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

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the degree of

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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.

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