosefi (2016a) is an example that presents a Samoan woman’s autoethnographic and activist writing of resistance in higher education through three identities that are the narrator, the academic, and the poet. Iosefi’s (2016a) cultural critique supports transformation of self. In my current research, the second research question arises from and guides the development of my performative and critical methods.

  iii. Inclusion of co-performers. Lipsitz (2008) observes that activist researchers grapple with their identity in two camps where their actions are susceptible to

43 Research aim 3: Understand my identity; (5) Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative.
44 Research aim 21: Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
suspicion. The positivist dominance of the academy is distrustful of activist research, and research participant communities can be similarly distrustful of any researchers from the academy. Lipsitz (2008) responds to the challenge of identity by calling for democratisation of the academy and for activist researchers to, “change ourselves and others (and) to become the kinds of people who can create institutions, practices, beliefs, and social relations capable of generating a more just world” (p. 98). By reframing understandings of research participants as co-performers, Lipsitz (2008) shifts activist research towards activists’ agendas of social change.

Recognising my roles as both object and subject, this criterion applies to my pursuit of transformation of self/other/world45.

iv. **Challenging power relations.** Oslender and Reiter (2015) call for activist researchers to challenge the legitimacy of social research that fails to consider power relations in the field. My research challenges whiteness in teacher-research, school curriculum, pedagogy, intital teacher education and continuing professional development, as well as neoliberalism in teacher praxis46. This research develops a model of critical reflective practice that stands in contrast to positivist models of technical or practical reflection that would fail to critically challenge power or meet my research aims47. I liken my CPR to Lennon’s (2015) cultural critique and revelations of the impact of patriarchy in schools.

v. **Critical narrative analysis.** Oslender and Reiter (2015) call for activist researchers to challenge universal narratives that otherwise dominate the academy.

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45 Research aim 9: Intervene and improve praxis; (18) seek allies; (19) Build communities of interest; (22) Improve understandings of whiteness in the field of education.
46 Research aim 8: Reveal whiteness shaping my praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope; (24) Identify manifestation of whiteness that privilege of silence voices.
47 Research aim 8: Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (9) Intervene and improve praxis; (21) Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
Writing about the participation of girls in Physical Education in schools, Oliver and Kirk (2016) observe that a meta-narrative exists in the field of literature that is “we have yet to find the solution to the problem of girls and physical education” (p. 314). This narrative reifies teacher researchers to positions of power, while diminishing the position of girls in schools as subalterns requiring change. Their contribution to the field of research includes disrupting, rather than reproducing the meta-narrative, and creating “more hopeful narratives” (p. 314). Earlier in this thesis, chapter 1 included *Mystery of learning Burke and Wills* and *Mystery of Sandy Creek*, and both mysteries apply critical analysis to challenge universal narratives⁴⁸.

**vi. Ensuring the social remains in social science.** Nabudere (2008) cites examples of activist research that generate dialogical knowledge production, noting “the more centres of knowledge, the more dialogues and the richer experiences of human existence” (p. 76). In doing so, participant research demonstrates *social* science rather than privileging the *science* part. This thesis is a performative and critical autoethnography that attempts to use storied representations of experience to construct knowledge and then apply this knowledge to build communities of interest⁴⁹.

**vii. Mobilising forces for change.** Activist researchers’ pursuit of social transformation encourages the mobilisation of democratic participation. Accordingly, Khasnabish and Haiven (2012) argue that research should be disseminated with the purpose of mobilising forces for change, as opposed to serving the self-interest publication metrics of the researcher. I share their activist research aims to transform

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⁴⁸ Research aim 10: Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (16) Apply critical social analysis to action; (17) identify political nature of language, then use language for liberation.

⁴⁹ Research aim 15: Create stories that resonate with an audience; (16) Apply critical social analysis to action; (19) Build communities of interest to decolonise praxis.
others by mobilising researchers to create utopian spaces for “the radical imagination to flourish” (p. 411)\textsuperscript{50}.

viii. \textit{Language use that is inclusive of non-academic audiences.} Smith (2015) reports on activist work with a community of women from outside of the academy whose sons have been executed by state police officers without trial. Critically reflecting on the use of language can assist co-performers to participate in discourses arising from the research. Nubedere (2008) observes research can be disseminated using techniques other than thesis, such as song, dance, and drama that stimulates participatory community forum. My research interest is to use stories that resonate with an audience, to build communities of interest which will improve understandings of whiteness in the field of education and promote anti-racist and pedagogies of hope\textsuperscript{51}.

As activist research, I conclude this section with Patrick Sullivan’s observation of education. As a teacher, scholar, and activist, Patrick Sullivan (2015) writes,

… our work is about education, reading and writing, and literacy, of course, but it is also about class, gender, and race, and inequality and poverty. It is about freedom, social justice, and the ideals of a democracy.

(Sullivan, 2015, p. 332)

2.4 Decolonising theory

Whether it is ending racism, sexism, homophobia, or class elitism, whenever I interview folks about what leads them to overcome dominator thinking and action they invariably think about love, about learning acceptance of difference from someone they cared about.

\textsuperscript{50} Research aim 18: Seek allies; (19) Build communities of interest; (21) Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
\textsuperscript{51} Research aim 15: Create stories that resonate with an audience; (17) Identify political nature of language, then use language for liberation; (19) Build communities of interest to decolonise praxis; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.
I began the introduction to this thesis citing bell hook’s (2013) ontology of hope that exists in the space between love and ending domination. To begin this section on decolonising theory I return to bell hooks’ writing that reveals the possibilities of new ways of thinking to challenge hegemony, that such thinking and action are motivated by love from someone who was cared for. This is true of my own process of conscientization which exposes hitherto hidden whiteness, opening me to decolonising praxis, and has been motivated by people I care for, a student and Gandu Jarjum52.

I also began this thesis citing Marcelo Diversi and Claudio Moreira’s (2018) notion of the decolonising classroom as sites of hope. Diversi and Moreira (2018) considers decolonising pedagogies can be seen when teachers and students establish connections between personal biographies and social histories, personal troubles and public issues, and individual struggles against social structures that enable suffering (Diversi & Moreira, 2018, p. 86). Recognising as utopian places worth wishing for, even if we never arrive at them, they call for elements of praxis in decolonised classrooms to be:

- inclusive of multiple ways of knowing and being;
- sites that struggle against oppression;
- creatively endless in the making of transformative counter-narratives;
- places that bear witness to lived experiences as scars on bodies;
- where performative knowledge is co-constructed;
- polyvocal, and

52 Research aim 8: Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (21) Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
• where we can change the world\textsuperscript{53}.

Diversi and Moreira’s (2018) elements play out in the polyvocal representation of *Mystery of Sal*.

\textbf{2.4.1 Decolonising, polyvocal representation of Mystery of Sal}

The decolonising and polyvocal representation of *Mystery of Sal*, below, was first published in Wood (2017). This representation shows performances of and resistance to Diversi and Moreira’s (2018) elements of praxis in decolonised classrooms, which is an attempt to show how Sal might have been experiencing curriculum and pedagogy in my classes in the weeks leading up to the assessment day. This representation of *Mystery of Sal* includes my teacher voice, in black font, and an omnipresent critical voice that is written in blue font and italics. Although Sal appears as a co-performer in this representation, I make no claim that the omnipresent voice is the voice of Sal or any other student in my more than two decades of praxis.

\textsuperscript{53} Research aim 10: Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (11) Resist dominant forces; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope.
The White teacher says,

“In Drama we will be learning about political activism and social change. What I’m looking for are techniques that show Brecht’s Epic Theatre.”

His monologue continues,

“We are learning about overcoming adversity
What I’m looking for is clear communication with your audience.”

And then...

“We are learning about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.”

!!

What I’m looking for is to understand on whose authority do you teach these things?
With whose cultural knowledge?
With whose permission?

As your teacher,

A man
Who is White
And middle class And able-bodied
An owner of property;

Trust me,
I know all about these things.

;)

I’m talking

So I’m learning?

I’m teaching

Right. I’m listening.

I have the script

Yes. I know my part.
The Seven Stages of Grieving
So you’ve selected our class text

I am leading the class discussion

To satisfy the White curriculum
I am asking the questions

We’ll all have the same answers.

Now, open your scripts.
Who’d like to read?

Then we’ll discuss your knowledge.

“Oi. Hey you! Don’t you be waving back at me! Yeah, you with the hat! You can’t park here, eh! You’re taking up the whole bloody harbour! Just get in your boat and go. Go on, get!
Bloody boat people.”
What time and place does this scene refer to?

- questions to elicit information.

Who are the characters?
What’s their attitude?
What’s their status?

- questions to shape understanding.

Do we all understand the writer’s use of irony?

- questions to press for reflection.
  But
  When do we do the activism learning?
  And when will we overcome adversity?
  When will we hear,
  Without your edits,
  The voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Now I’m leading the class discussion

On First People’s experience??!!

The lesson’s buzzing:
I’m on fire
with questions,

  and whiteness

My students are engaged

  and replicating

with answers

  that please dominance
And all of their answers are right!

says who?
No,
Really,
When did you ever learn this?

We’re collaborating
We’re creating,
We’re all in,
An inclusive team

......!

I’m prompting participation
I’m nodding
I’m smiling
I’m making eye contact
Drawing in Merry, Lizzie, Darren and Steve.
Keeping Jennifer, Jake and Tom engaged.
I make eye contact with Sal –

......!

My conscience burns.
My body gasps
and disguises the moment as a blink.
A nano-second has passed
The world restarts.
I look away.
Unsettled
but nodding
and smiling
the lesson goes on.
That feeling...
That moment...
What was that?

Whiteness: Chinked
not shattered.
Applying Diversi and Moreira’s (2018) elements of praxis in decolonizing classrooms to my polyvocal representation of Mystery of Sal prompts me to ask questions. My critical whiteness studies response to the mystery reveals a teaching style that is monologue rather than dialogue and that replicates dominant narratives rather than critically interrogating racialised epistemologies in the narratives. This moment of conscientization does not hold all the answers but is a representation of struggle to bear witness to lived experience, create counter-narratives, and lead to self/other/world transformations. As Peter McLaren writes, these critical questions are,

>a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school and the social material relations of the wider community, society, and nation-state.

(McLaren, 2000, p. 35)54

2.4.2 Applying decolonising theory

Decolonising theory recognises the power of majoritarian narratives to reify the status quo and reinforce colonialism, capitalism, and heterosexist patriarchy. Frantz Fanon (1968) writes in The Wretched of the Earth that colonisation begins with violent acts that become acts of exploitation, “continued at the point of the bayonet and under canon fire,” and where colonists, “continue to fabricate the colonised subject” to validate their privilege (p. 2). Blair (2015) adds that, “with colonisation came institutionalisation” (p. 202), and hooks (2013) and Moreton-Robinson (1999) observe the impact of institutions like schools and media as places that reinforce majoritarian narratives. Robin DiAngelo (2018) further adds, “From

54 Research aim 7: Deepen understandings of praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools; (24) Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices.
birth, we are conditioned into accepting and not questioning these ideas” and these ideologies are reinforced, “in school and textbooks, political speeches, movies, advertising, holiday celebrations, and words and phrases” (p. 21)\(^{55}\).

The polyvocal representation of *Mystery of Sal* shows the continuation of institutionalised violence, exploitation and struggle experienced by First Peoples students, and my uncritical and white replication of majoritarian narratives. Writing in *Betweener Auteothenographies* Marcello Diversi and Claudio Moreira (2018), adopt conscientization and a decolonising imagination, and recognise the continued impact of colonisation to, “keep the oppressed out of mainstream knowledge production” (p. 40). Diversi and Moreira (2018) speaks back to power with language, actions, performed bodies and representations of lived experiences as acts of resistance. Diversi and Moreira (2018) recognises the limitations of decolonising scholars to have all the answers but offer their own lifelong commitment to the project of performing decolonising counter-narratives of resistance, “to keep hope alive” (p. 10)\(^{56}\).

In accordance with the aims of this research, the polyvocal representation of *Mystery of Sal*, as an act of decolonisation, moves beyond social critique and pursues transformative activism which will challenge dominant, colonial narratives\(^{57}\). Solorzano and Yosso (2016) assert racism, “creates, maintains and justifies the use of a ‘master narrative’ in storytelling” (p. 130). This view is supported by Taylor (2016), that asserts the importance of identifying and challenging hegemonic narratives, that were, “created, crafted, and globally institutionalised” by the ancestors of today’s white populations who,

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\(^{55}\) Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope.

\(^{56}\) Research aim 25: Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.

\(^{57}\) Research aim 16: Apply critical social analysis to action.
unwittingly, unknowingly, and without express permission, benefit politically, economically, and educationally. One purpose of narrative is to redirect the dominant gaze, to make it see from a new point of view what has been there all along. (Taylor, 2016, p. 6).

This redirection is acknowledged by the omnipresent voice at the end of *Mystery of Sal*, recognising a moment of my conscience burning as, “whiteness: chinked, not shattered.”

As acts of resistance, counter-narratives challenge dominant narratives (Merriweather, 2015) in a process described by Linda Tuhwai Smith (1999) in *Decolonising Methodologies* as, “rewriting and re-righting” (p. 28). Jackson (2019) cautions decolonisation is more than interrogating and dismantling dominant colonial narratives, but also, “to deal with the trauma and wrong that colonisation inflicts while creating the hope for something better” (p. 109). The construction and performance of counter-narratives have the potential to destabilise the universality of western epistemologies and production of knowledge, lending itself to notions of activist scholarship that Diversi and Moreira (2018) opine is central to decolonising praxis.

Mohanty (2003) agrees, positing decolonisation is a radical, transformative process in which colonial narratives are actively resisted, and Dei (2006) adds decolonisation involves a reclamation of the past and undoing of Eurocentric knowledge that masquerades as universal knowings. As method, Smith (1999) posits that decolonisation is a dynamic process, arguing that researchers need to more than reveal underlying social and cultural oppression, that decolonising researchers should actively contribute to actions that address social injustice and overcome oppression. This view is supported by Norman Denzin’s (2010) *A

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58 Research aim 10: Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (21) Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
59 Research aim 16: Apply critical social analysis to action.
Qualitative Manifesto, that calls to qualitative researchers to “… change the world, and change it in ways that resist injustice while celebrating freedom, and full, inclusive, participatory democracy” (p. 32).

2.4.3 Decolonisation as performative and critical activist research

In his performative text Writing Decolonizing Autoethnographies, Norman Denzin (2018) imagines a dialogue between scholars who apply decolonisation in the work. Gloria Anzaldua, Dwight Conquergood, Augusto Boal, Claudio Moreira and Marcelo Diversi, and Tami Spry are among the characters who, like the polyvocal representation of Mystery of Sal reproduced in the previous section, construct counter narratives to examine and re-examine their own personal, communal and cultural histories, in decolonised and performative acts of resistance.

Pierre Orelus (2013) also adds activism to the notion of decolonising theory that challenges dominant narratives. Naming capitalism and racism the “twins of inequities”, Orelus observes historical narratives construct hegemony that places whites at the centre to their benefit and that, “colonialism is still at work; its legacy continues to shape the practices of many institutions, such as schools…” (p. 42). On activism, Orelus proposes the decolonising of teacher practices and school systems to bridge educational gaps and close socio-economic gaps in which the decolonising teacher accepts the “professional and moral obligation” to meaningfully connect students and curriculum (p. 47). The decolonising school and system need to support teachers and school communities in their undertakings to remove the excesses of both neoliberal and colonial education policies. Drawing on the experience of Maori in Aotearoa, Jackson (2019) concurs, adding “there is a moral

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60 Research aim 15: Create stories that resonate with an audience.
as well as a political, economic, and constitutional imperative to that reimagining” (p. 109).

In chapter 1, I discussed Gloria Anzaldua’s (2015) writing in *Light in the Dark* as an Indigenous knowledge that can be likened to conscientization. Anzaldua, describes decolonising as the Coyolxauhqui imperative in which she struggles to reconstruct herself from “woundings, traumas, racism and other acts of violation” (p. 1). She conducts this struggle in spaces she terms nepantla that is where, “my cultural and personal codes clash, where I come up against the world’s dictates, where those different worlds coalesce in my writing” (p. 2). Nepantlas are simultaneously spaces of constant tension where we realise, “we and others failed living up to our idealised goals” (p. 17) and active imaginings of transformed worlds that are dreamt of, “passionately via all our senses, and will(ed) into creation” (p. 20).

My article, *Waking up to Memmi*, that is reproduced in chapter 6 of this thesis, demonstrates similarities with Anzaldua’s decolonised texts in the nepantla space.

This critical self-reflective research is two decolonising stories in nepantla spaces where there is struggle within my personal codes and against the world’s dictates. The first story is the mysteries of lived experience in Australian schools that reveal whiteness, like the polyvocal representation of *Mystery of Sal* from Wood (2017). The second story is my researcher’s attempt to crystallise understandings of my teaching practice that is the subject of the research.

As a researcher, I am attempting to decolonise myself from the western institutions of education that reinforce the dominance of positivist knowledge systems based on empiricism. This is the story of celebrating inclusive, participatory,

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61 Research aim 10: Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education.
and democratic research methods that challenge traditional, positivist empirical methods. My researcher story draws on autoethnographic methods developed by Norman Denzin, Carolyn Ellis, Laurel Richardson, and Heewon Chang. But, as I recognised in chapter 1, similar Indigenous knowledges have transgenerational history beyond the western academy.  

2.5 Anti-racism and hope

One of the tasks of the progressive educator, through a series of correct political analysis, is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be. (Freire, 1994, p.9)

Earlier, Figure 3 showed my crystallizing mysteries framed with a series of lenses and that includes an epistemological researcher lens of critical whiteness and anti-racist hope. An understanding of an antiracist, pedagogy of hope is derived from Freire (2000), Gillborn (1995), Giroux (2011), McLaren (2006), Malott et.al. (2015) and others. In the Australian context, I share Emma Kowal's (2015) use of the term anti-racist to refer to a person who critically recognises the, often adverse, impact of socio-political structures on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Further, in Racism and Antiracism in Real Schools David Gillborn (1995) posits that anti-racists’ work in schools is undertaken in solidarity with other anti-racists and with people who are marginalised by race and racism, and that their intention is to reject, overcome, or break down racist structures. Like Kowal (2015) and Gillborn (1995), I acknowledge that the term ‘white’ can refer to skin pigmentation but, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, it is more typically a reference to the dominance of one cultural group over others. This understanding concurs with Bell (1976), DiAngelo (2018), Taylor (2016), and others.

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62 Research aim 11: Resist domiant forces; (21) Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
An understanding of hope can be seen in the work of Paulo Freire (2000), Henry Giroux (2011), and Peter McLaren (2006) who offer that hope is a form of utopian education that illuminates individual or social struggles. Writing in *Pedagogy of Hope* Paulo Freire (1994) reminds us of that hope is an ontological need which is embedded in the work of educators to maintain the struggle to transform power. Conversely, “hopelessness and despair are both the consequence and the cause of inaction or immobilism” (Freire, 1994, p. 9). Denzin (2007) describes hope as the desire to dream and improve existence, whereas hopelessness is “hope that has lost its bearings” (p. 135). Daniels (2010) similarly explains “hope creates room for movement, for possibilities of creating different outcomes, whereas despair simply shuts them down” (p. 42). Stewart-Harawira (2005) adds that hope begins with seeing the possibilities of difference where there is peace, justice, and sanctity of life, and Lavia (2006) posits pedagogies of hope emerge from resistance to domination, aggression, and ignorance.

Like Lavia’s notion of postcoloniality in the Carribean, my anti-racist hope is utopian and aspirational. In Lavia’s research, postcoloniality, “makes connections between past, present and the future” (Lavia, 2006, p. 281). My aspiration seeks to reveal the domination of whiteness that is embedded in western schooling, including my praxis, and transform these sites to decolonised spaces. Imagining hope in education, bell hooks (1994) calls for educators to,

> open our minds and our hearts that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions, I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions – a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education the practice of freedom.

*(bell hooks, 1994, p. 12)*
Giroux (2011, pp. 121-3) concurs with the notion of hope including an activist’s utopian pursuit and offers eight qualities educated hope that align with the aims of this research. Giroux’ list of qualities of hope includes:63

- seeking better ways of living that, in this research, includes the pursuit of fairness through dismantling of oppressive structures;
- requiring intellectual courage to identify and resist domination that, in this research, is the Freirean process of conscientization;
- evoking different histories and different futures that, in this research, includes decolonising Australian history and committing to change;
- promoting social transformation that, in this research, is the goal of self/other/world transformations;
- providing a vocabulary for alternatives to the existing social order that, in this research, includes recognition of privilege afforded to storytellers and sensitivity to which parts of the stories I own;
- reclaiming agency from neoliberal attack that, in this research, is committing to teacher professional development beyond that of the education system and is a call for others to join, such as Socrates’ call in Wood (2018b) to join an alternative resistance movement;
- addressing requirements for democracy that, in this research, is the pursuit of truth and voice; and
- accentuating the relationship between the pedagogical and political that, in this research, is the act of teacher conscientization with the aim to improve praxis and build communities of interest that resist hegemony.

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63 Research aim 25: Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.
Connecting anti-racism and hope, Zeus Leonardo (2009) builds on Giroux’ list, adding anti-racist pedagogy of whiteness dislodges students from, “the hopelessness and helplessness of having to consider oneself as simply privileged (therefore racist),” and instead affirms white students’ humanity and their, “ability to choose justice over domination” (p. 95). Robin DiAngelo (2018) concurs. Reflecting on her processes as a white woman seeking to disrupt racism, she writes,

It is a messy, lifelong process, but one that is necessary to align my professed values with my real actions. It is also deeply compelling and transformative.  
(DiAngelo, 2018, p. 154)

Recognising conscientization as the beginning on a wider project of liberation, mitigates the impact of resistance resulting from awakenings that can lead to feelings of guilt. Tatum (2016) identifies a spectrum of activism that white people can progress through, inspired by the “restoration of hope”, rather than “immobilised by their own despair” (p. 286). Titane (1998, p. 167) is sceptical of white teachers’ efforts to challenge racism, but provides a four-point checklist that calls for for white teachers to:

- be able to define their own whiteness;
- facilitate communities of interest who explore racial issues in education;
- take cognizance of how curriculum replicates dominance; and
- build awareness of how to support students in their own racial identity development.

This CPR has revealed flaws in my, hitherto, understandings of the impact of whiteness on my identity and my praxis, but it is also testament to my pursuit of
transformation of self, others, and the world. To that end, I conclude Part I of this thesis returning to bell hooks,

Love as a way of life makes it possible for us all to live humanely within a culture of domination as we work for change. The radical nature of love is that it is profoundly democratic. (bell hooks, 2013, p. 199)

2.6 Summary of conceptual framework

Throughout this first part of my thesis, subtitled dendritic agates, I have cultivated the formation of crystals to aid my understanding of self identity, praxis, and experiences of dominance in Australian schools. In this second chapter, I have discussed Freirean conscientization as a conceptual framework of research that is critical, activist, and decolonising, and which disrupts hegemony in the pursuit of anti-racist pedagogies of hope. My discussion of the conceptual framework that underpins this research has continued to decentre hegemonic constructions of knowledge that replicate whiteness and embraced radical epistemologies that support my CPR aims.

2.6.1 Transformation of self

Throughout this chapter I have continued to ask questions about identity and praxis with the aim of transformation of self. Freirean scholarship of conscientization has deepened my critical understandings of manifestations of whiteness in Australian schools through the performance of Mystery of learning Burke and Wills. My reclaimed stories from my memories as a child-student and performed mystories are examples of my cognizance of historical and socio-political forces like whiteness which are enacted through school curriculum and that impacted on the development
of my identity. The impact of whiteness on my professional praxis was then demonstrated in *Mystery of Sal*, which was performed in this chapter as a decolonising and polyvocal representation. My subsequent critical questioning is an example of transformations of self that accord with the aims of both conscientization and CPR.

### 2.6.2 Transformation of other

My discussion on anti-racism and hope deepened my construction of knowledge about my research aims related to building communities of interest that reveal, and actively work to resist, manifestations of hegemonic forces like whiteness in Australian schools. Be it the pursuit of anti-racism or hope, the field of critical teacher research identifies the importance of lifelong work in solidarity with allies.

### 2.6.3 Transformation of world

This chapter has continued to generate knowledge that supports transformation of world by decentring whiteness. The previous chapter decentred white knowledge and called for openness to a recentring of Indigenous knowledges. In this chapter, the section on critical whiteness studies added to calls for an unsettling of white knowledge that is presented as universal truth. Furthermore, the section on activist research added to calls for research to critically analyse the socio-political conditions that frame epistemological constructions of knowledge and move beyond interpreting social data towards the activist goal of transformation of the social world.
… process of matter crystallizing in more than one form in response to different environmental conditions.
3. **Method**

**auto**: self-reflection  
**ethno**: to explore people’s experiences  
**graph**: to write, to make an image, to perform a script that I (or you) create;  
**autoethnography**: bending the past to the present;  
**I write my way into and through my experiences**;  
I treat myself as a universal singular:  
I devise a script and play myself.  

(Denzin, 2018, p. 14)

Profoundly dissatisfied with the scant research and professional development that has been available to me to develop praxis in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, I began exploring scholarly research possibilities that would embrace my CPR commitment to self/other/world transformation. I engaged in a process of investigating and rehearsing research methods that were critical and activist, and I reflexively realised I was answering the question, “How can critical praxis research reveal hegemonic forces like whiteness in teacher research that is undertaken in an Australian context?”

I was drawn to the field of performative and critical autoethnography because it allowed me to reflect on my experiences, treat myself as a universal singular, and situate my research within the political and cultural setting of education in Australia. Like critical whiteness studies, performative and critical autoethnography rejects notions of stable ontologies of truth, and it acknowledges the co-existence of multiple truths including crystallization as a process of constructing knowledge and understandings (Ellingson, 2009; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Kara, 2015; Kruger, 2012 and Leggo, 2012). As a research method, performative and critical autoethnography welcomes activist research that transforms self, others, and the world, and in chapter
I discussed how this goal is embedded in conscientization and CPR (Aviles, 2009; Denzin, 2003; Gale & Wyatt, 2018; Harris & Holman-Jones, 2018; Kress, 2011).

My application of performative and critical autoethnography has allowed me to delve deeper into phenomena where layers of hegemonic power have been revealed within my identity and that were impacting on my praxis in the field of education. I also discovered the value of personal narrative and mystory, and I have explored artful ways to ethically show storied representations of lived experiences in Australian schools.

In the introduction to this thesis, I described the concentric lenses through which I construct meaning from the dendritic crystallizing mystories. Figure 3 showed the outer lens of this thesis as a performative representation of critical autoethnography, and I began this chapter citing Norman Denzin’s description of this method which adds the notion of the performative to previous settled etymological definitions of critical autoethnography (Adams, Holman-Jones, & Ellis, 2015; Chang, 2008; Denzin, 2014; Ellis, 2004; Poulos, 2021). The addition of the performative recognises the act of writing scripted representations of self as a method of constructing new knowledge. Performative and critical autoethnographic writing recognises the body as a site of knowledge where traumas, joys, and everything between is re-membered (Denzin, 2018; Iosefo & Iosefo, 2020; Mackinlay, 2019; Pelias, 2019; Spry, 2016; Upshaw, 2017; and Wood 2018a). Denzin’s inclusion of the performative in his description of autoethnography provides insight into the

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64 Research aim 4: Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity; (5) Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (15) Create stories that resonate with an audience; (21) Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
method that I have developed in this CPR, that has created dendritic crystallizing scripted representations of myself, my praxis, and education in Australia.\(^{65}\)

In this chapter I will discuss dendritic crystallization as an overarching method which combines multiple texts and genres to represent phenomena, and in which researcher positionality is reflexively embedded and acknowledged in the construction of knowledge. I then discuss the emergence of critical autoethnography in the western academy including its heritage and the performative turn, and I also identify criticisms of autoethnography from both outside and within the field. I then sharpen the focus of my methodological lens to compare methods of reflective practice in response to my second research question, and this leads to a discussion on CPR. As I progress towards chapter 4, where I discuss data collection and analysis, I provide an overview of methods of personal narrative, reclaimed story, and mystery, all of which contribute to the development of the dendritic crystals in this research. I conclude this chapter with a brief discussion on alternative research methods and propose options for further research.

3.1 Dendritic crystallization

Part II of this thesis embraces polymorphism as a metaphor whereby phenomena can appear in several different forms. This accords with the notion of dendritic crystallization in this research whereby I represent my lived experiences in Australian education through generating multiple texts and using multiple genres. Ellingson (2009, p. 125) explains the Greek origins of the word dendrite that means tree or treelike, and that is applied by physicists and chemists as a description of

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\(^{65}\) Research aim 6: Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience; (7) Deepen understandings of praxis; (17); Identify political nature of language then use language for liberation; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools.
growing branches of crystals. Figure 3 in the Introduction to this thesis showed the mysteries that I create are dendritic crystals branching from the two impetuses for the research, that are Mystery of Sal and Mystery of Gandu Jarjum.

In the introduction to this thesis, I also cited Laurel Richardson’s (2000) application of the term crystallization which built upon Wolcott’s (1990) notion of multiple understanding of phenomena. Richardson argues that the aim of social research should be to open research settings up to new ways of seeing, doing, and understanding, rather than reducing lived experience to privileged representations of researchers’ versions of ‘truth’. She argues, “crystallisation provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic,” (2000, p. 934). Ellingson (2009) further advances the notion of crystallization, offering her own definition of crystallization as combining,

> Multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text or series of texts, building a rich and openly partial account of phenomenon that problematizes its own construction, highlights researchers’ vulnerabilities and positionality, makes claims about socially constructed meanings and reveals the indeterminancy of knowledge claims even as it makes them.

(Ellingson, 2009, p. 4)

The application of Laura Ellingson’s definition can be seen in Melitta Hogarth’s (2018) *I am the emu* and Carl Leggo’s (2012) *Sailing on a Concrete Boat*. Hogarth (2018) begins with an ink drawing and then offers eight stanzas of text in which she claims her space and identity as an Aboriginal person, a teacher, and a learner. Hogarth identifies coloniser oppression that marginalises Aboriginal

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66 Research aim 6: Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience; (7) Deepen understandings of praxis.

67 Research aim 21: Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
knowledges, understandings, and worldviews, as well as researcher vulnerability which is created by majoritarian-deficit narratives. Reaffirming her claim to space and identity, Hogarth offers counter-narratives of resistance in which her connection with land, water, and sky stands as a positional challenge to coloniser thinking. Carl Leggo (2012) pursues understandings of the nexus between teacher identity and pedagogy through a series of written accounts that appear as essay, poetry, and prose, and which construct a rich and partial account of his experiences.

Like Hogarth (2018) and Leggo (2012), later in Part III of this thesis I offer my own partial accounts of experiences in Australian education through a series of texts. My reflections and refractions, can be taken singularly or as a series of texts, work as dendritic crystals to construct knowledge by rubbing against/with/through each other, in a process that attracts and repels, yields, and resists knowledge claims (Spry, 2016). This, “non-linear, iterative, and improvisational” process (Ellingson, 2009, p. 99), ever inductively shifting backward and forward, is an act of researcher play, “with the constraints of various genres and epistemologies by allowing each to inspire and shape the others” (p. 101).68

Ellingson (2009, pp. 127-136) also posits five benefits of dendritic crystallization which demonstrate synergy with the 25 aims of this research. The first benefit is an enhanced capacity to pursue multiple research aims, and dendritic crystallization can achieve this because it is an ongoing commitment to a research project, constantly branching into new crystals and texts, in what Ellingson describes as an odyssey. The commitment to a personal and professional odyssey towards transformations becomes a source of researcher joy. The next benefit is enhanced meaning making through the production of multiple texts in multiple genres that I

68 Research aim 1: Educate myself; (14) Seek truth; (15) Create stories that resonate with an audience.
show in Part III of this thesis, where the fourth benefit, enhanced reflexivity by placing separate pieces of work into conversation, is also demonstrated. Finally, Ellingson proposes dendritic crystallization offers enhanced potential to reach wider audiences through the generation of multiple texts in multiple genres. Table 3, below, shows the alignment between the benefits of dendritic crystallization and my research aims.
**Table 3. Benefits of dendritic crystallization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ellingson’s five benefits of dendritic crystallization</th>
<th>Aims of this research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced capacity to pursue multiple aims because it is an ongoing project that constantly branches into new crystals and texts</td>
<td>Educate myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced researcher joy that is both a personal and a professional odyssey towards transformations</td>
<td>Understand historical and socio-political forces that shape teacher praxis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced meaning making through the production of multiple texts in multiple genres</td>
<td>Understand my identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced reflexivity by placing separate pieces of work into conversation, not to triangulate, but to problematise knowledge claims</td>
<td>Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced potential to reach wider audiences through the generation of multiple texts in multiple genres</td>
<td>Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deepen understandings of praxis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervene and improve praxis</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deconstruct and racialize whiteness</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resist dominant forces</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek verisimilitude</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek trustworthiness of accounts</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek truth</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create stories that resonate with an audience</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply critical social analysis to action</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify the political nature of language, then use language for liberation</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek allies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build communities of interest to decolonise praxis</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reveal dominant whiteness in schools</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify manifestations of whiteness that</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>privilege or silence voices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 shows I had found a research method that could support the aims of my research. In this early phase of my research, I was introduced to Ellis and Bochner (2000). This chapter radically challenged traditional western social sciences by dismantling researcher and writer privilege of interpretations of data over the research participants’ experience. The new understanding of social science has been adopted by proponents of crystallization, and new epistemological and methodological language has evolved which includes redefining terms like validity, reliability, and generalisability. I include a representation of my excitement at reading Ellis and Bochner as *Mystery of a methodological encounter*.

**Mystery of a methodological encounter**

I first encountered autoethnography in one of Denzin and Lincoln’s Handbooks. It was in a book chapter called ‘Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity’ by Carolyn Ellis and Art Bochner.

Ellis introduces the chapter by recalling a telephone conversation that she had had with Bochner, and this storied recollection is presented as data. Writing reflexively, Ellis suggests that writing the conversation adds to verisimilitude, that is the lifelike or realness of representations of data. In Ellis’ writing, the reader is almost invited to take up a position inside of the text and engage in dialogue with the writer. The book chapter is the first time that I recall having awareness of the presence of the researcher and writer blatantly and brazenly co-occupying space with their data in scholarly text.

Throughout the chapter, Ellis establishes a framework for autoethnography that includes auto (self), ethno (culture), and graphy (writing about). Later in the chapter, writing about personal narrative, Bochner challenges notions of a singular ontology of ‘truth’ in communication between humans, and calls for researcher reflexivity in the field of narrative inquiry.

**Brazen!** Ellis and Bochner then set about redefining traditional and empirical understandings of validity, reliability and generalizability.

For autoethnographers, validity means that written accounts of research appear “lifelike, believable and possible; as Ellis says, “verisimilitude.”

Ellis and Bochner suggest that reliability can be enhanced by including the voice of research participants in accounts of social research.

On generalizability, they suggest that readers need to see their own self in the research, and that the research ought to prompt readers to wonder about how they would respond to lived experience that is represented in the accounts.
Undertaking research in this manner has embraced multiple methods to develop challenged traditional western scholarship notions of rigour, validity, reliability, and generalisability. Moreover, in response to my second research question, the method of teacher research has revealed hegemonic forces like whiteness in an Australian context.

3.1.1 Validity

Aim 12 of this research seeks to support the activist transformation goals of this research by achieving validity. In positivist research, validity is the pursuit of singular ontological truth in data sets, and in traditional western social research validity triangulation is often pursued through identifying consistent representations of phenomena within multiple data to establish a universal truth (Hammersley, 2008; Silverman, 2010; Webster & Mertova, 2007; Wolcott, 1990). On the other hand, Wolcott (1990) believes that qualitative research should aim to reveal the complex socio-cultural contexts in which a phenomenon occurs and illuminate multiple voices, multiple perspectives, and the possibility of multiple truths. Ellingson (2009) contrasts validity triangulation with crystallization, observing the former represents knowledge as fixed and rigid, whereas the crystal has “an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach” (p. 3).

Ellis (2004) posits a new understanding of validity in social research, offering,

… I look at validity in terms of what happens to readers as well as to research participants and researchers. To me, validity means that our work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable and possible.

(Ellis, 2004, p. 124)

69 Research aim 12: Seek verisimilitude.
Reclaiming the term validity in autoethnographic research, Ellis (2004) asserts it is achieved when researcher accounts have verisimilitude; that is the accounts are lifelike and believable. Denzin (2014) reaffirms the importance of validity in social research as connection between the writer and the reader through which, Webster and Mertova (2007) suggest, the audience are invited to take up positions in the text to understand the performed experiences. Validity in the mysteries is demonstrated in Part III of this thesis, in the section crystallizing teacher conversations.

3.1.2 Reliability

This research also joins challenges to positivist notions of reliability in social research. Whereas positivist social research defines reliability as the stability of data and the capacity to replicate it, crystallization seeks trustworthiness in the accounts of data and is concerned with case specifics rather than transferability (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Clough (2002) and Webster and Mertova (2007) opine the notion that reliability ought not to be judged by the ‘truth’ of researcher accounts; rather it is determined by the trustworthiness of the writer. Based on Bochner’s (2000) understanding that representations of lived experience can only ever be partial, and that consequently representations are a political and social construction, the focus shifts from the data on to how the reflexive writer applies, responds, and offers understandings of the data. Denzin (2014) summises this position, offering reliability is determined by how the writer creates meaning from a story, rather than the researcher’s account of an experience. Reliability in the trustworthiness of the mysteries is also demonstrated in Part III of this thesis.

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70 Research aim 13: Seek trustworthiness in accounts.
3.1.2 Generalisability

Generalisability is also a reclaimed term in autoethnographic research. Denzin (2014) and Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) assert that, whereas positivist social research seeks to apply transferability of phenomena across large random samples of respondents, a reclaimed definition of generalisability encourages readers, rather than respondents, to construct your own meaning from accounts of experiences and consider possibilities for your own micro or macro transformations.

Through this reclaimed understanding of generalisability, I reaffirm that this research is not positivist, empirical thinking that classifies and categorises, and seeks systemic order and generalisable findings. This research embraces complexities of time, space, place, and bodies rubbing and intertwining, attracting, and repelling. Generalisability in this research is achieved when socio-political complexities of the stories of experience resonates with the audience and prompts transformation of others, in accordance with aims 15, 18, and 1971 of this research. This reclaimed understanding of generalisability is shown in Part III of this thesis, in the section crystallizing teacher conversations.

3.2 Autoethnography

I noted earlier in this chapter the field of autoethnography has largely settled on an etymological definition of autoethnography as auto (self), ethno (cultural group), and graphy (research) (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Holman-Jones & Harris, 2018; Pelias, 2019; Poulos, 2021). Thus Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis (2015) offer, “When we do autoethnography, we look inward into our identities, thoughts, feelings

71 Research aim 15: Create stories that resonate with an audience; (18) Seek allies; (19) Build communities of interest to decolonise praxis.
and experiences – and outward into our relationships, communities and cultures” (p. 46). Reflecting on her significant contribution to the field of autoethnography, Ellis (2009) adds, “I am the person at the intersection of the personal and cultural” (p. 13). Bhattacharya (2017) further adds the autoethnographer, “systematically analyses (personal) experiences within the cultural context of where those experiences occur” (p. 25), in the social construction of knowledge with reflexive and critical consciousness (Alexander, 2013; Metta, 2013). Boylorn and Orbe (2014) similarly note that autoethnography encourages the researcher to apply, “a critical lens, alongside an introspective and outward one, to make sense of where we are in the context of our cultural communities” (p. 17). Hughes, Pennington and Makris (2012) state that, in addition to writing about the personal and cultural, autoethnography scholarship should address “existing theory, practice, methodology, and research results” (p.212), and this view is supported by Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis (2015), Ellis (2004), Ellingson and Ellis (2008), Madison (1999), and Spry (2001). Using a lens as a metaphor, Chang (2008) opines that the process of zooming in and out, between the personal and the cultural, makes autoethnography an ideal tool for reflective professionals including teachers. Like Chang (2008), Ellis and Bochner (2000) suggest the process of autoethnography connects the personal and cultural stating,

Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on cultural aspects of their personal experience; then they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract and resist cultural interpretations.

(Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 79)
3.2.1 Emergence performative and critical autoethnography

Denzin (2010) locates activist qualitative research in the space between critical inquiry and social justice and traces its emergence through eight historical movements. According to Denzin (2010), the movements begin in the period 1900 – 1950 referred to as ‘Traditional Research’. The second movement, ‘Modernist Research’ spans the years 1950 – 1970, the period in which Albert Memmi’s (1965) post-colonial text The Colonizer and the Colonized was published. From 1970 – 1986 Denzin (2010) notes the rise of interpretive research that draws on feminism, cultural studies, and phenomenology. It was in this period that Derrick Bell published seminal works that mark the beginnings of critical legal studies and later critical race theory. Denzin (2010) refers to the fourth movement as the ‘crisis of representation’, a term attributed to Marcus and Fisher (1986) and spanning the years 1986 – 1990, as a period notable for qualitative researchers’ struggle to represent themselves in their research. Earlier, David Hayano’s (1982) Poker Faces identified challenges experienced by the social researcher who is both subject and object in writings about their own community. Laurel Richardson’s Writing Strategies (1990) considers devices that qualitative researchers can apply to their writing including narrative and reflexivity. Denzin (2010) identifies the years between 1990 and 1995 as the ‘postmodern movement’ during which researchers sought to apply literary devices in their reports. Further to the emergence of the postmodern movement, Webster and Mertova (2007) suggest this movement marked a shift from pursuing understandings of the external to the internal.

Postmodern interests include who is doing what to whom (character, plot and time), multiple voices (truths), holistic views, relationships between disciplines, practical concerns, personal voices and social, ethical and cultural responsibilities.

(Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 30)
Carolyn Ellis’ *Final Negotiations* (1995), a seminal work in the field of autoethnography, exemplifies the shift and uses literary devices like character, plot, and time to tell Ellis’ personal story of her relationship with her terminally ill partner. Denzin (2010) calls the sixth movement ‘post-experimental inquiry’ and attributes the period 1995 to 2000, which includes Michael Herzfield’s (1997) *The Taming of Revolution*. Herzfield locates himself as researcher in the field and includes problematisation of this position that leads to Herzfield as researcher co-performing the roles of both subject and object of his research. In *Opportunity House*, Michael Angrosino (1998) asserted, “What I object to is the tendency to think we’re being insufficiently scientific and objective if we include ourselves in the story” (p. 32).

From 2000 to 2004, Denzin (2010) notes the ‘methodologically contested present’ as the seventh movement. From his 2010 publication, Denzin deems the eighth movement, beginning in 2005, as ‘the future’, a movement in qualitative research that, “blends aesthetics, ethics, and epistemologies. It understands that knowledge is power,” (Denzin, 2010, p.26).

More recently Denzin (2018) offers a description of performative and critical autoethnography which includes reference to autoethnographers bending the past to the present. Earlier, writing about a process of performative and critical autoethnography in *Searching for Yellowstone*, Norman Denzin explains,

I write from the scenes of memory, rearranging, suppressing, even inventing scenes, forgetting claims to expect truth or factual accuracy, searching instead for emotional truth, for ideas’ meaning.

(Denzin, 2008, p. 18)

In *Searching for Yellowstone*, Denzin (2008) demonstrates performative writing of mysteries which are developed from memory and that pursue an emotional
truth. Like Denzin, this thesis similarly warps timelines and seeks emotional truth\textsuperscript{72}, and in doing so reveals an ‘unsettled I’.

