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Unravelling Yarns: How might knitting narratives inform critical
pedagogical practice?

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of

Master of Education

at Massey University, New Zealand

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2015

Dedication

For Huia, Eve and Byron,

For always being loving and supportive, and for believing in possibilities.

Abstract

This thesis uses narrative research methodologies to explore the experiences of women and knitting, and examines how those experiences might be used productively to enable educators to develop critical pedagogy skills in the classroom. Through gathering knitting narratives, a learning space is created for voices that are often unheard, to (re)examine and reflect on experiences of the past and present in order to generate new understandings.

Narratives have been collected from four women whose lives span three generations; the researcher, her mother, mother-in-law, and daughter. This spans time periods from World War II up until the present day. Field texts for each participant have been written using data from interviews, reflective writing, and photographs. Wider themes have been identified and examined in an educational context relating to the development of the critical classroom.

Additional data have been collected from books, online newspapers, journal articles and published reports.

This thesis posits that there are specific areas that might be useful for educators to examine further, to establish critical pedagogical philosophies in formal educational settings. The themes consider the importance of belonging, examining privilege, acknowledging the whole self, and the value of alternative sites of learning. These themes also encourage educators in turn to consider new perspectives through self-study, and to understand the experiences of their learners and the communities to which they belong. Finally, specific recommendations for educators, relating to the themes, are made.

Acknowledgements

To my supervisors, Dr Linda Leach and Dr Kama Weir, whose constant guidance in organising and refining this project left a wonderful and indelible impression on the final work. Thank-you for sharing your experience and wisdom.

To the participants, your stories are priceless gifts. Thank-you for so lovingly sharing them and enabling this research journey to go ahead, in a way that meant we took this journey together. This project completely reflects your lives and experiences, and in a way I feel sad about leaving them to move on to the next thing.

To my Academic midwives and mothers here in Bahrain, Rhea Fitzpatrick and Johanna Visser. You not only introduced me to critical pedagogy and narrative inquiry, but you stepped in during my moments of questioning to help me through the process.

Thank-you to those who offered support to the participants in this project: Tania Tait, and Rangī Dansey. Also to my father and father-in-law for providing technical support to the participants in terms of the smooth running of internet telephony, scanning and emailing photographs, and even holding up garments to see and discuss.

For Huia, thank-you for your constant encouragement, for understanding the challenges and steering me through whenever I got stuck. Thank-you for your willingness to contribute to both my never ending discussions about knitting, and to my growing yarn stash.

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