As a research method, performative and critical autoethnography embraces notions of ‘unsettled I’. Tami Spry uses the term ‘unsettled I’ to acknowledge the dynamism of ‘I’ that is “partial, incomplete, copresent in the temporality of becoming, since the performative-I exists in relational reflexivity with the Inappropriate/d Other, discourse and context” (2016, p. 81). In this research, my ‘unsettled I’ is a crystallizing construction in relation to ‘inappropriate/d others’ from: (i) my memories as a child-student who include my own school teachers; (ii) representations of my experiences as an adult-teacher interacting with my teacher colleagues and Sal; and (iii) experiences as a teacher-researcher who has deepened understandings of praxis in relationship with other researchers and their ideas.

My ‘I’ has shifted throughout this undertaking of conscientization as I have pursued deep cultural understandings of phenomena, and during which I have been reflexively aware of my ‘unsettled I’ as both object and subject of the research, or teacher and researcher, and this I was contributing to the phenomena. In chapter 1, I observed the impact of Mystory of Sal and Mystory of Gandu Jarjum as beginnings to transform my I. An ‘unsettled I’, as research object, is also revealed in the data that is presented later in chapter 6 as mystories. In addition, as I have uncovered layers of whiteness in I, as research object, I have applied this learning to attempt to decolonise my research praxis. This has meant an ‘unsettled I’ as research subject\textsuperscript{73}.

\textsuperscript{72} Research aim 14: Seek truth.
\textsuperscript{73} Research aim 3: Understand my identity; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my praxis; (10) Deconstuct and racialise whiteness.
3.2.2 Autoethnography and representations of subject/object

The ‘crisis of representation’ and subsequent developments in performative and critical autoethnography have influenced my choices of method and that are embedded in this research. In this section I provide an overview of the ‘crisis of representation’ and some methodological solutions, specifically the use of story as data that is communicated through literary devices. I conclude this section with examples of autoethnographic representations of data, drawing specific attention to the impact of the writer’s choices on generalisability.

Further to Denzin’s movements of qualitative research, the lineage of autoethnography in western scholarship has been traced by Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis (2015), Chang (2008), Denzin (2014), Ellis (2004), Poulos (2021) and others. Karl Heider is widely attributed with coining the term in 1975, although his use of the term was to explain how he was privileging the representation of research informants’ voices in findings of his ethnographic research. Later, David Hayano’s (1982) *Poker Faces* demonstrates work as a native in a community, and he subsequently calls for researchers to locate themselves in texts. Both Heider and Hayano’s works predate the ‘crisis of representation’ and neither offer literary experimentations that have appeared in scholarly work since Denzin’s categorized fifth movement.

Hayano’s (1982) *Poker Faces* offers an insight into the professional world of playing poker in Los Angeles card rooms. Hayano identifies himself as a professional gambler; that is, he is a member of the community that he is researching, and states that his research, “can be described as an exercise in autoethnography because it is completely interwoven with my personal involvement and analysis of events as an inside member” (pp. 150-151). On the other hand, Hayano gives little indication in
the body of text that he is an insider of the community that he has researched. There appears to be distance between the researcher, research informants, and the writer. Typically, Hayano’s writing is focussed on an ‘other’ who is separate from himself as the subject or researcher and subsequent writer. His anecdotes and descriptions of behaviours are usually attributed to players referred to in third person. Some descriptions could be about Hayano, or they could be inclusive of all poker players. By the end of the text, the reader is none the wiser to the wins and losses that Hayano would likely have sustained throughout his five years as an insider, and while there is an indication that Hayano frequented half a dozen card houses, the reader is not aware of his preferred card house, nor the reasons for his preference.

In the body of the text Hayano provides tables that arrange his community of thirty poker players into categories, but he does not identify the place that he occupies in the analysis, and there are very few co-constructed narratives or personal narratives that clearly identify the author. Hayano rarely locates himself in the text with pronouns like ‘I’, ‘we’ or ‘our’, although a reflexive researcher piece is included as an appendix that makes a noticeable change. The appendix frequently refers to ‘I’, and it is Hayano’s call in 1982 for social research to address the writer/research representations that subsequent researchers refer to as the crisis of representation. Hayano observed,

Still a noticeable gap exists between the researcher’s stated empirical and theoretical interests and his finished monograph. This gap – the methods and experiences of data collection and interpretation – can be closed if researchers are willing to undertake a closer examination of their motives, involvement, and analytical procedures.

(Hayano, 1982, p. 143)
Four years after the publication of Hayano’s (1982) *Poker Faces*, Marcus and Fisher (1986) are credited with coining the term ‘crisis of representation’ by Denzin (2010), Richardson (1990), Schwandt (2007) and others. The crisis arises from two methodological issues that are the epistemological limitation of interpretivist research to completely account for lived experience, and researchers’ representations of self in their writing. Bochner (2000) attempts to resolve the crisis, offering that stories about the past can only ever be a representation of the past that is subjectively framed by the political and the social. That is, researchers cannot recreate entire subtle and nuanced lived experiences of the past, we can only ever hope to recreate partial representations of lived experience, and that these representations are subjectively interpreted from a researcher and then writer’s standpoint. Earlier, in response to the crisis of representation, Richardson (1997) noted, “how we theorise about *lived experience* and how we experience *lived experience* are at odds” (p. 65), and recommended social researchers embrace the tools of literature to create rich and engaging representations of data.

Clough (2002), Denzin (2014), Ellis (1995), Leavy (2013), Nabudere (2008), Richardson (1997), Webster and Mertova (2007) and others attest to the importance throughout human history of using story as a medium to communicate social meaning, and that story has the capacity to be aesthetic, inclusive, moral, rich, and multivocal. Furthermore, the significance of story in Indigenous epistemologies is reported by Phillips and Bunda (2018), Emberley (2014), Martin (2008), and Smith (1999). Writing in support of the place of story as data in the academy, supporting Ellis and Bochner’s (2000) alternatives to traditional epistemologies, Leggo (2012) asserts,

I’m not denying or diminishing the value of logos, of scientific, technological, pragmatic approaches to research. I am only
holding fast to acknowledging that there are other ways of knowing.

(Leggo, 2012, p. xix)74.

Denzin (2014), Ellis (2004), and Poulos (2021) are among works that trace the development of interpretive research and the emergence of experimental research methods. Such methods provide a resolution to the ‘crisis of representation’ and finds a place for literary performances of research. MacLure (2003) offers an understanding of the ‘crisis of representation’, suggesting that it is a response to the dissatisfaction that some qualitative researchers felt as they engaged in traditional models of research that imposed an artificial separation between researchers and their investigation of a supposed ‘settled other’. Rather, MacLure argues, qualitative research in education settings should be collaborative, dialogical and draw attention to the dynamic nature of the research field, the presence of the researcher in the field, the researcher’s voice, as well as the voice of the research participants, and even the voice of the writer in the dissemination of research.

Writing in prose, Carolyn Ellis’ Final Negotiations (1995) identifies the positions that she occupies in the text as researcher, writer, and member of the research community. The practice of challenging traditional methods of disseminating research data is demonstrated in by Laurel Richardson’s Fields of Play (1997) that publishes research using prose, poetry, and play script. Harris and Sinclair (2014) apply play-as-research-text to creatively explore teacher identity and pedagogy, and Jane Speedy’s Staring at a Park (2015) uses creative writing and artwork using the features of an IPad as representations of her lived experience after having a stroke.

74 Research aim 21: Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
Ellis’ *Final Negotiations* (1995) is a deeply personal account of the author’s experiences in a relationship with her partner, Gene Weinstein, who was diagnosed with chronic emphysema. Early in the narrative Ellis recalls a conversation that she had with Gene’s doctor who advised her that Gene would experience a continual drop in ‘levels’ of capability and that he would eventually die. As a structural device, this conversation establishes inevitability in the narrative. As Ellis discloses the intimate details of her relationship with Gene, she uses the declining levels in his health to frame the story, reporting on Gene’s deteriorating health and the impact that this has on their own relationship as well as their social and professional networks. Ellis describes deep and mutual affection that is tempered by passionate, jealous rages and power struggles, and she reveals her intimate, private thoughts about Gene’s deterioration including feelings of guilt and reflections on her own well-being. The deeply personal writing that Ellis divulges is fraught with the ethical tensions that she has since discussed in *The Ethnographic I* (Ellis, 2004). These tensions begin with an understanding that the work is entirely Ellis’ perspective on her relationship. Multiple other characters are cited or quoted in the text, including Gene; however, the other characters’ experiences are narrated by Ellis, from her perspective, and Ellis notes in her closing chapter and elsewhere that the stories of other characters are often represented without the others’ consent. In the case of Gene, whose medical, personal, social, and familial history is revealed in tremendously intimate details, the absence of consent or other ethical protections is a source of criticism of the work (Ellis, 2004).75

The impact on generalizability of Ellis’ (1995) *Final Negotiations* can be seen through a comparison of Ellis’ work with Stephen Hancock’s (2015) book chapter,  

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75 Research aim 12: Seek verisimilitude; (13) Seek trustworthiness of accounts.
Your Inquiry is Not Like Mine. The former was published in 1995, the latter published in 2015. Hancock’s chapter is the story of his researcher narrative as he seeks a method for his doctoral study. Set in a coffee shop, Hancock (2015) weaves conversation of critical research method with his supervisor as he provides introspective stories and personal insights to his lived experience of race and racism. Like Ellis (1995), Hancock (2015) narrates personal details including memories and insight to his experience in the coffee shop. Where the two texts differ is the voice of the narrator. Ellis (1995) draws the reader inside of the text; as a reader we are in the car, or bedroom, or hospital ward with the narrator and her subjects as events take place. For example,

“Maybe you should pull over,” I say to Gene, who is coughing uncontrollably while driving. My calm voice belies my fear.
“No, I'll be okay in a minute.”
He must know what he's doing. But he’s choking, and now turning gray. Pull over, goddamn it, I scream, silently.

(Ellis, 1995, p. 22)

On the other hand, Hancock (2015) narrates his personal story from a distance. As a narrator, he steps away from the time and place of events. The effect is that, as a reader, we are in conversation with a storyteller who is looking at details of another time and another place. For example,

There was so much more that I wanted to talk about, but I knew our time had come to an end. So, we parted, and as I left the coffee shop, I also left the part of me that welcomed marginalisation.

(Hancock, 2015, p. 23)

Both excerpts show the researchers accounting for lived experience as well as representing themselves in their writing. However, the sample of Ellis’ writing demonstrates present tense, even though her story was occurring in the 1980s. This is over a decade before the book was published, and three decades before I quote
her in this text, yet Ellis’ language places us, the audience to her story, in the car with her; “He must know what he’s doing,” is a statement to us, the readers, riding along with Ellis and Gene. Hancock, on the other hand, is narrating a story that occurred in the past and he makes the choice to maintain past tense in the writing. As a reader, our relationship is distanced from the story, and it is interpreted for us by Hancock as storyteller.

The result of the two pieces of writing influences the texts’ generalizability, that Ellis and Bochner (2000) discuss in their co-authored chapter and that I discussed in *Mystery of a methodological encounter*. For performative and critical autoethnography, generalizability assumes post-structural recognition of the reader, and considers the impact of representations of the research that are embedded in the text upon the reader. This is a position that had been argued earlier in Barone (1990) and Clough (2002). The examples of Ellis (1995) and Hancock (2015) that I have provided here suggest that placing the reader inside of the research setting has the potential to be an evocative experience that increases the generalizability of the text76.

The importance of evocative representations in text and generalizability is a useful reference for my critical self-reflective research. Commenting on the value of evocative, emotion-laden writing as reflective practice, Bolton (2010) offers, “strong feelings are an indicator of ethical values,” and, “recognising and working with emotions through reflexivity can significantly develop practice” (p. 37). *Mystery of Sal* has a tragic element, while *Mystery of Matthias* has elements of a romantic-comedy. Importantly, both stories continue to draw me back to them, to reflect on them, and to

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76 Research aim 15: Create stories that resonate with an audience.
find new insights or new perspectives on them. Aims 18 and 19\(^{77}\) of this research seek generalizability with a wider audience that leads to building communities of allies and aims 6 and 7\(^{78}\) seek to access stories of my practice that draw me back to them to stimulate deeper understandings of my practice. Therefore, these stories achieve generalizability when I, as a reader, return to them to make meaning that leads to a disruption of my own experience (Denzin, 2014; Swick, 2013), or when other readers are prompted to evaluate their own experiences and consider alternative ways of knowing or being (Adams, Ellis & Holman-Jones, 2015; Bochner, 2000).

3.2.3 Criticisms of autoethnography

The emergence of autoethnography as a method that can be performative, critical, and activist in nature has attracted disapproval from traditional, positivist researchers in the social sciences and the broader academy\(^ {79}\). In addition, criticism from within the field of autoethnography have led to the development of an overarching framework. In this sub-section I discuss criticisms of autoethnography and responses from within the field.

Criticism from outside of the field of autoethnography is based on epistemological ground. Positivist researchers, seeking to use empirical measurement to derive universality, are critical of experimental and interpretive single-n social research, noting that autoethnography does not produce generalizable findings. Hammersley (2008) further challenges experimental types of research like autoethnography on the grounds that it lacks rigour, its measurement

\(^{77}\) Research aim 18: Seek allies; (19) Build communities of interest to decolonise praxis.

\(^{78}\) Research aim 6: Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience; (7) Deepen understandings of praxis.

\(^{79}\) Research aim 21: Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
methods lack validity, and that its calls to activism are blatantly political and biased. Hughes and Pennington (2017) challenge the subjectivity of emic reporting, observing “recollected emic reporting is subjective, and this subjectivity can be rendered in the open coding process; and when the researcher is the only source of data, there is limited assemblage for triangulation, and therefore limited reliability and trustworthiness” (p. 66).

In addition to direct criticism about autoethnography, its acceptance in the western, colonial, and positivist-dominated academy remains unenthusiastic. Direct criticism affords the field of autoethnography an opportunity to respond. On the other hand, qualitative researchers aligned with traditional positivist methods marginalise autoethnography through silence, for example the 3rd edition of David Silverman’s (2010) *Doing Qualitative Research*. The publication is two years after the publication of the *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (2008) and eleven years after Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s *Decolonising Methodologies* (1999), yet Silverman (2010) fails to offer a discussion on either of the alternative ways of knowing or doing research, nor does he discuss autoethnography.

Specific criticism of interpretive social research like autoethnography is that it risks becoming solipsistic and narcissistic. Atkinson (1997) and Sparkes (2002) caution against romanticising constructions of a protagonist self and other characters. Ali-Khan (2015) also expresses concern that autoethnography adds to self-adoring, me-cultures where non-critical narcissism reifies the trivial to paramount importance. Chang (2008) similarly warns against researchers becoming self-indulgent, stating, “mere self-exposure without profound cultural analysis and interpretation leaves this writing at the level of descriptive autobiography or memoir” (p. 51). Chang (2008) adds that four common pitfalls in autoethnography are that
researchers focus on self in isolation from others, write excessive narration at the expense of analysis, engage in an over reliance on memory as data, and do not adequately address the ethical failings in discussing others – including colonising others’ stories (p. 54). The importance of critically layering the personal within the cultural and providing a conceptual framework for the autoethnography was a theme addressed by Anne Harris in her plenary address to the 2015 Art of Critical Autoethnography Symposium. Harris (2015) called for critical autoethnography which embeds theory into the personal story. Ellis (2004) similarly states, “We must not neglect the ‘ethno’ part of autoethnography” (p. 200).

Further criticism relates to claims of reflexivity as a process that is embedded throughout an autoethnographic research project. Such claims frequently appear in autoethnographic dissemination (Boylorn, 2013; Denzin, 2008; Ellis, 2009; Harris & Sinclair, 2015; Lennon, 2015; Sleeter, 2015; Spry, 2011; and Wood, 2018a). Reflexivity is challenged by both Bozalek and Zembylas (2017) and Spry (2016) who opine that reflexion is limited by fixed frames of the researcher’s own situated knowledges and understandings. Instead, they offer diffraction as a method of decentring the researcher’s constructions of knowledge and praxiology, and to embed study of the practices of knowing throughout the research. That is, while reflexivity challenges the positionality of the researcher through critical lenses such as race, gender, class, ableness, diffraction challenges the social construction of knowledge as it impacts on researcher and research communities, and the socio-political relationship between them.

In response to criticism of interpretive social research as well as developing research praxis, a number of scholars have established a framework for inquiry. Developing alternatives to validity, reliability, and generalizability, Bochner (2000)
offers a set of criteria that call for an abundance of concrete detail, complex storytelling, articulating a personal transformation in the writer, and evoking a shift in the reader’s head and heart. Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis (2015) offer four goals for autoethnography that represent a synthesised version of a list of thirteen criteria posited by Ellis (2000). The four goals include writing that:

- contributes to knowledge;
- is evocative and in which the writer is made vulnerable;
- consists of an overarching narrative and is aesthetically crafted; and
- demonstrates an ethical representation of self and others.

Denzin (2014) cautions there are inherent dangers in framing criteria for autoethnography because the criteria can become an authority that place limits on writing practice, rather than encourage opportunities to radicalise the dissemination of research. Notwithstanding his caution, Denzin (2014) suggests seven criteria for autoethnographers to aspire to in their work that include:

- unsettling or challenging repressed meanings;
- storying representations that invite moral and ethical dialogue;
- providing vision for resistance or utopian alternatives;
- devising work that is caring;
- creating representations of data that show rather than tell;
- reporting with interpretive sufficiency, representational adequacy, and authentic adequacy; and
- committing to the political, functional, and collective.
I draw this section to a close affirming my aspiration to achieve these seven criteria. I am also drawn to Elliot Eisner’s (1991) notion of the educational connoisseur in chapter 4 of his book *The Enlightened Eye*. I applied Eisner’s (1991) four qualities of the educational connoisseur to frame Wood (2017). The first quality is perceptibility that illuminates the holistic experience in an education setting. Second, Eisner calls for noticeability whereby the researcher is alert to specific features of education. Discernment is the ability to distinguish one educational experience from another, and uniqueness is developing the understanding that educational experiences can rarely be replicated in other settings.

I now turn to models of reflective practice in pursuit of answer to research question two, “How can critical praxis research reveal hegemonic forces like whiteness in teacher research that is undertaken in an Australian context?” and a comparative discussion on models of reflective practice.

### 3.3 Models of reflective practice

In chapter 1 I noted my dissatisfaction with the capacity of the Australian PST and Marzano’s pedagogical framework to support my aim to decolonise praxis, and research question two seeks a research method that will reveal hegemonic forces like whiteness in teacher research that is undertaken in an Australian context. In this section I will continue to discuss the importance of this teacher reflective research that is critical and activist, and that fills a noticeable gap in quality pre-service teacher training or ongoing professional development throughout my teaching career. I begin this section with a comparative discussion on models of reflective practice including technical reflection and critical reflection in the context of the research questions and aims of this research. I locate Gillie Bolton’s through-the-
mirror writing and participatory action research and as practical approaches to
reflective practice. I provide a detailed discussion on through-the-mirror-writing in
chapter 4 and I add a discussion on participatory action research towards the end of
this chapter. I conclude this section by returning to Freire’s conscientization and
Kress’ CPR.

3.3.1 Reflective practice

Practitioners can be enabled to let go and rewrite assumptions, taken for granted, ossified notions of themselves, and take
greater responsibility for actions, thoughts and feelings, even ones of which they were previously unaware.
(Bolton, 2010, p. 252)

In this section I provide a brief overview of contributions to reflective practice
in western scholarship and identify approaches to reflective practice that are
technical reflection, practical reflection, or critical reflection.

I began this research with a determination to transform my praxis in the field
of education. Having noticed ossified notions of myself and taken for granted
assumptions, I found those things to be, as Pierre Orelus (2013, p. 47) describes,
“professionally and morally” disturbing. Having taken cognizance, I am compelled to
intervene and take greater responsibility for actions80. As I continue questioning
those things, I become activist in the struggle to intervene and de-racialise micro and
macro social formations that are the legacy of colonialism but have experienced the
inability or unwillingness of Australian schools to supply the professional tools that I
require to work towards transformation81. My dissatisfaction with the neoliberal

80 Research aim 3: Understand my identity; (4) Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity;
(7) Deepen understandings of praxis; (9) Intervene and improve praxis.
81 Research aim 11: Resist dominant forces; (16) Apply critical social analysis to action; (24) Identify
manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in
Australian schools.
approach to professional development, curriculum and pedagogy in Australian schools has led me to develop my own questioning methods. The neoliberal approach draws from positivist research traditions like pre- and post-intervention measurements of phenomena that reveal, at best, superficial understandings of racialised power relationships that are embedded in the research context\(^{82}\).

I noted in chapter 1 that reflective practice in western scholarship often acknowledges the contributions of the Ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates, and twentieth century scholar John Dewey. The growth in reflective practice research can also be traced to the work of Donald Schon (1983) and journals that have subsequently begun publication including *Reflective Practice*, and *Critical and Reflective Practice in Education*. Both journals have published articles that are of use to my research, particularly with regards to online professional development and blogging communities that I will discuss in chapter 4 as they relate to a phase of data collection of this research. As a teacher of the Arts and Humanities I recognise Phillip Taylor's (1998) *Redcoats and Patriots* as a seminal contribution to reflective practice that challenged academic rationalist approaches to pedagogy, disrupted the privileged position of positivism in the academy, and empowered his teacher voice. Christine Sleeter's (2015) critical social fiction *White Bread* also draws on reflection as a classroom teacher to add to the messiness of her narrative of professional experiences, personal relationships, and revelations of oppression and resistance in her familial history.

Socratic method is derived from the questioning technique that Socrates is thought to have applied to those with whom he debated in ancient Athens. His

\(^{82}\) Research aim 21: Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education.
questioning would probe and identify inconsistencies in the position adopted by his interlocutor (Kraut, 1999). Socratic method differs from conscientization because Socrates asks questions of another person with the aim of illuminating noticeable phenomena, whereas Freire’s method notices phenomena and then submits self to questioning. Lending itself to critical reflecting practice, in How We Think John Dewey (1933) observes that we reflect when we are unsettled by events with the intent to restore our emotional equilibrium and he sets out a linear and empirical five step process for the reflective thinker who, upon being unsettled:

- experiences the mind leaping forward with solutions;
- develops appreciation for the magnitude of the problem;
- proposes a hypothesis and begins collecting evidence to support it;
- reasons through the problem, proposing hypothesis and evidence; and
- tests the hypothesis through actual or imagined action.

The Dewian model of reflective thinking embodies empirical scientific method. Further, Tripp (2012) suggests the Dewey model is an emotional response to phenomena in which disequilibrium occurs because of feelings like guilt, fear, frustration, or embarrassment. The result can be paralysing for the reflective thinker because analysis of an incident that remains fixed on emotion can result in self-castigation. In chapter 2 I discussed the impact of such paralysis as a barrier to white people engaging in critically understanding race and racism. Tripp (2012) suggests Dewey’s model of reflection needs to be accompanied by strategies to shift thinking from the personal to the wider work culture, that is systemic thinking, for instance, looking at how the teacher is positioned by the institution, which is often their reason for making a professional judgement.

(Tripp, 2012, p. xiii)
Donald Schon’s *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) develops Dewey’s model of reflection and emerges as a response to attacks on professional knowledge. Schon suggests professional knowledge, including that of teachers, benefits when it emerges from professional practice, but that professional knowledge has been subject to attacks. He opines professional knowledge is attacked from the conservative right who seek to engineer a lack of public confidence in the professions; meanwhile voices in the left have attacked the professions as institutions which preserve the dominance of reified professional knowledge. Attacks from within the professions themselves have also indicated a loss of confidence in their knowledge systems (Schon, 1983).

To address the crisis of confidence in the professions, Schon (1983) proposes a model of professional thinking that is reflection-in-action. The Schon model suggests practitioners draw on experience to analyse and predict the impact of their actions in a cause-effect relationship with the environment. An example that is provided in Schon (1983) is framed by the pursuit of knowledge to rearrange blocks that will improve the stability of a structure. In a classroom reflection-in-action as a series of sequential steps might be useful to help students embed an understanding of spelling rules, but it fails to consider wider socio-political factors that influence situations.

Both Dewey and Schon’s method of reflection remain fixed in empirical positivism, rather than critical approaches to reflection that I seek. Tripp (2012) posits reflection that occurs within a fixed world view invariably reinforces that world view, and “we first must change our awareness through deliberately setting out to view the world of our practice in new ways” (p. 12). Brookfield (2017) offers a further comparison between technical reflection and critical reflection, in which the former is
“a problem-solving process that’s invoked only when something’s not working”
whereas “critical reflection is not a remedial tool; it is a stance of permanent inquiry”
(pp. 78-80)\textsuperscript{83}.

Rather than an attack on professional knowledge this research,
acknowledging my left leaning as subject and object, is a call for others to build
communities of solidarity and decolonise praxis\textsuperscript{84}. This is critical research, and as
such contributes to the field disparagingly referred to by Schon as one of
“muckrakers and radical critics” (1983, p. 14)\textsuperscript{85}. However systemic professional
development has failed to provide me with an anti-racist, critical pedagogy of hope
that would liberate my teaching and emancipate my students. hooks (2013), Ladson-
Billings (2009), Rodriguez (2015), and others have already indicated the powerful
resistance that dominant voices place as barriers to social change\textsuperscript{86}. There is no
hope in making the contribution to education that I seek to achieve if left to school
systems and education policy makers. Thus, I have embarked on my own odyssey of
muckraking and radical critique.

Schon’s contribution to reflective practice, advancing Deweyan thinking,
demonstrates technical reflection and his reference to muckraking and radical
critique suggests an alternative approach of reflective practice. Table 4, below, adds
a third approach that is practical reflection. The Table offers two examples of each
approach and applies four criteria to compare the approaches. I note the six
examples are not an exhaustive list.

\textsuperscript{83} Research aim 21: Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
\textsuperscript{84} Research aim 18: Seek allies; (19) Build communities of interest to decolonise praxis.
\textsuperscript{85} Research aim 16: Apply critical social analysis to action; (17) Identify political nature of language, then use
language for liberation.
\textsuperscript{86} Research aim 20: Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope.
For example, neither Socrates nor Dewey is included in Table 4, and contemporary scholars like David Tripp, author of *Critical Incident in Teaching*, and Stephen Brookfield, author of *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* are also omitted, although I have referred to Tripp (2012) and Brookfield (2017) throughout this section.
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<td>Reveal truths of practice</td>
<td>Deepen understanding of practice, leading to improved practice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set goals from predetermined list of skills, and measure improvements using proficiency scales</td>
<td>Enter into dialogue with situations through a process of reframing questions</td>
<td>Develop theory and practice to challenge hegemony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Procedure</strong></td>
<td>Five stage process of ‘Through the mirror writing’</td>
<td>Research cycle of act→observe→reflect→act</td>
<td>Cyclical process of noticing phenomena→questioning→intervening→educating self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practitioner’s voice in data</strong></td>
<td>Stories of practice empower voice within existing power structures</td>
<td>Stories about practitioner's interpretation of lived experience, that celebrate teacher voice</td>
<td>Stories of resistance that empower the practitioner's voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Absent in proficiency scales. Practitioner voice is removed from decontextualised data</td>
<td>Practitioner voice can be embedded in the action research cycle</td>
<td>Practitioner’s voice of self in the social world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 identifies three approaches to reflective practice that are technical reflection (Schon and Marzano), practical reflection (Bolton and Kemmis), and critical reflection (Kress and Freire). The Table identifies two examples for each approach and locates the examples within a research paradigm. Marzano’s *Art and Science of Teaching* is empirical, and the purpose is to rehearse and improve predetermined skills, whereas critical approaches include Kress’ CPR, which aims to challenge hegemony, and Freire’s conscientization, that pursues a radical activist aim of shifting to hopeful futures. As practical reflection, Bolton offers a five-stage process of through-the-mirror writing which seeks to deepen understandings of practice. Kress posits an interpretive approach to research that collects data, codifies data, and interprets data.

A significant difference among the methods in Table 4 is the place of the practitioner’s voice within the research and its relationship with the socio-political environment. Teacher voice is absent in Marzano’s empirical method, but voice appears in Schon’s technical method, albeit within existing power structures. Kemmis’ model of action research allows for teacher voice to be included in data cycles, and Bolton’s practical method celebrates teacher voice. Kress’ CPR identifies teacher voice in the context of power structures and celebrates teacher resistance to hegemony and Freire’s method locates voice in the social world.

### 3.3.2 Technical reflection

The purpose of technical reflection is to improve professional practice. I acknowledge that the methods offered by Marzano and Schon might be of use to teachers; however, they do not meet the aims of this research because they seek to change professional practice, without consideration of the contribution of socio-
political structures of power that shape practice. For example, the Marzano the
method represents teacher actions as one of 41 observable elements that can be
captured using proficiency scaling tools. Considering the elements as teacher skills,
or the scientific tools of effective teaching, the Marzano approach calls on teachers
to set goals to improve practice of teaching skills, and then work collegially to
measure improvements in practice of the skills. This approach hypothesises that a
teacher’s skill in the classroom, “is causally linked with how well and how much
students learn” and that, “the relationship between classroom strategies and
behaviours and student achievement is very straightforward” (Marzano, 2012, p. 3).
The simplicity of Marzano’s statement infers a smooth conduit where teacher input
equals student output. But the conduit is not smooth. It passes through multiple
filters of educational disadvantage such as socioeconomic background of students,
English language proficiency, disability, and Indigeneity that were identified in the

Furthermore, Marzano’s method of reflective practice is empirical, whereas
the research that I propose to undertake is critical, activist and decolonising. The
predetermined questions that could be relevant to *Mystery of Sal* are design question
8 that is *establishing and maintaining effective relationships with students*. The three
elements of this design question are:

- element 36: *understanding students’ interests and backgrounds*;
- element 37: *using verbal and nonverbal behaviours that indicate affection for students*; and
- element 38: *displaying objectivity and control.*
While these elements might generate reflective thinking that leads to changes in practice, they reduce reflection to a simplistic problem–solution dichotomy that omits deeper layers of cognizance. Marzano strips context and views the teacher–student relationship with deficit thinking that creates the origins of the problem in which at least one of the parties needs to be fixed.

Brookfield (2017) and Tripp (2012) suggest critical reflection moves beyond technical reflection. They opine critical reflection seeks to illuminate power and uncover hegemony, while technical reflection is concerned with vocational matters like improving the use of asking questions that check for student understanding. Applying technical reflection to *Mystery of Sal* would limit questions and solutions to vocational quick-fixes, and reinforce teacher blame without consideration of wider systemic colonialism and whiteness as significant contributors to the episode.

**3.3.3 Muckraking and radical critique**

Writing on the experience of American teachers nearly three decades ago, Joe Kincheloe’s (1991) *Teachers as Researchers* offers an alternative to the systemic endorsed processes and my school’s reification of Marzano’s framework with its empirical method of reflective practice. Kincheloe (1991) observed, “In the quest for enhanced educational productivity, teachers’ work has become increasingly controlled from above” (p. 12).

However, the professional knowledge that I am seeking will not be achieved by tracking my progress with Marzano’s predetermined design questions and elements or other policy and procedures created by my employer. Kincheloe (1991) observes such technical knowledge that is rooted in the positivist empiricism and will be, “incapable of comprehending the social world” (p.69). Drawing on Jurgen
Habermas’ theory of cognitive interests, Kincheloe (1991) called for emancipatory knowledge that,

... leads to freedom from dominant forces and distorted communication (whereby) the act of knowing is a form of self-reflection that allows an individual to gain an awareness of the connection between knowledge and interest.

(Kincheloe, 1991, p. 70)

Bolton (2010) offers an understanding of reflective practice that is similar to Freire’s conscientization. Both understandings awaken the practitioner to objectified knowledge with the world, and through which taken for granted revelations of self are revealed. Such knowledge is an antidote to that which was attributed earlier to bell hooks (2013) as dominator thinking that functions unconsciously. Bolton specifically posits reflective writing as an effective tool for professional development that can illuminate assumptions and actions, and that can make conscious the otherwise unconscious imprints of colonialism and whiteness87.

Despite the rationalist approach of data tracking that is embodied by the Art and Science of Teaching, Marzano’s (2012) teacher work-book references Gillie Bolton’s (2010) ‘though-the-mirror’ writing process. While Marzano’s Art and Science of Teaching risks reducing the act of teaching from lived experience to decontextualized, empirical data, the inclusion of Bolton’s reflective writing with its liberatory possibilities is almost contradictory. Indeed, my own through-the-mirror-writing offers me, outside of the formal professional development structures of my workplace, processes of claiming ownership of my teaching career. It is these processes that offer me the opportunity for professional renewal, in ways that are meaningful to me, that empower me, that give me agency, and that I hope will

87 Research aim 7: Deepen understandings of praxis; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my teacher praxis.
transform me. Gillie Bolton describes through-the-mirror writing for personal and professional development as,

so called because writers are taken right through the mirror’s glass and silvering into a reflective and reflexive world where nothing can be taken for granted: everyday actions, events and assumptions about other people take on a radically different significance.

(Bolton, 2010, p. xxi)

Bolton (2010) suggests that an effective model of reflective practice must be more than a *Hey presto!* rationalist approach to education that is otherwise reductive and fails to provide value to learners. Such a model may suit employers seeking data-driven compliance but does little to liberate the classroom teacher. More effective models of reflective practice allow teachers to, “question and problematise themselves, their roles and those in authority over them, their political, social and professional situations” (Bolton, 2010, p. 55)88. Kincheloe (1991) opined,

Teachers as researchers who are familiar with the philosophical, historical, and political context in which inquiry takes place, will, I believe be better able to understand their roles as producers of knowledge.

(Kincheloe, 1991, p. 71)

Brookfield (2017) offers four lenses to “unearth and scrutinize our teaching assumptions” (p. 7) that are students’ eyes, colleagues’ perceptions, personal experiences, and theory and research. I acknowledge the absence of students’ eyes in this research for ethical reasons and discuss my method of data collection and analysis further in chapter 4.

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88 Research aim 20: Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope.
3.4 Critical praxis research

In critical praxis research, we learn to see the world critically, while at the same time changing our practice with radical love powerful enough to catalyse transformation. (Kress, 2011, p. 31)

As radical method, CPR offers a decolonising field of research practice that challenges the construction of knowledge and inherent racialized imbalances of power at all levels. In this section I draw on Tricia Kress’ (2011) description of CPR in response to my second research question that is, “How can critical praxis research reveal hegemonic forces like whiteness in teacher research that is undertaken in an Australian context?”

Kress (2011) envisages CPR as,

a theory of method that questions and challenges patriarchal and colonising conceptualizations or research, while emphasising the importance of considering in part and whole the epistemological (ways of knowing) and ontologies (ways of being) of the researcher and the researched as both individuals and parts of larger collective groups within local, national, and global societies that are rife with power struggles, inequality and contradictions.

(Kress, 2011, p. 11)

Throughout this thesis I have referred to the goals of CPR as self/other/world transformation. I began this section quoting Tricia Kress’ notion of CPR as a method that includes three components which are the researcher’s critical revelations of the world, researcher/practitioner commitment to changing practice, and the drive of radical love which invokes transformation. These components are in addition to the qualities of CPR that were presented earlier in this chapter in Table 4 that compared models of reflective practice. Table 4 aligned CPR with Freirean conscientization as activist and critical method, applying theory and practice, drawing on stories of
resistance to challenge hegemony, and which are told through practitioners’ voices. This section will continue to develop an overarching framework of CPR and it includes examples of doctoral theses that have applied the methodological framework as activist research in school settings in pursuit of the goals of transformation. I conclude this section with a discussion on how I have applied CPR in response to my second research question.

Just as the goal of conscientization is to intervene and educate, Kress (2011) asserts researchers applying CPR, “want to learn more about a phenomenon in order to improve something” (p. 9) and the something most often relates to critical inquiry in the pursuit of social justice (Denzin, 2010) specifically in education settings. Moreover, supporting multiple aims of this research, CPR presses self-examination, challenging the researcher to be critical of how, “race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexuality, native language, geographic location, etc. inform the way I experience and make sense of the world”. Once I understand how I am influenced to experience and interpret the world, I then ask questions like how my new, critical understandings can, “transform my practice to be more inclusive and human(e)” (Kress, 2011, p. 17).

Like the invisible experiences of whiteness reported by DiAngelo (2018) and McIntosh (1992) that were discussed in chapter 3, Tricia Kress (2011) reflects on her own school education and observes the impact of white and colonial experiences that blinded her to privilege. Further, Kress (2011) opines she cannot change her past, but she is committed to, “grieve and then grow” (p. 29) as she integrates new knowledge to improve her praxis. Adopting a CPR approach, Kress is open to

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89 Research aim 1: Educate myself; (2) Understand historical and socio-political factor that shape teacher praxis; (3) Understand my identity; (4) Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity; (5) Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (9) Intervene and improve praxis; and (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools.
democratic and utopian hope which includes generating opportunities for students to find a voice, as opposed to research that builds a narrative of students or teachers needing to be fixed. The former allows us to, “unravel our assumptions and challenge underlying norms that may exclude or marginalise” (p. 30), and the latter positions research subjects as deficient, thus creating an oppressive relationship and perpetuating the status quo.90

The application of CPR in education settings can been seen in doctoral research including Aviles (2009), Lennon (2012), and McGowan (2018). In these examples the research process included an examination of the researcher’s identity, critical understanding of time and place specific to the research setting, and deep reflection on the purpose of both education and educational research (Kress, 2011, p. 67).

As CPR, Christopher Aviles’ (2009) unpublished PhD thesis is a demonstration of self/other/world transformation. Aviles investigates a mentoring relationship between an experienced and early career teacher that reveals layers of their individual and personal identity in the socio-cultural context of their school community. Throughout the research Aviles documents self and other transformation as he, the researcher and mentor, and Mr Hoffman, his mentee, develop deeper understandings of education praxis. Further, Aviles asserts a wider transformation of the school as an organisation was also evident. Sherilyn Lennon (2015) describes her application CPR in her book titled Unsettling research: Using critical praxis and activism to create uncomfortable spaces. Lennon describes the power of CPR to generate change in education and educational research as she reflects on the

90 Research aim 7: Deepen understandings of praxis; (9) Intervene and improve praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope.
evolution of her work. She notes her research began as an investigation into gender and academic underperformance of boys in her school that, “evolved to become an activist study, foregrounding self-discovery, social transformations, and the reconceptualising of research itself” (p. 12). Jean McGowan’s (2018) doctoral research, in the context of education in Ireland, blends CPR with action research and it reveals the researcher’s previously unexamined political, cultural, and social assumptions about schooling in Ireland. McGowan’s action research, framed by Bourdieu’s notion on cultural capital and a lens of socio-historical forces of dominance, builds teacher praxis to acknowledge students’ Indigenous knowledges and cultures.

The contribution of Tricia Kress to the field of critical teacher research, and the examples of doctoral research that I have cited in this section, offer an answer to the question ‘how can critical praxis research reveal hegemonic forces like whiteness in teacher research that is undertaken in an Australian context?’ This section has discussed ten qualities of CPR that address my second research question. According to Kress (2011, p.167), critical praxis research:\n
\begin{itemize}
  \item is motivated by radical love;
  \item challenges hegemony in education and educational research;
  \item challenges epistemological constructions of knowledge;
  \item is informed by co-locating theory and practice;
  \item applies decolonising theory;
  \item unravels assumptions and taken for granted norms;
\end{itemize}

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91 Research aim 1: Educate myself; (7) Deepen understandings of praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (11) Resist dominant forces; (16) Apply critical social analysis to action; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope; (24) Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.
• embeds self-examination to reveal identity and its subsequent impact on praxis;
• generates stories of resistance, told through practitioners’ voices;
• is an activist pursuit of self/other/world transformation, and
• like dendritic crystallization, supports multiple research aims including a commitment to, “a lifelong endeavour toward self and social change”

3.5 Narrative inquiry, reclaimed stories, and mystories

I began this chapter with a discussion on dendritic crystallization and autoethnography. Following on, I discussed reflective practice and specifically models of reflective practice that support conscientization and CPR as critical and activist and that lead to transformation. In this section of the chapter, I begin to shift toward my research method with a discussion on personal narrative, reclaimed stories, and mystory.

3.5.1 Personal narrative

As a research method personal narrative emerges from the human trait of telling stories. Humans use story to make meaning from the seemingly tangled messiness of lived experience, to record our lived experience, and to retell our lived experience in ways that connect with self and others (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clough, 2002; Kroth & Cranton, 2014; Phillips & Bunda, 2018; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Our collective stories, like dendritic crystals, can become a narrative, and this understanding of story aligns with research question two of this thesis.

The personal narrative devices that I employ in this research are located by Ellingson and Ellis (2008) and Ellis and Bochner (2000) within the broad umbrella of
autoethnography which I discussed earlier in this chapter. Leggo (2012) posits that personal narrative is an alternative epistemology to traditional scientific, technological approaches. Phillips & Bunda (2018) agree, adding, “storying is axiological, ontological and epistemological. We argue for story as theory, as data, as process, as text on the ethical grounds of accessibility and foregrounding the marginalised” (p. 7). This view concurs with Clandinin and Rosiek (2007), Elbaz-Luwisch (2007), Elliott (2005), McNiff (2007), and Webster and Mertova (2007), and there is agreement that the aim of personal narrative is to discern meaning from moments and reveal layers of understanding from the otherwise tangled messiness of lived experience. Blair (2015) observes,

> Stories have layers; layers that a few people may know and more layers that everyone knows. The storyteller is often the listener and at the same time they are the storyteller. The storyteller is often the one being spoken to.

(Blair, 2015, p. 200)

Interpreting layers of story accords with conscientization as a process of noticing and taking cognizance, as well as aim 6\(^{92}\) of this research. Kroth and Cranton (2014) notes the layered relationship between narrative and identity, stating, “There is a core self that is relatively constant over time. Yet, that self or aspects of that self may be challenged by other events and experience” (p. 18). Merriweather (2015) agrees, noting the uniqueness of personal narrative research to acknowledge self, discover self, and transform self. Particular to teaching and learning contexts, Clough (2002), and Webster and Mertova (2007) opine that personal narrative offers researchers multiple perspectives of stories, can shift teachers by unsettling, fixed knowledge, and move towards holistically, open-ended understandings of phenomena. Kincheloe (2007, p. 16) posits critical teaching professionals embrace

\(^{92}\) Research aim 6: Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience.
open-endedness, appreciate ambiguity in educational practice, and interrogate politically contested spaces. In addition, critical reflection on individuals’ stories interrogates how stories have been shaped, stored, reshaped, retold, and how these memories contribute to one’s personal growth. Like Freire’s process of conscientization where the researchers are simultaneously in and with the world, Leggo observes,

Life is abundant, and narrative inquiry is a way of focusing on some particulars of that abundance in order to recognise some of the possibilities of meaning that lie in the seemingly tangled messiness of lived experience.

(Leggo, 2012, p. xiii)

Relevant to teaching and learning contexts and my aims in this study, Webster and Mertova (2007) opine personal narratives offer researchers multiple perspectives of stories that holistically illuminate life events. In addition, critical reflection on stories that interrogate influences on memory reveal insights into how stories have been shaped, stored, reshaped, retold, and how these memories contribute to one’s personal growth. I further draw on Clough (2002) to support my decision to undertake critical analysis of my teacher narrative, as opposed to immersing myself in reflective practice models like those posited by Art and Science of Teaching, with its quantitative check lists and proficiency scales. Clough (2002) notes that traditional research places sterile instruments between researcher and research participants, and that traditional writing is technical rather than artistic. The result is that the voice of teachers is muted in the field, and that teacher access to research reports is limited by hierarchical structures of the academy. Webster and Mertova (2007) observe that, “powerful insights offered by stories have often been

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93 Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (3) Understand my identity; (7) Deepen understandings of praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness.
ignored, perhaps because of the traditional predominance in research of the modernist-empirical view” (p. 14)94.

Leggo (2012) stipulates that the study of personal narrative is an alternative epistemology to traditional scientific, technological approaches to understanding and that, as a different way of knowing, there ought to be different ways of reading science. While I don’t discount the value that other members of the teaching profession may find in the *Art and Science of Teaching*, it does not meet my needs. To that end, I am drawn to Carl Leggo’s observations that,

… science has been misrepresented for generations as reliable, valid, and objective means of inquiry (while) other modes of inquiry have often been ignored or dismissed ...
My narrative research is connected to understanding how stories present possibilities for understanding the complex, mysterious, even ineffable experiences that compromise human living. I am especially interested in understanding how stories can help us live with more creative, ethical and political conviction

(Leggo, 2012, pp. xviii-xix)

Webster and Mertova (2007) further suggest, “Narrative is well suited to addressing the complexities and subtleties of human experience in teaching and learning” (p. 1) and continue the interpretive research project of redefining criteria for judging interpretive research. Just as autoethnographers have argued, Webster and Mertova (2007) assert that the study of personal narrative reclaims terms like validity, and reliability, reaffirming that validity means achieving verisimilitude and reliability means the account is trustworthy rather than replicable95.

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94 Research aim 15: Create stories that resonate with an audience; (21) Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
95 Research aim 12: Seek verisimilitude; (13) Seek trustworthiness of accounts.
3.5.2 Reclaimed stories and mystories

In addition to the study of personal narrative, in chapter 2 I discussed counter-narratives as, “a tool for exposing, analysing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2016, p. 133). Further, Merriweather (2015) posits that majoritarian narratives are typically Eurocentric and are constructed to maintain the status quo. In Why weren’t we told?, Henry Reynolds (1999) describes his journey, as a non-Indigenous man, of discovering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counter-narratives in Australian history. In my research I am seeking to draw on my stories to understand how my identity has been constructed and subsequently shapes my praxis in education. I am reclaiming stories of my learning as a child-student, adult-teacher, and teacher unionist that are exposing, analysing, and challenging race and racism in my teaching practice.96

Webster and Mertova (2007) note a two-stage process of conducting narrative inquiry that begins with reclaiming stories by imagining back into past events, and then reflexive deliberation of the storying of those events to reveal political and cultural biases hidden beneath them. Datta (2018) further describes reclaiming stories as a decentring of hegemony in epistemological understandings and research methodologies. Haviland (2017) warns that, while reclaiming stories is an act of resistance against hegemony, there is concurrently an inherent reimaging of story and that this can become a new site of critical tension. Battiste (2000) offers a counter argument to Haviland and posits the restoration and harmonisation of dominant and subaltern knowledge systems helps to heal, restore dignity, and realise human rights. Writing about reclaiming voice as a decolonising process,

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96 Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (5) Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness.
Laenui (2000) concurs with Battiste (2000), adding that such a process is more than reversing power structures, it is new structures that “can hold and house the values and aspirations of the colonised people” (p. 155).

My process of reclaiming stories was undertaken with the purpose of critically understanding how dominant and racialized power is replicated in schools and then intervening to open the experience of school education to greater inclusivity. Through a series of reflective writing tasks and subsequent analysis I reclaimed thirty stories of my experiences, beginning with my years as a child-student and through my years in tertiary education and years as an adult-teacher and teacher-unionist, and throughout my PhD candidature as a teacher-researcher. I applied a process that is drawn from Gillie Bolton’s (2010) *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development*. I included Bolton’s model of reflective practice in my earlier discussion, and I return to discuss my application of through-the-mirror-writing in chapter 4. Through reclaiming thirty stories and my subsequent analysis of them, themes and patterns emerged which challenged political and cultural bias in the stories and revealed manifestations of bias that is consciously or unconsciously embedded in my praxis. Data that emerged from this crystallizing process resulted in the creation of five mysteries.

Denzin (2009) recognises Gregory Ulmer’s (1989) *Teletheory* as seminal to the development of mystory in social research and offers a definition for mystory as, reflexive, critical stories that feel the sting of memory, stories that enact liminal experiences. These are stories retellings that seek the truth of life’s fictions via evocation rather than explanation or analysis. In them ethnographers, audiences, and performers meet in a shared field of experience.

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97 Research aim 22: Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools.
98 Research aim 8: Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis.
99 Research aim 14: Seek truth.
The term mystery had previously appeared in literature; however, Ulmer’s contribution advanced the term beyond a noun to an epistemological frame that is a hybrid of, “empirical and fictional impulses” (Ulmer, 1989, p. 45). Like the possibilities afforded by critical autoethnography, Ulmer (1989) asserts mystery works with anecdote to expose grand narratives but is limited to, “what I happen to unearth” (p. 83). This recognition of the role of ‘I’ as politicised researcher, making choices about what is pursued in the research, is politicised in the act of reporting research, whereby the researcher designates their own social role as well as that of co-performers (Ulmer, 1989, p. 89).

The five mysteries that I published on thecrystallizingteacher blogsite are a creative social fiction retelling of personal experience in pursuit of critical understanding of whiteness in Australian schools. I employ specific terms to denote the stage of the data collection process. While I reclaimed thirty stories, they were not mysteries. The thirty reclaimed stories are raw data that is not deidentified, risks harm to other parties, and marks the beginning of a critical reflective process. These thirty reclaimed stories are not shared in this thesis, rather the mysteries are the, “critical stories” of the, “sting of memory” that, “seek the truth of life’s fictions” (Denzin, 2009, p.131), and that are disseminated in accordance with the ethical framework that I provide in chapter 5. Each mystery reveals truthful insights into whiteness in the context of school education in Australia\textsuperscript{100}.

\textsuperscript{100} Research aim 14: Seek truth; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education.
3.6 Alternative methods

My second research question asks, “How can critical praxis research reveal hegemonic forces like whiteness in teacher research that is undertaken in an Australian context?” In the Introduction I noted the epistemological and methodological lenses that I have applied to view the crystallizing mysteries and to this point I have discussed my chosen application of a conceptual framework and method. Before I turn to the methods of this research, I will briefly discuss three alternative critical methods that I could have applied to reveal whiteness in schools, as well as describe reasons for not selecting these methods in this research. The alternative methods include a/r/tography, symbolic interaction, and participatory action research. I offer these alternatives in the spirit of Ellingson’s (2009) discussion on dendritic crystallization whereby researchers can place their work in discussion with itself.

3.6.1 A/r/tography

A/r/tography is described as practice-based teacher-research that recognises the interconnectedness of art, research, and teaching (Irwin, LeBlanc, Yeon Ryu & Belliveau, 2018; and Leggo, 2008). Irwin and Springgay (2008) assert the importance of, “theory-as-practice-as-process-as-complication” (p. xxi) and Irwin (2013) adds that a/r/tography disrupts notions of a stable ontology of theory and practice, offering a synergetic understanding of in-between spaces where practice informs theory which leads to deeper understandings of practice.

The mysteries that I developed as CPR data are performatively written pieces of creative nonfiction. Leggo (2008) reflects on the pursuit of generating deeper understandings through autobiographical writing and experimentation with different

I engage in an ongoing performance in my writing, a performance that informs me, on the one hand, and then transforms on the other. Ultimately I am always committed to transformation. Essentially pedagogy is all about transformation.

(Leggo, 2008, p. 9)

Ulmer (1989) agrees, referring to mystory as the “voice of pedagogy” (p. 87). Leggo (2008) similarly describes an arts-based process of writing about his past as trying to write in different voices, “seeking to know enough of the past to get on with living now” (p. 7), and in this research, I use art to embrace political representations and reflexively acknowledge the partiality and fragmentation of memory. I describe my method of data collection, including my process for creating mystories, in chapter 4, but note here my methodological tension to develop partial memories as reclaimed stories and subsequently mystories.

In this research, I recognise the close theoretical frame of a/r/tography with my pursuit of decolonising and activist teacher research, and the mystories are an arts-based approach to generating data. However, my second research question is specific to adopting CPR which is a choice that I made because it leads to transformation. Just as CPR can include art making as data, it doesn’t have to; similarly, a/r/tography can be critical and transformative; but doesn’t have to be. For that reason, I recognise the possibilities that a/r/tography offers as a lens for similar research; however, I dismiss it as a method for this current research.
3.6.2 Symbolic interactionism

The field of symbolic interactionism emerges from the work of The Chicago School, and in particular George Mead and Herbert Blumer (Bochner, 2014; Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003; Schwandt, 2007). The central tenet of symbolic interactionism is that human interaction is stimulated by the communicative use of symbols (Musolf, 2003) and it offers researchers understandings of ‘mind’ and ‘self’. Meltzer (2003) lists five examples of minded behaviour that occur within a person and include reflexivity, role taking, use of significant symbols, internal conversation, and self indication. Minded behaviour can manifest in interaction with others that Weigert and Gecas (2003) identify as the realisation of self, noting that, “self becomes as self does and others respond.” (p. 268). Boylorn and Orbe (2014), citing the work of George Mead, draw on the field of symbolic interaction and seek to understand the relationship between self-identity and the wider socio-cultural influences.

There is a synergy between the ideas proposed by Boylorn and Orbe (2014), and this research offer the opportunities for dendritic crystallization beyond the scope of the present conscientization. Symbolic interaction offers an understanding of my teacher narrative, and for a time I was moved to adopt this method for this research. However, it would have shifted the focus of my research onto relationships. The focus of this research is not the dynamic between student and teacher, which is between Sal, Matthias, or other students and me. Rather, the focus is on understanding me and the wider socio-political influences on my teaching practice which includes, in part, relationships with students. Once I understand me in the context that I perform work, dendritic crystallization might submit mysteries to further

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101 Aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis.
questions regarding the communicative act of teaching and learning and the role that I play in that act.

A second reason for not adopting symbolic interaction is that it does not adequately provide me with the opportunity to critically identify the influence of race and racism in my praxis or make whiteness visible. Symbolic interaction investigates the use of significant symbols; however, cultural identity and experience can disrupt the flow of symbols. To that end, I am particularly interested in the work of Lonnie Athens (2007; 2009) who has proposed a new wave of symbolic interaction termed radical interaction; the former pursues understandings of interaction as a social act, whereas radical interaction seeks to understand notions of dominance in relationships.

Radical interaction might be a method that I adopt in subsequent Participatory Action Research because it might provide deeper understanding of the manifestation of whiteness in my praxis-based relationships. However, the present critical praxis-based research seeks to illuminate my core identity, not the manifestations of my core. This is about understanding me, to improve me, and only then, to improve my relationships and praxis in an antiracist pedagogy of hope.

3.6.3 Participatory action research

Earlier in this chapter I noted the contribution of Stephen Kemmis to models of reflective practice that deepen understandings of practice, embed practitioner voice in the research process, and lead to improvements in practice. Carr and Kemmis (2006) define participatory action research as a cyclical process of research phases including planning → acting → observing → reflecting.
The scope of my current research process of conscientization has been to observe and reflect on praxis that is captured through dendritic crystallizing mysteries. Further research might include planning and acting as I pursue further transformation of others in accordance with aims 15-20. Such research could benefit from a model of reflective practice like participatory action research.

Tuck and Fine (2007) propose participatory action research is the fourth phase in a researcher’s process of decolonisation. The first phase of decolonisation is to identify the majoritarian voice of domination, often a voice of colonisation and promulgated in practice and lived experience by the denial of multi-voice narratives. The second phase is termed ‘Coloniser’s Guilt’ and often manifests in sentiments like, “I didn’t know” and, “What can I possibly do?” This is my critical incident through Mystory of Sal, although I add the critical observation of Tuck and Fine (2007) that such sentiments are, “steeped in the privilege of white ideology, reeking of false generosity” (p. 154) and the result is a retreat from explicit racist behaviour, with the onus for healing placed on the marginalised persons. The third phase of the researcher’s process sees an epistemological shift that opens the researcher to new spaces of inquiry that interrupt their existing theories. Again, with critical observation I note the assertion in Tuck and Fine (2007) that reframed notions of democratic power can be, “a cover for domination, occupation, and assimilation” through critical theory that is based on the premise that, “there cannot be democracy without Indigenous sovereignty” (p. 157). In other words, my proposed research and subsequent dissemination of ideas means nothing unless I can work out my role in delivering Indigenous sovereignty, or at least to honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and knowledges in my praxis. This leads to the final phase, which
in my case is further planning and acting in a continuous cycle of participatory action research.

3.7 Summary of method

This first chapter of Part II of my thesis has supported my construction of knowledge in response to my research questions. Just as polymorphism is a process of matter crystallizing in more than one form, this chapter has developed understandings of research method that recognises multiple truths. I have discussed dendritic crystallization as an odyssey of knowledge construction by cultivating deepened understandings of phenomena in a process of noticing and asking questions about experiences, revisiting these experiences, and linking new knowledge about these experiences to other knowledges and experiences. As method, this process challenges western-positivist understandings of validity, reliability, and generalisability. I have described my dendritic crystallization as a process that is performative and critical autoethnography in which I address the ‘crisis of representation’ by reflexively acknowledging the political representations that I perform as an ‘unsettled I’ through a creative process of reclaiming stories and generating mystories. I have also discussed models of reflective practice and specifically activist and transformative CPR.

3.7.1 Transformation of self

Throughout this chapter I have explained the choices I have made about research methods that continued to deepen my understandings of how historical and socio-political forces have shaped my identity and impacted on my praxis. Dendritic crystallization, like critical whiteness studies and conscientization that were discussed in chapter 2, is a commitment to an odyssey of critical reflective practice
and transformational learning. As a performative and critical autoethnographic process, dendritic crystallization establishes new stories of experiences and new connections between stories. Dendritic crystallization also leads to transformation of self by deepening understandings of stories of experiences by revisiting and resubmitting experiences to new questions and then generating new storied representations of experiences.

3.7.2 Transformation of other

Aims of this research include seeking allies (18) and building communities of interest to decolonise praxis (19). This chapter described autoethnographic methods that lend themselves to working towards achieving these aims such by creating stories that resonate with an audience, and accounts which are trustworthy, and seek verisimilitude and truth.

3.7.3 Transformation of world

The performative and critical autoethnographic methods of critical praxis research that I have developed, continue to challenge western epistemologies, and research methods, and improve understandings of hegemony in the field of education.
4. Data collection and analysis

This chapter will disrupt any notion of the mystories as fixed phenomena. They are not. They are polymorphic and in a constant state of fluidity, ever changing and ever responding to the positionality of the lens through which they are viewed. In this chapter I will deal with both data collection and data analysis. My discussion on data collection outlines three phases of process that I undertook, and it draws on reflective practice, personal narrative, reclaimed stories, and mystery which I discussed in the previous chapter. In the data analysis section, I outline my reflexive process of coding that identified emerging patterns in the data and the autoethnographic relationship between these patterns from the personal within the wider cultural themes.

4.1 Data collection

I begin the chapter with a discussion on my use of critical teacher journals as a tool for data collection and then explain the method of atomised assemblage that I developed to create the crystallizing mystories. This discussion develops my response to the second research question of this thesis, and it performs the role of explaining the method of CPR that I developed to crystallize my understanding of whiteness in my praxis in the field of education. Writing about CPR method, Tricia Kress (2011) observes, ‘data collection and analysis are always directed to the goal of understanding people’s lived experiences” (p. 54).

4.1.1 Critical teacher journal

In this section I will discuss my application of critical teacher journals to capture and interpret memory, and my journals’ role in capturing my three-phase method of CPR. The field of autoethnography acknowledges the benefits of journal
writing. Denzin (2014), Poulos (2009) and Ronai (2013) note the role of a journal as a place to record and interpret memory that Giorgio (2013) asserts is the bricks and mortar of autethnography. Carolyn Ellis’ *Final Negotiations* and Michael Angrosino’s *Opportunity House* are both examples of autoethnographic publications that interpret memories previously recorded in a journal.

The contribution of research journals to the development of teacher knowledge is reported by Bashan and Holsblat (2017) that notes journals provide the opportunity for professional reflection that links theory and practice. Watanabe (2017) explains the benefit of journal writing through the Japanese cultural concept of kotodama, whereby one codifies an internalised thought, verbalises the thought, and this gives the thought its power to be actualised. Gillie Bolton (2014, pp. 158-160) offers a suite of benefits for using journals as a tool for professional development and that apply to this critical reflective educator research. Bolton (2014) observes,

> Solitary private writing can enable tentative or bold expression and exploration of past, present and future, the discovery of hitherto unknown areas, some even cathartic.
> (Bolton, 2014, p. 158)

Likening journal writing to the process of bricklaying, Bolton (2014) observes practitioners take up available materials to piece together a construction. In the case of journal writing, the constructions can become:

- sites for the process of enquiry where critical, creative, and analytical thinking occurs;
- tools for self-dialogue;

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102 Research aim 4: Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity; (6) Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience.
• tools to enable collegial discussion;
• spaces to question hitherto taken for granted practice by critically examining underlying assumptions;
• safe spaces that afford privacy to bridge inner thoughts with professional actions;
• places to shape ethical practice that aligns with espoused values; and
• places to imagine possible alternative identities.

Early in my research process I recognised the importance of my critical teacher journal and I have attempted to keep the pages organised. All the data that appear in my critical teacher journals include the date and, as my process of conscientization evolved and I noticed phenomena with increasingly deeper and critical cognizance, I also began to include a time code, the location where I was writing the entry, and I sometimes returned to the entry to add a title.

The mode of writing varies throughout my journals. There are focused writing tasks like through-the-mirror-writing exercises that I describe later as a second phase of data collection, and that enable self dialogue which bridges inner thoughts with professional actions. There are also to-do lists that attempt to maintain linear and chronological order and focus on my research process, and I record written reflections on experiences and conversations that attempt to capture my reflexive researcher thinking at a specific time. For example, Figure 4, below, reproduces the first entry in my first critical teacher journal, dated 27 September 2014. The entry in my critical teacher journal does not diminish the importance of ethical approval, but it does recognise the importance of capturing choices, thoughts, reflections, readings, values, positions, and rehearsed writings throughout the research process. As I type
these words over six years later, I recognise that I was foreshadowing a process of destabilising myself. I was committing to becoming an ‘unsettled I’.

Figure 5. Critical teacher journal - excerpt 1


My critical teacher journals also include pasted in pages from other sources. There were moments throughout my research when I did not have ready access to my journal, but scribbled thoughts or insights onto a notepad. I also pasted in some printed electronic documents like email exchanges that are relevant to the project. Examples of these emails include exchanges with my research supervisors, the letter from Gandu Jarjum (dated 15 November 2016) reproduced in this thesis as Appendix A, and consenting to using the name Gandu Jarjum, as well as an email exchange with autoethnographer Carolyn Ellis, in which Ellis warmly states, “Let me know if I can help in any way on your journey into autoethnography” (RJ-1, 5 December 2014). I note this email excerpt is reproduced with the permission of the original author.
Another type of data in my journals appears in the form of sketches or diagrams and there is a table, dated 17-19 October 2016, that I designed as I began to analyse data, code text, identify patterns, and continue the transformative process of educating myself. The sketches are typically my attempts to interpret data or resolve conundrums at times when I was unable to think through ideas or communicate ideas in coherent sentences. Figure 5, below, reproduces an excerpt from my journal that shows me applying catalytic force to my reclaimed stories to develop *Mystery of a field trip*.

**Figure 6. Critical teacher journal – excerpt 2**

![Image of a handwritten page with diagrams and text](image)

*Note. From Research Journal – 1 (18 July 2016).*

The sketch shows the development of my thinking as I bridged the divide between official planned curriculum and my aspiration to enact critical curriculum.
Through the process of sketching and diagramming, I was stirring disparate atoms of crystals that began to be drawn together and establish new connections, the beginnings of new crystals. These disparate atoms included the *Australian Curriculum: English* and its three strands of literacy, literature, and language, the binaries of systemically imposed learning goals against a professional teacher’s pursuit of critical anti-racist teaching, and the consideration of a third, interstitial and in-between space. Nerida Blair (2015) describes a similar iterative process of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander thinking with story as,

> the endless need for listening, the repetition, periods of silence and spiralling of story is challenging; it is a part of that space, that confluence of differing ideas that requires reflection and different actions.  

*(Blair, 2015, p. 201)*

As conscientization, this was a process of noticing, questioning, and taking cognizance, a crystalized understanding of the reclaimed stories began to emerge, and I reminded myself to maintain reflexive cognizance of the six-minute writing tasks that I had previously undertaken. The cognitive processes that are represented in the diagram underpinned the idea of writing the story in the form of Gary Crew’s novel *Inner Circle*.

My critical teacher journals demonstrate the iterative and non-linear data collection process; however, there are specific actions that I undertook that can be grouped into three phases that accord with Norman Denzin’s (2018) *Performance Autoethnography*. Denzin writes,

> The sting of memory locates the moment, the beginning. Once located this moment is dramatically described, fashioned into a text to be performed. This moment is then surrounded by those

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103 Research aim 1: Educate myself; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness.  
104 Research aim 14: Seek truth.
cultural representations and voices that define the experience in question. These representations are contested, challenged. (Denzin, 2018, p. 36)

Just as the process of making crystals involves collecting ingredients like salt and water as well as a vessel to contain the ingredients and a stirrer to act as a catalyst, the first phase of my critical reflective praxis research included gathering artefacts like reflections on ‘the sting of memory’ and reclaiming stories of my lived experiences in Australian schools. I applied catalytic forces to the gathered artefacts and reclaimed stories, and this led to the second phase of making crystals. As a crystallizing teacher and researcher, I manipulated the reclaimed stories, ‘fashioning them into text to be performed,’ by applying creative writing processes and transforming the reclaimed stories into social fiction mysteries. The third phase included examining the mysteries through different lights and from different angles, just as my data collection included reflexivity, reflection, and collegial discussions as I held the mystery ‘representations up to contest and challenge’ of the interpretations from both my ‘unsettled I’ and display before an audience of my professional colleagues. I include a discussion on two processes that I employed to collect the insights of my professional colleagues later in this section. Figure 7, below, depicts my three-phase process of CPR as method.
Figure 7. Three-phase process of data collection
4.1.2 First phase method: Gathering artefacts and reclaiming stories

The application of gathering artefacts as a source of autoethnographic data is demonstrated in Anderson & Glass-Coffin (2013), Clough (2002), Denzin (2018), Giorgio (2013), Harris (2014), Lasczik (2018), Leavy (2013), Mackinlay (2019) and Poulos (2009). Leavy (2013) asserts that stories can be derived from both traditional social science data collection like interview or document analysis, as well as from a more abstract, “accumulation of research, teaching, and personal experience” (p. 41). Specific to CPR, Kress (2011) offers,

Data sources may include field notes, journal entries, video and audio recordings, narrative writing, photographs, documents, artwork, open-ended surveys, blogs, online discussions, and other types of tools that provide evidence of how people experience and make sense of the world.  

(Kress, 2011, p. 54)

Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2013) adds artefacts can stir memories and deep reflection in the autoethnographer and they can evoke strong emotion in readers. Probing his own memories and dreams, Chris Poulos writes,

Digging deeper, plowing into the content (italics in original) of the memory morphing into story, I find multiple readings are possible.  

(Poulos, 2009, p. 28)

Examples of artefacts stimulating autoethnographic writing include Giorgio (2013) that draws on family documents, photographs, and letters, to remember and memorialise family history. Lasczik (2018) similarly investigates personal and familial history of the author as subject and object, drawing on data collected from walking through places which is later reported as sensory responses. Harris (2014) narrates the evocative story of an encounter with the author’s birthmother and includes the literary element of place as a vivid component of the account, and Mackinlay (2019) describes the joy of participating in her Pa’s ritual of doing a daily crossword puzzle.
and drinking coffee (pp. 82-4). Clough (2002) narrates six stories revealing insights into schools, teaching and teacher-research, and provides the reader with a schematic giving insight into the type of data that contributed to the stories. I applied a similar schematic earlier in Table 1 to report on the types of data sources that I used in the first phase of my data collection and included columns titled:

- **Unit of meaning** that identifies a component of the story, such as a character;
- **Data source** that cites the origin of the data, like an interview or field note; and
- **Data method** that is Clough’s chosen method of writing to represent the data as prose, press clipping, or social fiction (Clough, 2002, p. 72)

*Mystery of a field trip* was drawn from gathered artefacts like course outlines and curriculum documents as well as my reflexive understanding of enactments of curriculum. *Mystery of Matthias* began with me gathering a photograph from the school formal and was supplemented by my memory and recalling work samples and school records. *Mystery of learning Burke and Wills* also demonstrates my application of the first phase of data collection that began as a reclaimed story whereby I collected disparate atoms from memory, place, and walking. The data gathered was from the experience of an afternoon of walking around both the primary school that I attended as a child and a nearby local museum. This experience was personal and visceral and, like the experiences reported in Lasczik
(2018), revisiting place and tracing my childhood footprints was a catalytic force that stimulated the six-minute writing exercise outlined by Gillie Bolton (2010).  

4.1.3 Second phase method: Artful representation and development of mystories

Having gathered artefacts, reclaimed thirty stories, and located them on a timeline of my life, I then set to the task of applying catalytic force to grow these assembled atoms into crystallized mystories. Earlier in this chapter I described sketching and diagramming in my critical teacher journal as a process of applying catalytic forces that contributed to the development of Mystory of a field trip. I also submit that catalytic force can be external to the researcher. The process of making crystals can include environmental factors like adding salt water to an alkaline base, stirring or allowing particles to float in a semi-dormant state, and placing the vessel containing the ingredients to rest in the sun. In this second phase of the research, the crystalizing metaphor is very close to a reality.

Elsewhere in this thesis I have acknowledged my economic privilege to be able to undertake a period of focused research work on Kythira, Greece where, for lengthy periods, I was a group of atoms floating in the saltwater solution of the Mediterranean Sea, free from emails, phone calls and knocks on my office door. In this state, I was able to contemplate submitting myself and my assembled atoms to questions, and to crystallize. As I floated in a semi-dormant state in the saltwater solution and warmed by the sun, I framed my reclaimed stories with the seven

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105 Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (4) Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness.
stages of Albert Memmi’s the colonizer who refuses that are performed in *Waking up to Memmi* and are reproduced in Part III of this thesis.

The second phase of data collection involved artful representation and developing of five deidentified mystories and a sixth reflexive mystery. I discussed the relationship between reclaimed stories and mystories earlier in chapter 3. In this section I explain my process of developing reclaimed stories into mystories that included the five steps identified in Bolton’s (2010) through-the-mirror-writing process. Bolton’s five steps are:

- further collection of data;
- interpreting the data;
- beginning to analyse data;
- developing themes and patterns; and
- disseminating writing as reflective research.

I locate the first three steps within the second phase of my method of data collection that is artful representation and development of mystories; however, Bolton’s fourth and fifth steps will be deferred to the next section pertaining to data analysis.

In chapter 3, I reported on vulnerability and personal risk experienced by autoethnographic researchers, as well as the unsettling of one’s *I*. Bolton (2010) similarly warns that the five step through-the-mirror-writing process, can feel risky because certainties dissolve in such marginal states. These certainties can feel comfortably secure, once questioned in this way they are experienced as professional straightjackets. Within the marginal writing state, the writer loses clarity in a unitary self, begins to perceive alternative selves in the different retellings of the story.

(Bolton, 2010, p. 64)
Step 1: The six-minute write.

The first step of Bolton’s (2010) process is the six-minute write that I used to develop the data collected as reclaimed stories in the first phase of my CPR. Having found a focus through photographs, walking, memories, and other gathered artefacts, step 1 of through-the-mirror-writing engaged me in free writing on a theme for six minutes without interruption. I hand-wrote in my critical teacher journals, beginning each six-minute write on a clean page and identifying the date, time, location of the writing, and timecodes. I frequently cued six-minute songs on my iTunes playlist to keep track of time, and some six-minute writes were extended to 12 minutes. In a six-minute period my average writing output was 200 words.

The intention of this process was to allow ideas to emerge, free from constraints of grammar, spelling, punctuation, story structure, and ethical concerns that pertain to identifying people, places, or events. Bolton (2010) suggests that this writing process liberates ideas and stories that might be deeply hidden in layers of sub-conscious. In so doing writers explore issues that they are otherwise unwilling or unable to articulate, they pursue forgotten memories, and, like dendritic crystals, find new connections, thoughts, and ideas. Richardson (2000) theorises that this writing can provide insight into how humans construct identity and meaning in the world, stating that, “I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I did not know before I wrote it” (p. 924). Anzaldua (2015) concurs, stating “Writing is a process of discovery and perception that produces knowledge and conocimiento (insight)” (p. 1).

The six-minute write that led to Mystery of learning about Burke and Wills occurred within hours of my afternoon of walking through places of my childhood. This writing exercise absorbed me for longer than the prescribed six minutes, and
begins with happy childhood memories of best friends, good teachers, fun and
games, and mostly enjoying school. As the writing continued, I became increasingly
aware of the omission of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories in my primary
schooling and, with this, the tone of the writing shifts from a joyous nostalgia towards
anger; I later reflected that I feel like I’ve been duped. As Henry Reynolds (1999)
similarly describes, I felt, “let down, cheated, sold short” (p.2), and this discovery is
something, ‘that I did not know before I wrote it’\textsuperscript{106}.

The six-minute writes, and those that extended to twelve minutes, did not
always reveal an immediate and deeper understanding of my reclaimed stories. For
example, \textit{My story of pre-service teacher training} did not emerge until I had spent
some days in the state of floating with disparate and sometimes invisible atoms. I
then collected additional atoms like historical data from Griffith University’s public
website. Two decades prior, I had completed my initial teacher education
qualification at Griffith University, Australia, and the additional artefacts that I
collected from the website shone new light on my reflections of my own education as
an undergraduate student. Then, between 23 July 2018 to 16 August 2018 I began
stirring the atoms that included undertaking three separate six-minute writing
exercises and subsequent reflexive writings. In this time, I also exchanged emails
with my research supervisors, and I created two diagrams all in an attempt to
interpret the reclaimed story that was my own education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander knowledges, cultures, histories, stories, and languages as a child in schools
and young adult at university. Of this iterative process of discovery, I wrote in my
researcher journal on 3 August 2016, “So, I go back, reread stories already journaled

\textsuperscript{106} Research aim 1: Educate myself; (4) Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity; (10)
Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools.
and then will six-minute map and see what happens” (RJ-1, 3 August 2018). These collated writings are an example of ‘collecting further data’ in through-the-mirror-writing. The additional data assisted me to establish connections between reclaimed stories, ‘that I did not know before I wrote it’, and it culminated in the development of *Mystery of pre-service teacher training*\textsuperscript{107}.

**Step 2: The story.**

This purpose of the second step of through-the-mirror-writing is to begin to interpret by sharpening a story’s focus that might have emerged through six-minute writings. This step became crucial in shaping reclaimed stories into representations of truth that are subsequently shared in the mysteries. Phillips and Bunda (2018) describe this step of process as, “sitting and making emergent meaning with data slowly overtime through stories” (p. 7).

In this step I made *what* and *how* choices pertaining to the threads of stories that emerged in step 1. *What* choices relate to the content of the story and *how* choices related to the mode of writing or genre. This is also the step where I undertook the ethical process of deidentifying people, places, and events.

In considering *what* stories to pursue, I acted on a hunch to select threads that I believed were more likely to assist me to understand whiteness in my praxis and the wider field of education in Australia. In *Mystery of learning about Burke and Wills* I made choices to prune details from the six-minute write that I considered were less relevant to the research. Examples of pruned details include the surprise that I felt at how much smaller everything seemed, like the weeping willow tree that my fractured memory recalls up to ten or more children could easily sit under - when we

\textsuperscript{107} Research aim 6: Discern multiple persectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience.
were six years old. I also recall a fractured memory of what might have been my first public performance, as a seven-year-old, playing the role of a sailor on the Buffalo, the British flag ship of South Australia’s first colonisers. In the performance, I think I recited my line in unison with two other boys, one of whom became my best friend in our early teenage years but, after school we lost contact, and he has since passed away. The memory of our performance is partial. I have limited confidence in my memory of the details so, despite this research being the reflections of an educator with two decades of teaching Arts and Humanities subjects, and this memory potentially of my first public performance, and of my role playing a colonial sailor, I selected not to pursue the thread. At the time.

I also made the decision to not develop this reclaimed story into a mystery, believing I have little agency to change events that occurred over three decades ago; however, I do have agency to alter curriculum and pedagogy in the present and future. As Memmi (1965) observes, “One cannot change one’s past, but one can (re)remember it” (p. 72). I later returned to the memory and it informs both the imagined character Derek Turner in *Mystery from pre-service teacher training* as well as a what detail in *Waking up to Memmi*, (Wood 2018a), in which I reflexively acknowledge the partiality of memory.

In addition to selecting what to include in stories, Bolton (2010) calls on writers to consider how to tell the story. Experimental writing modes that challenge traditional writing of the academy have been discussed by Denzin (2018), Ellingson

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108 Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (4) Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity; (24) Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices.
109 Research aim 5: Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness.
110 Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (4) Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools.
Ellis (2004), Faulkner and Squillante (2016), Grainger (2011), Harris and Sinclair (2014), Leavy (2013), Richardson (1997), Sleeter (2015) and others. Ron Pelias offers various and complementary definitions on performative writing in *The Creative Qualitative Researcher* that includes,

> Performative writing is an evocative act, generated by means of linguistic playfulness and designed to provoke thought.  
> (Pelias, 2019, p. 49)

Writing about crystallization, Ellingson (2008) calls for stories to take a range of critical styles and forms. Writing in *Fields of Play*, Laurel Richardson (1997) laments that traditional academic texts can be boring and homogenised with an omniscient narrator and she seeks more dynamic and creative texts. Employing a range of literary devices, she would later term creative analytical practices, Richardson (1997) uses poetry, prose and play script. Harris and Sinclair (2014) also use play script to develop the practice of social fiction and arts-based research, showing insights into issues pertaining to research praxis like ethics, truth, and method. Christine Sleeter (2015) reveals whiteness in personal relationships and familial history through prose that is both historical facticity and social fiction. Carol Grainger’s (2011) *Silent Moments in Education* selects specific incidents to write about, and then uses memory and fiction to write multiple perspectives on the incident.

Grainger’s (2011) blend of memory and fiction became a useful how sample that guided some of my decision making as I shaped the mysteries. For example, Grainger (2011) recalls the personal story of wanting to drop English class in her senior year. The initial story is a field note that documents her recollection in a succinct three sentence paragraph. Later Grainger (2011) retells the story from a third person, social fiction reconstruction in the form of case notes from her school
counsellor. Of the social fiction, Grainger (2011) states that it is not, “relevant whether such notes exist, or indeed ever existed. What matters is that the notes might have existed (italics in original); that the text tells a story, or rather a version of a story” (p. 46); a notion that is supported by Bochner (2014), Clough (2002), Leavy (2013), Leggo (2012), and others. In *Fiction as Research Practice*, Patricia Leavy (2013) noted the appeal of using literary devices is,

> Their ability to transform consciousness, refine the senses, promote autonomy, raise awareness, express the complex feeling based aspects of social life … jar us into seeing and thinking differently, illuminate the complexity and sometimes paradox of lived experience, and to build empathy and resonance.  
> (Leavy, 2013, p. 23)

In the example of Grainger (2011), by switching the story of dropping English to the school counsellor's voice, Grainger uncovers new perspectives of power relationships in her schooling. This fresh perspective stimulates Grainger to return to her field note and write a fresh, more detailed, personal, and evocative interpretation of the memory of dropping English. As I considered how to shape the mysteries something like *Mystery of learning Burke and Wills* could have been retold as a series of lesson plans from the perspective of my teacher, or journal notes from my teacher who directed our class re-enactment of Governor Hindmarsh and the first colonisers arriving in South Australia onboard the Buffalo.

The mysteries that emerged from my through-the-mirror-writing process sought to represent education in Australian schools critically, artfully, and ethically. As a critical incident that prompted this research, I have continued to revisit *Mystery*

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111 Research aim 14: Seek truth; (17) Identify political nature of language and then use language for liberation.  
112 Research aim 13: Seek trustworthiness of accounts; (15) Create stories that resonate with an audience.
of Sal and consider alternative how modes to represent the story. In my researcher journal I note,

Representing Mystery of Sal is an ongoing interest. As the crystallizing teacher, I continue to find new angles to see the story’s refractions, that is what I can learn.

(RJ-1, 12 October 2016)

In chapter 2, I reproduced a representation of Mystery of Sal as a multivocal poem, that was originally published as My Story of Sal: A Critical Self-reflective Autoethnography Revealing Whiteness in the Classroom (Wood, 2017) and that demonstrates an omniscient and critically reflexive voice to challenge my praxis as a classroom teacher. I represented the story as a letter to Sal from my teacher’s voice on the thecrystallizingteacher, and in the introduction to this thesis the story is interpreted and represented as face paint113.

In making both what and how choices I have attempted to maintain cultural sensitivity to the ethical use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s stories, and I make no claim that I am representing stories as they were experienced by Sal, Matthias, or any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person. I have attempted to sustain this practice throughout this thesis, online publication of the mystories, and scholarly contributions. In addition to cultural sensitivity, I understand the ethical considerations pertaining to de-identifying people, places, and events, and I will return to this matter in chapter 5 on ethics.

Figure 8, below, builds on the criteria for effective autoethnographic writing that I cited earlier in chapter 4. Figure 8 proposes a three-dimensional model for constructing social fiction representations of mystories that consider balancing tensions among truth, ethics and aesthetics that act as catalytic forces, applying

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113 Research aim 6: Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience; (14) Seek truth.
pressure to assembled atoms, and giving the developing crystals both depth and colour.

**Figure 8. Constructing social fiction representations of mystories**

The construction of each mystery represented specific challenges as crystals were forming and I was attempting to balance catalytic pressures between truth, ethics, and aesthetics. My process of conscientization, of noticing and questioning, taking cognizance, and intervening, became an important reflexive tool as each mystery began to crystallize.

**Truth.** Each six-minute write embodied truths that became *what* threads and which I took cognizance of and sought to question. As I developed each mystery, I continued to reflexively return to *what* matters, although my critical teacher journals show that some of my initial drafts diminished *what* details. An example of reflexively evaluating the mystery drafts can be seen in the process of writing *Mystery of EATSIPS* when I recognised that I was privileging aesthetics over both truth of the
story and ethical representations of co-performers. My journal records my observation thus,

I played too much with the interpersonal dynamics between the characters. This was fun to do, but was a tease, and not what the data was telling me. Moreover the consideration of EATSIPS was lost, yet that was the essence of the lived experience.

As I was writing I was cognisant of a ratcheting up the tension of (Mel), until (she) blew. That was not the story. Further it represented the teaching profession poorly. I was sensitive to that point. So I went back, removed the heightened angst, and tried to give each teacher additional projects that do reflect lived experience.

(RJ-1, 13 July 2016)

I realised that by privileging the aesthetics of the story I was diminishing the truth of the story. The early draft was structured so that some of the characters provoked the Head of Department until that character had a verbally aggressive outburst. However, these fictional interpersonal dynamics shifted the focus away from the what of EATSIPS, and the representation also risked harm to the teaching profession. I subsequently rewrote the playscript in an attempt to balance the aesthetic qualities, the truth of the story, and to adhere to the ethical framework of the research. I return to a discussion on representation and truth in social fiction in chapter 5, on ethics.

My subsequent drafts attempted to balance the need for dramatic tension without diminishing the verisimilitude, reliability or generalisability of the characters and their situation. I remain concerned about the representation of this staffroom, but it feels right insofar as there are hardworking teachers who are oppressed by the manifestation of neomanagerialism in schools, but who also have little understanding

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114 Research aim 14: Seek truth.
of EATSIPS. The representation of the staffroom is recognised by my trusted peers in 7.3.3 of the Findings chapter in this thesis\textsuperscript{115}.

Conversely, as I drafted \textit{Mystory of pre-service training}, I experienced difficulty balancing competing tensions because I was emphasising the truth of the situation at the expense of both the ethical framework and aesthetics of the mystery. I was attempting to maintain awareness of the overarching story structure but sought variations in the storytelling mode. I revisited this draft over a period of three weeks as I attempted to improve the aesthetic arc of the story, or journey of the characters from start to finish\textsuperscript{116}.

\textbf{Ethics.} I return to discuss the ethical framework that underpins this research in chapter 5, but briefly describe here some of the challenges that emerged in the process of constructing \textit{Mystery from pre-service teacher training}, and \textit{Mystery of Sal}.

One of the challenges of writing \textit{Mystery from pre-service teacher training} was resolving the representations of co-performers and events from my own pre-service teacher training. I experienced continual pressures because I was unable to find a \textit{how} method of writing that communicated the truth of the story in a manner that adhered to both the ethical framework that I had established and my commitment to writing in a range of genres.

The mystery that I resolved to tell attempts to depict the truth of social debates that subverted my own initial teacher education that included 10-credit points of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education during my 320-credit point undergraduate degree. I resolved to show four distinct characters, each representing

\begin{itemize}
\item Research aim 7: Deepen understandings of praxis; (12) Seek verisimilitude; (13) Seek trustworthiness of accounts; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope.
\item Research aim 14: Seek truth; (15) Create stories that resonate with an audience.
\end{itemize}
specific standpoints, and attempted to build a dramatic arc. To achieve this balance and adhere to my ethical framework, I created the character Danika Kapoor to provide critical reflexivity to the standpoints of the three other characters\textsuperscript{117}.

In creating Danika Kapoor, I wanted to ensure that I was both truthful to and ethically representing the experiences of Danika, a refugee who sought political asylum in Australia. Consequently, my critical teacher journal records the inquiry that I undertook to create a truthful backstory for Danika’s character. I engaged in this additional task to ensure that I had reflective equilibrium that Daniels (1979) and Rawls (1971) refer to as an ordered set of moral judgements, principles, and established theories. In the case of Mystory from pre-service teacher training, reflective equilibrium is established when I was able to balance my truth of the story with a reliable artistic representation of the experience, with people, places, and events that have verisimilitude, within the ethical framework that I established. However, I note an artistic caveat in my journal, which is,

\textit{Mystery from pre-service training} is a bit of a cheat, as I introduce postcolonialism theory. I play within present, into my past.

(RJ-1, 12 October 2016)

Earlier I identified various writing modes that I have used to interrogate \textit{Mystery of Sal}. The letter that appears on \textit{thecrystallizingteacher} was constructed after the initial draft, written as prose, positioned the teacher as a critical hero. This representation clearly missed the truth of the story and I deemed that it was not an ethical representation\textsuperscript{118}. Reflecting on the failings of the initial representation prompted me to write directly to Sal; however, I concede that the multiple aesthetic representations of \textit{Mystery of Sal} have yet to satisfactorily resolve the story; but it is

\textsuperscript{117} Research aim 6: Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience; (12) Seek verisimilitude; (13) Seek trustworthiness of accounts; (15) Create stories that resonate with an audience.

\textsuperscript{118} Research aim 7 Deepen understandings of praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (14) Seek truth.
not a story I have finished asking questions about, and so I continue the pursuit of aesthetic representations.

**Aesthetics.** The process of selecting specific artful representations of the mysteries involved selecting a form that best represented the truth of the story that I was pursuing as well as demonstrating verisimilitude and a dramatic arc. The truth that I was attempting to capture in *Mystery of a field trip* is the conflict of competing pedagogical approaches, and teachers’ struggle to deliver a critical and progressive curriculum. The idea of an interwoven transcript occurred after I reflected on the structure of Gary Crew’s novel *Inner Circle*, in which chapters alternate between the voices of the two protagonists.\(^{119}\)

I was also cognisant of the aesthetics of a metanarrative as I shared the five mysteries with colleagues. Thus, I began with *Mystery of a field trip* that frames the metanarrative in the field of curriculum and pedagogy. *Mystery of EATSIPS* sharpens the curriculum focus specifically on the problem of dominant whiteness and its impact on the marginalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in Australia. The third story is *Mystery from pre-service teacher education* that suggests a systemic cause for the problem of dominant whiteness. *Mystery of Sal* represents a sharpening and personalising of the manifestation of the problem of dominant whiteness in curriculum, and the metanarrative concludes with *Mystery of Mattias* that is a story of critical hope.\(^{120}\)

**Step 3: Read and respond.**

Earlier in this chapter I observed that my research process was rarely linear, and I further note that this step demonstrates Heewon Chang’s (2008) observation

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\(^{119}\) Research aim 14: Seek truth; (15) Create stories that resonate with an audience.

\(^{120}\) Research aim 15: Create stories that resonate with an audience.
that autoethnographic research often blurs the boundaries between data collection and data analysis. Johnny Saldana (2009) calls for researchers to, “start coding as you collect and format your data, not after all the fieldwork has been completed” (2009, p.20). Notwithstanding the chronological overlapping of data collection and analysis, Pennington and Hughes (2017, p. 66) opine the need for autoethnographers to delineate between data collection and data analysis, noting the former is an emic process, whereas the latter relies on etic rationalisation. Kress (2011) supports the notion of etic thinking, offering that researchers applying CPR, “must be explicit about when and how our interpretations are emerging and we must examine both the possibilities and limitations of our interpretations” (p. 120). As Chang (2008) suggests, my data analysis was initially blurred as I allowed my emic self to influence authorial choices relevant to my through-the-mirror-writing process of generating mysteries. However, my data analysis became increasingly etic as I returned to the mysteries to write the sixth, reflexive mystery and as I considered the reflective contributions of peers.

During this third step, I reflexively read and responded to the developed mysteries and I recorded my responses in my critical teacher journal, sometimes as additional six-minute writes. Throughout this step I also sought to identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence student voices and social narratives. I have revisited this step to subject my researcher actions to questioning and to critically self-check for researcher whiteness. Laurel Richardson (1997) notes the importance of writing for the reflexive I in research.

The process of rereading one’s work and situating it in historical and biographical contexts reveals old storylines, many of which may not have been articulated. Voicing them offers the opportunity to rewrite them, to renarratavise one’s life. Writing
stories about our “texts” is thus a way of making sense of and changing our lives

(Richardson, 1997, p. 5)

An example of reflexively reading and responding to the mysteries appears in the paragraphs that follow Mystery of learning about Burke and Wills in chapter 1. I revisited the story and revealed what parts of the story that I had omitted, and I identified whiteness in the experiences of my childhood. In this case, reflexivity became a process of etic data analysis. My additional responses to the text, that recognise privileged Eurocentric histories and negative positioning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, are also reflective analyses of the collected data121.

As CPR, my read and respond notations became useful data that has subsequently provided insights into my praxis in the field of education. My intention was not to create an endless cycle between steps 2 and 3, that risked providing romanticised stories that were stripped of rigour and reliability (Atkinson, 1997; Atkinson & Silverman, 1997). Rather, after working through step 3, I attempted to examine the mysteries in a different light by sharing them with critical friends of the project, seeking their feedback, and making further amendments, before posting the mysteries on thecrystallizingteacher at fortnightly intervals. Bolton (2010) refers to the fourth step, share with a peer whereby the process of sharing with peers continues to blur the boundaries between data collection and data analysis.

4.2 Data analysis

Earlier in this chapter, Figure 7 showed the three phases of data collection and analysis in my critical teacher praxis research, and in the previous section I

121 Research aim 10: Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (24) Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices.
divided the second phase into a sequence of five steps of through-the-mirror writing. Working iteratively throughout this research, step 3 blurred into step 4, just as the second phase morphed into the third phase. I was taking up both emic and etic positions as I noticed and took cognizance of recurring patterns that were emerging in the data, and I began to add codes to data in my critical teacher journal. Tricia Kress explains,

> Your codes come from *you*, they are drawn from your prior experiences and understandings, your theoretical and conceptual frames, and the literature you have read. In other words your codes are constructed through your own lenses as you engage with and come to know others and the world around you.

(Kress, 2011, p. 177)

By the time I commenced the third phase of research I was noticing and taking cognizance of whiteness in curriculum and pedagogy, limitations of initial teacher education and continuing professional development, and moments of joy and hope. I began coding data accordingly.¹²²

The third phase of the research involved my own etic analysis of the mystories as well as reflective conversations with teaching colleagues that contributed to the collection of data while simultaneously deepening the analysis of patterns in the data. Noting the limitations of a rigid delineation between data collection and analysis, I continue the discussion on the phases of data collection and steps four and five of the through-the-mirror-writing process. I also discuss the data analysis process that I employed, that is drawn from Daniels (2012), Saldana (2009), and Saldana (2016), beginning with establishing codes and subcodes and leading to the development of categories and subcategories, and then themes, concepts, and patterns. The mystories are included in the findings chapter of this

¹²² Research aim: 1 Educate myself; (7) Deepen understandings of praxis; (9) Intervene and improve praxis.
thesis, and my analysis informs a discussion that I include after each mystery. The findings chapter also includes conversations with two trusted colleagues that reflect on the issues arising from the mysteries.

4.2.1 Third phase method: Reflexivity, reflections, and collegial discussions

By the third phase of the research, I had taken cognizance of emerging themes that I wanted to further interrogate, both in my praxis and more broadly in the field of education. The themes emerged from my own etic analysis of the mysteries and were adapted from the questions posed by Gloria Ladson-Billings (2009) to teachers in *Dreamkeepers*. The five questions that prompted analysis of the mysteries were:

- what is happening here?
- what is happening in this class?
- what is happening with this teacher?
- what is happening with these students? and
- do you see yourself in this story?

*Step 4 Share with a peer.*

In the third phase of my research process, I shared the six mysteries with professional colleagues, initially posting on *thecrystallizingteacher* and later with colleagues who were available to participate in an unstructured, reflective interview. I had intended to post mysteries at fortnightly intervals and collect data from the comment threads that emerged on the online blogsite but concede that the online dialogue that I had hoped to stimulate failed to occur. Consequently, I approached two trusted colleagues who agreed to participate in an interview in response to the
five mystories and epilogue. The comments from the online blogsite that were privately shared with me, as well as the interview transcripts, and my own reflexions as both object and subject of the research, inform the third phase of my research method.

4.2.2 thecrystallizingteacher

The purpose of publishing the mystories on thecrystallizingteacher and inviting comments from peers and a broader online community was to develop additional insights into my praxis. Moreover, as patterns developed into categories the reflexive and collegial conversations captured at thecrystallizingteacher would deepen understandings of lived experiences in Australian schools. Gillie Bolton observes,

Peers’ responses can open up fresh avenues. They can support towards deeper levels of reflection, and perceive wider institutional, national, social or political contexts.

(Bolton, 2010, p. 142)

Through-the-mirror-writing can result in a radical dismantling of one’s personal and professional assumptions, and Bolton (2010) suggests that inviting peers to open the story to new perspectives yields deeper understandings of praxis. After I had undertaken step 3 of read and respond to the mystories, I recruited six trusted peers with whom I have worked in my twenty-year career in education, however, mitigating against bias became a conundrum. On the one hand, I recognised that my recruitment process demonstrated affinity bias (Smith, 2017; Turnbull, 2016), defined by Turnbull (2016) as a, “predilection to be more comfortable surrounding ourselves

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123 Research aim 7: Deepen understandings of praxis; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope.
with people who make us comfortable” (p. xx). In seeking to recruit trusted peers, I was also seeking to recruit peers with whom I am ‘comfortable’. I also wanted to mitigate against a halo effect manifesting from affinity bias, in which my trusted colleagues might censor or repress their views, motivated to help to deliver favourable data to my research or out of risk of offending me (O’Toole and Beckett, 2010). On the other hand, I attempted to avoid in-group bias (Brewer, 1979; Knobloch-Westerwick, Mothes & Polavin, 2017; Wilson, 2019) that is defined by Marilyn Brewer as “attitudinal and perceptual biases in favour of members of one’s own group over members of other groups” (1979, p. 307). As a result of a long association with my six colleagues, I anticipated they would perform critical representations of cultural and gendered standpoints voices that could decentre me. Among my colleagues were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as non-Indigenous people, educators identifying as either men or women, and a mix of teachers, parents, education researchers, and policy makers. I acknowledge the absence of my students in this cohort as a limitation of this research.

I had provided my peers with a project information sheet that explained my project and their rights as participants in the research. I note that further ethical considerations pertaining to my trusted peers and the use of public comments as data are discussed later in chapter 5 that addresses the ethical framework of the research. Relevant to this chapter is that the project information sheet explained the use of *the crystallizing teacher* and my intention to provoke online dialogue.

The use of online blogs to facilitate reflective online professional communities is considered by Bolton (2010), Boulton and Hramiak (2012), Emslie (2009) and Smidt, Wheeler, Peralta, and Bell (2018). Like Freire’s conscientization, the authors concur that the benefits of reflection are deeper understanding of practice that
enable improved or transformed professional praxis. They similarly note that online communities are beneficial in connecting geographically dislocated and time poor professionals, like my community of trusted peers. Understanding that teachers are time poor, I chose to limit the publications of mystories to five, with a sixth reflexive piece. That teachers are time poor is also the reason that I initially chose to use an online blog rather than conduct face to face interviews.

The schedule for posting the mystories was fortnightly, from Friday, 15th July 2016 to Tuesday, 25th October 2016, although I varied the day during the week that I posted in an attempt to generate additional interest from a broader online community. I also paused the fortnightly schedule of posting to the blogsite during the school spring vacation period in Queensland, Australia, that was between Friday, 16th September to Tuesday, 4th October. I reminded the research participants of their right to choose not to respond to some of the mystories, but that they might rejoin online dialogue at a later time. Figure 9, below, sets out the crystallizing teacher publication schedule.

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124 Research aim7: Deepen understandings of praxis; (9) Intervene and improve praxis.
Figure 9. thecrystallizingteacher publication schedule

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<tr>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>Mystery of a field trip</td>
<td>Mystery of EATS1Ps</td>
<td>Mystery from pre-service teacher training</td>
<td>Mystery of Soil</td>
<td>Mystery of Marthaas</td>
<td>Conversations with myself</td>
<td>Online data collection closed</td>
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Note. Adapted from thecrystallizingteacher.wordpress.com, 2016.

I created thecrystallizingteacher.wordpress.com and I remain the sole administrator of the site. Administrator privileges are password protected, and I am the only person who knows the secure password. As the administrator, I can access data on the site that is reported by the host, wordpress.com. Reports reveal that in the 138 day period, between 15 July 2016, when I first posted the Welcome, to 30 November 2016, when I ceased collecting online data, the seven posted blogs attracted 341 views from 205 visitors across 10 countries. The report reveals that the most common country of origins for the views were:

- Australia (180 views);
- USA (45 views);
- UK (41 views);
- Greece (18 views, which are most likely me testing the site);
- New Zealand (14 views); and
- Canada (12 views).
I promoted each new post with an email to my six trusted peers that included a direct link to the post on *thecrystallizingteacher*. I also promoted the posts through my social media networks on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Researchgate. Reports reveal that the networks that delivered the most traffic were Facebook (141 views) and Twitter (52 views). One view originated from LinkedIn and zero views originated from Researchgate.

Despite the traffic to *thecrystallizingteacher* that my social media and direct emails generated, at the time that I closed the site for comment, there were zero comments from any of my colleagues and the wider online educator community. One of my trusted colleagues had sent two private emails in response to two separate mysteries.

### 4.2.3 Unstructured peer interview

At that time, I returned to my critical teacher journals and reviewed the emic and etic analysis of the data that I had begun to code. I formed the view that there was rigour in my process and sufficient detail to proceed with my research, although I was troubled by the omission of the insights from my professional colleagues given that I was already excluding student voices (AITSL, 2012; Brookfield, 2017; Kress, 2011; and Tripp, 2012). Consequently, I sought to recruit new colleagues who would be prepared to engage with the mysteries and then participate in a face-to-face interview. Louise and Kathleen agreed to participate as trusted colleagues, and both appear in this thesis with their written consent.

Louise was one of my colleagues who had agreed to participate in *thecrystallizingteacher* online blogsite, and she is also my colleague who provided two private emails in response to two mysteries. I first met Louise in my role as a
secondary school teacher of the performing arts when Louise was a secondary student. Our school was in the outer suburbs of Brisbane, Australia. After graduating from secondary school, Louise studied Performing Arts at university and became a secondary school teacher specialising in Music and Drama. As teacher colleagues we have shared teaching resources across schools. Louise’s career has included work in a school with a high proportional enrolment of students who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and she has worked for the Department of Education in a role that included both teacher professional development and EATSIPS. In 2019 Louise and I job-shared the role of Researcher Officer with the Queensland Teachers’ Union.

Kathleen joined the research project as a trusted colleague in 2017, approximately twelve months after I had posted the mysteries on thecrystallizingteacher. I first met Kathleen when she was undertaking a pre-service teacher placement in the school that I was teaching at, which was the same school where Louise had been a school student. After a fifteen-year gap, Kathleen and I became colleagues again at an inner-city school in Brisbane, Australia. We have a similar approach to pedagogy and relationships with students. We are strong advocates for learning in and through the arts and have honest and robust conversations with each other, our colleagues, or students. This is demonstrated in some of the excerpts from our interview that appear in Part III of this thesis. Kathleen was interviewed on a Thursday afternoon at our workplace, after we both had taught for the day, but the following day, Kathleen told several our colleagues that they all need to be interviewed by me, because the interview was “the best thing in years.” (RJ-1, 21 October 2017).
My intention with both interviews was to maintain a semi-structure and be guided by the questions adapted from Gloria Ladson-Billings in *Dreamkeepers*. However, I abandoned this plan in both interviews because both Louise and Kathleen provided thick and rich details of their lived experiences as non-Indigenous teachers, artists, and mothers. During the interviews, I considered this material was uncovering greater depth of understanding of teacher praxis than their analysis of the mysteries would generate. In both interviews I did offer some open questions that invited Louise and Kathleen to establish links to our unstructured interview back to the mysteries.

In both cases my trusted colleagues and I share understandings of people, places, events, ideas, and values in a detail that is not captured in words or the transcript is but is alluded to. For example, Louise understands the context of *Mystery of EATSIPS* with such insight that she checks if one of our colleagues appears in the story. Kathleen tried to explain the impact of *Mystery of Matthias* and resolves to state, “You know what I mean” (KLa2). And I do. And I also understand the challenge of codifying and then applying language to represent the emotions that are experienced by a teacher. In the interview Kathleen continued to explain her emotive response to *Mystery of Mathias* with a story from her own teacher experiences.

I provided a project information sheet to both Louise and Kathleen and subsequently provided Kathleen with copies of the mysteries. Both of my colleagues agreed to the audio recording of the interview and I then recorded both interviews on my mobile phone. I then uploaded the recordings onto two USBs, in accordance with the conditions of the ethical approvals of the research and deleted the recordings from my phone.
The audio recordings were converted to text by an online service provider, rev.com. I received a Word copy of the interview text from rev.com that I reformatted as a script. This included representing text as moments when interview participants were talking over one another as well as identifying moments and length of pause. I also added sounds that added to the lived experience of the interview into the text. For example, I interviewed Louise in her home after I had taught for the day at school, where her newborn daughter takes our attention on multiple occasions and her dog frequently participates in the interview.

I then edited the script, amending words from the rev.com generated Word document, specifically focussing on five actions:

- ensuring culturally appropriate and respectful representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, that rev.com had not understood, including spelling “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander” and the acronym EATSIPS;
- de-identifying names or people and places;
- ensuring consistent standard Australian English spelling of words, in accordance with my explanation that appears in the introduction to this thesis;
- amending Australian colloquialisms or names of places like Kathleen’s references to Mount Isa; and
- reviewing the audio recording and attempting to clarify moments identified in text by rev.com as inaudible.

Having settled on the transcript of the interviews, I copied the text into a new Word document, formatted as in landscape and that included two columns. The text
was inserted into left column and I made annotation in the right column as I was
listening to the recording of the interviews.

As I listened to the interviews, I was cognisant of strategies for analysing data
that are offered by Ladson-Billings (1998) and Chang (2008). Applying the tenets of
CRT in education, Ladson-Billings (1998) sorts experiences of teaching and learning
into four categories that are: curriculum, pedagogy, school funding, and public policy.
As I developed the mysteries, I similarly identified categories including curriculum,
pedagogy, and education policy, as well as initial teacher education and continuing
professional development, stories of oppression and stories of hope. Additionally,
Chang (2008) suggests ten strategies for autoethnographic data analysis that
include:

- **searching for recurring themes** (e.g. curriculum, pedagogy, teacher
education);
- **looking for cultural themes** (e.g. colonialism, whiteness, neoliberalism);
- **identifying exceptional circumstances** (e.g. Mystory of Matthias offers
  hope);
- **analysis of inclusion and omission** (e.g. voices and perceptions that
  shape a teacher’s narrative);
- **connections of the past with the present** (e.g. understandings of the
  origins of whiteness in contemporary praxis);
- **analysis of the relationships between the past and present** (e.g. critical
  reflection on childhood experiences);
- **comparing self with other cases** (e.g. connections between Kathleen and
  Louise, and my etic analysis, as well as with the field of literature like
  Sarra, 2011; and Vass, 2013);
- **contextualising broadly** (e.g. autoethnographic generalisability of the mysteries);
- **comparisons with social science constructs and ideas** (e.g. replication of power), and
- **Framing with theory** (e.g. whiteness).

Having coded both interviews, I then added a third column to the landscape Word document, titled category, and began a process referred to by Saldana (2016) as lumping and splitting. Saldana offers that lumping data allows for representations of a broad essence of a category, while splitting data presents more nuanced scrutiny of phenomena under investigation. Chang (2008) also notes that, “data analysis often involves fracturing data while data interpretation consists of organising data back together in classified themes or patterns” (p. 128).

My process of lumping and splitting involved fracturing the interview transcripts and juxtaposing similar codes from the interviews, to establish categories of data. From the categories of data, I began to see emerging theory and added a fourth columns to the Word document. Table 5, below, is an example of the process.
The final step in this process of data analysis was to review the fractured and assembled text and ascertain meaning that I ascribed. In the example provided in Table 5, I ascertained that the samples of text were supporting understandings of identity and then how identity impacts on teacher praxis.

### Step 5: Develop writing.

My researcher process of decolonisation will be crystallised through Bolton’s fifth step of ‘through the mirror writing’ and will inform the organisation and writing modes of my dissertation. Like Ellis (2004), Harris and Sinclair (2015); Holman-Jones, Ellis and Adams (2015); Richardson (1997); and others, Bolton (2010) calls...
for writers to play with forms of writing that deepen their own understanding, and that create an evocative experience for the reader. As dendritic crystals, the mystories have supported the development of the peer-reviewed articles that I have published throughout my PhD candidature, and other, additional dendritic branches that continue to grow.

4.3 Summary of data collection and analysis

This data collection and analysis chapter has explained my method of CPR which continues to develop a response to the research questions. I have described my three-phase process of working emically to gather artefacts and artfully represent performative and critical data. This three-phase process has deepened my understanding of identity, the impact of identity on praxis, and my experiences in Australian schools. Working etically, this method of CPR has continued to reveal places where hegemonic forces like whiteness manifest in Australian schools.

4.3.1 Transformation of self

I began this chapter with a discussion on the importance of my critical teacher journals. These journals are a place where I have recorded data and, working reflexively, also reveal my “unsettled I”. As a data set of dendritic crystallization, my critical teacher journals contribute to my understandings of transformation of self.

4.3.2 Transformation of others

The aims relate to transformation of self by understanding identity and transformation of others by developing a method which seeks verisimilitude, trustworthiness of accounts, truth, and stories that resonate with an audience. As a
crystallizing method that is open to polymorphism, I recognise multiple standpoints from multiple participants who appear in this thesis and the mysteries as ‘in/appropriated others’. I return to this discussion in the next chapter.

4.3.3 Transformation of world

Previous chapters have described constructions of knowledge arising from this thesis as challenging western hierarchies in the academy. This chapter added reflexive caveats and described research dilemmas that had arisen that are related to concepts of truth, ethics, and aesthetics. I revisit these concepts in the next chapter on ethics.
5. Ethics

This ethics chapter will discuss the ethical framework of my research and I will report on how this framework guided my decision making and subsequent actions in response to conundrums that arose during the research. This chapter appears in four sections. I begin with a discussion on the ethical principles that have guided my decision-making processes throughout this research and specifically respect, beneficence, and justice as they pertain to rights of ‘in/appropriated others’. I then return to my discussion on data collection and analysis that began in chapter 4 as it relates to my researcher choices pertaining to the representation of experiences of ‘inappropriate/d others’, co-performers and, my own ‘unsettled I’ in both the performances of mystories and throughout this thesis. In section three of this chapter, I will discuss ethical issues that arose as a white researcher working with ‘in/appropriated other’ representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and I identify conundrums related to the research method that I employed and that were resolved by working to critically decolonise my research. In the final section of this ethics chapter, I report on the administration of the blogsite that I created for this research as well as the storage and management of all data that was collected throughout the research process.

5.1 Ethical framework of this research

I navigated ethical conundrums by developing an ethical framework which guided my researcher decision making and the subsequent actions that I undertook in throughout the research process. The ethical framework begins with Norman Denzin’s (2014) notion of a “communitarian dialogical ethic of care and responsibility” (p. 80), and with consideration of ethical pitfalls identified in Dwight
Conquergood’s (1985) *Performing as a Moral Act*. Denzin’s (2014) notion informed my practice of method that included data collection and data analysis. Conquergood’s ethical pitfalls have specifically supported my authorial decisions as I developed the mysteries and currently as I write this thesis. The ethical framework that I have applied is further supported by the ethical principles of CPR identified by Kress (2011).

Denzin’s (2014) proposal for a communitarian dialogical ethic of care and responsibility provides an ethical framework that recognises the relationships between the research participants that I referred to in chapter 3 as they pertain to the ‘unsettled I’ and ‘in/appropriated other’ (Spry, 2016). Denzin (2014) reflexively locates the political position of the storyteller and that affords grace to co-performers in the text. Denzin writes that a continual dialogue connecting past and present, performer and audience is necessary and that these exchanges “treat persons, their cares, and their concerns with dignity and respect” (p. 80). Grace can further be shown to co-performers by avoiding four ethical pitfalls, identified by Conquergood (1985). The pitfalls are (i) ripping off others’ stories; (ii) infatuation rather than deep engagement with the research site; (iii) skeptic’s cop-out that inadequately protects the rights of co-performers; and (iv) sensationalising the research data. My application of this ethical framework will be demonstrated in the next section of this chapter, following this specific discussion on my ethical framework.

My search for a research method that could support my crystalizing processes of conscientization was fraught with ethical conundrums, however a growing body of research exists in the field of performative and critical autoethnography that has provided guidance to address ethical conundrums. For example, on political representations that are embedded in this research, Tricia Kress (2011), writing
about CPR, reminds the activist teacher researcher that their goal is “self/other/world transformation” (p. 140), and Sherilyn Lemon (2015) adds that her own CPR was “never intended (to be) neutral, objective or rational” (p. 51). Writing about performative autoethnography, Tami Spry (2016) concurs, recognising the political representations of both the autoethnographic self, the ‘unsettled I’, and co-performers, as ‘in/appropriated others’. Clough (2002) demonstrates the use of social fiction to represent data from schools and education, noting the ethics of colonising the stories of co-performers, and the risk that stories can create for third parties. Angrosino (1998), Bochner (2014), Ellis (2004), Harris and Sinclair (2014), and Richardson (1997) are further examples of ethical representations of autoethnographic data.

In chapter 3 I cited Eve Tuck and Michelle Fine’s (2011) *Inner Angles* which has informed my choices specific to ethical research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Other works that have influenced the ethical framework of my research include Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s writing about “research as a site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the west and the interests and ways of resisting of the Other” (Smith, 1999, p.2). Sarra (2011) similarly discusses the importance of research methodologies that challenge western knowledge systems and of non-Indigenous researchers taking a “meta-reflexive self-totalisation approach” (p. 3) to research that disrupts othering in the research process and dissemination of the research.

In chapter 4 of this thesis, I began to report on some of the ethical conundrums that occurred during the data collection phase. An example of an ethical conundrum that was resolved with a communitarian dialogical ethic of care (Denzin, 2014) was my rewriting of *Mystery of EATSIPS* where my ethical intention was to
minimise the risk of harm to the teaching profession. While I have necessarily included the ‘in/appropriated other’ to crystallize understandings of my ‘unsettled I’, I have attempted to do so through the development of mysteries that engage deeply in the research site, without ripping off others’ stories or sensationalising the research data (Conquergood, 1985).

Further to my overarching ethical framework, Kress (2011, p. 132) reminds researchers applying CPR the goal of self/other/world transformation must adhere to ethical principles that relate to respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. These ethical principles are drawn from the USA’s National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioural Research 1978 report *Ethical Principals and Guidelines for Research Involving Human Subjects*, commonly referred to as The Belmont Report. In my Australian research context, similar principles are identified in Australia’s *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (NSECHR) (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2015). On values and principles, the NSECHR states,

> The relationship between researchers and research participants is the ground on which human research is conducted … respect for human beings, research merit and integrity, justice, and beneficence – help to shape that relationship as one of trust, mutual responsibility and ethical equality.
> (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2015, p. 11)

### 5.1.1 Respect.

Drawing on *The Belmont Report*, Kress (2011) opines that respect for persons is demonstrated through participants being properly informed about the research, consenting to research processes, and consenting to dissemination of the research. The Australian NSECHR further stipulates that a participant’s decision to participate in research is voluntary, must be based on informed consent in which project
information is presented in a suitable manner to the participant, and that such consent may be given orally or in writing. Additionally, consideration should be given to appropriate reimbursement of participants for costs incurred, participants can place limits of the use of data that they provide, and participants reserve the right to withdraw from the research (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2015).

The NSECHR informed the creation of three documents that were subsequently approved by Griffith University’s Human Ethics Committee, and the project was assigned the reference number GU Ref No:2016/425. The three documents appear in this thesis in Appendix B and include: Project Information Sheet, Participant Consent Form, and an electronic alert that was published on thecrystallizingteacher. The Project Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form were written in plain English and demonstrate respect as an ethical principle by ensuring the community of my trusted colleagues understood:

- the purpose of the research and its possible benefits;
- they would be provided with a copy of the mystories);
- they would be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview, no more than sixty minutes in duration, and consider what was happening in the stories;
- that the interview could be face to face or online;
- the interview would be audio recorded, and that the recording would be securely stored by the research team;
- they reserved the right to choose whether or not they would be identified in the research, and whether or not this would be using a pseudonym or their real name;
• the risks and the costs involved in participating in the research, related to time;
• they could be reimbursed for costs incurred including, but not limited to, parking, data usage, and childcare;
• their participation in the research was voluntary;
• they could withdraw from the project at any time, without giving reason, and that they could rejoin the project at a later date;
• a summary of the findings would be made available after the interviews had been conducted;
• they could add further comment to the summary of findings; and
• they could contact the research team with any questions, and they had the right to contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Griffith University to discuss any concerns about the conduct of the project.

The Participant Consent Form stated that there would be no direct benefit for research participants’ contribution to the research; however, a possible benefit of participating in the research became apparent following the first interview. Kathleen reminded me that teachers who are registered with the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) were able to log their participation in the research as time contributing to continuing professional development (CPD). QCT registration requires a commitment to undertake 20 hours of CPD per calendar year. I did not amend the Project Information Sheet, but I have verbally provided this advice to the other research participants.

A third document was created for the first phase of data collection and remains live on thecrystallizingteacher. This document was also approved by Griffith
University’s Human Ethics Committee, and it welcomes online participation, but with a declaration that (i) the participant must be over 18 years of age; (ii) any comments could be used for research purposes; and (iii) racist and offensive material will be removed.

### 5.1.2 Beneficence

Beneficence seeks to minimise potential harm while maximising potential benefits for research participants. The NSECHR identifies six categories of harm that are: physical; psychological; devaluation of personal worth; social harms; economic harms; and legal harms (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2015). In the case of individual teachers and school leaders, I recognised the economic harm that could occur by adversely impacting upon a colleague’s career, and I have taken care to minimise the risk of harm to ‘in/appropriated others’ and communities in the mysteries by de-identifying them. For example, I note in the introduction to *Mystery of EATSIPS* that, “The majority of my past and present colleagues will recognise the characters in *My Story of EATSIPS*; it is a representation of most of us, but none of us in particular.” The same could be said of Toby and John in *Mystery of a field trip* and the characters in *Mystery from pre-service teacher training*. I have also been critically aware of the psychological and social risk to communities of teachers and school leaders and took reflexive care to review each of the mysteries before I blogged them. This resulted in cycling between my recollection of experience and my representation of the experience so that I maintained the truth of the experience without harming ‘in/appropriated others’. Similarly, I did not want to add to the transgenerational harm that colonial research has inflicted upon communities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. I was critically aware of the
psychological harm, social harm and devaluing of personal worth that representations Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in this research could present. In this regard, I was grateful for the guidance that was provided my supervisor Harry Van Issum, a Woppaburra man, and project critical friend Nicole Major, a Bundjalung woman.

In addition to minimising harm, beneficence also seeks to maximise benefits to participants. Kathleen’s response to participating in the research indicated professional benefits of accruing CPD time. Participating in the research prompted her own professional reflections that yielded an increased enthusiasm for further collegial discussion and professional development. In the first phase of data collection, Louise had similarly observed,

\[ \text{PS. As a side note – having just put my thoughts on paper for the first time in a while … It’s interesting to note just how much I reflect on my practise, without even realising it.} \]

(L_12-8-16)

5.1.3 Justice

Referring to The Belmont Report, Kress (2011) offers that justice in human research means fairness and equal treatment of individuals and communities. Justice similarly appears in the Australian NSECHR where it is separated into distributive justice, that dispenses the benefits and burdens of research equally, and procedural justice, that fairly recruits and carries out the research.

Prior to my current research, I had begun to devise a research proposal that included me, as researcher, teacher, and applied theatre practitioner, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student actors in partnership with a museum. The aim was to improve my teaching in PST 1.4 and 2.4, as I facilitated a creation of a piece of museum theatre that critically interpreted the museum’s collection.
Following a meeting with the director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander college, I withdrew the research proposal and later wrote a storied representation on the meeting for my research supervisors. *Mystery of le garçon et le ballon rouge* used Albert Lamorisse’s 1956 French film *The Red Balloon* as a metaphor, and I positioned myself in the story as *The Red Balloon*’s protagonist, Pascalle, because I enter the story with both a bright enthusiasm and a naivety. However, unlike Pascal, by the end of the mystery I had begun to recognise ethical flaws in my research proposal and as I reflected on these with my supervisors. A de-identified version of my experience appears below.
Mystère de le garçon et le ballon rouge

Le ballon rouge had been filling with helium. It was very exciting. It was red. It was big. And it began to reach up, desiring to dance among the clouds. Quite a bit of helium had been puffed into le ballon rouge since Pascalle had received a positive response to his research proposal from Le Directeur. He was going to partner with the acting school and a museum. His students would critically interpret the museum’s collection and use their research to create a performance piece. Throughout the process Pascalle would be learning from the students about ways to become a better teacher.

So it was that Pascalle would meet with Le Directeur on Wednesday afternoon. He was a bit concerned that residual static electricity from the earlier afternoon storm might burst his ballon rouge, but, as it happened, that anxiety was nothing compared to the meeting that introduced him Le Directeur.

Pascalle skipped into the acting school with his floating ballon. Le Directeur grabbed le ballon right from the start and the room was filled with that ominous, heightened anxiety one gets when a ballon is threatened.

“I have to tell you right away that I really dislike applied theatre,” Le Directeur said and continued to squeeze le ballon. “This is an acting school. We perform in premier theatre venues. You want to perform in a museum?”

Then Le Directeur untied the lip of le ballon and pulled the edges so that helium squeezed out in that unbearably high shrill. For twenty minutes poor little Pascalle and his ballon rouge were taking quite a beating. But then…

“Alright. I have some students who would benefit from understanding applied theatre, and especially their rights as participants. And their community should know about the dangers of artists stealing the intellectual and cultural property. So you can teach about applied theatre for 90 minutes each week, then do the museum piece in the second term.”

But I have spent quite a bit of time musing over the ethics of my project. Without intending to do so, Le Directeur convinced me that my proposal to work with the acting school is all about the benefits that I get from the deal: a PhD, improved understanding, improved teaching, kudos. What I’m offering has little value to the curriculum of the acting school and the students.

In short, I think I’m going to take my ballon and float away.

… although I am already dreaming of other ballons.
The conclusion of *Mystory of le garçon et le ballon rouge* marks the beginnings of my understanding of distributive justice. Following my meeting with the director of the arts school, I understood that my research was providing limited benefits to the students at the school. Rather, while there might be benefit to me as a researcher, teacher, and artist, my proposal meant that students would miss the opportunity to perform in a premier venue. Furthermore, like the current research proposal, the aim was to intervene and improve my praxis, however achieving that aim meant collecting feedback on my teaching from the students. This collection of knowledge from the students was in addition to accessing their cultural and artistic knowledges. As an ethical consideration of distributive justice, I was experiencing the benefits of the research, while the students would be experiencing the burdens. Section 4.8.11 of the NSECHR (2015, p.66) describes such ethical flaws of justice as exploitation.

The current research has sought to address exploitation in both distributive justice and procedural justice. As an ethical principle of justice and following an exchange of ideas with my supervisor Dr Van Isssum, I redesigned my research method and my plan for data analysis. I have attempted to maintain relational ethics with Gandu Jarjum and individual members of the committee, to embrace Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Smith, 1999; Sarra, 2011), and to limit the burden that my research has placed on members of the committee.

Performative and critical autoethnographic researchers in the academy have observed the limitations of ethics principles that are drawn from reports like *The Belmont Report* (Adams, Holman-Jones & Ellis, 2015; Denzin, 2014; Ellis, 2004; Hughes & Pennington, 2017; Kress, 2011). Gillies and Aldred (2002) observe “Research ethics have therefore focused on how well participants are treated but has
not extended to encompass broader questions of knowledge itself” (p. 32). Turning specifically to CPR, Kress (2011) opines such reports emerge from positivist conceptualisations of research but can be unaware of the “potential ethical conundrums that critical praxis research will likely bring” (Kress, 2011, p. 134). The next section addresses the ethical conundrums that my CPR presented.

5.2 Representation of people, places, and experiences

Throughout my research I have written about people, places, and experiences, framed by Denzin’s (2014) communitarian dialogical ethic of care and respect, and attempting to avoid Conquergood’s (1985) ethical pitfalls. I have written about lived experiences that have occurred in the past in the form of mystery representations of these lived experiences. Then, after sharing the mysteries with colleagues and our reflections on the themes that emerged, I have represented some of these reflections in my writing that appears in chapter 6. This section will discuss the ethics of representing my ‘unsettled I’ and ‘in/appropriated others’ across past and present, as well as discuss the representation of truth in the data that appears as mystery representations of lived experience.

5.2.1 Self

I am at the core of this research. It is about my praxis in the field of education. Specifically, it is about deepening my understanding of whiteness that impacts on my identity and which subsequently impacts my praxis. However, like Andrew (2017), Angrosino (1998), Ellis (1995), Leggo (2012), Merryfeather (2017), Spry (2011) and others, I acknowledge the inevitability of ‘in/appropriated others’ in my autoethnographic stories. Spry (2016) describes the role of ‘in/appropriated others’
in performative autoethnographies, as offering “alternative ways of seeing and being with one another, understanding ourselves in relation to others” (italics in original) (p. 52). Elsewhere Spry (2011, p. 58) defines agency as power of the autoethnographic storyteller to construct both the ontological matter that is being investigated, that what of the story, and the epistemological stance of the stories, the how of the story, and calls for this agency to be exercised in a manner that is empowering for the co-performers.

Lyn Merryfeather (2016) has agency as the storyteller of women supporting partners who are undertaking female to male transition and, as an autoethnographer, Merryfeather empowers herself and her community of ‘in/appropriated others’ by adding the voice of these women to the field of academic literature. Sherilyn Lennon (2015) has agency as she tells stories of her own teacher-research praxis in the field of gender and education and is empowered by the possibility that her storytelling offers for the CPR goals of self/other/world transformations. Mike Kim (2014) is a returned serviceman who tells a story of his post-deployment experiences. Kim’s capacity to narrate his story and to identify barriers to his unfinished journey of healing are both examples of agency defined by Spry (2011).

I recognise my agency in making what and how choices of the mystories and I accept accountability for the standpoints that I have adopted to tell the mystories. I also recognise that in a different time or place my ‘unsettled I’ might adopt a different standpoint, and I acknowledge that ‘in/appropriated others’ may have a different story to tell from alternative standpoints. The privileged position that I have as the storyteller gives me agency. Noting my privileged position, I also add my acknowledgement of Karen Martin’s (2008) concern that Aboriginal agency is limited
when Aboriginal knowledges and stories are recorded by and shared by non-Aboriginal peoples, and I return to this in the next section.

In this thesis I have agency because I have been able to claim space to reclaim experiences which shaped my identity and that influence my praxis. I also have agency because I have choice in which experiences I selected and then represented as mysteries, and therefore I have agency in constructing the narrative that underpins this thesis. Gillies and Alldred (2002) assert, “the political and personal perspectives of researchers inform the intentions we have for the research” (p. 33).

As I have attempted to crystallize understandings of my praxis, I have placed myself in multiple roles in the mysteries, and I have attempted to view the mysteries from alternative standpoints. This process draws on the principles of crystallization that I discussed in chapter 3 (Ellingson, 2008). Sometimes my identity is obvious, such as in Mystery of Sal and Mystery of Matthias. Other times I am less conspicuous which prompts me to wonder whether I am John or Toby in Mystery of a fieldtrip. In Mystery of EATSIPS I can hear my voice saying the words of most of the characters and, like Carl does, planning football training to avoid a staff meeting makes perfect sense to me. This performative and critical reflective process of crystallization has afforded me further agency as I deepen my understanding of my praxis and engage in self-transformation.

5.2.2 Co-performers

As Kress (2011) foreshadowed, the representation of co-performers in the mysteries has presented ethical conundrums. I will now discuss the ethical framework that I applied to support my decision making. There are two types of co-
performer in this research: those who share spaces in the mysteries, such as Sal, Matthias, Derek and Roseanne, who I have considered as deidentified ‘in/appropriated others’; and then there are my trusted professional colleagues, including Kathleen, Louise, and Gandu Jarjum, whose reflections assisted to open up the mysteries of teaching practice to wider understandings. I discussed the application of respect, beneficence and justice related to my trusted professional colleagues in the previous section of this chapter. The trusted professional colleagues appear in this thesis in a manner that they have consented to and that followed consultation. The representation of ‘in/appropriated others’ in the mysteries was more problematic.

The ‘crisis of representation’ in the social sciences, discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis, sought to address strategies for researchers to represent themselves in texts. An unresolved ethical conundrum in the field is the representation of ‘in/appropriated others’ in texts. Chang (2008, p.68) notes that while self might be the focus of the autoethnography, co-performers will play an inevitable role. The autoethnographic storyteller has an ethical responsibility to be sensitive to what part of the story they own, and to protect the privacy of others. Andrew (2017) offers a conceptual framework to apply to autoethnographic representations of self and others. This framework maps the key aspects of autoethnography, (e.g., importance of self’s story, risk to others, strengths, and limitations of method), against duties of intuitionism (e.g., honouring, repatriation, gratitude, justice, beneficence, self-improvement, and non-maleficence). The application of a table to make explicit the author’s demonstration of intuitionism is a useful addition that supports autoethnographic reporting on representing others in stories. However, many autoethnographers already communicate like ideas without the organisation of a
table. For example, Christine Sleeter (2015) in *White Bread* represents her family across generations, as well as her present-day school community. Lyn Merryfeather (2016) in *You’ve Changed* represents co-performers that she has experienced relationships with as a supportive community, and others with whom she has experienced personal and intimate relationships. In both cases the author includes an explanation of their process of representing co-performers without the need for further reducing representations of their data to an empirical table.

The literature review that Andrew (2017) provides omits two works that have contributed to the ethical framework of this current research. Andrew (2017) does not reference Conquergood’s (1985) *Performing as a Moral Act* that, at the time of writing, Google scholar identifies has been cited 754 times (14 May 2019). Similarly, Tami Spry’s (2011) notion of an ethic of aesthetic representation is absent from Andrew’s literature review.

Two additional examples of strategies that address autoethnographers’ ethical conundrum of representing co-performers are relational ethics, and co-construction of texts. Relational ethics accords with Denzin’s notion of ethics as communitarian and dialogical (Andrew, 2017; Chang, 2013; Clandinin, 2013; Hughes & Pennington, 2017), and it is an ethic that I have demonstrated with my trusted colleagues. Ellis (2007) writes, “relational ethics recognises and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work” (p. 4). Co-construction of texts are jointly authored between researchers and the research participants. The purpose of co-constructed text is to democratise participation in the crafting of the story, and the result is that the research participant has greater agency (Ellis, 2004). This democratised agency is demonstrated in Harris (2012) through ethnocinema as a
research method. The researcher, Harris, collaborated with young Sudanese women to select stories and make production and post-production choices in how the stories are shown to an audience as short films. Ellis and Bochner (1992) similarly employ co-construction of text. They independently wrote a personal narrative about events and decisions they made in their relationship, then they shared their personal narrative, identifying points of commonality and difference, and together they co-constructed the published text.

Relational ethics and co-construction of text has been useful in guiding my decision making in my research relationship with my trusted colleagues, however neither approach to ethics was satisfactory when it came to creating the mysteries. At a practical level, some of the lived experiences that inform the mysteries occurred over twenty years ago and I have long lost contact with the co-performers in the story. In the case of students who appear in the mysteries, for example Sal, or Mike in Mystery of EATSIPS, there are power issues embedded in the teacher-student relationship and that make relational ethics inappropriate. Bell and Nutt (2002) identify a conundrum for practitioner-researchers is the management of the “responsibilities in practice, in ways that all parties would consider ‘ethical’” (p. 71). There is no avoiding my identity as a teacher whose classes impacted on Sal to the extent that Sal chose to not complete the assessment program. To add the hierarchy of researcher-participant to our relationship would exacerbate power imbalance. Moreover, for the purpose of this critical reflexive praxis research, I prefer to leave Mystery of Sal as incomplete. A cleaner ending, aided by Sal’s insights, might have resulted in me answering questions about my praxis and thereby experiencing less drive to undertake this in-depth research. The resolution that I do imagine is articulated from my standpoint as a trade unionist and
represents Sal as withdrawing her labour. I take care not to represent the incident from one of Conquergood’s (1985) ethical pitfalls. Rather, I am pursuing beneficence whereby the benefits of this reflective research outweigh the harm to Sal, Matthias, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and I pursue justice by challenging white hegemony.

5.2.3 Truth

My resolution to the ethical conundrum of representing people, places, and events in mysteries has been to write fictional accounts of my experiences. Chang (2008) notes the importance of researchers developing ethical strategies to manage the location of other characters in stories. Suggested strategies include disseminating research using pseudonyms or redacting co-performers’ names, however Chang also acknowledges that the context of stories might be sufficient for co-performers to still be identified and that researchers should obtain consent before publishing. Denzin (2014) takes Chang’s (2008) ethical strategies further, suggesting that narrative is always a story about the past, but that it can only ever be a partial and political representation of the past. The result of this is that researchers can extend the notion of pseudonyms to de-identifying research contexts, while maintaining the ‘truth’ of the story. Denzin’s idea can be seen in practice in The Social Fiction Series, edited by Patricia Leavy, that are literary works informed by social research. An example of this work is Carl Leggo’s (2012) Sailing in a Concrete Boat that uses literary devices including poetry and prose to represent the emotional turmoils and conflicting values that the author experiences in his roles as teacher, Christian, friend, father, husband, and lover. In the same book series, Christine Sleeter’s (2015) White Bread uses archival records and present lived
experience to weave her familial past with present positional identities, as she seeks
to critically understand racial dominance in America. Earlier, Michael Angrosino’s
(1998) *Opportunity House* developed a method of using fiction to represent
ethnographic stories of mental retardation because the research community were
unable to provide informed consent to participate in his research.

Carolyn Ellis (2004) writes of the use of fiction in autoethnography research
that the goal is “not be so much to portray the *facts* of what happened … but instead
to convey the *meaning* you attached to the experience,” (italics in original) (p.116).
Ron Pelias (2016) concurs, as he deliberately employs arts-based writing to
challenge the reader to consider “what counts as evidence, what might be accepted
as truth, what might be of use in everyday lives” (p. xiii). Building on Denzin’s (2014)
understanding that data is only ever a representation of lived experience, Ellis
concludes that there is validity in autoethnography if the writing evokes in the reader
a belief that the work is lifelike, believable, and plausible. Writing about his own
representation of educational research as fictions, Clough (2002) declares his
stories,

> *Could* be true, they derive from real events and feeling and
conversations, but they are ultimately fictions: versions of the
truth which are woven from an amalgam of raw data, real
details and (where necessary) *symbolic equivalents* (italics in
original).

(Clough, 2002, p. 9)

Angrosino (1998), Bochner (2014), Clough (2002), and Ellis (2004) include
epilogues that disclose an understanding that some of the stories in their narratives
might, or might not, have occurred, and that some of the characters might, or might not, be real or composites of the real people. Nonetheless, the ‘truth’ in their stories
is that something like this happened. This reflexive acknowledgement of the writers does not detract the shared experiences of ‘truth’ that the work offers the reader. The acknowledgement does not diminish the lifelike, believability, or plausibility of the work. Nor does the acknowledgement diminish the goal of both examples that is to evoke emotion in the reader and lead them to consider resisting injustice in their own world. Ellis (2009) notes,

For me, the question (is) not whether narratives convey precisely the way things actually were, but rather what narratives do, what consequences they have, and to what uses can they be put.

(Ellis, 2009, p. 110)

I draw this discussion on representation to a close with a reflexive statement about ‘in/appropriated others’ appearing as John and Toby; the Arts Faculty staff and Mike; Derek, Thom, Roseanne, and Danika; Sal and Matthias. I declare that the five stories are truthful stories. Further, there was rigour in the process of crafting the stories that I demonstrated in chapter 4. Specifically, in the case of Sal and Matthias, I did teach classes that included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The classes did engage in enthusiastic conversations throughout the unit of work, and students did demonstrate commitment to succeed in the assessment. On the day of the assessment task, ‘Sal’ did refuse to participate. That said, ‘Sal’ might, or might not, be the student’s name, and the meaning of this story does not rely on gender facts; ‘Sal’ might, or might not, have been female. Further, the class might, or might not, have been Drama. Similarly, the meaning in my story of Matthias is more important than the ‘truth’ of Matthias and his age. ‘Matthias’ might, or might not, have been the student’s name and ‘Matthias’ might, or might not have been a year 9 student. The assessment task that ‘Matthias’ completed might, or might not, have
been making a puppet. And the celebration with ‘Matthias’ parent – that might or might not be his father – might or might not have occurred at the school formal.

5.3 Cultural appropriateness

While the aim of this research has been to improve my understanding of whiteness in the field of education, I have also developed my praxis as a critical researcher. There were several times throughout this research where I descended into a spiral of problems and frustrations that seemed to cultivate more problems and frustrations. I was only able to break free from this downward spiral once I realised the irony that I was subjecting my educator self to questions about whiteness in my educator praxis, but uncritically allowing the same forces of whiteness to impact on my research. Applying Denzin’s ethical framework, that includes connecting past and present with dignity and respect, I began to recognise experiences in my own researcher journey that presented ethical conundrums. These were exacerbated by unconsciously conducting research from a white standpoint and were only resolved by reframing these conundrums with a decolonised approach to research. This section reports on my ethical approach to the research that shifted from positivist, western and white ways of knowing towards greater empathy with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and understanding.

Following *Mystery of le garçon et le ballon rouge* I determined a need to connect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics to supervise my research. I cold called and emailed faculty members and became frustrated that I was unable to connect with a supervisor. Reframing the problem of connecting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, I began to see the issue as twofold: (i) my whiteness that was leading me to rush to comply with timelines that
stem from a neoliberal standpoint, that lead to (ii) me failing to invest time in building relational ethics. There is a similar theme in *Mystery of EATSIPS* when Leah says, “If they want to be included in our curriculum, they have to be available and affordable.” Both Leah and my own attitude are examples of a denial of justice that privilege one person’s needs, or at least neocolonial systems, over the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Reframed from a position of procedural justice, I shifted to wonder how supervising my research might have benefits for a supervisor.

Another problem emerged during the data collection phase of my research when colleagues who had agreed to participate began to withdraw. As I discussed in chapter 4, my original six trusted colleagues identified lack of time or business as a reason to withdraw from the project, however I also began to understand that there were ethical considerations of beneficence and justice that were unique to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants. As I discussed my frustration with Harry, I was reminded of Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s approach to interviews with Maori and understood that my approach to the interviews was contributing to the problem. Firstly, I was approaching the interviews with a level of formality that simplifies the task of ethical reporting of human research, but that reinforces hierarchal relationships between researcher and participant. Moreover, I was asking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants to assume the role of an authoritative voice on behalf of their community. Such positioning met my needs as a researcher but was an uncomfortable role for my colleagues. The final realisation that helped me to break free from this downward spiral was the critical realisation that I was privileging western ways of knowing through my proposed method of data collection, captured from participant interviews, while diminishing the learning that I already have collected from my relationship with Gandu Jarjum colleagues. The latter has guided
so much of my thinking throughout this research, and my continued relationship with members of the committee continues to be a source of learning. Moreover, I have earned the trust of the committee to be invited to speak as an ally within our union on matters related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

I began my PhD research journey with a commitment to improving my school teaching praxis. My initial flawed research proposal was reported earlier in this chapter as *Mystery of le garçon et le ballon rouge*. Following that experience, I familiarised myself with the guidelines for working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that are offered by Martin (2008), Queensland Government (1999), Rigney (1997), Smith (1999), and others that are listed on the Griffith University Research Ethics site. I continued to naively determine that my research was about my teaching practice, and that many of the processes were not relevant to my research. As a critical reflexive researcher, I now consider this position as another example of my whiteness blinding me to the transgenerational abuses that researchers have perpetuated on Indigenous peoples throughout the world (Guillemin et al., 2016; Smith, 1999; Van den Hoonaard, 2002). On the other hand, the research is informed by data that will include representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, both in my teacher vignettes, and in data from my informant community. Whilst I am the object of my research, I understand the implications of doing no harm to Sal, Matthias, and other characters who appear in my research, and I am sensitive to how representations might harm Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Understanding, respecting, and demonstrating cultural protocols is a significant consideration in this research, and all the mysteries were read and approved of by a critical friend before they were published.
5.4 Data storage and management

Throughout the research project multiple sets of data were produced, most of which is collated in my critical teacher journals. There are six-minute writes and diagrams that led to the production of the mysteries, copies of the mysteries that are published on thecrystallizingteacher, responses to the mysteries as either written response or audio recording of an interview, and documents specific to researcher ethics that include informant consent forms. The capacity for collecting responses to thecrystallizingteacher from the wider public was also prepared for, however there were no responses, and the blogsite is now closed for comment.

I began my researcher journal on 27 September 2014. My journal remains locked in a filing cabinet in my office, and I have the only key. All hard copies of research informant consent forms are also stored securely in the filing cabinet in my office. Drafting of the mysteries was undertaken either in my journal or electronically using Word documents. The Word documents are stored electronically on one of two USBs that are password protected, regularly backed up, and both remain locked in my office that I have the only key to. The USBs also store all the electronic copies of all information that was uploaded on thecrystallizingteacher. The online blogsite remains live; however, it is closed for public comment, and I maintain sole administrator responsibility for the site with a unique and secret username and password.

The strategies that I have listed in this section are approved by Griffith University’s Human Ethics Committee and demonstrate compliance with Ethical Conduct in Human Research (Australian Government, 2007).
5.5 Summary of ethics

This ethics chapter has explained my process for resolving dilemmas that began to emerge in chapter 4. I have described an ethical framework which guided my researcher decision making processes and addresses issues of respect, beneficence, and justice in accords with Australia’s NSECHR. The ethical framework was specifically applied to the representations of people, places, and experiences as I sought truthful performances of self and co-performers. The chapter also discussed cultural appropriateness and my storage and management of data.

5.5.1 Transformation of self

This ethics chapter includes a reflexive turning of my researcher gaze back upon myself. *Mystery of le garçon et le ballon rouge* was another critical incident that educated myself through revelations of whiteness in my research praxis. My reflections on this incident reinforced the ease at which privilege can lead to complacency and submission to hegemony.
PART III  

*REFLECTIONS & REFRACTIONS*

… looking back at oneself and looking back from different angles.
6. Findings

Part III of this thesis begins with five findings sections that continue the process of crystallizing my critical understandings of whiteness in my lived experiences of Australian schools as well as demonstrate the application of the research processes that I undertook. The findings lead to a conclusion chapter and an epilogue.

The findings of this research emerge from talking with stories and about those stories (Anzaldua, 2015), and I take up both emic and etic positions. I am emic as a teacher, asking questions and submitting myself to questioning, but I am etic as a researcher when I report on phenomena of which I have noticed and taken cognizance. The first section of my findings chapter reproduces the five mystories that emerged from my data collection process, described in chapter 4, and that were subsequently posted to thecrystallizingteacher in the period 6 August 2016 to 8 October 2016. The five mystories reveal difficulties that are faced by teachers who seek to enact critical pedagogies that challenge hegemony and systemic whiteness that is embedded in Australian schools and that is not adequately challenged in pre-service teacher education programs. Some of the mystories also show the importance of hope in teacher-student relationships.

In reproducing the mystories, I have maintained the formatting of the original posts on thecrystallizingteacher and I include the hyperlinks that were originally embedded in the posts. One addition is that I have expanded the hyperlinks to assist readers accessing hard copy of this thesis. Another notable exception is that, at the time the mystories were blogged, I had not begun referring to mystory as one word because when I was blogging, I had not yet encountered Gregory Ulmer’s (1989) text that is credited with coining the term mystery. Third, following each mystery I
include a new discussion that is informed by my etic analysis that applies questions inspired by Ladson-Billings (2009) that are:

- What is happening here?
- What is happening in this classroom?
- What is happening with this teacher?
- What might be happening to young people/students in this story? and
- How might you respond if you were in this story?

The second section of this findings chapter is a reproduction of *Conversations with myself* that was also posted to *thecrystallizingteacher* as an epilogue to the mysteries. In *Conversations with myself* I reflexively discuss themes arising from the five mysteries related to my role as both object and subject of the research.

The third section of this chapter, *Crystallizing teacher conversations*, introduces the voices of trusted colleagues Kathleen and Louise. Prompted by the mysteries, we engage in collegial and reflective conversations that extend the themes related to the impact of dominant forces of whiteness on teacher praxis in contemporary Australian schools. Kathleen and Louise also demonstrate the benefits of CPR in revealing whiteness and neoliberalism in teacher research.

The findings chapter concludes with excerpts from two articles that were previously published in peer-reviewed journals and a forthcoming book chapter. The first of these is an abridged version of my contribution to *International Journal of Multicultural Education*’s 2017 special edition on Critical Autoethnography in Pursuit of Educational Equity that provides an etic analysis of the polyvocal representation of *Mystery of Sal* that appeared in chapter 2 of this thesis. I then reproduce an excerpt from my 2018 contribution to *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* that is emic in its representation of some of the findings from this research as a dwam. Written as
social fiction, my dwam begins and ends in a semiconsscious state wherein I become
lost in self-reflective thought which becomes an overarching metaphor to describe
uncritical responses to colonial narratives being inscribed in my schoolteacher
praxis. This state of semi-consciousness privileges an epistemology that is rooted in
memory and imagination, and it enables theory and practice to simultaneously
occupy the same spaces that are free of the constraints of linear chronology. The
third publication I reproduce is an abridged adaptation from part of a forthcoming
book chapter that responds to Paulo Freire’s (1998c) *Teachers as cultural workers* in
which Freire writes ten letters to those who dare teach. I write a letter back to Paulo
Freire in response to his eighth letter about cultural identity and education and, in
this thesis chapter, I add a new model to the text which represents complexities of
teacher-student relationships which are shaped by identities and are performed in a
wider socio-political context.
6.1 Mystories

6.1.1 Mystery of a field trip

*Mystery of a field trip* was originally posted at *thecrystallizingteacher* on 2 August 2016.

This is the story of two teachers' approaches to pedagogy. Toby adopts a traditional, academic rationalist approach to curriculum, while John, resisting neoliberal data driven pedagogy, tries to maintain critical awareness in his teaching. Both teachers are a composite representation of my two decades of teaching different units in different learning areas and in different schools. While I struggle to enact a curriculum that is democratic, promoting active citizenry, respect and understanding, I am constantly pulled back into a system that demands discrete, incremental data tracking.

*My Story of a Field Trip* borrows from Gary Crew's (1986) *Inner Circle*. I have hinted at his central characters, Joe and Tony, in name only, for me the character similarities end there. However I have used one of his settings, the Brisbane Powerhouse. In my story, teachers John and Toby base a unit of work on *Inner Circle* and I use a similar literary device to Crew by interspersing their character’s stories.

**John.**

Toby was my mentor when I was doing my teacher training. I was lucky enough to get a job here and now most of my classes are next door to him.

When I started teaching, Toby was the teacher I aspired to be. He was structured, organised, his classes were disciplined, and he got good results. I suppose that over the years we developed a strong working relationship. We share resources. We go out for dinner a couple of times a year. That sort of thing.

**Toby.**

John was a real live wire, a 'let's change the world kind of guy'. If there was a cause, he wore the badge. Everything bothered him.

I like teaching next door to John. At the end of each unit we sit down together...
and measure student improvement and compare results. It’s good for us to be able to share resources like our Term 2 unit on Gary Crew’s *Inner Circle.* I know it’s a bit dated now, but I’ve taught the unit with some tough kids; disengaged, low literacy, that sort of thing, and they enjoy it. And I enjoy it. So why change? We do some good work with *Literature and Literacy.*

I like working around the *Language* aspect of the Australian Curriculum in English. I’ve always struggled to teach form without content. It bothers me that we privilege literacy over language through NAPLAN, for example. And our *Inner Circle* unit is a case in point. The Australian Curriculum says teach a novel that explores a social issue, so we look at masculinity and Indigeneity. It bothers me that, despite the global aim of exploring a social issue, the assessment is all about plot, character, setting and constructing paragraphs. So I talk to my class about the portrayal of women in *Inner Circle,* particularly the women in Tony’s life. And I’m relentless in talking about how Joe challenges dominant narratives that shape negative perceptions of Aboriginal peoples, and then press the class to wonder about whether Joe challenges dominant narratives. We look at resources like the *Racism. It stops with me* site and that sort of thing. And I read a lot. Even year 10 kids like to be read to. I have volunteer students read as well, but I like to perform the book. Some of the ratbags payout on me, but it’s in good fun, and it tells me I’ve got them engaged.

But more than reading aloud, I really want
to think about what we were reading. What are the attitudes and ideas that are embedded in the characters’ words and actions? How do they challenge us? What do they reinforce?

About 18 months ago we caught up for dinner at the Powerhouse. It’s the central setting of *Inner Circle*. It was an abandoned Powerhouse, and in the book was a place that Joe used to sleep rough. Now it’s a public space with bars, meeting rooms, theatres, hanging art, that sort of thing. It’s still got that grunge feel though. There’s graffiti on the walls, louvers on the roof, cat-walks and exposed beams. And as we were sitting there John said,

“I think you’re on to something. What better place to discuss setting? Of course there’s all the other stuff as well on social issues: youth, homelessness, Aboriginal people, that sort of thing, that you can sort of still feel etched into the walls. A good book brings that to life.”

It was a really worthwhile learning experience. We read paragraphs in different parts of the Powerhouse and tried to imagine where Tony and Joe had been and how they got to those spaces. There are still ladders and catwalks that you can see up in the roof. Then we sent the students out into New Farm Park to try to find the palm tree that was a strong symbol in the book. What we found was that the students wrote rich detailed paragraphs about plot, character, and setting.

The year ten cohort really enjoyed the experience. Toby did too. We’re going again next year. I’ve been trying to
convince him that you don’t need to visit places to achieve depth in content. You can explore ideas just as easily. So the revolution lives on. I’m changing the world, one teacher at a time.

As for the Year 10’s, there’s no doubt the trip inspired deeper knowledge, but it’s not yet sufficiently critical knowledge. I still don’t know how Toby will feel about arranging for a Turrbal Elder to speak to students next year.

6.1.1(a) Etic summary of findings.

*Mystery of a field trip* shows two different approaches to curriculum. Toby delivers an academic rationalist approach to curriculum that aims to develop students’ technical grasp of the subject, while John seeks to deliver a reconceptualist model of curriculum and develop students’ critical thinking. Toby appears to be comfortable with his teacher-centred style of working, whereas John struggles to be the critical and student-centred teacher that he aspires to be. Both teachers report that their classes enjoyed the field trip, and Toby also reports that the experience led to improved technical skill, “What we found was that the students wrote rich detailed paragraphs about plot, character, and setting.” John offers no insight into students’ responses aside from the observation, “the trip inspired deeper knowledge, but it’s not yet sufficiently critical knowledge.” There may be a gap in John’s practice that is a barrier to his students developing critical knowledge.

John’s struggle to enact a critical model of curriculum is not uncommon. Chege (2009) identifies five approaches to teaching literacy that range from technical and rationalist approaches, largely demonstrated by Toby, to critical literacy based on the scholarship of Paulo Friere, Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, and others that

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125 Research aim 6: Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experiences; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democractice, anti-racist pedagogy of hope.
aims to both identify the political nature of language and then use language for liberation. Chege (2009) observes socio-political forces are quick to mobilise and demonise progressive teachers who seek to intervene and educate to challenge the status quo. Joe Kincheloe asserts that “Hope is alive” but,

No one will let us have our socio-political and educational dreams without a protracted struggle. The work is hard, and we will often be vilified for taking part in critical activity.

(Kincheloe, 2008, p. x)

Like the character John in *Mystery of a filed trip*, I have struggled to maintain a critical approach to pedagogy in a school system that adopts neoliberal education policies, and which enshrine hegemony and inequities. I have written about my struggle in *The Last days of education?* (Wood, 2018b). Both *The last days of education?* and *Mystery of EATSIPS* demonstrate the tactic of neoliberal proponents to increase teacher workload to an extent that teachers have very limited time to organise activist’s agendas for social change.

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126 Aim 17: Identify political nature of language, then use language for liberation.
In my twenty year career as a teacher, I have worked in different roles in over fifteen schools. The majority of my past and present colleagues will recognise the characters in My Story of EATSIP; it is a representation of most of us, but none of us in particular. I’m not even sure who I am in the story. While the characters are imagined, they are also drawn from composite memories of people, places and events. The characters teach in the Arts Faculty of an unnamed school, but the word ‘faculty’ could just as easily be replaced by ‘department’, and Arts could be replaced by English, Humanities, Behaviour team, or the names of professional teams and committees that I have worked in.

In My Story of EATSIP, the Arts faculty have scheduled fortnightly meetings a couple of days after the School Leaders’ Meeting. The agenda is usually taken up with the Head of Faculty reporting on leadership decisions to staff. The meetings typically occur after school but, depending on the time of year, commitments to the school, other departments, and students, attendance at the meetings fluctuates - I expect that is already sounding familiar to many colleagues who have shared my teaching journey.

MEL NEWMAN – Head of the Arts faculty  
LEAH FITZGERALD – Faculty teacher  
ADAM WAYNE – Faculty teacher  
ALICIA WHITMORE – Faculty teacher  
RACHAEL HORNER – Beginning teacher  
MIKE – A student on the school’s football team  
CARL BAKER – Faculty teacher and football coach

The faculty staffroom consists of workspaces for eight teachers. A lunch table in the middle of the room has various papers scattered across it. There are two doors; the main door is an exit, the other leads to the Head of Faculty’s office. A sink, kettle and small fridge are just inside the main door.

MEL Okay. Look, thanks everyone for staying back after the Musical rehearsal. I know it makes for a long day, but I need to talk about EATSIP. And we’re already twenty minutes late starting -

LEAH Sorry, I was caught up with the parents making the costumes -
No, that's okay. We'll just start though. I know Alicia has to leave. Adam? Where's Carl?

Yep. Just making a coffee. I'm listening though. Does anyone else want one?

Could you make me a green tea? My cup's in the sink.

Sure thing.

Oh and Carl said he had football training. He said sorry he forgot to tell you. And sorry, I only just remembered.

Adam? Are you going to sit down?

Yep. Do you want the bag left in, Leah?

Can we start please?

I'm going to have to –

I know –

(Alicia stands and crosses to her workspace) It's just I need to start packing up a few things. I've got some assignments to mark tonight after conference planning committee. But I'm listening.

Great. I'll take your chair. (Adam sits with his coffee in the space vacated by Alicia and passes Leah her tea.) One green tea.

Thanks.

So Carl's not coming. Alicia has to leave. Adam, you've got your coffee –

And Leah's got her tea –

I'm going to take the minutes and chair. Is everyone okay with that?

I'll take the minutes.

(Passing a folder and pen to Rachael) Would you mind? Oh, and here. (Passing a second folder) I've signed your field trip permission letter. You just need to photocopy them and you can start handing them out to your classes.

The staffroom door bursts open. Mike, a student, red faced, panting and sweating, walks in and begins rifling through Carl's desk.

Mike? Are you okay?

Yeah ... we just ran ... Carl asked me –

(correcting) Mr Baker.

Yeah. He asked me to grab the team folder.

We're having a meeting.

Oh sorry. I just need to get –

It's private.

(reaching over Carl's desk and passing a folder to Mike) Is this it?

Yep. (Mike snatches the folder) Thanks. (He exits)

Okay. Can we start?

Is there an agenda?

Yes. I sent around an email from the last School Leaders' Meeting.

The one about EATSIPS?

Yes. It's always the last item on the agenda and we never get to it.

It's like the pedagogical framework stuff isn't it?

I suppose they're a little related.
ALICIA To be honest Mel, with conference committee, and drafts, and reports I haven’t had time to read that attachment yet. And look, I’ve got to –
MEL Right.
ADAM/LEAH See ya/Goodnight, Alicia.
ADAM (to Rachael) 4:53. Alicia departed.
ALICIA Sorry everyone. Bye. (she exits)
RACHAEL Shall I just make an EATSIPS heading?
MEL Great. And look, this has been on the agenda all semester and we never get around to it. I just need something to take back to School Leaders’. Does everyone remember what EATSIPS stands for?
LEAH The A is Aboriginal
ADAM That’s right, and TS for Torres Strait. We already do a unit on rituals, and I downloaded some head dress when we were looking at masks.
MEL That’s the ATS. And Adam, it sounds like you are already –
ADAM Embedding! Woo-hoo!!
RACHAEL (writing) So “Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait...”
ADAM I for Islander, or is it Island?
LEAH Islander. And the P is for Positions
MEL Perspectives
LEAH That’s the one. See I read the email.
MEL Yes. And I know Leah, you already do a unit on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance in year 10.
LEAH Year 9.
MEL Good.
RACHAEL Year 10 look at the Stolen Generation and the apology in Documentary Drama to coincide with their History unit. I’ll write all of these down. (to Adam) When do you do mask?
ADAM We sometimes look at masks in year 8 as a bridge into the year 9 unit on identity.
MEL Yes, as a department I pointed out at School Leaders’ that we do quite a bit of Aboriginal studies already.
ADAM It would be good if there was money to hire artists to work with the students.
RACHAEL I’d like to do some professional development.
MEL That’s good. Add that to the list. One of the issues that came up at School Leaders’ was including Elders in our teaching.
LEAH Well, like Adam said, where’s the money? But they can’t have it both ways. If they want to be included in our curriculum they have to be available and affordable.

Carl Baker staggers through the door carrying a bag of footballs, two full water bottle carriers, and his team folder.

CARL Righto. Sorry I’m late. I forgot we had training this afternoon. What did I miss?
ADAM Nothing. We’re just finishing aren’t we? (to Rachael) Meeting closed at 5:02pm.
MEL Alright. That’s enough for me to take back. We’ll follow up at our next meeting after School Leaders’.
CARL Oh Mel, when are reports due again?
Two weeks later, following the School Leaders’ Meeting, the Arts faculty discussed the whole school pedagogical framework that had been deemed a priority for next term. EATSIPS is never mentioned again.

6.1.2(a) Etic summary of findings.

Mystery of EATSIPS shows teachers with high workload undertaking additional duties like musical rehearsals, sport coaching, conference planning, as well as their daily core business of planning, teaching, assessing, and reporting. As a consequence of their workload, this group of teachers are resistant to poorly communicated agendas for change.

The school leadership might use the word ‘priority’ in relation to EATSIPS however the experience of these teachers is that EATSIPS is not a priority. In this mystery, there is no allocation of resources to EATSIPS, rather teachers were required to read an email in their own time and are now meeting in their own time. As an item for discussion EATSIPS is “always the last item on the agenda and we never get to it,” and the Head of Faculty states, “I just need something to take back to School Leaders.” The teachers have not been provided appropriate professional development and the result is that their collective understanding of EATSIPS is shallow, they cite examples of adding rather than embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in curriculum. Aside from Mike, student voices are absent in this vignette and there is no evidence to demonstrate how successful enactments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in curriculum is in the Arts faculty. This includes critical challenging of whiteness in curriculum and

127 Research aim 22: Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools.
students’ experiences and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families in the school community\textsuperscript{128}.

These teachers may be delivering quality teaching in their own curriculum area of expertise, however there is no quality application of the EATSIPS framework. The three elements of EATSIPS, \textit{personal ethos}, \textit{whole-school ethos}, and \textit{classroom ethos} are absent from the Arts Faculty discussion (Department of Education, 2011). Aside from Rachel, who asks for professional development, the experienced teachers have little interest in shaping a personal ethos that aims for “building a sense of self knowledge and understanding” (Department of Education, 2011, p. 17) in the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples\textsuperscript{129}. Furthermore, there is clearly no development of a whole-school ethos that would share the accountability for the provision of curriculum and pedagogy that embeds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. Nor is there the development of classroom ethos that would provide balanced and inclusive curriculum\textsuperscript{130}.

Adopting a moral position that education is a place where \textit{personal ethos} can develop to challenge dominance, pejorative stereotypes, and racism, I assert that EATSIPS is always educationally relevant. The development of such personal ethos is likely the provocation for the group assignment that draws together four students in \textit{Mystery from pre-service teacher training}.

\textsuperscript{128} Research aim 24: Identify manifestations that privilege or silence voices.
\textsuperscript{129} Research aim 4: Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness.
\textsuperscript{130} Research aim 23: Reveal dominant whiteness in schools; (24) Identify manifestations that privilege or silence voices.
6.1.3 Mystory from pre-service teacher training

Mystory from pre-service teacher training was originally posted at thecrystallizingteacher on 28 August 2016.

My story from pre-service teacher training is set at a university campus-bar where four students meet up to plan a group presentation. The students are enrolled in a 10-credit point subject, Indigenous Education in the 21st Century. The 14 week course includes 10 teaching weeks and a four week block of teaching practicum (prac.) in schools. The assessment tasks include the delivery of a group presentation that answers the question 'How can teachers' critical reflective practice improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students?', and students are required to maintaining a reflective journal over the course of their four week prac.

My story unfolds through a reading of the group members' journal entries following their planning meeting. Derek, a white male in his early twenties, is in his final year of teacher training as a Drama and History teacher. Thom, a white male in his mid twenties, is in his final year of a degree in primary school teaching. Roseanne, a white female in her early twenties, is hoping to complete a teaching degree in science teaching and become the first person in her family to graduate from university. Danika, a single mother in her mid thirties is an Australian citizen originally from Sri Lanka, has a research scholarship to complete her Honours degree in Communications.

Like the 10-credit points of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education that I undertook during my own Bachelor of Education, this group struggles through conflict, privilege and the invisibility of Whiteness.

**Derek Turner**

3/5/07

My supervising teacher tore me up a bit after my Drama class today. I wasn't really keen to go back to a group planning meeting at uni for our Critical Reflective Practice seminar, but Roseanne Louis and I are doing prac at the same school, so we're carpooling. And so off we went.

I'd been thinking about a couple of stories from my own primary school days, but Thom had a pretty clear agenda mapped out for our group so I didn't get to talk much about my story of a play in grade
2 when I played a colonial sailor. The play was about Governor Hindmarsh proclaiming the free state of South Australia in 1836. I grew up in South Australia so I know the history, chapter and verse. But I can only remember bits of images and words from the play. I think I recited my line in unison with my best friend and a third boy.

“We are the sailors of the Buffalo,” and then there was another line. I’m really frustrated that I can’t remember much more of what might have been the first public performance of someone who grew up and is now training to be a Drama teacher. OMG – I can’t even remember my lines! But I suppose it was 15 years ago. Anyway, Thom had an agenda, and Roseanne left early, which was bloody annoying because we are supposed to be carpooling, and she had the car!

**Thom Donovan**

**Indigenous Education in the 21st Century**

Critical Reflective Practice Seminar meeting

**Thursday, 3 May, 2007**

I was the first to arrive at the uni bar and waited for Roseanne, Derek, and Danika while revising my notes. I prepared to report from my notes on the presentation that the Deputy Principal at my school delivered to pre-service teachers last week. Mrs Davies discussed the importance of acknowledging the name of the traditional Aboriginal land in our classrooms, and I thought that this could be a topic that our group used for our Critical Reflective Practice group seminar.

Once everyone arrived I suggested that we all outline a critical reflection of our own school experiences that might lead to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as a basis for our presentation. Danika is not an education student, so chose not to contribute a story to the group. Derek discussed a play that he was in, but he did not have sufficient details for the group to be able to critically reflect on. Roseanne argued with everything and then walked out on the group.
After I reported on Mrs Davies’ acknowledgement presentation, I was surprised by Roseanne’s reaction. She stated that it would be a ridiculous waste of time having to acknowledge Aboriginal people in every lesson.

Danika asked if Roseanne’s school flies the Australian flag and pointed to the flag flying over the university library. Her argument was that every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student has to walk onto a site flying a colonial flag that represents a history of cultural oppression and marginalisation of people. Her suggestion that that is the experience of Indigenous students all day, every day, and that the eight seconds it takes to do an acknowledgement, could be viewed not as a time waster, but an investment in inclusivity and a symbol of teachers’ position as an anti-racist ally.

Mrs Davies had said something similar, that for some students, Acknowledgement of Country won’t mean anything anyway. But for some students, some white students, it will get them to think. For Indigenous students, it may be the one moment in the day that colonial dominance in education is disrupted. It might be a bridge that builds a relationship of trust that is crucial before learning can take place.

I don’t know how we’re going to pull this altogether, but the presentation will be:

- Roseanne (if she agrees. Danika is going to call her) - reporting on reflective practice, comparing Giroux and Freire as critical practitioners with Marzano’s Art and Science of Teaching proficiency scales.
- Danika - framing critical reflections of experiences in schools with Postcolonial Theory.
- I will then present with a focus on AITSL Standards 1.4 and 2.4
- Derek pulls it all together, reflecting on my story of Mrs Davies’ Acknowledgment presentation.

Roseanne Louis

3-5-07
DT & I R doing prac @ the same school & because we had a CRP meeting, he car pooled with me.
I don’t care what the other group members have said. If this is meant 2 B our reflections – here’s mine. I’m sick of hearing about how I am privileged.
All these theories that people like Danika go on about, make no difference 4 teachers in the real world. Even if it did, where’s the acknowledgement of my single mother who raised 3 girls? – we weren’t the easiest of kids. I will B the 1st person from my family 2 graduate from university – if I can somehow pass this subject. I got in2 university on my own, & I’m doing my degree without any help.
So there might be a cycle of privilege, but not in my family. Even if we R “white”. We’re from the cycle of poverty. I’m not from a privileged background. I don’t have an Honours scholarship 2 spend my time reading & writing inside of the safety of the university walls. What I have is 2 part time jobs, & I had 2 leave the meeting 2 get 2 1 of them. The group all knew that.
I’m trying 2 break my family free from the cycle of poverty & get my share of the cycle of privilege. I think Derek’s comment about a bi-cycle was completely offensive. I don’t care that he had 2 catch a bus home. I had 2 get 2 work.

Danika Kapoor

Reflective Journal_2007_May3

As an Honours student from the Communications Department, undertaking the 10-credit point course Indigenous Education in the Twenty-first Century as an elective makes me a bit of a fish out of water. The course has the expectation that students will break for four weeks to undertake their teaching practice. I don’t have to do a “prac.”, so instead I’m trying to apply Postcolonial Theory to lived experiences of others. I’m the outsider looking in, “Othering” those who teach the Subaltern.

• Derek’s “We are the sailors of the Buffalo” is fascinating in its partiality and the details that Derek appears to have recalled as well as what he has forgotten or perhaps chosen not to disclose.
  - Derek recalls acting alongside his best mate in the role of a sailor (reinforcing dominant colonial narratives and masculinity.)
  - Derek recalls the play was about Governor Hindmarsh and a colonial proclamation about South Australia. (There was no discussion about alternative histories, or even the appearance of First Peoples in the play.)
  - I wonder if First Peoples were included in the play, or was South Australian curriculum still replicating the colonial notion of Terra Nullius 15 years ago? Something to follow up...

• Thom’s presentation from his Deputy Principal is perhaps an indication of curriculum change in the years between Derek’s grade 2 experiences and Thom’s current “prac."
As someone outside of schools, I’m interested in:
  - Whether or not there actually is change in schools and curriculum?
  - If so, what has led to this change?
  - Are there factors that resist curriculum change?
  - I also want to know more about the Donnelly/Whiltshire Review of the Australian Curriculum. I think I heard Roseanne say something about this government report recommending that there should be less focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, knowledges and understandings.
Perhaps that was Roseanne’s interpretation - How can the government reconcile its Close the Gap on education outcomes for Indigenous students if Indigeneity is marginalised in the curriculum?

- Again, from outside of schools, and also from outside of dominant, white, Australian culture, our conversation on privilege indicated the importance of critical reflective practice in the teaching profession. Roseanne can see class privilege, perhaps gender privilege as well. Perhaps she can see privilege when it is denied to her, rather than when she benefits from it. I’ve committed to follow up with Roseanne.

- I need to work out how to discuss the invisibility of whiteness and privilege. The group knows that I am a single parent, but I have made the choice not to contribute my own schooling experiences in Sri Lanka and my family’s experience at Port Hedland where we first arrived in this country.

The meeting was productive in that we all have a section to present in the seminar. I’m framing the seminar with Postcolonial Theory based on the work of Albert Memmi’s *The Colonizer and the Colonized* and Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*.

### 6.1.3(a) Etic summary of findings.

*Mystery from pre-service teacher training* is a story of whiteness and conflict. Roseanne is hostile because she can see privilege when it is denied to her but is blinded by privilege when she benefits from it. Thom appears to pragmatically follow those in power who make decisions and Derek lacks critical reflective skill. Despite the subject that the group is studying, the development of critical reflection does not appear to be a skill that has been learnt in their pre-service teacher training. Danika is the only group member who critically reflects, and she is not going to be a teacher. The implication of this is the likely replication of dominant narratives in the future classes of these group members. What appears to be lacking in these students’ initial teacher education program is skill development to reflect on personal knowledge. Figure 10, below, reproduces part of the Department of Education’s EATSIPS model as it relates to personal reflections.
Working from the centre of the EATSIPS model, personal histories influence attitudes and perceptions, which then influence accountabilities, organisational environment, curriculum and pedagogy, and community engagement. While Roseanne, Thom and Derek describe stories, they do not demonstrate an ability to
critically reflect\textsuperscript{131}. Danika’s research journal indicates an interest in challenging the perspectives that are embedded in the group members’ stories. Her interests accord with the EATSIPS framework (Department of Education, 2011, p. 22) that calls for reflective questions including:

- why do I hold particular perspectives?
- how were my perspectives formed?
- who and what influenced these perspectives?
- where and how do they impact on my work with the school and community? and
- do I need to rethink my position on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in my school’s policies and teaching and learning processes and practices?

I have submitted myself to the type of reflective questioning called for in the EATSIPS framework. Revelations of the time and place, people, and events that contributed to inscriptions of whiteness consciousness appeared in my through-the-mirror-writing process of reclaiming stories and shaping the mystories. This process of conscientization has led to the crystallizing understandings of identity and praxis that are reported in this thesis. As dendritic crystallized understanding, I specifically consider the nexus between my past and present experiences in schools in my article, \textit{Waking up to Memmi} that is reproduce later in this chapter.\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{131} Research aim 3: Understand my identity; (4) Understand factors contributing to my identity; (5) Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative.

\textsuperscript{132} Research aim 1: Educate myself; (2) Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (9) Intervene and improve praxis.
6.1.4 My letter to Sal

My letter to Sal was originally posted at thecrystallizingteacher on 14 September 2016.

My letter to 'Sal' is a confessional tale, and the truth of this story is also the heart of this research project.

Our year 11 Drama class had worked on Wesley Enoch and Debra Mailman’s text The Seven Stages of Grieving throughout the term. This play, devised by two Indigenous artists, includes issues of identity, racism, violence, and reconciliation. From my position, as a white teacher, we'd had great class conversations about issues arising from the play. Two days before the performances for assessment I recall skiting to colleagues that at least 80% of the class would be in the A and B level of achievement bands.

At the time I didn't understand why Sal, an Indigenous student, refused to perform the assessment task. This was out of character for Sal, and I explained the academic consequences of her decision, before setting about performing all of the teacher tasks that my school system required of me: I emailed Sal’s parents advising them that Sal had refused to participate in assessment; I emailed both my Head of Department and the Year 11 coordinator; and I logged an entry on Sal’s student record.

Sal’s student record confirmed that this was an atypical incident in her schooling. Bothered by this incident, I have sought to move backwards in a retracing of narrative leading up to the assessment day and, through critical self-reflection, I have begun to unravel the layers and multiple experiences of curriculum and pedagogy. At the time, I was too busy trying to coax Sal to perform, explaining that instead of at least a B for the semester, failing to perform would mean the best she could hope for would be a D. What I am beginning to see is the complex interaction of me, a white teacher, interpreting the Indigenous themes of a text, written by Indigenous theatre-makers, and yet failing to provide a space for Indigenous student voices.

This critical self-reflective research is helping to open me to understand Sal's possible motivation for withdrawing labour, and to see the broader implications for teachers of curriculum and pedagogy.
Dear Sal,

Sorry.

As your teacher I failed you and I’m sorry.

I was shocked that a student would make a choice to withdraw labour from one of my Drama classes. At the time I failed to understand. I was so caught up with delivering a curriculum that met the aims of our school data wall, appeasing those people outside of our class, that I failed to hear you and the voices of our classmates. It’s a bit like I was performing my own scripted text, rather than supporting students’ learning. It’s a bit like our readings from Augusto Boal’s work in that I was delivering my own monologues, rather than working in dialogue. I’m sorry that I did not make time to hear you.

So often in Drama we (or is it always just me?) talk about power and class. Now as I reflect, I realise that I had overlooked the importance of critically discussing race, of challenging pejorative stereotypes, of failing to see and challenge white privilege.

What you have helped me to see is the continuation of dominant colonial narratives in the curriculum. I can see the privileged place of whiteness that marginalises Other voices. It really is more than a little bit ironic to be teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives with the Judeo-Christian values that are embedded in the Australian curriculum, especially from a position of Whiteness. I want to do better.

I want you to know that I’m committed to change. Since our unit on The Seven Stages of Grieving I have begun a process of deep critical self reflection on my own teaching. I want to be a more critical teacher, open to multiple understandings, inviting multiple perspectives, and empowering student’s voice. I want my classes to be sites of critical hope that empower us all to be anti-racist allies.

Changing my teaching might be a slow process, and I will stumble along the way. After all, I continue to work in a system, as you know, that is highly resistant to perspectives that challenge dominance. I’m continuing to work hard to critically reflect on how my own whiteness impacts on my teaching. Teachers are learners, too. We spend our careers learning how to be better, understanding that, just like no two teachers are alike, I understand that no two students are ever the same.

I hope other teachers will join with me.
I hope for a better future.
I’m sorry for failing you.
Thank you for teaching me.

Sincerely,
Craig Wood.
6.1.4(a) Etic summary of findings.

My letter to Sal demonstrates a critical incident in teacher praxis which jars privilege, reveals whiteness, and appears to open the teacher to white guilt. Written in the form of a letter in the present, the mystery reflects a past event. The author of the letter appears to have begun a transformation in between the past event and present writing.

The teacher reflects on an experience that jarred privilege and has led to a transformational process. The story indicates that the teacher, as holder of universal knowledge, assumed the role as the authority in the class. From a critical whiteness perspective, the teacher’s authority arises from the position as custodian of privileged colonial narratives that marginalise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Moreover, the teacher’s pedagogy entrenched the teacher voice and white dominance, rather than democratise learning through critical conversations. The past event shocked the teacher who thought that he was enacting critical pedagogy, but now realises that what he thought was dialogue was experienced as monologue. Through critical reflection, the whiteness in curriculum and his teaching is revealed, as is the impact of whiteness in contributing to the student’s action. The teacher is now seeking alternative way of working.

The actions of the student appear to be a response to a deliberate decision to withdraw labour from participation in the curriculum. The student’s choice is actioned with the understanding of a punitive academic consequence; however, the student is motivated by something deeper than school results. There are other students in the

133 Research aim 1: Educate myself; (9) Intervene and improve praxis.
134 Research aim 10: Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education; (24) Identify manifestation of whiteness that privilege or silence voices.
class who are co-performers in this story. The mystery and subsequent teacher reflections are silent on the extent to which the classroom ethos reframed or reinforced individual attitudes and perceptions of non-Indigenous students.
6.1.5 Mystery of Matthias

Mystery of Matthias was originally posted at thecrystallizingteacher on 8 October 2016.

Most teachers have stories of the difficult class or challenging students. Throughout my teaching career I have often worked with students who are at risk of disengaging from education. My story of Matthias is typical of my experiences. Beginning as a tale of apprehension and distance, the story is one of persisting through frustration and exhaustion, understanding the individual learner, and eventually leading to places of hope.

The start of the new school year bought with it some challenges. Matthias was listed on my year 9 Drama class roll. I didn’t teach Matthias when he was in year 8, but his reputation preceded him. Matthias was notorious for mucking up in class and in the playground, and he frequently failed to submit assignments or to even be at school on days when assessment items were due. As the new school year got under way, it looked like nothing much had changed.

Most days Matthias was asked to report to me in the student notices. This sounded very formal, even punitive. Looking back now I can see that this was reinforcing the pejorative reputation that been formed of Matthias amongst students, staff, and probably himself. I really just wanted to check in with him. I’d check on his uniform and that he had the correct books for his subjects, and some days we’d just casually chat about the weekend football results or his family. In any event most of my colleagues were used to Matthias dropping in during morning tea; we had all given up reminding him of the staffroom etiquette to knock on the door and ask politely to speak to a teacher.

The first assignment that our year 9 Drama class had to complete was to make a puppet. Students had time to work on the project in class, but I also gave Matthias some additional guidance at his morning tea visits. However Matthias’ behaviour on the day that the assignment was due was not unexpected. He was absent. But, later in the day there was silence in the staffroom when Matthias dropped his puppet on my desk and turned to leave without saying a word.

“What’s this, Matt?” I asked.

Matthias, drew a long breath, started chewing gum, and said, “It’s my Drama thing.”

“Your puppet, then. You put a bow tie on him! Nice.”

Unable to resist playing with a puppet I placed my hand inside and began working out how to manoeuvre his head. His goggley eyes jiggled about. Matthias was a bit bewildered but eventually asked “What do you reckon I’ll get, Sir?”

“Can I ask you something,” I interrupted his thought flow, “is this the first assessment you’ve ever done in Drama?” Matthias answered with a raised eyebrow and half smile.

“I haven’t got a marking sheet in front of me, but it’s at least a B.”
“Really!!??”
“At least a B,” I confirmed. Then added, “Hey Matt, can I call your Dad?”
“What for?”
“I reckon he’d be proud of you. Come on, let me make his day.”
Matthias’ half smile became a full smile. “Whatever. Thanks, Sir,” he said and left.
Matthias didn’t continue Drama after year 9, in fact I rarely saw him. But three years later at his school formal, dressed in a tuxedo, Matthias, his Dad, and a camera approached me.
“Sir, can we get a photo together?”

6.1.5(a) Etic summary of findings.
Mystery of Matthias is the story of expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and the power of investing in relationships that disrupt deficit thinking, build confidence, and offer hope. The story suggests a socially accepted narrative about Matthias that generates a low expectation amongst teachers and likely contributes to Matthias’ negative perceptions of self. In the story the narrative is changed when Matthias experiences academic success and a positive relationship with a teacher. This class provides an opportunity to experience an alternative narrative and imagine a future of hope. Matthias goes on to complete high school.

Beyond the analytical questions inspired by Ladson-Billings’ *Dreamkeepers* that consider what is happening in this class, with this teacher, and with this student, *Mystery of Matthias* reveals the critical importance of relationships between teachers, students, and parents. In the mystery, ‘Sir’ relinquishes his own meal break times to provide additional support for the student. An education system that values teachers re-engaging at-risk students ought to allocate additional resources so that
students who are represented by Matthias can access support, rather than rely on ad hoc good will of teachers\textsuperscript{135}.

\textsuperscript{135} Research aim 7: Deepen understandings of praxis; (25): Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.
6.2 Conversations with myself

*Conversations with myself* is the title of Bill Evans’ 1963 Grammy Award winning jazz record as well as Nelson Mandela’s 2010 literary album. As a fan of both, I chose to use the title for my epilogue to *the crystallizing teacher* that I posted on 25 October 2016. As an epilogue, the blog was part reflexive account of writing the previous five mysteries, and part beginning of my analysis of the mysteries.

Presented as a duologue, in *Conversations with myself* I return to my insider and emic position in the research and I assume the identity of two characters. I am both Craig the Researcher who is subject of this research, and Woody the teacher, whose teaching practice is the object of the research. In the epilogue, Woody disrupts traditional hierarchies in the academy\(^\text{136}\) and turns the research gaze back on the researcher. The critical reflexivity that arises from performing both of the roles in the interview demonstrates:

- conscientization, in which there is a continued process of teacher questioning and a researcher process of noticing and taking cognizance of things\(^\text{137}\);
- crystallization, as I attempt to understand teacher praxis by interpreting views of my praxis from multiple angles\(^\text{138}\);
- reflexivity, as I engage in discourse between both object and subject of the research;
- reflexive and critical acknowledgement of my agency and privileged position as writer, as I describe processes of choosing the stories to

\(^{136}\) Research aim 21: Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.

\(^{137}\) Research aim 7: Deepen understandings of praxis; (9) Intervene and improve praxis.

\(^{138}\) Research aim 6: Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience.
include or omit, and my choices related to how the stories are represented;

- tensions in working with data to shape truthful representations of lived experiences;

- the emergence of themes and connections between the mysteries;

- value in the use of personal narrative in critical teacher research;

- an ethical framework for storied representations of memory involving people, places, and events;

- insights into power and privilege that impact on teachers, and that teachers unconsciously replicate;

- insights into how whiteness is replicated in teacher training and curriculum;

- a commitment to establishing communities of interest that further develop understandings of whiteness in Australian education settings; and

- a commitment to continue the research with foreshadowed publications.

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139 Research aim 14: Seek truth.
140 Research aim 5: Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative; (7) Deepen understandings of praxis; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis.
141 Research aim 21: Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
142 Research aim 5: Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (9) Intervene and improve praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness.
143 Research aim 8: Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis.
144 Research aim 19: Build communities of interest to decolonise praxis; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools; (24) Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.
Craig the Researcher: Where does the name Woody come from?

Woody the Teacher: Australian men with a monosyllabic surname often find the letter Y added to their surname. Clark becomes ‘Clarky’; Smith becomes ‘Smithy’; and in my case Wood becomes ‘Woody’.

Craig: A cultural practice then?

Woody: Amongst the dominant, patriarchal sub-cultures that I have often been drawn to in my career. Yes.

Craig: ‘Dominant, patriarchal sub-cultures’?

Woody: My stories of Sal and Matthias prompted me to think about this. I am interested in working with students who are at-risk from disengaging in education, like Matthias, and I think I’ve been effective in building relationships with these students. But I’m increasingly aware that these relationships might be reinforcing the dominant patriarchy, and that might be why I was able to connect with Matthias, but failed with Sal, a student with a clean record.¹⁴⁵

Craig: Matthias and Sal are two of nearly thirty reclaimed stories located on a timeline of your life. There are only five stories on the crystallizing teacher. What’s missing?

Woody: Some of the mysteries stories are composites of the reclaimed stories, and the reclaimed stories from my own schooling ended up on the cutting room floor. But I can trace a curriculum link from the omissions of First People’s knowledges in my own neocolonial, white schooling, and that same dominant thinking, unchallenged, being replicated in my own uncritical pedagogy.

¹⁴⁵ Research aim 5: Understand how my identity impacts on my professional narrative.
Dominance that would likely continue, were it not for the intervention of this critical reflective research\textsuperscript{146}.

**Craig:** It's impossible to tell every lived detail spanning more than forty years; the five stories that are blogged are a focused sample, illuminating themes that are central to this interest. I chose your undergraduate university days as the starting point for the blogs to develop a narrative arc. *My story of a field trip* broadly introduced the theme of critical pedagogy, *My story of EATSI PS* then revealed a problem, and *My story from pre-service training* developed the problem and suggested a cause. *My letter to Sal* is the dramatic climax in the arc and *My story of Matthias* is a story of hope\textsuperscript{147}.

**Woody:** Reflecting on all thirty reclaimed stories, making connections between them, and pressing myself to see experiences in different ways, has deepened my understanding of curriculum and pedagogy and how I enact both\textsuperscript{148}. I have found the process of storying rich, complex and lived experience has been much more valuable than representing the act of teaching and learning as decontextualised, reductive data, often the preferred representation of education authorities. Stories speak to the audience I am interested in sharing dialogue with. Reductive data is for a different audience and purpose\textsuperscript{149}.

**Craig:** You don't want to dialogue with education authorities, policy makers, government?

\textsuperscript{146} Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools.

\textsuperscript{147} Research aim 15: Create stories that resonate with an audience.

\textsuperscript{148} Research aim 6: Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience; (7) Deepen understandings of praxis

\textsuperscript{149} Research aim 12: Seek verisimilitude; (18) Seek allies; (21) Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
Woody: I’m interested in this research creating dialogue, not monologue. Dialogue is more likely with classroom teachers and school leaders than it is with education authorities, policy makers, government\textsuperscript{150}.

Craig: We’ve talked about representations of your teaching practice and the ethics of representation in the stories.

Woody: I have opened my own practice up to this process, but I have worried about harm being done to my colleagues, the wider teaching profession, individual students and, most importantly, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Writing about truth of experience as social fiction has meant people and places remain anonymous. There’s a distance of time, place, and action between my experiences and the shared stories.

But truth remains embedded in the story\textsuperscript{151}.

Craig: The introduction to My story of EATSIPS states the story, “is a representation of most of us, but none of us in particular.”

Woody: That’s right.

Craig: You disapproved of an earlier draft of that story because it represented the teaching profession poorly.

Woody: The published draft captures the truth of the matter. There are significant workload issues for each teacher and EATSIPS is constantly pushed aside while distractions are attended to. The teachers in that story do not embrace EATSIPS because their employer gives no indication that it is a priority and, critically, as a white staffroom, no one sees the need for EATSIPS\textsuperscript{152}.

\textsuperscript{150} Research aim 16: Apply critical social analysis to action.
\textsuperscript{151} Research aim 13: Seek trustworthiness of accounts.
\textsuperscript{152} Research aim 12: Seek verisimilitude; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools.
As an example of truth through composite mysteries, I can say that *My story from pre-service training* is a real incident. Several in fact.

**Craig:** Whether it’s your memory or the shared story, the truth of *My story of pre-service training* can be found in deconstructing whiteness and privilege.

**Woody:** That’s how I view the story now. Others may have a different take.

**Craig:** And to the challenge of balancing ethics with truth, and with artistic representation of data, that is your memories, characters, and settings.

**Woody:** That was your struggle.

**Craig:** Certainly was. You were right to reject early drafts of *My story of EATSIPS*; they were too playful. I was privileging an artistic need to create a build up of dramatic tension, and that resulted in the truth being diminished. On the other hand, playing with writing styles and the story structure in *My story from pre-service training* magnified truth in the story. I found the process of shaping the stories both challenging and satisfying. What I’ve developed is a way to drill through layers of context to realise the core of what I think is our research interest, then find ways to disseminate that core through stories. I think of the process as a sensual rumba between two partners: the data that is your memories of lived experience, and shared stories that represent the data. As I choreograph this dance, I’m aware that an audience is seeing the rumba from different positions around the ballroom.

**Woody:** That’s a journal article.

**Craig:** Forthcoming.

**Woody:** As the researcher what are the findings from mysteries?

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153 Research aim 14: Seek truth.

154 Research aim 12: Seek verisimilitude; (13) Seek trustworthiness of accounts; (15) Create stories that resonate with an audience.
Craig: The ‘Welcome’ blog said I was looking to learn about hope, race, racism, and whiteness in teaching. I now also wonder about hope and whiteness in research. But as the object of the research, what has the research revealed for your teaching practice?

Woody: Gaps.

Craig: Gaps?

Woody: For me, time and again as I reflected on my practice I saw gaps and deficits. I thought that I was effective in building rapport with students, but as I said earlier, My letter to Sal, reveals critical gaps. For me, time and again as I reflected on my practice I saw gaps and deficits. I thought that I was effective in building rapport with students, but as I said earlier, My letter to Sal, reveals critical gaps.

Craig: Intersectionality of whiteness and gender?

Woody: And gaps between the critical pedagogy that I thought I enact, and the type of curriculum students are experiencing. And an overarching systemic gap in meeting my professional needs. The reflective practice models on offer by my employer would not have revealed any of the traits that are at the heart of what I see as the deficits in my teaching practice. And I wouldn’t say it’s a point of learning, but there’s a humility in this process, explicitly revealing my deficits, not to mention revealing to myself that I’m not the teacher that I aspire to be. That hurts my pride. So it should. I think that pride has masked my whiteness. Pride has allowed me to think that I’m John in My story of a field trip. In practice I’m probably more Toby.

Craig: I think revealing character traits to yourself is very much a point of learning. Are there others?

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155 Research aim 5: Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative; (7) Deepen understandings of praxis; (9) Intervene and improve praxis.

156 Research aim 8: Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education;

157 Research aim 3: Understand my identity; (4) Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity.
Woody: Some of the drafting of my stories uncovered anger that I didn’t know about before I wrote it.

Craig: Sounds like Laurel Richardson’s Critical Analytical Process.

Woody: We excluded my primary school stories from the shared stories but I’m angry about the omissions of First People’s histories, culture and language in my own education. I am angry because my schooling did not celebrate the rich understandings that First Peoples have known and practiced throughout these lands and waterways for over 40,000 years. I am angry at my pre-service teacher education program of the 1990s that included 10-credit points in a single subject on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. I am angry at successive state governments who have consistently failed to fund the development of quality professional development for Queensland teachers, and the federal government for continuing to privilege the status quo. I am angry because of the cycle of neocolonialism that I now replicate\textsuperscript{158}. And I am angry at myself for such egocentrism. The omission of First Peoples’ perspectives in my education is nothing compared to the trans-generational failure of education systems, and the continued replication of neocolonial narratives in contemporary curriculum and pedagogy.

But I didn’t know about the anger before I wrote about it.

Then again, I didn’t know what I had missed out on until I began this process.

Craig: Critical reflection has revealed gaps and character traits. How does that relate your expectations at the start of this process?

\textsuperscript{158} Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic anti-racist pedagogy of hope; (24) Identify manifestation of whiteness that privilege or silence voices.
Woody: Initially I wanted to be a better teacher, using the Professional Standards for Teachers as a tool to measure and evaluate my practice. Nowhere in the PSTs is there space to be critical of the system. Another point of learning has been the revelation that my struggle to be the teacher that I want to be, is hindered by the system that is designed to replicate dominant, colonial, white narratives. So again, the PSTs make a pretty template, but entrench oppression and deny teachers the opportunity to develop criticality of their own practice. As critical reflection goes, this process has been deep and transformational, and more beneficial to my continuing development as a critical teacher than state or federal government agency generated packages of teacher professional development. As a researcher you wanted to learn about hope, race, racism and whiteness in teaching. How is that going?

Craig: That also remains a gap, insofar as I wonder about researcher practices that celebrate hope and reveal researcher whiteness. In *The Qualitative Manifesto – A call to arms*, Norman Denzin calls on qualitative researchers to undertake activist research methodologies of change. This process has been interventionist in its nature, by reflecting on your teaching past and present, but we’ve not shifted to how to go about resisting domination and promoting hope, social justice and freedom in your classes.

Woody: So what next? How do I teach in the interstitial third spaces of reconciliation?

Craig: In a meaningful way, rather than creating more pedagogical templates?

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Research aim 1: Educate myself; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic anti-racist pedagogy of hope; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.
Woody: Absolutely!

Craig: Critical action-research?

Woody: Sounds like you’re already thinking of your post-doctoral research.

Craig: One step at a time.

Woody: As long as there are more forward than backward steps.

6.3 Crystallizing teacher conversations

In Part II of this thesis, I described my iterative and performative process of through-the-mirror-writing. That discussion included describing both the method of data collection and my subsequent process of data analysis which involved codifying data, identifying patterns and establishing themes. In this chapter I present excerpts from my interviews with Kathleen and Louise that support the methodological choices that I have made in this research as well as opened the mysteries to new perspectives and deeper understandings of praxis. Throughout this section I have attempted to fade down my research subject’s authorial voice and amplify the interview data, albeit data that includes my voice in exchanges with Kathleen and Louise. I have attempted to only use my authorial voice to establish links between the interview excerpt and this research.

Like the etic analysis of the mysteries that I discussed in the previous section of this chapter, I was initially guided by Ladson-Billing’s questions as method to analyse the mysteries, and to provide a frame for the interviews. However, by allowing the interviews to follow an unstructured approach, the data reveals a wider array of perspectives and understandings of praxis and demonstrate:

- methodological support for this research project’s use of CPR\textsuperscript{160};

\textsuperscript{160} Research aim 21: Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
• examples of generalisability, validity, reliability, ethics, and trust\textsuperscript{161};
• critical understandings of the impact of teacher identity on praxis\textsuperscript{162};
• tensions between curriculum and teacher pedagogy\textsuperscript{163};
• teacher frustration;
• unanimity in our experiences of the failings of initial teacher education and continued professional development;
• the manifestation of whiteness in education structures and identity formation that includes the absence of cultural safety\textsuperscript{164};
• notions of joy in teaching and learning; and
• agreement on the importance of relationships in teaching and learning.

\textit{6.3.1 ‘I’ve actively chosen to re-educate, change my thought process’}

The purpose of engaging in the fourth step of through-the-mirror writing is to invite new and deeper understandings of praxis. In the interviews with Kathleen and Louise, there are demonstrations of hermeneutical benefits of reflective collegial engagement for both parties participating in the research, as well as recognition of the importance of critical reflexive practice rather than technical reflection. Critical reflexion opens practitioners to political representations of power and can lead to challenging those phenomena that result in oppression, whereas technical reflection in education develops teacher skills that potentially replicate hegemonic forces.

\textsuperscript{161} Research aim 12: Seek verisimilitude; (13) Seek trustworthiness of accounts; (14) Seek truth; (15) Create stories that resonate with an audience.
\textsuperscript{162} Research aim 5: Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative.
\textsuperscript{163} Research aim 10: Deconstruct and racilaise whiteness; (11) Resist dominant forces.
\textsuperscript{164} Research aim 4: Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools; (24) Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices.
An example of this is provided by Louise who had provided written responses to some of the blogs when they were originally posted. Her response to *Mystery of a field trip* considered the story in the context of her own pedagogical dilemmas and Louise concluded the response with,

PS. As a side note – having just put my thoughts on paper for the first time in a while … It’s interesting to note just how much I reflect on my practise, without even realising it.

(LLW)

Some months later in our interview, Louise pressed me to explain my research.

**LL** When you … (dog barks) like with your research … like what are you trying to achieve?

**CW** When I critically reflect on my own practice and I map my practice to the standards –

**LL** mmm

**CW** - I’m barely graduate –

**LL** mmm

**CW** - and the point I’m going to make in the conference next week is, for the classroom teachers who are in there, I reckon we’re –

**LL** oh yeah

**CW** - all barely graduate –

**LL** easily.

**CW** If you look at the descriptor of barely graduate, that’s where we are, and there would be some people who are a little stronger than that, because they’re running great programs, but not many of us. And that’s why um *Mystery of Sal* was such a shocking critical incident in my classroom practice.

(LLa6)

Later in the interview, the conversation turned to *Mystery of Sal* and I asked Louise how she would have managed a similar experience. Louise also teaches *The Seven Stages of Grieving* in a similar context and she outlined a process of relationships in her praxis that connect teacher, student, parent, and curriculum.

**LL** … and so I - [STUDENT #1] was very connected to her culture. I sort of approached her at the end of the first lesson and I said, we are gonna be doing this play, I’m gonna call your Mum, because I just want her to know that
we are doing this play and that I'm going to do my very best to be –

**CW** yeah

**LL** - you know, doing it in a culturally sensitive way and I start the year by doing *The Rabbits* - like I've written a process drama for, you know the book *The Rabbits*?

**CW** No.

**LL** It's a storybook, a children's storybook and it explores the rabbits thrown out of their home by foxes and it the whole thing is a big analogy for –

**CW** yeah yeah

**LL** [inaudible] - colonisation and stuff. So we do a process drama so the kids can kind of get a sense of what it feels like to have your stories lost and we build their communities and we spend lessons on building their home, and decorating their houses and flags for their little tribes and really gain them to invest into their tribe. Then, I get the Performing Arts staff, like if you list [inaudible] to come in and they just destroy everything that the kids have made -

**CW** yeah

**LL** - and we explore those feelings of loss and you know you have invested in something and it's gone. It's gone and you can't make it again. And then we kind of reveal what we are doing and go into *Seven Stages* and whatnot. I remember like calling [STUDENT #1's PARENT] and saying, "You know, I'm gonna do my best, but...it's only my best..."

**CW** yeah, yeah.

**LL** I'm going to try and I just want you to know that this is what we are doing. I sorta said to [STUDENT #1], "Look, if you ever feel like what I'm doing is culturally insensitive, please just come up to me at the end of the lesson and just be honest with me and tell me because I'm not going to be offended." You know I'm really aware that I am teaching this for the first time with someone who identifies really strongly as being Indigenous Australian.

**CW** Um hm.

**LL** She loved doing the performance. But, I think if I had a kid like Sal who refused to do...did you know that Sal was Indigenous?

**CW** Yeah.

**LL** Yeah, I don't know, I think I would probably would've, well in my school context, first and foremost, I would have gone to our Guidance Counsellor 'cause we have a really, and we do like, she's got a lot of Indigenous programs and stuff and she's really tapped into the Indigenous kids at our school. So I would have gone to her and talked to her about it and maybe get her to touch base with Sal and see why. I probably would have just had a conversation with
Sal first. Failing that, gone to the GO and probably tandemly called home.

CW yeah, yeah.

LL To talk about why Sal might not feel comfortable to do these. And what other options do we have for Sal.

(LLb7-8)

Louise pressed me further on the details of *Mystery of Sal*.

CW - really it’s a critical incident to just leave it there, has just opened me up –

LL yeah

CW - to a whole lot of critical reflections that I otherwise would have still been blind to.

LL All I can think of is an epiphany.

(LLb8)

Kathleen, referring to Danika Kapoor in *Mystery from pre-service teacher training*, observes the importance of critical reflective practice.

KL The last student in that story, who wasn’t an education student, she really analysed peoples’ …

CW yeah yeah

KL … and talking about how she could see the discrimination in all aspects apart from race –

CW yep

KL - which was quite interesting. I think that’s something that I’ve had to overcome in my own journey. So I do make a concerted effort –

CW yeah yeah

KL - to include that in my teaching practice. But the biggest thing that … that idea that the teachers are influenced by their own history as much as they … and if you’re not self-aware

CW mmm

KL then that influence can really take over your practice in the classroom.

(KLa2)

Later, Kathleen added that not every teacher undertakes critical reflection.

KL I think in reflection, I mean I know that I’m very this-is-who-I-am in the classroom. But I think after reading those stories it was a little more clear about how much of our personality we put in there. And I feel like we have complete total reign when we’re in that classroom for seventy minutes to say and do what we want to personally. I mean, I make a real effort to try and tell as
close to the truth of the situation for Indigenous Australians as I know –

CW  Yep
KL  - but that doesn’t mean that everybody has that desire. I think it comes down to a desire and a willingness to do it. A desire and willingness to change your thought. To self-educate.

(KLa5)

Soon after in the same interview, Kathleen reaffirmed that critical reflective practice requires an activist’s intention and, like my primary aim in this research, Kathleen asserts an active choice to educate herself\(^\text{165}\).

KL  There’s teacher’s own personal experience. And if it’s a bad one, and I would say I’ve ….. Growing up it was not a positive experience. But I’ve actively chosen to re-educate, change my thought process. That doesn’t means it’s happening for everybody.

(KLa6)

6.3.2 ‘I really identified with the struggle’

Both of the interviews with Kathleen and Louise provided examples of the mysteries’ autoethnographic generalisability, that being the impact that the story has on them both as readers. As we spoke, Kathleen and Louise shared personal histories or professional struggles with some of the characters, and they recalled emotional resonances with some of the mysteries.

Kathleen was initially hesitant in the interview.

KL  You’re not going to judge me on some of my responses are you?

(KLa1)

Having established trust, Kathleen explains her own experiences of economic disadvantage as a child growing up in a remote part of Queensland, and on that

\(^{165}\) Research aim 1: Educate myself; (5) Understand how my identity impacts on my professional narrative.
basis had a strong affinity with Roseanne in *Mystery from pre-service teacher training*.

KL  This one I'm worried about judgment. The third story, the pre-service story. Ah - when the guys went back to Uni after their prac -

CW  Yeah

KL  - to talk about the stuff. Is that I actually connect with Roseanne. Roseanne is me.

(KLa1)

KL  So, that story … yes. Really hit home a little bit. Especially, I think, the communities that we grew up in and the perspectives of Indigenous Australians. Um … yeah, is really interesting in terms of my history and my journey.

(KLa2)

In a written response to *Mystery of a field trip*, Louise identified with the notion of professional struggle.

I can identify with so much in this story – in terms of both John and Toby … I really identified with the struggle between teaching content versus teaching critical awareness - social understandings.

(LLW)

The pedagogical struggle embedded in *Mystery of a field trip* also resonated with Kathleen.

CW  What have you written about John and Toby?

KL  Oh my God, John and Toby.

- What's being said, how is it being said, why is it being said?
- Why do we study stories?
- For language or for personal growth.
- I see myself in both teachers.
- Oh look! The joy of reading.

CW  Which I think is something John would have talked about.

KL  Yeah. Yeah Um. Just this, (sigh) I don't know, when I read a book, I learn something from it. When I, there's characters that you connect with for reasons um and yeah, teaching English particularly this year it's all become about

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166 Research aim 15: Create stories that resonate with an audience.

167 Research aim 15: Create stories that resonate with an audience.
how is it constructed. What word did they use? How is this sentence structured?
Which is important. There’s value in that. But we’ve definitely lost that idea of what - what lesson are we learning from the novel? Who do we connect with? Why do we connect with them? Um what are we learning? And I think the idea that you had this beginner teacher versus established teacher is extremely important and I guess that’s why I see myself in both. [laughter] Which you said as well.

CW Yeah, that’s right.
KL You lose your passion. Sorry this is turning really depressing. [laughter]168

(KLb7)

For Louise, *Mystery of EATSIPS* resonated for several reasons and, acknowledging our own shared professional histories, I disclosed place and character details to Louise169.

**CW** But given we’re probably talking about the same staff room where that story is set –
**LL** - Yeah [laughter]
**CW** - I’m not surprised. I might see myself in that scene somewhere, I might be one of those characters too.
**LL** Is [COLLEAGUE #1] in it?
**CW** No, no...well [COLLEAGUE #1] could be, [laughter]
[COLLEAGUE #1] could be, it’s about how people respond.
**LL** Oh lord, yeah.
**CW** I see myself as a couple of those characters –
**LL** - So in your like –
**CW** - but when I wrote it, I know which one I actually am.
[laughter]

(LLa6)

The evocative potential of autoethnographic generalisability was also evident in Kathleen’s response to *Mystery of Matthias*. The mystery prompted a deep melancholy in Kathleen that revealed the impact of systemic oppression on her as

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168 Research aim 25: Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.
169 Research aim 12: Seek verisimilitude; (13) Seek trustworthiness of accounts.
she reflected on her own children, children in her classes, and the wider system of education in Australia.

KL Matthias. It just made me cry. [laughter] Don’t laugh at me. Because oh – far out - it’s a shit, shit job. It’s a shit job. If you get one of those stories every five years, somehow it gives you enough juice to get through the next five.

[laughter]

CW It sustains. It fills the tank.

KL You know what I mean.

(KLb2)

KL So that made me cry for so many reasons. It made me cry because it was beautiful. Made me cry for the memories of those you know six feedbacks that I’ve had in my time.

(KLb3)

KL Made me cry for the poor kid in grade seven … made me cry for the poor kid in grade seven who just feels like shit every lesson every day … Yeah. Made me cry for a system where we’re setting kids up for failure. And nobody seems to give a shit … It made me cry ’cause I have three children. And I know that my children’s worth is more than what they get on a report card. I don’t share my kids’ report cards with them. I refuse to have them feel that their identity and that their worth is in a report card

(KLb4)

KL Yeah. So that was I liked that story and I hated it all at the same time. (laughter) ’Cause I just think surely there’s a better way. And with everybody studying education and everybody talking about education, why do we still not have a better way?

(KLb5)

Whereas *Mystery of Matthias* evoked sadness in Kathleen, I paraphrased the mystery in the interview with Louise who responded very differently\(^\text{170}\).

LL That's [dog barks] so lovely. Those moments are why I teach. [dog barks]

CW Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

LL That's really cool. That’s really cool.

\(^\text{170}\) Research aim 6: Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience.
**6.3.3 ‘I could identify with every person’**

Drawing on Ellis’ (2004) notion of validity in autoethnography, that is a measure of stories lifelikeness, the following two excerpts from the interviews demonstrate examples of verisimilitude from *Mystery of EATSIPS*. Kathleen recognises the theme in the story, while Louise recognises the character, and she discloses her own real-life experience that bares striking similarity to the mystery.

Kathleen recognises the culture of auditing and compliance in Australian education and relates the *Mystery of EATSIPS* to another education policy that she is aware of in her school system\(^{171}\).

**CW** Any other stories? We talked about *Mystery of EATSIPS*, the staff meeting.

**KL** Yeah, jumping through hoops, somehow, I did say somehow paper has become proof.

**CW** mmm

**KL** Somehow if we write it on a piece of paper it's true and it's happening. Nobody's checking –

**CW** - yeah so the principal says –

**KL** - that anything's happening. Yes. –

**CW** - I just need to go back to the principal –

**KL** -Yes –

**CW** - with this, sit down everybody I just need to go back to the principal with this, yeah.

**KL** Yeah. There's no proof in the classroom.

**CW** No.

**KL** None. That's what I hate about that bloody IT license, people who could write a good essay could say that they've done all this stuff, there's, it's paper has become proof. It's ridiculous.

Louise recognises the lifelike nature of the characters in the staff meeting.

**LL** I think I could identify with every person in that like role play, because you know, you're sitting in a staff meeting, it's 3:10, you've had a horrible day, and you know, your well-meaning HOD's like, "Ah, there's this new

\(^{171}\) Research aim 12: Seek verisimilitude; (15) Create stories that resonate with an audience.
framework", and you're like, "Oh great, another one, excellent", and you just... and you kind of don't listen, because you know that it's gonna pass through. It's not gonna be implemented properly, no one's going to care about it in 10 minutes, it doesn't affect your curriculum, it doesn't affect the way that you teach, it doesn't affect you from day to day, and you're like, "I'm exhausted, I just want to go home", but then at the same time, you know, the next day you would be the person who would have the energy to listen to that, you know, teaching is just so demanding that it's there's just no space for stuff.

(LLa2)

Later, Louise retells her own story of EATSIPS, without realising the similarities to Mystery of EATSIPS\(^{172}\).

LL I remember having a discussion with my Head of Department - was like, "Ah, here's this EATSIPS document thing-o", and I'm like, "Ah cool! EATSIPS!", and I'm trying to, you know...and then it became a conversation of, "Ah, in year eight Performing Arts we should do Indigenous dance, and we should go to Bangarra Dance Theatre".

CW Yep.

LL And I'm like, "That's great, but I don't really think that's what this is --

CW hm-mmm

LL - trying to do".

CW Yep.

LL You know? But it's like, "Ah, well no, if we do like, if we do...", I remember now, it's like, "If we do like Indigenous dance then we can get out clap sticks and stuff in year eight music, well then we can say we've done EATSIPS, and we can tell [PRINCIPAL] that we've done EATSIPS in the Performing Arts", and I'm like, "Yeah...".

CW That's that's almost verbatim --

LL - It's kind of not --

CW - of my story.

LL Is it?

CW Yeah, yeah, that's very close to my story of EATSIPS.

LL Really? Oh my God.

(LLa6-7)

\(^{172}\) Research aim 2: Seek verisimilitude; 20: Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, antiracist pedagogy of hope.
6.3.4 ‘May not be 100% the truth’

Autoethnographers define reliability in their work as the trustworthiness of the accounts. I addressed ethical considerations in chapter 6 of this thesis, and I note that throughout the interviews I continued to maintain reflexivity and afford respect, beneficence and justice to Kathleen and Louise. In this section I identify reflexive accounts from the interviews that challenge the reliability of the mystories.

In the interview with Louise, I disclose a detail from *Mystery of Matthias* that is at odds with the published version.

**CW** Well that disrupts the story as I've told it. No Mathias couldn't have been in that class [sound of email alert] 'cause what I say is Mathias, I taught him in grade nine and never taught him again.

**LL** [laughter]

**CW** They're stories! They're stories –

**LL** [Laughter]

**CW** - There’s truth in them –

**LL** [laughter]

**CW** - and I know what the truth is.

**LL** May not be 100% the truth.

**CW** They’re social –

**LL** I'm just going to check my phone for a sec –

**CW** - fictions

(LLb15-16)

Earlier in the interview, Louise demonstrates the possibility of affinity bias and engaging in collusion that potentially corrupts data.

**LL** Um yeah, I mean, I don't know if I'm helping you with what I am saying.

**CW** Oh, well, I don't know either [baby coos]

**LL** [laughter]

**CW** I'll analyze the data later...

**LL** [Laughter]

(LLb6)

6.3.5 ‘You’re not going to judge me on some of my responses are you?’

The ethics chapter of this thesis explained the ethical framework that I employed and that included addressed principles of respect, beneficence and
justice. I provided a copy of the Project Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form to Kathleen and Louise prior to their interview and commenced both interviews with the participants signing the consent form.

CW  So, [laughter] you can't get anything past the recording.
So, I won't steal your pen, I'll give you your pen back –
LL  - Thank you –
CW  - having just signed to say that you will not be identified on blog site, but that's okay, and do you wish to be identified in the dissemination of the research, and are you willing to participate in the research? Yes and yes –
LL  - Yes –
CW  - Excellent! And obviously, we're doing a recording.
LL  Yep.

(LLa1)

Earlier in this section I noted Kathleen’s initial hesitation in the interview; however, within moments she shifted from indicating apprehension to demonstrating trust and a preparedness to openly engage in the interview.

KL  My birth certificate says caravan park.

(KLa2)

KL  Even as my mum got older the fact that she was fired when she was um engaged and married, and then subsequently rehired but lost her job when she had my sister and I. By the time she had my brother in ‘84 um she was able to keep her job. But, I remember as a young child being put in the car with dad and my little brother so that mum could come out on her dinner break to breastfeed my brother.

(KLa2)

6.3.6 ‘Those levels of whiteness...’

Kathleen and Louise both discussed the importance of critical reflection to challenge hegemonic power. The conversations considered experiences that shape identity and ultimately replicate power or reject oppression\(^\text{173}\).

\(^{173}\) Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (4) Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity.
Louise’ lament supports bell hooks’ notions of whiteness imprinting on children from birth,

LL … those levels of whiteness … that that you know like it or not, is who we are moulded to be.

(LLb1)

Kathleen observed,

KL We don’t talk about the good and the bad of those experiences and how to alter them.
CW No. Yeah, they just sit there.
KL Yes (laughter).
CW They do.
KL Left to fester.

(KLa3)

Deeper reflections reveal racism in others, indicating that, for the participants it is easier to make adverse findings of others or systems, rather than the personal. For example, while discussing a set of grandparents, Kathleen suggested,

KL I couldn’t see them discriminating against their own grandchildren if they were gay, not at all.

(KLa3)

Later Kathleen added to the explanation,

KL … it’s that idea that personally one-on-one I’m not … So, therefore it makes it okay - to be okay on a wider global community sort of arena.

(KLa3)

Kathleen also noted assumptions that are embedded in systemic whiteness in schools that mislink physical traits to cultural identity\(^{174}\).

KL We definitely hear the comments, “How can they be Indigenous? They’re white with red hair”….That happens - that has happened … this is like my 17th year. That’s happened at every school I’ve ever taught at.

(KLa7)

\(^{174}\) Research aim 10: Deconstruct and racialise whiteness.
Earlier Kathleen had reflected on school curriculum as a structure that reinforces hegemony by marginalising difference, then adding that non-critical reflection systemically reinforces deficit thinking of Other\textsuperscript{175}.

\textBF{KL}  … we teach our kids that individuality is important and that your own identity is important, yet we’re trying to hide up this part, trying to cover this part of their identity that is so important.

\textBF{(KLb1)}

\textBF{KL}  … Never celebrates the greatness or the good … So all the things that are lacking, that are only lacking because white people did the things that they did … And continue to.

\textBF{(KLb2)}

Kathleen and Louise are both parents of children who are enrolled in early childhood education programs. They offer two alternative perspectives on curriculum related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that their children are experiencing. The two experiences indicate that there might be a spectrum of omissions, marginalisations and replications of whiteness, that shifts to “shiney” and positive imagery, and further to critical narratives that celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, stories, and languages\textsuperscript{176}.

Kathleen disparagingly explains how her children experience a clean, sanitised, “shiney” version of non-confrontational white history in early childhood education, replacing omitted history in school curriculum that we experienced in our own schooling\textsuperscript{177}.

\textBF{KL}  I think about my son now, I - I don’t think he’s ever come home from school talking about the atrocities that occurred. Still very clean, maybe a little more truthful than what I definitely experienced, but it’s still a very clean … friendly perspective on history. The reason why my son knows the truth is because he gets that truth at home…

\textsuperscript{175} Research aim 22: Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education.
\textsuperscript{176} Research aim 24: Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices.
\textsuperscript{177} Research aim 17: Identify political nature of language then use language for liberation.
We talk about the truth as well for Indigenous, like for Native Americans. Um we've got two boys, they like to play Cowboys and Indians and we make them know that the Indians are not actually the bad people in this scenario … that the Indians were fighting for their survival and for their land. We put it in a context that our three year old can understand.

“Could you imagine if somebody came in and told us that we had to leave our home, would you like that?”

“No mummy I wouldn't like that.”

So, that's the way our kids are educated… They never come home talking about the history of Indigenous Australians as a truthful thing.

My daughter, just last week had a, which is probably that surface level perspectives of Indigenous peoples, so people came to her school, they had a year 2 incursion they learnt to weave baskets, they did some they had some musical instruments, um they had um some face painting and [DAUGHTER] was very specific about the fact that it was disrespectful when you get painted it needs to stay for the whole 24 hours, it's the seven sisters. Um she said, “Other kids in the class took it off straight away mummy, but I'm keeping mine on because that's what you're meant to do.” But I can only put that down to her home environment.

Um and it was all very happy shiny for [DAUGHTER]. Very happy shiny, she came home and she was very angry that she wasn't Indigenous, that seemed to be my fault. Um [laughter] - technically it is. She said abodiginal instead of Aboriginal so we had to work very hard on the correct pronunciation of the word, so I'm assuming that at school nobody taught these little babies how to pronounce the word correctly. So I'm fearful that all day she was going around saying abodiginal to the Indigenous people during the incursion. Um and it was all very positive and isn't this wonderful and I wish that I was Aboriginal so that I could do all these wonderful things that they do and that is [DAUGHTER]'s education of Indigenous history in Australia. [laughter]

(KLb10)

Louise also discussed inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in early childhood education. But as a parent, her take is the early childhood curriculum is cool.

LL And. My God. So, here's another thing. My three year old comes home from Kindy and it's NAIDOC Week. They
celebrate NAIDOC Week at Kindy which I think is … adorable. And comes home from Kindy and so everyday we get like an email home from Kindy saying...what he's done, [baby coughs] how it aligns with the early years curriculum framework. And so in NAIDOC Week they did like dot paintings, like Indigenous dot paintings and they talked about talked about like you know Indigenous people and how they are the First People of Australia and it’s, you know, the learning framework thing is, um through these conversations, [SON] is learning to be a culturally sensitive citizen ... And I’m like, he’s two. Like, he really doesn’t know all his body parts like to be quite honest with you ... But yeah, so I thought that was quite cute. I mean, they’re trying .... [Laughter] ... Well, yeah, uh, yeah, he's doing his little cotton bud dot painting, you know on his little boomerang shaped cardboard and I'm like, that's - that’s cool

(LLb3).

6.3.7 ‘Nobody is educating us’

Earlier in this thesis I reported that my own initial teacher education and subsequent access to quality continued professional development in the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education has been very limited. My experiences accord with those of Louise and Kathleen. Both interviewees were emphatic about the absence of opportunities to develop praxis related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in their own pre-service teacher education programs and the challenges of accessing professional development.

CW ... but if you think about your own initial teacher education program, what was embedded in that?
LL Nothing, nothing.
CW What university was that?
LL QUT.
CW QUT? You're naming QUT.
LL QUT, absolutely nothing. Like, I did a Bachelor of Creative Industries and I majored in Drama and Music, and then I did a Bachelor of Secondary Education. And I had nothing. There was an elective subject that you could do, which looked at, like, um Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, but I think, from memory, that was more

178 Research aim 22: Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education; (24) Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices.
about... Like, there were two, and one of them was about learning history and the history of their language, and then the other one was about how to engage those kids in the classroom.

**CW** Mmm.

**LL** But, there was nothing, nothing in any of my education - tertiary education.

(LLa3-4)

**CW** What did your pre-service teacher training include to prepare you for First Peoples education, or Indigenous education?

**KL** Nothing. Not a single-

**CW** Not a single subject?


**CW** Is in ... No, you're drama-music, but-

**KL** - I'm drama-music.

**CW** - Yep.

**KL** - However, so I did a double degree. So I did my three year music degree in two years, and I did my four year education degree in two years. So I had to be doing six to eight subjects every year when I went to uni. And when I got to the education there was sort of four core education subjects. And then we had to take, like, two electives from different areas to open our perspectives. Still on that list there was nothing about Indigenous studies. Not a single thing. Because that's what I was thinking about. The fact that ... Um, yeah, I've got it here. I never had any uni subjects about Aboriginal, or Torres Strait Islanders in education or anything at all.

(KLa7-8)

Kathleen continues, explaining the need for critical identity awareness and that initial teacher education needs to challenge experiences that have shaped identity\(^{179}\).

**KL** … at uni when you're a little more open to things there was nothing there. There was nothing there to change it.

**CW** Hmm.

\(^{179}\) Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (3) Understand my identity; (4) Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity; (5) Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative.
To change your perspective. Or to make you think about the way that you saw people, or the things that you thought, or the things that you had seen in the past. Nothing. No electives, no cores. -

KL - yep
CW - nothing.

In the absence of adequate initial teacher education in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander praxis, Kathleen identifies the need for teachers to develop the skills of applying critical reflection to praxis, and the subsequent curriculum benefit of challenging pejorative stereotypes and negative experiences\textsuperscript{180}.

What is that? What does that look like? What do we do for those children? How do we present that? So I don't know how any teacher at any time in the history of Australian education actually has any skills to present this ... Or any resources to present it any other way than using our own personal experience ... That's what's happening in the classrooms ... There's teachers' own personal experience. And if it's a bad one, and I would say I've ... growing up it was not a positive experience ... but I've actively chosen to re-educate, change my thought process. That doesn't mean that's happening for everybody ... And therefore those kids in those classrooms are getting ... depending on when and where you grew up, a different perspective of reality

Both Louise and Kathleen offer insights into failures of continued professional development in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and both show teacher frustration at failures to provide appropriate profession support for teachers. Kathleen’s frustration is systemic, whereas Louise observes the behaviour of teachers. Both demonstrate sentiments that are embedded in Mystory of EATSIPS\textsuperscript{181}.

...and as the curriculum changed then it became a priority. And to this day I still have not had any professional

\textsuperscript{180} Research aim 16: Apply critical social analysis to action; (17) Identify the political nature of language, then use language for liberation.

\textsuperscript{181} Research aim 9: Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education.
development on how I am meant to implement Indigenous perspectives into my curriculum

(KLa8)

Kathleen also identifies that the implications of the absence of adequate initial teacher education and quality continued professional development shifts the responsibility for appropriately preparing pre-service teacher to their untrained supervising teacher.

KL  … praccies still come and their focus is meant to be looking at Indigenous students and how to educate them. Yet we don't find that out till they get here. They're put in classes without any Indigenous children. They don't know what they're meant to do to include Indigenous perspectives.

CW  Mmm

KL  They're not sure whether they're meant to be teaching Indigenous children, or implementing Indigenous perspectives into a classroom for non-Indigenous children–

CW  Yep.

KL  - we, as teachers and practitioners, have no idea how we're meant to assist these people because we ourselves have no idea what the hell we're doing.

(KLa8)

Louise offers an alternative perspective on the roll out of EATSIPS from her experience delivering professional development from the employer\footnote{Research aim 20: Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope.}.

LL  Look, I - I so when I was in Central Office, I was working on Professional Standards for Teachers, with [COLLEAGUE #2], and at the same time EATSIPS was being rolled out, and I hadn't really heard of EATSIPS until, you know, I was in Central Office, and I don't know if it was developed before I got to Central Office, or if it was developed at the same time, but I was there, this was what? 2007? And, I'd never heard of it until I got there, and then I remember we were delivering Professional Standards for Teacher's workshops, in conjunction with EATSIPS workshops –

CW  mmm –

LL  - and so we were trying to align what part of the EATSIPS framework aligned with which Professional Standards. We
did those workshops in Cairns and, like, a lot of regional centres, and [COLLEAGUES #3]?, from [SCHOOL]?

**CW** [COLLEAGUE #3]? The teacher [COLLEAGUE #3]?

**LL** Yeah, [COLLEAGUE #3], yep, was involved in a lot of that stuff, and it was excellent, but even back then, like, getting the buy in from - from staff, well one, around the standards was hard enough, and two, because the standards were such a new thing back then. It was well and truly before any talk of any national standards -

**CW** - Oh, so this was the days of the Queensland College of Teachers -

**LL** - Yeah, this was like -

**CW** - 10 professional standards –

**LL** - The PSTs

**CW** Yep.

**LL** Yep. This was like a long time ago, and at the same time we were trying to find the cross over with EATSIPS, and [COLLEAGUE #4], [COLLEAGUE #2] and I were trying to run these workshops that were both, and we were trying to do it in partnership with the A06 from EATSIPS –

**CW** hm-mmm –

**LL** - and [COLLEAGUE #5]? as well? was in there doing the EATSIPS stuff.

**CW** I don't know that name.

**LL** He was "Uncle [COLLEAGUE #5]" from [COMMUNITY], and so I knew him from back then –

**CW** - mmm –

**LL** - but even back then, even from the very birth of it, there was just so little buy in from, ironically, people, which you would think it would really matter to, like people who were working with highly Indigenous populations in their schools, and people who were even Indigenous themselves, you know, and they were just, you know, it's just another acronym, it'll pass. You know, and PST's past and got replaced with something else -

(LLa3)

Louise recalls the experience of the participation of teachers who did engage in EATSIPS professional development.

**LL** We ran a few EATSIPS/PST workshops, but the majority of the workshops weren't (dog barks) PST workshops by the end. I think, (dog barks) I wouldn't say that it was overt resistance, I would say that it was a kind of PD where people came along, (dog barks) they loved what it was, they were really invigorated by the PD, and then they left and nothing else happened ever after that … because their cup is - their cup was so full, (dog barks) and I'm not sure that it was sort of seen as something that they could
... add into their already very full cups, as teachers ... if that makes sense ... (pause) Yes. (dog cries) That was my understanding, and then since then, like the only EATSIPS stuff I've done is at a school level, and it's like, "Here's a policy document, you should read it."

(LLa4-5)

The notion that EATSIPS will pass because teacher's cups are so full is embedded in Mystery of EATSIPS. Kathleen returns to the frustration that teachers experience when policies are implemented as acts of accountability and compliance, rather than acts of professional responsibility.

**KL** We know we have to do it. We jump through the hoops. We write it on a piece of paper so the principal can show it to somebody from outside that, "Oh, yes. This is what we're doing." And it usually does come down to, particularly in Performing Arts, that we get somebody that plays didgeridoo out to the class ... And that's as far as it goes. That's it ... And somehow that is fulfilling the requirements. I don't understand how it's fulfilling the requirements. It's just like a ... It's jumping through hoops. It's filling out the piece of paper. It's ticking the box. But it's not actually doing anything of value.

(KLa8-9)

Louise is similarly frustrated with school leadership that ensures accountability, rather than ensuring valuable learning.

**LL** I get it, like no-one has got time for another bolt-on acronym, because we're bombarded with bolt-on acronyms all the time, to our curriculum, but this shouldn't, it shouldn't EATSIPS shouldn't be another bolt-on acronym.

(LLa2)

Louise concludes that systemic change is required and that EATSIPS needs a policy champion to deepen policy understanding and enactment at the local level, and someone to support professional development and who can drive and deliver change.

**LL** I think people kinda like, “so what I have to tie every single lesson that I ever do back to and find some kind of way to link it back to an Indigenous perspective. Like if I'm
teaching like you know year 12 Impressionism, in music, have I gotta link that back to ... like an Indigenous person's perspective on that?" And no, no that's not the point ... of EATSIPS. But I think that's a big perception out there around it. Like I think you were the champion for it and you were delivering it in schools and it like we should be finding those moments ... organic, that are organic and make sense in the classroom, one. And two, you know critically evaluating our practice on those key moments in time where it could have been better or we should have been better. You should be the spokesperson for EATSIPS ... it needs a champion that ... It needs it needs a leader of those champions to say, it's as simple as finding those moments ... and critically evaluating the teaching of ... respect. To help those our first our First People ... For me, that's a massive take away from this conversation.

(KLb13-14)

Kathleen concludes that, in the absence of systemic support for teachers to improve praxis in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, teachers need to commit to self-education\(^{183}\).

**KL** I think it comes down to a desire and a willingness to do it. A desire and willingness to change your thought. To self-educate, because nobody is educating us.

(KLa6)

**KL** I can only be aware of myself. I can only try and do the best that I can do.

(KLb11)

6.3.8 ‘Am I doing this right?’

The absence of access to quality professional development that has been experienced by Kathleen, Louise, and me, has led to frustration as well as a lack of confidence in our teaching praxis. We have each sought local solutions to fill the professional development gap with varying degrees of success that indicate that schools lack culturally safe spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

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\(^{183}\) Research aim 1: Educate myself; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.
and families. The frustration and lack of confidence that is experienced by teachers was identified by both Kathleen and Louise. Both colleagues recognise that teachers want help to improve praxis.

**KL** I myself had a fear of ‘am I doing this right?’

**(KLa10)**

**LL** … then I’m like, well, that sucks that it’s insensitive that I’m fearful. You just don’t want to like you know offend, you know?

**(LLb2)**

Kathleen believes that teachers want help to improve praxis in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ education, but culturally unsafe spaces can exacerbate the challenges of accessing local support. Kathleen reflected on an experience of arranging for a parent to be a guest speaker in one of her classes.

**KL** … so we’ve set up a safe area, but yet again it’s another exclusion … so they’re not singled out as Indigenous … because it’s still seen as something that’s bad. Not something to celebrate … Not something to be proud of.

**(KLa9)**

**KL** I think (First Peoples) refuse because they’re scared … she’s like ‘I couldn’t. I couldn’t possibly come and talk to them.’

**(KLa10)**

Louise had experienced teaching in a school that had been more successful in establishing culturally safe spaces and offered examples from [SCHOOL NAME] that counter both *Mystery of EATSIPS* and Kathleen’s reflections. Louise was able to access positive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models who worked with students and the school community.

**LL** Amaz - yeah, amazing, like amazing, and they had, like, have you seen, there’s there was … it was actually on, um what’s that channel? NITV? The Indigenous channel? … Um [dog barks] there was a really cool documentary on

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184 Research aim 10: Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education; (24) Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices.
there the other day, actually, about [dog barks] um C-
GEN, and the kids from [SCHOOL NAME] doing C-GEN
with some of the aunties and uncles from the community ...
And they worked with that guy from Bangarra. It was
just so cool, because a lot of the kids from other schools
don't have [dog barks] those aunties really readily ... like
available to talk to, like we did, at [SCHOOL NAME].

(LLb2)

I reproduce Louise’ approach to teaching of *Seven Stages of Grieving*,
discussed earlier in this chapter, because it demonstrates the importance of teachers
recognising their limitations, but actively building partnerships to generate safe
spaces.

LL  Like you know and then we kind of reveal what we are
doing and go into Seven Stages and what not. I remember
like calling [STUDENT #1’s PARENT] and saying, “You
know, I'm gonna do my best, but...it's only my best...like I -
... I'm going to try and I just want you to know that this is
what we are doing.” [dog barks] and I sorta said to
[STUDENT #1], I said "Look, if you ever feel like what I'm
doing is culturally insensitive, please just come up to me at
the end of the lesson and just be honest with me and tell
me because I'm not going to be offended." Um... you know
I'm really aware that I am teaching this for the first time
with someone who identifies really strongly as being an
Indigenous Australian ... And she loved like doing the
performance.

(LLb7)

Louise reflects on cultural safety, relationships and teacher contact with an
Aboriginal parent, pre-emptively or to seek permission, that becomes a foundation
on which she builds cultural safety as the unit progresses. Louise’s statement, “I'm
gonna do my best,” is a five word statement acknowledging whiteness as a deficit in
her teaching practice that results from having had no training in Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander education. Her statement also reaffirms Kathleen’s earlier
warning that teachers fall back on identity that is shaped by lived experience, and to not critically reflect on lived experience risks reinforcing pejorative stereotypes\(^{185}\).

6.3.9 *The places that my ancestors are from*

The mysteries prompted reflections on whiteness, and deeper connection between my story, and the stories of Louise and Kathleen. The interviews demonstrated some understanding of the importance of connection to place that we experience, and from this we establish our own realisations of the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ connection to country. In both interviews, Louise and Kathleen are able to describe the implications of their critical reflective understanding for their teaching\(^{186}\).

In a discussion on her own Drama teaching praxis that includes teaching *Seven Stages of Grieving*, Louise identified a gap in her own cultural knowledge.

\textbf{LL} I’ve taught *Seven Stages* many times now ... and I just ... try to use the word fearful, but I’m just so aware and careful of being respectful, much more so than I am with any other unit that I ever teach ... because I don’t want to offend [dog barks] I don’t want to [dog barks] be culturally insensitive, and I’m so [dog barks] concerned that I inherently a, because as you say, of those levels of whiteness.

(LLb1)

Later, Louise added to her desire to demonstrate cultural sensitivity, of her feelings of hopelessness and ineffectiveness.

\textbf{LL} I just, honestly, I just feel, more than anything else, this overwhelming sense of loss and [dog barks] sadness for them [baby noise].

(LLb3)

\textbf{LL} You know, I don't wanna sound like I pity them [dog barks], there, that's horrible, like I don't want to sound like

\(^{185}\) Research aim 5: Understand how my identity impacts my professional praxis.

\(^{186}\) Research aim 15: Create stories that resonate with an audience.
I'm, you know, that you, that you pity this poor group of people or whatever. But I just feel this awful sense of loss for them because they have been you know the Indigenous people of this country thrust in this world that they don't, that's not who they are and they have to try and live in a white world and it isn't [baby coos] who they are. They have lost their land, and their stories and their [baby calls] ... language [baby calls] and I just think it's so sad, and it's such a sense of loss. [baby calls] (to baby) Please don't be cross -.

(LLb4)

On connection to country and culture, Louise discussed her own experiences of connection with her familial heritage.

LL Yeah it's interesting isn't it, like that calling home. Like 'cause you know, [HUSBAND] and I travelled heaps with we lived in London. Like we went to 42 countries and I felt so connected to Scotland. Like the Highlands in Scotland and I also felt real - like when we were in Germany, just I felt like I was, so to speak, home ... And same like in Yorkshire and I really didn't know much of my family tree at all and I came home and I was talking to my Nana about how I really felt so drawn to Scotland [baby coos] and the Highlands and Yorkshire and and Germany and um she contacted her brother, like her now late brother and our ancestry is German and Scottish. Isn't that funny ... And like all we went to like 43 countries and of all of those countries [baby coos] that I went to, like I loved them all, but I just felt this real sense of like pull ... to the places that my ancestors are from. And I didn't even, at that time, know that they were from there ... You know and I just thought that that was amazing.

(LLb5-6)

For Kathleen, place also has implications for praxis. Kathleen’s reflection on the place of her birth likens economic inequality to racial inequality. Her connection to Roseanne in Mystory from pre-service teacher training prompted reflections on the absence of economic power that her family experienced in a community and led to different connections to place.\(^{187}\)

KL So, that story ... Yes. Really hit home a little bit. Especially, I think, the communities that we grew up in and

\(^{187}\) Research aim 4: Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity.
their perspectives of Indigenous Australians. Yeah, is really interesting in terms of my history and my journey

(KLa2)

Through a process of critical reflection, Kathleen’s later added the realisation that her experience of place was challenging, but that she benefitted from privilege that was not available to all children.

KL … you get out alive … I know I definitely had issues with teachers knowing my parents, and neglecting some children in their education based on what happened in the community. So, that was for me, like, a pretty little white girl I can only imagine what it would have been like for those children who were Indigenous.

(KLa5)

Kathleen’s reflections apply a critical frame to her experiences as a child, and challenge negative experiences and imagery. This reframing means that Kathleen avoids replicating pejorative stereotypes that Chris Sarra discusses. Adding an economic frame of labour, Kathleen observes188,

KL Because (First Peoples) are not valued in the community. So they’re definitely not valued in the education of that community … They’re not valued as workers. It’s very hard to overcome that negative perception.

(KLa5)

Kathleen’s reflection connects teacher identity and pedagogy189.

KL I think after reading those stories it was a little more clear about how much of our own personality we put in there.

(KLa5)

6.3.10 ‘You can’t measure joy’

Kathleen and Louise both discussed pedagogical joy that they experience as classroom teachers. Such joy can manifest as passion for their subject, or student

188 Research aim 10 Deconstruct and racialise whiteness.
189 Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis.
enjoyment of learning or the shared joy between teacher and student when a student achieves a learning outcome.

In a written response to the initial posting of *Mystery of a field trip* on thecrystallizingteacher, Louise identified with the professional tension that was experienced by John. Louise reflected on the importance of teaching the technical but that there is joy in discussing the human condition.

… all I wanted to do was discuss thematic material, debate the complex social issues present, but instead had to balance this with a clear focus on grammar, paragraphing, vocabulary, spelling etc etc etc. But that’s ok … I get it. Students need to learn to read and write well. That’s reality, it’s the world we live in. It’s undeniably vital … on the other hand … I’m SO excited at the prospect of JUST talking about themes, the human condition and being critical with these year 12 drama students.

(LLW)

Kathleen also discussed the importance of teaching and learning extending beyond technical curriculum.

**KL**

English assessment is analytical apart from one unit a year and after speaking to other schools there's a 50/50 percent between creative and analytical. Um - and I can't even remember where I was going there - but this idea, ah that's what it is - In the program it says reading for joy, reading for joy. (laughter) I just, I'm like, no bloody reading for joy happening in the English program that we have, for anybody – for teachers or students - And how do you measure reading for joy?

(KLb5-6)

In an earlier written response to *Mystery of a field trip*, Louise extended her reflections on the mystery to her own pedagogical aims of teaching students critical and creative thinking.

I ALWAYS say to EVERY year 12 class that I teach that, if they remember something about Brecht/Beckett/Pinter when they leave – bonus. But what I’m more interested in is teaching them not to believe everything they see on Channel 7 and Chanel 9; to QUESTION their world.

(LLW)
Some months later, in the unstructured interview, Louise discussed celebrating learning with a particular student\textsuperscript{190}.

**LL** I reckon like as a teacher, my biggest moment of “done my job!” You know those moments … when like it’s like, you can leave now, I'm done. Probably one of my favourite students ever [STUDENT #2] said to me, he said to the class once, I don't know, I was like I guess I was having like a Woody moment where I was talking about some random thing that was in the news. I'm like, “Did you guys see this in the news?” Blah-blah-blah and then [STUDENT #2] said something to the effect of “Yeah, Miss, but what channel was it on, was it Channel 7 or Channel 9, because if it was we can't take it for granted." I'm like ahhhh.... you can graduate now, you're done.

(LLb11)

Kathleen asserts the importance of joy in learning but recognises the challenges of making learning joyful in contemporary Australian schools that embody joylessness resulting from teacher oppression\textsuperscript{191}.

**KL** … personally I don't feel like you can learn if you don't have joy and um enthusiasm and passion for something. There's nothing happening in education at the moment, and I say that as an Arts teacher, because they're fucking killing it. I don't know what there is that can bring children joy when they come to a school at the moment, and that is depressing. (laughter) It's depressing. What's bringing anybody joy. And the teachers, sure as fuck are not joyful. Because at every opportunity we're told we're doing a bad job. At every opportunity they tell us we have to do something else without giving us any direction on how to do that. (laughter) So, I just, yeah.

(KLb7)

As we discuss *Mystery of a field trip* Kathleen returned to the notion of joy and discussed the impact of oppressive curriculum on disconnecting learners and learning from their lived experience world.

**KL** you can't measure joy … you can't you can’t you can’t measure it … You can't and that's why (field trips) don't

\textsuperscript{190} Research aim 25: Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.

\textsuperscript{191} Research aim 20: Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope.
happen because they’re seen as a hindrance, when actually they’re probably one of the best opportunities for education. So we talk about that perspective, yet we give the kids no opportunity … to see perspective or to experience perspective. Somehow it's just meant to happen … What did I say? As an adult it's about lessons and connection, lessons, lessons, lessons. What can I prove those children know and what I fear is … my fear is that they're not learning anything. That they're not becoming … because these children have no idea about what is happening around them … or what's happened before them, or what's happened to shape the world that we live in.

(Earlier, Kathleen had discussed the impact of measurement on a particular student, and laments such focusing on data erodes the student's joy.)

KL … and we talk about this year’s growth - what are we gauging this year's growth on exactly? Moving from a 'D' to a 'C' and then a 'C' to a 'B' and then a 'B' to an 'A'? Um I was even told today that one of my kids, by the time he gets to grade 10 he'll be at level. I'm like, he's not ever going to be at level for his literacy, that's just not going to happen for this child and it's not definitely not going to happen for this child the way the education system is set up now because there is no chance for him to catch up. So I don't know how you're telling this child and his mother that that's going to happen. How is this going to happen? They're just gonna alter the data. That's all that they're going to do. They're going to say that each year he moves up, so his ICP is going from a grade three to a grade five next year. Regardless of whether, no testing. And remove him from arts classes where he would probably actually have so much success and joy

(KLb5)

6.3.11 ‘Relationships are so important’

Further to the emergence of joy as an additional theme in this research, Kathleen and Louise both recognised the importance of relationships. While the collegial interviews were unstructured and did not specifically apply the Ladson-Billing’s questions, relationships are also a significant aspect of the Dreamkeepers’ praxis.
Prior to the interviews, in a written response to *Mystery of a field trip* Louise had already observed the importance of teacher-student relationships and peer-teacher relations.

Maybe combining the strengths of each teacher would create the ‘ultimate’ pedagogist and professional. It sounds to me like they can both learn from each other. The way I read it – John is being innovative, trying to find authentic connections for the students reading *Inner Circle*. That’s good teaching for Indigenous perspectives, but really – it’s just good teaching. I wish I had John around, with his ideas, when I was teaching *7 Stages of Grieving*! Having someone there with fresh energy to challenge you and give new ideas is so valuable.

(LLW)

6.3.12 ‘The hamster wheel of crap’

The frustration of dedicated teachers appeared throughout the unstructured interviews. The cause of the frustration is often Australia’s school system that is summed up in three moments with Kathleen. The first shows the compassion of teachers that is unmatched by their employer; the second demonstrates systemic failure to provide appropriate professional support for teachers; thirdly the unrewarded emotional labour that teachers invest in their students. Each moment indicates the alienation between teachers and Australia’s education system.

KL  You want to fight the good fight. You want to do the right thing by those Indigenous children and by God you will and nobody's gonna stop you and you got to bring that sandwich for that poor kid whose got no bloody food and nobody gives a fuck about and you're gonna take that uniform home and you're gonna wash it. I've paid for music camps, I've bought instruments out of my own money. And after a while you realize nobody gives a fuck. [laughter] And you think, no matter how much I fight, I'm in a system that doesn't allow this to get any better

(KLb7)

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192 Research aim 20: Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.
KL I really try to change (negative imagery) ... We try to change ... I don't know if I'm doing it right ... I don't know if I'm doing a good a job ... I have no fucking idea

(KLa10)

KL And they talk about feedback all the fucking time. And that's the only feedback we get that we've made a difference is one kid every five years at graduation or, you know I remember when I worked at [SCHOOL NAME], I had this girl, she played trumpet, um she was from a split family, um the step-sister was this musical genius and they paid, her father and her step-mother paid for private lessons on the violin for her sister whereas this student just had to - just had to deal with the Education Queensland group thing lesson each week on trumpet.

And the instrumental music teacher and I saw something really great in this student and we worked really hard. We gave her all the extra time that we could possibly give her to improve her musical skills. Um and I left um [SCHOOL NAME] as she was going into grade 11 um and as I left I said to her I said, “You’re worth it. Don’t care what your Dad says, and I have faith in you and I want you to promise me that you'll at least audition, if nothing else just at least audition.”

And um so then I went off when she was in grade 11 and grade 12 and went to the UK and all the rest of it and then I came back and I was working, married, pregnant. So I opened up my education or my Hotmail thing and here was this email from [STUDENT #4] just um saying I just want to thank you so much, I auditioned, I got in, I'm doing music education and I can't thank you enough. And I'm like, thank God, it was worth something –

CW - mmm –

KL - and then you know, that gave me the power to go on to get up every morning and fight against this fucked up system, that you hate yet you're completely a part of and you come here every day hating every single thing about the institution knowing that you're isolating children, that they're disengaged, that they don't give a shit. That it's completely the wrong way to educate these kids, yet here you are doing the same shit different day and it's bloody hamster wheel of crap and you've got to wait every five years for the email or the photo opportunity or the something –

CW - Yep –

KL - To realize that, how many kids would you see in five years? That you helped one. It's fucking depressing –

CW - No, but one gave you the feedback –

KL - One gave you the positive feedback –

CW - One gave you the feedback –
6.3.13 *Summary of crystallizing teacher conversations*

There are two significant findings that emerge from the research participation of Kathleen and Louise. The first finding supports the construction of crystallizing understandings that are relevant to research questions 1a – 1c, namely the power of experiences in shaping personal identities which then influence teacher praxis. The second finding was that responses of my trusted colleagues indicated my CPR method has validity, reliability, and generalisability and that this research has led to the development of new perspectives and deeper understandings of praxis.

Each mystery sought to reveal whiteness in Australian schools. Kathleen and Louise connected with such themes that included teachers’ struggle to deliver critical pedagogy in their classes, the omission of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in initial teacher education programs and subsequent absence of quality professional development, and the importance of supportive teacher-student relationships. Both interviews opened me to further consideration of joy in learning and I could hear the impact of frustration that results from fighting systemic hegemony. The interviews further deepened my understanding of the need to critically explore the impact of personal identity on teacher professionalism and its subsequent impact on teacher-student relationships.

My CPR method applied critical autoethnography that aimed to resonate with the audience and prompt reflection on their own experiences in schools. Both interviews demonstrated that this occurred. Moreover, Kathleen and Louise gave
strong indications that the mysteries demonstrated verisimilitude and trustworthiness.

6.4 Mystery of Sal: A critical self-reflective autoethnography revealing whiteness in the classroom

Representing Mystery of Sal is an ongoing interest in my process of conscientization. Applying methods of crystallization to the story I continue to find new angles to see the story’s crystallizing refractions. In this findings chapter I present an abridged discussion that was originally published in International Journal of Multicultural Education’s special edition on autoethnography in pursuit of educational equity (Wood, 2017), where I represented the mystery as the decolonising poem that was reproduced in chapter 2 of this thesis. The findings discussion in the publication is framed by Elliot Eisner’s (1991) notion of the educational connoisseur that includes four qualities: perceptibility, noticeability, discerning features, and uniqueness. I applied Eisner’s four qualities to the themes that I noticed and took cognizance of throughout my process of conscientization that include whiteness in curriculum and limitations of initial teacher education and continuing professional development.

6.4.1 Perceptibility

Eisner (1991) posits that perceptibility in educational research refers to illuminating holistic experience. Supported by Bishop (2008), Leonardo (2016), and Smith (1999), in this research I consider the holistic experience to be the systemic privileging of dominant white knowledge that marginalises Aboriginal and Torres

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193 Research aim 12: Seek verisimilitude; (13) Seek trustworthiness of accounts; (15) Create stories that resonate with an audience.
Strait Islander knowledges, cultures, histories, stories and languages in school curriculum and white teacher pedagogy. By submitting myself to questioning, I am unveiling the mechanisms that have influenced my teaching, which I hitherto could have been replicating and which subsequently impacted on Sal. Thus, in *Mystery of Sal* I wonder about conceptions of dominance and otherness in the curriculum. Lester-Irabinna Rigney’s (2015) keynote address at the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) Conference challenged delegates to consider the origins of curriculum in Australia, noting that curriculum did not arrive on a boat from Europe. Dei (2008) similarly states, “We know education did not begin with a colonial encounter” (p. 119). Rigney (2015) was challenging neocolonial dominance that continues to reject understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as people of learning, and whose 60,000 year heritage embodies curricula that are deeply connected with local lands, seas, waterways, and skies. Rigney’s (2015) lament is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, cultures, histories, stories and languages are not valued by Western schools. This lament is shared by Freire (1993) who observes that Western schools privilege bookish intellectualism over knowledge garnered from lived experiences, and they typically advantage students whose cultural capital “coincides with what the school regards as proper and correct” (p. 17). From my position of dominance, I was satisfied that I was enacting a pedagogy that I thought was dialogical and inclusive, and I was satisfied with my teacher questions and class discussions. However, my critical self-reflection identifies my practice of imposing a hierarchy of knowledge that determined ‘proper and correct’ white knowledge that oppressed Sal’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge.
As a white, male, able-bodied, property-owning teacher in Australia, I am a representation of dominant power, whereas Enoch and Mailman’s text includes depictions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander characters experiencing discrimination, injustice, oppression, struggle, and loss (Sydney Theatre Company, 2008). I now recognise that as a white, monolingual teacher, I am, “underprepared to teach children from non-dominant backgrounds” (Brock & Pennington, 2014, p. 322). Consequently, I question the limited capacity of my cultural knowledge in being able to enact a curriculum that appropriately interrogates the issues raised in the play.

The aims of the unit were pre-determined by the school’s Work Program; however, Ladson-Billings (2009) observes that it is not what we teach “but it is the way we teach that profoundly affects the way that students perceive the content of that curriculum” (pp. 14-15). I now challenge the authority I assumed as the dominant knowledge maker in the class and acknowledge that my whiteness affords me a limited knowledge of lived experience on the themes and issues arising from The Seven Stages of Grieving. I wonder about this missed opportunity to challenge whiteness and enact a critical pedagogy of hope that empowers, rather than marginalises, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges (hooks, 2003; Freire, 1994; Giroux, 2011). However, I also note that, despite the generation of theory on whiteness and hope, there are limited examples of practitioner-generated knowledge in this space. Daniels (2010), Nichol (2007), and Tatum (2016) are welcome additions.

6.4.2 Noticeability

Eisner (1991) asserts that the quality of noticeability pertains to educational research that is alert to specific features of education. In this section I consider
whiteness in education policy as it has impacted my own teaching and learning. My own Bachelor of Education, completed in 1996, included a mere 10-credit points, out of a 320-credit point degree of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. Earlier I noted limited professional access to programs like *What Works!* and *Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Curriculum*. I further note that in my two decades as a public school educator, I have experienced no quality professional development in the area of developing praxis in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. My experience mirrors that of teachers surveyed in Luke et al. (2011), which reports “a lack of sufficient pre- and in-service training preparation in Indigenous education” (p. 230). Ma Rhea, Anderson, and Atkinson (2012) also identified a pattern of limitations in the practices of the Australian teaching workforce pertaining to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and pointed out that professional development in this field has been “patchy, ad hoc and lacking in cohesiveness” (p. 52). Pennington (2007) similarly observes that American pre-service teacher education programs have yet to mainstream the idea of examining white culture as a factor in teacher education in courses related to content. The result is that teachers and schools replicate white privilege without disrupting it.

Returning to *Mystory of Sal* as a critical reflective teacher-researcher, I acknowledge my failure to challenge dominant thinking as well as my lack of culturally appropriate knowledge. I begin to wonder about the degree to which I was inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in our conversations, and I wonder about forms of oppression that Sal, and other students, might have been experiencing that my whiteness blinded me to. Most of all, I now wonder to what degree Sal and other students experienced hooks’ (2013) notion of domination
in my classes. My pedagogy encouraged conversation whereby white students voiced their racialised white narratives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that perhaps reinforced stereotypical perceptions. Sarra (2011) identifies an ontology of perception that can be measured through cause and effect, and finds that white perceptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples tend to be pejorative and derogatory. This results in deficit thinking among white educators and negative self-perception amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. I wonder if my class discussions perpetuated pejorative thinking that reinforced white students’ negative perceptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, replicating whiteness, and further marginalising Sal. Viewed through this lens, Sal’s actions, which systemically appeared to be disengagement from education, may have been a peaceful act of civil disobedience to protest against whiteness. Sal might have been achieving the semester’s aims by teaching me about political activism and social change.

**6.4.3 Discerning features**

My discussion on the discerning features of *My Story of Sal* considers Du Bois’ (1903) notion of double consciousness that arises from my classroom discussions that marginalised Sal’s knowledge. Writing in an American context, Du Bois suggested that double consciousness is a process through which African American people have an awareness of their own self and culture, but also see themselves through the eyes of political dominance. He writes,

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled
strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

(Du Bois, 1903, p. xiv)

By positioning dominant and white narratives as proper and correct, those who embody an alternative cultural knowledge are forced to exist in a state of double consciousness. Reflecting on Mystery of Sal, I wonder how my white, male teaching of The Seven Stages of Grieving affected Sal’s double consciousness. Sal was drawn to view issues of discrimination, injustice, and oppression through a lens of dominant whiteness that reinforced negative perceptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. From my hierarchical role, I was colonising the text, reframing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience from my position of dominance, determining correct and proper knowledge, and failing to press students to reflect on counter-narratives that the text offered and that challenge whiteness. By assuming I held privileged knowledge, I was excluding Sal’s lived experiences and knowledge as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student. The choice for Sal was to participate in assessment, which represented repressing her cultural knowledge, or reject whiteness at the price of academic success. Viewed through this critical lens, perhaps Sal’s withdrawal of labour was a logical reconciliation of what Du Bois (1903) states are “two warring ideals,” and demonstrated her “dogged strength.”

6.4.4 Uniqueness

Eisner (1991) defines uniqueness in educational research as experience that is not replicated elsewhere. I end my thematic analysis by foreshadowing transformational changes in my teaching practice that utilise the unique qualities of the Arts learning disciplines (Anderson, 2015; Gibson, Anderson & Fleming, 2016) to challenge whiteness and enact critical pedagogy of hope. Freire (1994) posits that
an ontology of hope imagines better ways of being and inspires the struggle to keep us moving forward. Giroux (2011) adds that activism enlivens hope, stating that hope demands “an anchoring in transformative practices” (p. 161), and that progressive educators must pursue a hopeful agenda that “alters dominant relations in power” (p. 161). On the spaces created by pursuing pedagogy of hope, Daniels (2010) suggests that teachers and students find new possibilities of being educators and educated. On the struggle that Freire (1994) identifies, Stewart-Harawira (2005) suggests, “Hope is not a blueprint for the future. What hope brings to us is the belief that different futures are possible” (p. 160).

The rationale of *Australian Curriculum: The Arts* includes the statement, “The Arts entertain, challenge, provoke responses and enrich our knowledge of self, world cultures and histories,” and its aims include developing students’ “use of innovative arts practices with available and emerging technologies, to express and represent ideas, while displaying empathy for multiple viewpoints” (ACARA, 2015). Notwithstanding the significant systemic barriers posed to a critical pedagogy of hope in *The Arts*, that arise from the ad hoc approach to professional development and recent attacks from political conservative forces on the Australian Curriculum as reported by Stinson and Saunders (2016), the *Australian Curriculum: The Arts* is an ideal site for teachers and students to explore alternative futures and ways of being that are democratic, multivocal, empathic, and that challenge dominant power and knowledge (Bishop, 2008; Dei & Kempf, 2006; Giroux, 2011; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2009; McLaren, 1997). The Arts are also collaborative and communal (ACARA, 2015), and this opens opportunities to include elders and family members in the classroom (Ainsworth & McRae, 2006; Bishop, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Sarra, 2011).
As a reflexive caveat, I recognise that the rationale and aims of the Australian Curriculum have not changed. However, this critical self-reflective research has prompted the beginning of transformation in the way I teach (Ladson-Billings, 2009). As a white antiracist ally, identified by Titone (1998), I acknowledge my limitations: whereas I might aspire to understand my whiteness, challenge the replication of whiteness through curriculum, and support students in their own racial identity (Titone, 1998), the effects of systemic and personal racism are not something that I am likely to experience. I further acknowledge Mackinlay’s (2012) reflexive article on her own whiteness as a teacher, and her findings related to the vigilance required to remain critical. Mackinlay (2012) ominously notes that maintaining critical perspectives is “actually quite easy for someone with … white skin, white identity, white power, and white privilege to forget” (p. 69).

The purpose of this research was to improve my effectiveness as a teacher in the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. By adopting Freire’s (1998a) approach to reflective teacher research, I continue to submit myself to questioning and to educate myself on the impact of my own whiteness as well as systemic whiteness in curriculum and teacher training. Freire (1998a) also recognises the importance of intervention arising from reflective teacher research. I am intervening in my praxis by committing to continued questioning and unsettling of whiteness and attempting to shift towards activism that enlivens hope.

6.5 Waking up to Memmi: A dwam of critical whiteness studies in school curriculum and pedagogy

In continuing to pursue my commitment to questioning and unsettling whiteness, I applied Albert Memmi’s (1965) seminal text *The Coloniser and the*
Colonised to my reclaimed stories. I subsequently published “Waking up to Memmi” in *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* (Wood, 2018a) that was a representation of emerging findings from my critical practice research, juxtaposing the temporal relationship of my 30 reclaimed stories. The article also developed a method of disseminating CPR as social fiction research and it includes a list of twelve benefits of using dwam as a research method.

The article is presented in the style of a dwam, that is the state of semi-consciousness that precedes sleep and finds dominant colonial narratives that continue to inscribe racialized power relations in school curriculum and pedagogy, and that have done so throughout my experiences as a child-student and an adult-teacher. Drawing from Albert Memmi’s notion of the coloniser who refuses, my dwam demonstrates critical awakening as a white teacher through six scenes spanning four decades. This reproduction of the article includes an adaptation of the introduction.

*Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* is published by the University of California Press, and during the editing process I agreed to change the spelling of words from standard Australian English to American English. This reproduction appears using standard Australian English. The journal also uses the Chicago Manual of Style (17th edition), and my article was published using endnotes. In this abridged reproduction of the original article, I have replaced the footnotes and, adhering to my university’s policies, I include the in-text referencing using APA (7th edition).

### 6.5.1 Introduction

This essay demonstrates a method of critical praxis research that I developed, introducing the notion of dwam (or dwamming) as an epistemology to enliven representations of lived experience in critical reflective teacher research. Framing my
own lived experiences of curriculum and pedagogy using Albert Memmi’s (1965) *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, I find a continued cultural legacy of colonialism in Australian schools, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, histories, and stories are marginalized by silences and misrepresentations that are embedded in the enactments of school curriculum. Further, that colonialism continues to present barriers to my critical, activist schoolteacher pursuit of hopeful futures\(^{194}\).

I begin with a discussion on autoethnographic critical praxis research (CPR) and I provide an explanation of the notion of a dwam that identifies twelve benefits of using dwam as a method to collect and analyze autoethnographic data, and to disseminate CPR. After providing a sequence of steps that I undertook in the construction of my dwam, I present my dwam as a story in six parts.

### 6.5.2 Autoethnographic critical praxis research

Tricia M. Kress (2011) defines CPR as a scholarly pursuit for practitioners that combines theory and practice to challenge hegemony, and that engages with stories of resistance to empower practitioners’ voices. The goal of CPR is self/other/world transformation (Kress, 2011, p. 140). Through my self-reflective research, I have sought to destabilize what I thought I knew, disrupting my assumptions of universal truths, viewing my hitherto constructions of knowledge as privileged, identifying how this knowledge has manifested in my teacher praxis, and critically understanding how I have replicated white dominance\(^{195}\).

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\(^{194}\) Research aim 5: Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative; (10) Deconstruct and racilaise whiteness; (21) Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools.

\(^{195}\) Research aim 1: Educate myself; (2) Undersntad historicl and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (7) Deepen understandings of praxis; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (9) Intervene and improve praxis.
I locate my CPR within the field of autoethnography, which Carolyn Ellis (2009) defines as a form of research at the intersection of the personal and the cultural, where the autoethnographer looks inwards and outwards as both researcher and researched (p. 13). Boylorn and Orbe (2014) observe that autoethnography opens possibilities for personal and cultural critique. Allen, Hancock, and Lewis (2015) assert that autoethnography can be, “intermingled with personal narrative, dialogical moments, and the rebirth of memories in real-time spaces [to give] voice to the voiceless and access to a storied life and experience” (p. 178). My research draws on reflective narratives from twenty years of experiences as a schoolteacher as data. In this article, these mystories (Denzin, 2008) inform the personal critique and are representations of my lived experiences in the cultural setting of Australian schools. I draw on Memmi’s (1965) *The Colonizer and the Colonized* to problematize my experiences, which I then view through a lens of critical whiteness studies, and which locates the mystories within the cultural replication of dominant narratives throughout Australian school curriculum and pedagogy. I present the research as a dwam.

### 6.5.3 Dwam

The word dwam has Scottish origins and describes the state of semiconsciousness that might precede sleep (Oxford Dictionary, 2016). Stevenson and Macleod (2015) offer that a dwam is “a fit of abstraction which leaves a person affected unaware of, or indifferent to, what is going on around him” (p. 38). My dwam begins and ends in a semiconscious state that opens me to “a fit of abstraction,” wherein I become lost in self-reflective thought, and wherein Stevenson and Macleod’s definition, that includes lack of awareness or indifference, becomes an
overarching metaphor to describe uncritical responses to colonial narratives being inscribed in my school teacher praxis. The word dwam is not widely used beyond the field of Scottish literature because, like many cultural groups that are subject to political forces of colonisation, the Scots’ oppressors, the English, have a history of denying Scottish language, history, and culture (Aitken, 2015). A similar phenomenon to dwam or of dwamming appears in American popular culture with the opening voiceover to *The Twilight Zone*.

> There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man’s fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area which we call the Twilight Zone.  
> (Serling, *The Twilight Zone*, 1959)

Taking a position in “the middle ground between light and shadow,” my dwamming disrupts Western epistemologies of the scientific method and privileges “the dimension of imagination” as a way of knowing. This approach to research opens my reflections on my teaching practice to new insights and enables me to generate new and critical knowledge of the impact of colonial narratives on my praxis.

My application of dwam as a method of collecting and analyzing CPR data is further influenced by a/r/tography and arts-based research (ABR) methods. A/r/tography and ABR empower practitioner voices in research while recognizing the potential value of creative and experimental research processes. Rita L. Irwin (2013) posits a/r/tography is research from the field of education studies that investigates spaces between art, research, and teaching, and where practice does not become subordinate to theory. Patricia Leavy (2015) describes the benefits of applying arts

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196 Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (7) Deepen understandings of praxis.
methods throughout the research process and their capacity to “expose people to new ideas, stories, or images. . . can do so in service of cultivating social critical consciousness” (p. 24). My purpose for developing dwam as a research process of data collection and analysis is to show data, rather than report on data. In doing so, I seek to democratize my research by disrupting traditional hierarchies that privilege researcher/writer interpretations of data over interpretations that you, the audience, might consider. Emerging from my CPR, I offer twelve benefits of applying dwam as research method:

- unsettling Western and positivist ways of knowing and understanding that reinforce hegemony by marginalizing alternative ways of knowing;
- privileging imagination as a way of knowing;
- disrupting linear understandings of temporal relationships to investigate possibilities that are created when the past is fused with present or future experiences;
- reflexively acknowledging gaps in data that are drawn from memory;
- embracing mess in data that is drawn from memory;
- providing a platform for discourse between multiple participants including theorists, multiple representations of self, and co-performers;
- creating synergetic knowledge by allowing theory and practice to occupy the same space, where each challenges the other, leading to deeper understandings of both;

197 Research aim 21: Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
198 Research aim 11: Resist dominant forces.
199 Research aim 6: Discern multiple perspectives that illuminate the messiness of lived experience.
• crystallizing multiple truths\(^{200}\);
• generating critical insight into praxis\(^{201}\);
• de-identifying people, places, and events by using symbol and metaphor;
• democratizing research by opening up interpretations of data that invite the audience to take up positions in the text\(^{202}\); and
• democratizing research by disrupting traditional hierarchies of power that privilege researcher/writer over audience\(^{203}\).

6.5.4 Method

I have employed seven stages of data collection and analysis in my CPR. I began by recalling my experiences in places where I imagined that hegemony was inscribing colonial narratives on my consciousness\(^{204}\). I then developed some of these reclaimed stories into mystories. In the third stage of inquiry, I returned to the reclaimed stories and located each on a timeline in descending order from the present to my birth year. This led to analysis of the patterns that emerged from a reading of the chronological order. As I engaged in this stage of the research, I began to shift from a central position of a ‘knowing I’. What I thought I knew about my life story became unsettled, patterns of dominant thinking began to be revealed, I wondered how multiple voices had been marginalized in my own schooling, and I wondered about the continued impact of this on my own actions as a

\(^{200}\) Research aim 14: Seek truth.
\(^{201}\) Research aim 1: Educate myself; (7) Deepen understandings of praxis; (9) Intervene and improve praxis.
\(^{202}\) Research aim 15: Create stories that resonate with an audience.
\(^{203}\) Research aim 21: Disrupt traditional hierarchies in the academy.
\(^{204}\) Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (4) Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity.
My analysis had opened deeper understandings of my experiences as a child–student in schools, and the influence of those experiences on my current adult–teacher praxis (Denzin, 2014). My CPR located specific moments of dominant hegemony that were being both inscribed on my consciousness and replicated in my praxis.

Despite my researcher task of chronologically ordering the 30 reclaimed stories, I discovered that the processes of inscribing dominant narratives on my consciousness have not been linear. Hence, as I began the sixth stage, representing my critical self-reflection in this performative piece of writing, I sought to demonstrate my nonlinear awakening by disrupting my representation of data. In the final stage, I have returned to the dwam and inserted two critical reflexive interludes that remind me of what Tami Spry (2011) refers to as “agency and representation” (p. 58). The first interlude reminds me that although representing my critical reflection as a dwam is a performative choice, it is a choice that reinforces my nonlinear, and unfinished, critical awakening. The second interlude reminds me that I write mysteries, analyze my narratives, and write about my understandings from a position of privilege. Whatever findings emerge from this undertaking, I remain inscribed with (in) colonial narratives and am imbued with white privilege that remains the status quo in schools and the academy.

The narrative of critical awakening that I present here is fragmented, episodic, and surreal. It is a dwam organized into six scenes. The Prelude identifies some of the scholars whose contributions underpin my critical reflections. A Child Lulled to

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205 Research aim 4: Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools.
206 Research aim 8: Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis.
207 Research aim 3: Understand my identity; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-acist pedagogy of hope; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools; (24) Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices.
Sleep reveals the critical tension created through the process of being awakened to some of the events that established my positions of privilege. The Long Dawn of Critical Awakening locates my experiences as a critical reflective practitioner and is followed by a second reflexive interlude. Twitching and Resisting Demons demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining my critical awakening as actions in my teaching praxis. A Leap of Hope reaffirms my commitment to unsettle dominance in my teaching praxis. Mystery of Matthias is the concluding epilogue for the dwam.

6.5.5 Prelude

My scotch glass is empty. Again. That’s the second time tonight, but it is nearing midnight; such is the life of a critical reflective schoolteacher straddling full-time teaching and part-time study. A neighbour’s dog barks, but mine remains undisturbed in a chair next to me. In the background, late-night TV is playing one of the Godfather films.

(1965) *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, has tagged pages and underlined passages from the section titled “The Colonizer Who Refuses” (pp. 19-44). The second book is my writing journal where I have drawn a timeline of my life and located thirty reclaimed stories on it. A pattern is emerging in the data, but I can’t quite make it out yet.

I lean back in my chair. Back stretch. Close my eyes. Breathe in and count

...2...3...4...

From the TV in the background I hear Al Pacino’s voice, “Just when I think I’m out they drag me back in,” (Coppola & Puzo, 1974) and I smile an acknowledgement of how the Godfather’s struggle mirrors my own attempts to refuse the benefits of colonialism.

### 6.5.6 A child lulled to sleep

I can hear a familiar lullaby, but I can’t remember the words.

The melody repeats.

My subconscious troubled, I open my eyes and look around. My reality is unsettled; my truth disrupted. My desk has gone! In fact, I’m sitting alone in what appears to be a school theatre.

A spotlight illuminates centre stage. Postcolonial theorist Albert Memmi stands in the spotlight and he beckons to me. “Come,” he says. The lullaby swells to a crescendo, I appear on stage with Memmi, but I have taken the form of my seven-year-old self. I’m dressed in a British colonial sailor’s costume. The stage curtain begins to rise.

From the stage right wing I hear Carolyn Ellis (2004) whisper, “What we tell is always a story about the past” (p. 116).
I’m facing an audience of my primary school peers. As my seven-year-old self, I am in a second-grade play, and I deliver my line, “We are the sailors of the Buffalo.” My seven-year-old self mouths a second sentence but does not produce any sound.

From the stage left wing I hear Arthur P. Bochner (2014) console, “it’s a present-day realization of gaps in the story of past experience,” (p. 299). “Connect the present in which we remember and the past of which we remember” (Bochner, 2007, p. 199).

“Gaps!” I hear my adult voice exclaim, “like this lullaby?”

“Yes,” interrupts Memmi, “let it play out.”

The familiar melody continues to repeat and from deep within my childhood memories I start to recall some of the lyrics.

Thr3e’s a lake in South Australia
Little lake with lovely name . .

“Enchanting lullaby isn’t it?” says Memmi, to a panel of three that has convened in the front row of the theatre, replacing my primary school peers. “Critical pedagogues, what do you think of the Other lullaby?”

“First, let’s discuss the Buffalo,” instructs a panellist, “this play about a boat with you as a sailor, where is the play set?”

My seven-year-old self, in British colonial sailor costume, proudly answers that the play is set at The Old Gum Tree, which happens to be right next door to my school.

“Let me ask that differently. On whose traditional lands is the play set?”

Initially bewildered, but confident in his knowledge of the historical narrative, my seven-year-old self restates, “It’s at The Old Gum Tree, where, on 28 December
1836, Governor Hindmarsh proclaimed the free state of South Australia in the name of King William the Fourth."

The panellist sighs, and then asks, “Can you tell us the name of the traditional owners on whose land the play is set?”

My seven-year-old self continues reciting his knowledge of the historical narrative. “There were no convicts on the Buffalo. South Australia is the only state in Australia that was established with free settlers.”

The second critical pedagogue panellist interrupts. “Craig, what we want to know is, in this second-grade play that reinscribes hegemonic white privilege and the dominant colonial narrative of the history of South Australia, where are the First Peoples?”

My seven-year-old self, bewildered, can’t answer the question, and hums the familiar lullaby.

And the story woven ’round it

“If I might be a narrator,” offers Memmi, “I think the panellists are attempting to challenge the powerful forces of colonialism in curriculum, which reify coloniser histories as universal truths, while First People’s histories are omitted.”

The panellists nod in agreement.

“Let me tell you then, it will be another 32 years before Craig learns the name of the Kaurnu People, the traditional owners of the land on which this vignette is taking place.”

The third panellist speaks: “I think what we’re seeing is the beginning of critical teacher research. Perhaps there’s even liberation from the systemic professional development being done to Craig — and most of the teaching
profession in the Western world — and that something rather quite meaningful is being undertaken here.”

*Carru barra wirra canna*

*Little star upon the lake*

“So nothing on Australia’s First Peoples, but you learned about colonialism in Central America?” prompts the second critical pedagogue, “Cortez perhaps?”

My seven-year-old self nods. “I remember the story of Cortez approaching an altar where a priest had just sacrificed someone. There was blood all over the floor.”

“The violence!” exclaims the panellist, and my seven-year-old self agrees, “of European imperialism. Did you learn about the annihilation of the Aztecs by the Europeans? Did you learn about the violence and destruction of First Peoples across the Americas, or was yours the white colonial narrative of Europeans saving savages from themselves? How does this curriculum offering on Mexico relate to the history of First Peoples in Australia?”

“Where do First People’s knowledges, understandings, and histories appear in your education?” adds the first panellist.

*Guide me through the hours of darkness*

“Right. And this lullaby?” continues the first panellist.

From the wings I hear Bochner (2007) prompt, “Memory work needs to remain cognizant of the cultural framework that the memory occurred within, and be critical of how the cultural framework between the memory and the writing will have shifted” (p. 200).

My seven-year-old self nods. The music swells and lyrics come flooding back from my memory.

*Every night the native mothers*
Croon this lovely lullaby

“How very quaint,” one of the panellists interrupts; “How very exotic,” offers another; “How very Other,” says the next.

“But wait,” interrupts Memmi, “let it play out.”

*Piccaninnies’ heads are nodding*

*Drowsy crooning fills the air -*

“Piccaninnies,” the second critical pedagogue stands, “is that using the Merriam-Webster dictionary or the Urban dictionary?”

“It’s the one in the song book,” says my seven-year-old self. Suddenly, four other white children, all of whom I recognize as classmates despite the passing of three and half decades, appear on the stage in British colonial sailor costumes and we sing a chorus.

“Heave away/Haul away/Heave away and hear me sing/We’re bound for South Australia.”

“Another British sailor episode,” says the third panellist, “A very strong theme.”

“Very patriarchal,” adds the first panellist.

“Very colonial,” adds the second critical pedagogue.

Memmi joins the panel, “Yes, there’s plenty of the coloniser who accepts in this part.”

“Not at all critical,” the third panellist laments.

“It seldom is,” says Memmi.

“It helps them sleep,” agrees the first critical pedagogue.

*Keep me safely ‘til I wake*

(Cogan 1965).
6.5.7 Reflexive interlude I

The scene fragments. The temperature plummets. I’m standing in Melbourne, Australia, in the middle of winter. Memmi elbows me in the ribs and then nods towards a pedestrian crossing the street. It’s Stacy Holman Jones. “Go on,” instructs Memmi, “ask her.”

I step onto the pedestrian crossing. Traffic halts; the whole world pauses while we talk. “Hi Stacy.”

“Hi Craig!” Stacy greets me with the warm, generous tone of a friend. “What an outfit!” she exclaims, noting my British colonial sailor costume.

“Yes. I’m working on a narrative inquiry, I’d love to send it to Departures in Critical Qualitative Research. . .”

“Oh wow. I can’t wait to read it. . .”

“Yeah. Only I’ve been working on it for months, and I’m stuck on how to (re)present my data.”

“Well, what’s it about?”

I explain my process of reclaiming stories, locating them on a timeline, and the subsequent revelation of inscriptions of whiteness on my consciousness.

“It sounds like fragmented and partial data. Have you read Eve and Christine’s chapter in the Handbook of Autoethnography? They wrote a glossary in a kind of fragmented style. Maybe you could interrupt the piece with your reflexive researcher voice. . .” (Tuck & Ree, 2013).

From across the street, Memmi whistles. A taxi pulls up to the pedestrian crossing. Stacy hops in and the taxi drives away. “Come,” beckons Memmi.
6.5.8 The long dawn of critical awakening

The scene fractures again and suddenly we’re back in the school theatre. We’re no longer on stage. I’m no longer a child, nor am I dressed as a British colonial sailor. I’m standing in a corridor of what appears to be dressing room doors.

“Do you recall these doors?” Memmi asks.

“I know this door,” I reply, recognizing the entrance to a classroom from my undergraduate university days. “This was my Indigenous Education class.”

“Go on. You can go inside,” Memmi permits, and I open the door.

A sensation of stepping back in time overwhelms me. We’ve stepped back to the classroom as it was in the last millennium, same decor and furnishings, same technology, same stale aroma, and same views from the windows. My lecturer, from over two decades ago, is sitting on the floor, leaning up against a wall. He looks exhausted. He is talking to someone, but I’m not sure who. “I just don’t understand how people can be so blatant,” he says. “For someone to stand up in the middle of a class and assert they don’t care if I think they’re racist. These people are going to be the next generation of teachers.”

I step forward. “I don’t either. Understand them, I mean.”

My lecturer nods acknowledgement. “And then to just walk out. In the sixties we walked out if the lecturer was racist. Today it’s all changed.”

“We’re not all racist,” I offer, “I’m not.”

My lecturer makes eye contact with me. Memmi quickly adds, “His is a position of principle,” then turns to me and asks, “do you want to refuse the benefits of colonialism?”

“I’m not sure,” I reply, suddenly feeling that my access to healthcare, housing, liberty, education, and superannuation are simultaneously being threatened.
“Ah-ha. I hear the quiver of uncertainty,” says Memmi. “You’re living under the sign of contradiction. You participate in and benefit from those privileges that you half-heartedly denounce. You’re wondering, how you can free yourself from this halo of prestige. Come,” he beckons, then turns back to my lecturer and adds, “this position of principle is not necessarily a rigid one” (Memmi, 1965, p. 64).

We turn around, but my path is blocked by another door that has a viewing pane of glass. I look through the glass and see that Memmi is on the other side, and he appears to be teaching. I open the door and walk through.

Memmi is mid-sentence, but he winks at me and continues, “humanitarian romanticism is looked upon in the colonies as a serious illness” (Memmi, 1965, p. 65).

I raise my hand and ask, “What can we do to challenge political power? How can we challenge historical relationships?”

“Well, if you have discovered that one of the camps is injustice; then the other is that of righteousness. If you, as our coloniser, cannot rise above intolerable moralism which prevents you from living, if you believe so fervently that there is injustice, then let you begin by going away. Of course, to refuse colonisation is one thing; to adopt the colonised and be adopted by them seems to be another; and the two are far from being connected. To be adopted by the colonised, you would have to be a moral hero. Are you some kind of a moral hero?” (Memmi, 1965, pp. 65-7).

A pause engulfs the room. Eventually, I break it by replying, “Isn’t this binary thinking?” My question seems to irritate Memmi.

“I don’t care for that oversimplification,” he says, and snaps his fingers. Everything disappears, save for another door.
The door opens. My seven-year-old self is behind it, no longer wearing the British colonial sailor costume. It’s folded neatly, and he passes it to me.

“I don’t want it,” I say.

“Me either,” my seven-year-old self says, “I want yours.” I look down and notice for the first time that I’m wearing a Recognise campaign shirt. Recognise is an Australian grassroots community campaign that aims to remove racial discrimination from where it is enshrined in the Australian Constitution (Dodson & Leibler, 2012).

“I’m working towards equality and liberation,” (Memmi, 1965, p. 64) I explain to my seven-year-old self. I’m speaking about the Recognise campaign tonight at a meeting.”

Memmi responds to my seven-year-old self. “We’ve talked about this. One cannot change one’s past, but one can (re)remember it” (Denzin, 2012).

I take a piece of campaign merchandise out of my pocket. It’s a Recognise keyring. “Can I give this to myself?”

“Yes,” consents Memmi, “but he’ll have to put the British colonial sailor costume back on. One cannot rid oneself of bigotry completely in a country where everyone is tainted by it” (Memmi, 1965, p. 67).

The words are striking. Feeling alone and bewildered, I sigh and we step back through the door. The door closes, and we walk along the corridor to the final door.

The last door doesn’t open, but I can see through a glass pane that it’s an education symposium and the room is overcrowded with white teachers. An Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander presenter is standing in front of a PowerPoint presentation on Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives (EATSIPS) in school curriculum (Department of Education and Training, 2011).

“So why should we privilege one culture in the curriculum?” a delegate asks.
I tap on the window. “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are many and diverse, and the point is we already privilege colonial narratives and . . .” Clearly the delegates can’t hear me.

“There’s no time to be adding more to the curriculum,” says another delegate.

I knock on the window. “This isn’t adding, it’s embedding.” Still, the delegates can’t hear me.

“Where can we do some professional development on this?”

I headbutt the window. “This is a conference. This IS the professional development. Now go back to your school systems, your schools, your colleagues and demand your professional needs are met in sustainable . . .”

My frustration rises as I realize the delegates still can’t hear me.

“This acknowledgement of traditional owners,” begins a white delegate, “we do that here at the start of each semester.”

I pick up a rubbish bin and hurl it into the glass pane. “Look. See that flag above the library? See the Union Jack in the top left corner? My guess is that’s flying every day of the semester. So, every day, every student, every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person walking on this campus sees that homage to colonialism embedded in their education. If you think one acknowledgement of traditional owners per semester is sufficient to redress continued colonial oppression, you’re. . .”

Memmi interrupts, “. . . invoking the end of colonisation?” (Memmi, 1965, p. 84).

I turn to Memmi. “They just can’t hear, can they?”

Feeling alone, bewildered, and ineffective, we turn away (Memmi, 1965, p.87).
6.5.9 Reflexive interlude II

It’s the intermission of a play, and there are over 100 people crowded into the foyer of the theatre. I recognize most of the crowd as either friends, artists, research colleagues, teaching colleagues, or former students. They have been frozen in time and place as they greet one another, many holding a glass of beer or wine. I’m holding a glass of scotch, standing next to Memmi.

“Lovely glass,” observes Memmi and I nod in agreement. “It’s a good heavy glass. And smoky. Peaty. A strong symbol of privilege perhaps?”

“You’re not making this easy, Albert,” I say. “I’m trying to be critically reflexive. You’re just being critical.”

Memmi disagrees. “No. I think you identify systemic whiteness, but you’re having difficulty confronting stories that locate you in recent personal interactions.”

“Well, there are ethical constraints.”

“That’s an excuse. You just told a story of teachers at a conference without identifying people, the conference, or the host university. No one said implementing a moral determination would be easy. You have over 40 years of colonial narratives to undo, but you’re worried that means undoing your accumulation of wealth. You are a property owner, are you not?”

I refuse to answer.

“Quite the dilemma then. No wonder this dwam has taken you over twelve months to write. Did you ever read the chapter in my book titled ‘The Colonizer Who Accepts’?”

“Your place amongst the colonisers who refuse is questionable too,” I bite back. “Sina Salessi (2013) notes that you fail to critique the role of Western nations in propping up corrupt third world governments; Sheila Walsh (2013) cites criticism of
your work that is sympathetic to Zionism; and Debra Kelly (2011) observes that your work is often constrained by binary thinking.”

Memmi snaps his fingers. We both disappear, but I feel his words resonate throughout my being, “This is your dwam of your critical whiteness.”

6.5.10 Twitching and resisting demons

I reappear as my adult–teacher self, inside of the theatre, and I hear Memmi call out, “Come.” I look up to the rafters of the theatre and see Memmi leaning over the rails of a catwalk, standing next to my desk with its arranged mess of books. “Come,” Memmi beckons again and I am suddenly standing next to him. He asks, “Feeling alone, bewildered, and ineffective?”

“Well, yes,” I reply.

“Wait till you see this . . .”

We look back down to the stage that has become my ninth grade classroom and my class of fourteen-year-old students are meandering towards it after attending a whole-school assembly. My seven-year-old self, wearing the British colonial sailor costume, is chatting with Matthias, an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student in my class. They appear to be classmates.

“What’s a scholarship mean?” my seven-year-old self asks Matthias. Matthias shrugs. “But you get your uniform paid for?”

“Yeah,” Matthias responds unenthusiastically.

“And they pay for your books and stuff?” Matthias shrugs again. “And everyone who was on stage with you, in that photo with the principal, has a scholarship?”

“Yeah”
“How come?”

When Matthias doesn’t answer, another boy in the class mockingly fills the silence. “Because they’re Aboriginal students and Matthias’s grandfather was from the stolen generation.”

My seven-year-old self looks at Matthias, who shrugs again. “Hey, Matthias,” says a second boy, “tell us that joke about your Aboriginal uncle.”

I look to Memmi. “They’re not going to make him tell that joke are they?”

“You already know the joke,” replies Memmi, “you knew it as a seven-year-old. It’s a part of you.”

“I don’t want it.”

“If this was a layered account, instead of a dwam, you would have to hear your seven-year-old self tell the joke. You would have to tell it yourself.”

“I don’t want to hear it. I don’t want to tell it. Can we leave?”

“It’s your dwam,” says Memmi, and we begin walking through the rafters of the theatre. “But as we are walking away from the boys, consider what’s worse, the language of children, or your complicit silence as a teacher. In your near present you wanted to invoke the end of colonisation but now, you won’t intervene and educate in a joke-telling that harms a student.”

I implode.

There is no ground. No ceiling. No walls. No theatre.

I am reduced to a single atom spinning through the chaos of infinity.

6.5.11 A leap of hope

I feel my hand touch something cold and metallic.

I’m standing on a ladder. Memmi is on the other side and we’re climbing.
I have no sense of the ground. No ceiling. No walls. No theatre. No inside or outside.

Memmi stops us. “One must live, act and think now,” (Memmi, 2011, pp. 13-14) he says, emphasizing the word now.

“I want to,” I say.

“Want to what?”

“Refuse colonialism. Resist exploitation. Reject racism, it’s a . . .”

“Racism is a rotten plank,” (Memmi, 1986, pp. 14-15) interrupts Memmi, “Yes, I’ve said that before. You’ve said that you want to refuse, resist, and reject before as well.”

“I want to, I do. But you said ultimately realizing my ineffectiveness I will adopt silence rather than fight for theoretical justice” (Memmi, 1965, p. 87).

“Theoretical justice? Is Matthias theoretical?”

“No. But you said I will exist in solitude, bewilderment, and ineffectiveness.”

“I said all of that in the 1960s, before you were born. I’ve also said, and a lot more recently, beware of prejudice and utopias, of all dogmas (Memmi, 1986). Come now, look down,” Memmi gestures below us and I see back into the theatre’s auditorium.

The three critical pedagogues have returned, and they are joined by other researchers from the field of education and teaching colleagues. In a growing sea of faces, I also recognize school uniforms and faces of students, some from my own childhood, others whom I have taught over twenty years. More students file into the auditorium. I don’t recognize them, but instinctively know that these are students that I will teach in the future.
“So, what now?” I ask Memmi.

“Come,” the crowd in the auditorium beckon.

“Wake up,” answers Memmi, and starts shaking the ladder.

“Wake up?” I ask.

“Wake up!” he reasserts, “wake up.” The ladder is vibrating.

I blink. My cellphone is vibrating, and the alarm is calling “wake up.” I blink. I look around. My desk is back. My perilous pile of and scattering of books is back. My scotch glass is back, still empty. My dog is back, still sleeping in his chair.

I blink again as my reality resettles.

I blink again, and my eyes scan the spines of my books. And I resolve to remain unsettled.

6.5.12 Epilogue: Mystery of Matthias

I slap my cellphone into silence, then notice sunlight beginning to penetrate the venetian blinds. I’m not sure that I am awake, but I’m feeling awakened, and in the distance, I can hear morning TV announcing the daily weather forecast. Preparing myself to stand and move into a new day, I notice one of the framed photos of moments in time from my teaching career. I pick it up and stare at the photo of Matthias, his Dad, and me.

Matthias’s reputation preceded him. Throughout 7th and 8th grade, he had frequently failed to submit assignments to his teachers or even be at school on days when assessment items were due. I only taught Matthias in 9th grade Drama, and the first assignment our class had to complete was to make a puppet. With some additional guidance outside of class, I was optimistic about the progress he was making, and, on the day the project was due, Matthias handed in a puppet. He
dropped it on my desk during the lunch break and turned to leave without saying a word.

“What’s this, Matt?” I asked.

Matthias looked into my eyes, drew a long breath, restarted chewing his gum, and said, “It’s my Drama thing.”

“Your puppet, then?” I looked over the assignment. “You put a bowtie on him! That’s nice.” Unable to resist playing with a puppet, I placed my hand inside and began working out how to manoeuvre the head. Its googley eyes rolled about.

Matthias stood watching me play, eventually asking, “What do you reckon I’ll get, Sir?”

“Can I ask you something,” I interrupted his thought flow, “is this the first assessment you’ve done in Drama?”

Matthias answered in the affirmative with a raised eyebrow and half smile. “I haven’t got a marking sheet in front of me, but it’s at least a B.”

“Really!!??”

“At least a B,” I confirmed. Then added, “Hey Matt, can I call your Dad?”

“What for?”

“I reckon he’d be proud of you. Come on, let me make his day.”

Matthias’s half smile became a full smile. “Whatever. Thanks, Sir,” he said and left.

Matthias didn’t continue Drama after 9th grade and I rarely saw him. But three years later, at the school formal (prom), dressed in a tuxedo, Matthias, his Dad, and a camera approached me.

“Sir! Can we get a photo together?”
6.6 A letter to those who dare teach

I have co-authored a chapter in response to Trica Kress’ call for submissions to a new book, titled *Radically Dreaming: Illuminating Freirean Praxis and Emerging from Dark Times*. My chapter is co-authored with Assistant Professor Jennifer L. Martin, and in it we take turns writing back to Paulo Freire in response to his letters to those who dare teach. I wrote the eighth letter about cultural identity and education, and this reproduction of an abridged version in this findings chapter includes reference to *Mystery of learning Burke and Wills*. I conclude this section with a new model, Figure 11, that arises as a dendritic crystal and from my etic analysis of the mystories, conversations with myself and crystallizing teacher conversations.

6.6.1 Eighth letter to Paulo: Cultural identity and education

Dear Paulo

When we understand teaching and learning is a relationship between self and others and is framed by wider local and global contexts in which the relationship occurs, we open the potential to view our work as an adventure. Teacher-student relationships are complex and there is a crucial order in understanding them that begins with teacher identity and extends to the wider socio-political context. Teacher identity influences teacher actions. Moreover, teacher identity is a filter that can distort intended teacher actions which are invested into the teacher-student relationship. Of course, students’ identity will also filter the teacher-student relationship and student identity will influence student actions. I recognise there might

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208 Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political factors that shape teacher praxis; (7) Deepen understandings of praxis.

209 Research aim 5: Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative.
be 30 students or more in the classroom, all with their own identity filters influencing their actions, and I recognise multiple student-student relationships are simultaneously occurring in the classroom. Multiple actions, influenced by multiple identities, and multiple relationships simultaneously occur in a wider socio-political context. Coming to grips with this complexity of relationships is indeed an adventure and the wider contexts do not just influence the classroom relationships. The adventure is all the more exciting when the progressive teacher, assuming the responsibility of a critical activist, works with the classroom relationships and pushes back on the wider socio-political context as an act of resistance and in pursuit of radical and positive change.\(^2\)

Teachers’ own identity consists of biographical stores of “what we inherit and what we acquire” (Freire, 1998c, p. 70). It is the aggregation of these personal and lived experiences that filters teachers’ communication in the relational space with their students.\(^1\)

This is why identity work is such a vital component of initial teacher education programs. Not surprisingly, proponents of the neoliberal project view education as a simplistic teacher-student transaction of knowledge. Neoliberals are threatened by revelations of the socio-political because it disrupts their power. Their response to identity work in initial teacher education is to advocate for back-to-basics approaches to education, and threats of defunding programs they label as ‘identity politics’. I acknowledge for some pre-service teachers, identity work can be overwhelmingly confrontational, but we have a professional and moral responsibility to develop a

\(^{210}\) Research aim 25: Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.

\(^{211}\) Research aim 4: Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity.
teaching profession that welcomes diversity, embraces multiple knowings and understandings, and fosters critical thought\textsuperscript{212}.

My own identity inherited and acquired the colonial history of South Australia. The school I attended in the 1980s was next door to one of the significant colonial symbols of the state. In fact, the ‘Old Gum Tree’ was the logo on our school shirt\textsuperscript{213}. I don’t ever recall learning about the First Peoples in my primary schooling. The histories, cultures, languages of the Kaurna peoples, the traditional custodians of the lands of my primary school, were omitted. Then my initial teacher education program consisted of a mere 10-credit points out of a 320-credit bachelor degree. What I had inherited and acquired as a white teacher was insufficient to meet Sal’s entitlement to educational justice\textsuperscript{214}.

The teacher who is critically aware of the, “political that governs their relationship with their students,” (Freire, 1998c, p. 72) will be more adept at deconstructing the narratives and counter-narratives that are replicated or resisted in their classroom. I agree with you about the importance of listening and observing, and respectful inquiry, to build foundational knowledge and understanding.

The appreciation for the multiple layers of complexities that influence this relational space must be achieved before the teacher-learner relationship can bloom. Only then does the adventure truly begins.

For continued adventures,

Craig.

P.S. Three years later, Sal enrolled in a teaching degree.

\textsuperscript{212} Research aim 11: Resist dominant forces; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.

\textsuperscript{213} Research aim 4: Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity.

\textsuperscript{214} Research aim 10: Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (24) Identify manifestations of whiteness that privilege or silence voices.
6.6.2 Crystallizing understandings of cultural identity and education

In the introduction to this thesis, I identified three interrelated sub-questions that have emerged from my iterative process of CPR. I have sought to answer the questions:

- how have my experiences of contemporary Australian education shaped my identity?
- does my identity impact on my praxis in education? and
- how do my experiences of contemporary Australian education, including my praxis, reveal whiteness in education?

The abridged version of the eighth letter to Paulo explains complexities in the process of identity formation which impacts teacher praxis, specifically teacher-student relationships, and is framed by wider socio-political context. Figure 11, below, represents this process.

Figure 11. A process of cultural identity and teacher-student relationships
Figure 11 represents the complexity of teacher-student relationships that are shaped by identities and are performed in a wider socio-political context. This relationship can be likened to Freire’s (1996) notion of dialogue as an encounter between humans and that is, “mediated by the world in order to name the world” (p. 69). In decolonising teacher praxis,

Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanising aggression.

(Freire, 1996, p. 69)

In my critical praxis research, the process depicted in Figure 11 emerges from crystallizing understandings from analysis of both my experiences and shared experiences with Kathleen and Louise in initial teacher education that are described earlier in this chapter in Crystallizing teacher conversations as “nobody is educating us.”

The figure shows identity forms from personal experiences of inheritance and acquisition. Mystory of learning of Burke and Wills, in chapter 2, revealed my inherited and acquired whiteness being replicated through school curriculum. In Crystallizing teacher conversations, specifically “The places that my ancestors are from”, Kathleen describes her experiences as a child-student in school as acquiring whiteness, and in “Those levels of whiteness” Kathleen and Louise both describe their children’s experiences of EATSIEPC.

Next, Figure 11 considers identity as a filter that can distort intended teacher actions which are invested into the teacher-student relationship. Mystory of Sal is an example of my identity filtering and distorting my praxis by blinding me to whiteness and which had significant impact on my teacher-student relationship with Sal.

Noticing Mystory of Sal as a critical incident in my praxis and subjecting both the incident and my role in it to questioning, has situated the incident and my
teacher-student relationship with Sal in the wider socio-political frame of critical whiteness. In my eighth letter to Freire, I suggest the teacher-student relationship does not have to be subordinate to the wider socio-political frame; rather a decolonising and progressive teacher can work with classroom relationships to push back against the wider socio-political context and forces of dominance in acts of resistance and in pursuit of radical and positive change.

6.7 Summary of findings

My critical praxis research has attempted to crystallize my understandings of whiteness in my teaching praxis by providing varied ways of knowing that span etic to emic, personal to collegial, and critical to interpretive and artistic (Ellingson, 2009). In this summary I return to Ladson-Billings’ (2009) questions to crystallize my understandings of those things of which I have noticed and taken cognizance.

6.7.1 What is and what has been happening here?

This findings chapter demonstrates powerful hegemonic forces of whiteness are deeply embedded in Australian schools and systemic barriers make it hard to resist215. In Mystery of a field trip, John indicates the struggle for teachers to enact critical pedagogies is easily usurped by the systemic agenda to produce rationalist education-data, and in The hamster wheel of crap Kathleen demonstrates the high cost of emotional labour to maintain such resistance. The eternal nature of the struggle against whiteness is demonstrated in Twitching and resisting demons in my dwam. My Eighth letter to Paulo recognises the interplay of identity and praxis that

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215 Research aim 8: Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialise whiteness; (11) Resist dominant forces; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education; (23) Reveal dominant whiteness in schools; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.
impact teacher-student relationships and that are framed by the wider socio-political frame of whiteness.

6.7.2 What is and what has been happening in these classes?

In addition to demonstrating that Australian schools replicate hegemony and whiteness, these findings chapters show that traditional models of academic-rationalist curriculum are enacted, and that there are limited opportunities for critical pedagogy to challenge dominance\textsuperscript{216}. Moreover, representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian schools are typically shallow because there is poor access to developing understandings of knowledges, cultures, histories, and stories dating back tens of thousands of years, in Australian pre-service teacher education programs and teacher professional development. This is demonstrated in *Mystery of EATSIPS* and is emphatically reaffirmed in the interviews with both Kathleen and Louise.

In my contribution to the *International Journal in Multicultural Education*, I recognise the privileging of dominant whiteness that marginalises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, cultures, histories, stories, and my dwam *A child lulled to sleep*, shows examples of South Australia’s colonial history, whiteness, being inscribed on my young and developing consciousness. Such is the strength of this inscription on my identity I had become blind to it, which led to arrogantly delivering monologue rather than dialogue, and that I attribute to Sal’s action to refuse to participate in the assessment program\textsuperscript{217}. Writing reflectively in my

\textsuperscript{216} Research aim 2: Understand historical and socio-political forces that shape teacher praxis; (16) Apply critical social analysis to action; (20) Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope.

\textsuperscript{217} Research aim 4: Understand factors contributing to the shaping of my identity; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialize whiteness; (17) Identify political nature of language and then use language for liberation.
researcher journal I charged myself with wearing a ‘veil of critical consciousness’. My veil is represented in *Mystery from pre-service teacher training* and is discussed as a challenge for the teaching profession by Kathleen and Louise in *Those levels of whiteness*.

**6.7.3 What is/has happening/ed with this/these teacher/s?**

There is strong evidence that Kathleen’s teaching praxis, Louise’s teaching praxis, and my own teaching praxis demonstrate an understanding of the importance of supportive teacher-student relationships. On the other hand, while my relationship with Matthias appears to provide hope, my relationship with Sal was oppressive. In my researcher journal, I wondered if my relationship with Matthias was more successful because I unconsciously replicated patriarchal power. An emerging finding from the mysteries, my dwam, and my eighth letter to Paulo is the revelation of some of the places where I, as a child-student, was the unconscious recipient of dominant inscriptions of whiteness created by the wider socio-political shaping my identity, and where, as an adult-teacher, I have unconsciously replicated dominance because of a lack of critical understanding of how my identity filters my inputs and outputs of teacher-student relationships.218

In both interviews, Louise and Kathleen identified teachers’ need to be able to access critical training to challenge bias in their praxis.219 As the object of this critical process of conscientization, I am cognisant of intervening and educating myself. My researcher journal, anecdotes shared with Louise, and *The long dawn of critical*

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218 Research aim 1: Educate myself; (3) Understand my identity; (4) Understand factors contributing to my identity; (5) Understand how my identity impacts my professional narrative; (8) Reveal whiteness in shaping my teaching praxis; (9) Intervene and improve praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialize whiteness; (11) Reveal dominant forces.

219 Research aim (7) Deepen understandings of praxis; (18) Seek allies; (19) Build communities of interest to decolonise praxis; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools
awakening in my dwam, show evidence of intervening in my teacher praxis. However, in I've actively chosen to re-educate, change my thought process both Louise and Kathleen assert that adopting a critical position is something they have chosen to do, but that there is limited systemic support available for their undertaking. Notably Mystory of EATSIPS demonstrates an absence of time for teachers to engage in critical reflection. The absence of criticality is also represented in Mystory from pre-service teacher training, The long dawn of critical awakening in my dwam, and in my contribution to the International Journal of Multicultural Education.

6.7.4 What is/has happening/ed with students?

Earlier in this thesis, chapter 3 compared models of reflective practice. I note Brookfield (2017) and others posit a 360-degree data collection method of reflection that includes student voices. I acknowledge the absence of student voice as a limitation of this research, and in chapter 5 I identified the additional ethical challenges such inclusion would have generated. Rather this research attempted to crystallize understandings of whiteness by reflecting on what students might have been experiencing and I acknowledge the limitations of this approach because what the teacher thinks is enacted and what the students actually experience is likely to be different. However, this thesis is my response to an interpretation of lived experience that includes co-performers. By considering Sal's action as an act of civil disobedience, I enable my learning, but recognise Sal’s voice is absent. In the Discerning features section of my contribution to the International Journal of Multicultural Education.

\[220\] Research aim 20: Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope.
Multicultural Education, I further considered Sal’s actions as prompted by Du Bois’ notion of double consciousness.

6.7.5 What else have I noticed and taken cognizance of?

Earlier in this chapter and emerging in Crystallizing teacher conversations, I noted the emergence of joy, hope and the importance of relationships in education. Like the challenges of enacting critical pedagogy, there are systemic barriers for teachers who seek to instil joy in their classes\(^\text{221}\). Similarly, teachers can offer hope, and I report on opportunities for hope in the Uniqueness section of my contribution to International Journal of Multicultural Education. I juxtapose notions of hope with the unsafe spaces that exist in schools and that are represented in Twitching and resisting demons in my dwam.

In addition to the importance of student-teacher relationships that are described by Kathleen and Louise, and that is represented in Mystery of Matthias, this research has also demonstrated the importance of teacher collegial relationships\(^\text{222}\). The critical reflections that were prompted in the interviews with Louise and Kathleen, as well as my relationship with Gandu Jarjum, have deepened my knowledge and understanding of whiteness in praxis throughout this research\(^\text{223}\).

I will return to the question of my research method in the concluding chapter, but I note that the questions that I have submitted myself to and subsequent cognizance has resulted in deeper understandings of whiteness in my praxis, and this has led to my beginning to undertake activist intervention in the teaching

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\(^{221}\) Research aim 20: Understand hegemony as a barrier to enacting democratic, anti-racist pedagogy of hope; (25) Resist domination and promote hope in Australian schools.

\(^{222}\) Research aim 15: Create stories that resonate with an audience; (18) Seek allies; (19) Build communities of interest to decolonise praxis.

\(^{223}\) Research aim 1: Educate myself; (8) Reveal whiteness shaping my teaching praxis; (10) Deconstruct and racialize whiteness; (22) Improve understanding of whiteness in the field of education.
profession. Some of these interventions are referred to in *The long dawn of critical awakening* in my dwam, as well as in conversation with Louise and Kathleen.
7. Conclusions

Throughout my PhD candidature I have presented my emerging research at various conferences. At one such forum, another white, able-bodied, English speaking man, undertaking higher degree research in a similar field, challenged me about taking up a place in the academy to tell my story at the expense of sub-altern researchers. His point was well made; however, my time and place in the academy has sought to dismantle privilege, rather than reinscribe hegemony. The purpose of my research has been to disrupt power and to find ways to do so.

In this concluding chapter I will return to the 25 aims of _thecrystallizingteacher_ and discuss how this research has advanced my professional odyssey of each. I begin with a summation of process of conscientization, broadly categorized as educating myself, which supported the first three inter-related research questions and that include critical understanding of socio-political forces shaping my identity and praxis. I then turn to research aims that have supported my crystallizing understandings of whiteness in praxis. Next, I discuss a response to research question 2 including a summation of the research method that I developed which blended performative and critical autoethnographic processes. I then discuss research aims that supported CPR aims of self/other/world transformation. Recognising conscientization and crystallization as continual processes, I end this chapter with a proposal for next steps in my work.

7.1 Applying conscientization to educate myself

I began this research after I noticed things about my teaching praxis that were an unsettling epiphany. As the research developed, three inter-related questions emerged that considered how my experiences in contemporary Australian education
have shaped my identity, how my identity impacts my praxis, and how my experiences and praxis reveal whiteness in education. Throughout this thesis I have written about my ‘unsettled I’ as a political and shifting identity that arises from educating myself as well as changes in my professional identity as I shift from classroom teacher to teacher-union official. Furthermore, my questioning of self has revealed historical and socio-political forces of whiteness, colonialism, and neoliberalism that are replicated in school curriculum, teacher training, and subsequently teacher praxis. Mystories, as well as the stories shared by Kathleen and Louise, make visible the ubiquity of historical and socio-political hegemonic forces on the shaping of teacher identity and how my identity impacts professional narratives.

7.2 Crystalizing understandings of whiteness in praxis

My pursuit of answers to the first three inter-related questions have revealed racialized power relationships, which are supported by an epistemology of whiteness, and that are deeply embedded yet typically invisible. Throughout this research I have acknowledged the messiness of lived experience of teachers, but I have critically reflected on experiences to deepen my understandings of praxis by revealing some of the locations in which whiteness has manifested in my praxis, including my acts of pedagogy, teacher training, and professional development, as well as systemic racism that is enshrined in Australian curriculum and PST. With this renewed and critical deconstruction of racialized whiteness in schools, I am now more able to intervene and improve my praxis because I am more woke to whiteness as a dominant force that can either privilege or silence voices. Acting on this new knowledge and critical understanding, I am more able to resist dominant forces and
pursue enactments of democratic, anti-racist pedagogies of hope. This transformation of self is an aim of critical praxis research.

7.3 Performative and critical autoethnography as method

The second question that this research has investigated has been how can critical praxis research reveal hegemonic forces like whiteness in teacher research that is undertaken in an Australian context? CPR is an activist research methodology that embraces an array of quantitative, qualitative, and critical methods of data collection in the pursuit of self/other/world transformations. CPR disrupts traditional hierarchies in the academy by embracing practitioner voice and, in the case of this research, welcomes creative writing practices. The methods of performative and critical autoethnography that I have employed have submitted my praxis and my identity to deep questions, and consequently made visible the hitherto invisible forces of whiteness in the field of education in an Australian context. The phase of the research that included teacher colleagues indicated verisimilitude, trustworthiness and truth in the stories that resonated with both Kathleen and Louise. The mysteries and subsequent collegial conversations identified the political nature of language and considered the use language for liberation.

7.4 Critical praxis research transformations of self/other/world

In addition to revealing hegemony in Australian schools, the activist nature of critical praxis research, combined with conscientization and dendritic crystallization, inspires the development of communities of interest. In this regard critical praxis research supports my aims to seek allies to build communities of practitioners with an interest in resisting dominant forces and decolonising praxis. Beyond the current
research, my dendritic crystallizing will seek to work with others to improve understandings of whiteness in Australian schools by revealing dominant whiteness, resisting domination, and promoting hope.

7.5 Next steps

The critical and reflective process of conscientization, advocated by Freire, and research processes of dendritic crystallization, discussed by Ellingson, establish an endless continuum of professional growth. I concluded chapter 4 foreshadowing possibilities for further dendritic crystallizing research that could draw on symbolic interactionism, radical interactionism, and participatory action research. Earlier in this chapter I have recalled the aims of this research that seek allies to build communities of interest.
8. A dwammed epilogue

Through this act of conscientization
I have continued to search and research.
I’ve submitted myself to questioning,
I’ve noticed, taken cognizance of, and
I’m intervening and educating.

This critical autoethnography
reclaimed stories and rewrote mysteries
revealing personal and cultural
violent inscriptions of whiteness in schools,
and transformations toward hope. And dreams.

My critical praxis research seeks
ending of domination in schools;
Utopian yearning that is made
as a moral calling to colleagues;
As a call to form communities,
transformational practitioners:
Joined, to end domination in schools.
Joined, together to do works of love.
Joined, united in diversity.
Joined, with our students, as dreammakers.
Hegemonic powers imprint privilege and dominant power on every white child from their birth.

Socio-political and economic structures embue gendered, heteronormative, and racist epistemologies.

Invisible replication of power in schools occurs, lest woke teachers activate dreamworlds.

Dendritic crystallizing:

Opens multiple meanings of stories of my praxis;

Connecting mysteries of oppression and resistance;

Challenging narratives and writing counter narratives as ethical storying of a reliable truth;

A dawammed nepantla. Dreamlike.
And through this, and with you
I hold Frierean hope:
Hope that is vision;
Hope that is just and fair;
Hope that resists and moves
us all to equity;
Hope in pedagogy
educating us all;
Hope that is more than an
Activist's dreamfulness.

Performatively
struggling in and through
nepantlas, bearing
witness to scars and
acts of oppression;
Decolonising
counter narratives
to challenge whiteness;
colonialism;
Real hope, dreamfully.
Bothered bodies’
raw energy,
resists and yields,
attracts, repels,
asks and answers.
Pushing. Pulling.
Rubbing against
and with and through;
Communities
of dreamkeepers.

Mystories:
Performa-
tive writing
to reclaim
lived moments
and disrupt
dominant
narratives.
Countering
and dreaming.
Gandu
Jarjum,
Simply
the best
ever.
Thankyou,
deadly
Comrades.
We are
dreamers.

Sal,
your
deed
changed
more
than
you
know.
We
dream.
15 November 2016

Craig Wood
31 Koala Road
MOOROOKA QLD 4105

craig.wood@griffithuni.edu.au

Dear Craig

Thank you for your letter dated 16 May 2016, in which you outline your research and seek consent from the Gandu Jarjum committee to use the Gandu Jarjum name in publications arising from your research.

Your letter was considered by the Gandu Jarjum meeting on the 26 October, which was the next meeting held after your letter was received.

We are pleased to provide the consent you request, and we look forward to learning more about your research and reading publications arising from it in due course.

In unity

Penny Taylor
Committee Chair - Gandu Jarjum
Appendix B

A school teacher's critical self-reflective autoethnography

PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

__/__/_____

Dear ____________________.

We invite you to take part in the research project A school teacher’s critical self-reflective autoethnography. We have prepared this information sheet on the project to help you decide whether or not you would like to take part in the research.

The research project

The purpose of the study is to reflect on Craig Wood’s practice as a school teacher in relation to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers 1.4 and 2.4. We believe that there is a moral imperative for all Australian teachers to be effective teachers of Professional Standards 1.4 and 2.4. The first of these standards is Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students, and the second standard is Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

What does the project involve?

You will be part of a team of six professionals in the field of education, identified by Craig, and whose expertise and opinions Craig respects and trusts. Craig will blog six reflective stories of his teaching practice over twelve weeks and is interested in your insights into these stories. You will be able to post comments in response to the blogs, anonymously if you wish. The blog site will be in the public domain, and the wider community might choose to comment on the stories as well.

Possible benefits of the research

International research indicates that Australia is served by a quality teaching workforce. Local research supports this too, but also notes the importance of greater professional development to address equity issues in education. The reflective practice blogging model that we propose could be further developed to assist other communities of Australian teachers reflect and improve their practice. The ultimate goal is to improve the educational experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Feedback to you

A summary of the findings of this research will be made available to you after the blog site is closed for comments. Your feedback on this summary will be very welcome, although it is not a requirement for your participation in the project. A full summary of the findings of this research will also be made available to you for comment, should you wish.

Risks to you

As a professional in the field of education we understand that your time is valuable. That’s why your participation in the project remains voluntary. Even if you sign and return the enclosed consent form, you are still free to withdraw from the project at any time and without giving reason. You may also choose not to respond to some blogs, but rejoin the project at a later date.

The blog site will be in the public domain, and so Craig will also discuss with you the option of commenting on the blog site using a pseudonym. Of course you are also welcome to post comments using your real name or details that will identify you if you wish to do so.

Privacy Statement
The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded, should you wish. As required by Griffith University, all research data (blog responses and analysis) will be retained in a locked cabinet and/or a password protected electronic file at Griffith University for a period of five years before being destroyed. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at: [http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan](http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan) or telephone +61 (0)7 3735 4375 and quote GU Ref No: 2016/425.

**Ethical Considerations**

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If you have any concerns regarding this research project, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics on +61 (0)7 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au and quote GU Ref No:2016/425.

**Further information**

You should feel free to discuss your participation in this project by contacting Craig or Madonna.

Craig will contact you in a couple of weeks to see if you want to take part in this study. If you decide that you would like to participate in the research project, we will provide you with a consent form, and ask that you sign and return the form.

Yours sincerely

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Appendix C

CONSENT FORM

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Harry Van Issum
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I have read the project information sheet on A school teacher's critical self-reflective autoethnography;

I understand I will be asked to respond to six blogs over a twelve week period;
I understand that I will not be identified on the blog site or in subsequent dissemination of the research unless I choose to be;
I understand there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
I understand that I can claim reimbursement for data usage;
I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
I understand that, should I withdraw, I may rejoin the project at a later time;
I understand that a part summary of findings will be provided to me with the option to add further comment, and that a full summary of findings will also be provided to me with the option to comment;
I have had any questions that I may have answered to my satisfaction;
I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team; and
I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on +61 (0)7 3735 4375 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project.

Are you willing to participate in the research? YES NO
Do you wish to be identified on the blog site? YES NO
Do you wish to be identified in any dissemination of the research? YES NO

Name: __________________________ Signature: __________________________

Date: ___ / ___ / _______
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