Teacher identity, teacher response, and pedagogical narration in a primary school setting

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Applied Research

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Abstract

This research will examine how teacher identity and a teacher's view of the child as capable influences curriculum creation, teacher's response, and culture of a classroom in a primary school community. It will seek to understand how this image of the child constructs teacher response that engages with students' thinking and makes meaning of learning and children's understandings of their worlds. Situated as a post-qualitative inquiry using pedagogical narrations, the relationships between child and teacher, teaching practices, professional conversations, and questions of praxis are made visible for debate and dialogue. Teacher identity influences moments with children, honouring the entangled relationships between child and teacher, and the co-participation of child and teacher together. This study utilises pedagogical narrations to articulate teacher's experiences, wonderings, and questions into teaching practices.

Master of Applied Research

"I, Anne Jordan, declare that the Master of Applied Research thesis entitled ***Teacher identity, teacher response, and pedagogical narration in a primary school setting*** is no more than 50,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work".

"I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University's Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures.

Signature: 

Date: 21st March, 2021

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Acknowledgement: I acknowledge the Wadawurrung Country where the research in Australia takes place and the Dja Dja Wurrung country where I spent my childhood. I pay respect to Ancestors, Elders and Families and the deep knowledges embedded within Indigenous communities and the ongoing connection of, and care for Country and the Land. I also acknowledge that connections with place provoke learning as I learn with, and care for, Sky Country, the Waterways and the Land.

Introduction

This thesis does not follow the expected conventions of a traditional thesis. Written as a post-qualitative inquiry (St. Pierre, 2021), this study endeavours to invent something new, not repeating "a pre-existing research reprocess to produce a recognizable result" but rather, it experiments and creates "something new and different that might not be recognizable in existing structures of intelligibility" (p. 6). This is not surprising as I draw on post-foundational perspectives (Moss, 2019) and embrace uncertainty, relationality, entanglements, subjectivity, and multiple truths and interpretations. This reinforces my view that the world and its participants are continually changing and evolving (MacNaughton et al. 2001). With this in mind, I first offer key concepts/practices and an overview of the thesis to show my engagement with the "new" and how I have let go of traditional research expectations.

Writing is a big part of my life as a learner and as a researcher. Writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson, 2001) drives this research. I do not see the separation between writing, my life--both socially and historical--and teaching. This means my stories are a critical part of this

research. Creative and reflective uses of writing are made visible throughout the chapters including the use of reconstructed teaching experiences (Vicars, 2006) and pedagogical narrations (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015).

Pedagogical narrations (Atkinson, 2012; Hodgins, 2012; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015) are narratives that function as a catalyst to think about learning and teaching in regard to children, teacher, context, and community. These narratives live "within the tension between theory and practice, between what happens and the reflection of what happened" within the life of teaching and learning (Vintimilla, 2019, p.3). "Pedagogy attends to and locates this tension in situated and contextual ways [in the everyday]" (p.3) which is why these narratives are pedagogical. Pedagogical narration is a way to represent children in complex ways but also provides a way to bring these stories forward to communities for discussion and further learning (Hodgins, 2012) --enacting the pedagogical. Pedagogical narrations (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015) are first shared in *Bees* as part of this introduction. The intention of the inclusion of these sections of a pedagogical narration is to invite the reader in to consider the possibilities of what learning and teaching can be in a primary classroom when thinking deeply about teacher identity and the image of the child. The process of pedagogical narrations is fully explained in Chapter 3, *Methodology, or rather refusal of methodology*. Chapters 4 and 5 share complete pedagogical narrations.

Chapter 2 utilises performative social science approach (Jones, 2006; Vicars, 2006) as a means of engaging with the literature through teacher identity and experience. Inspired by the work of Vicars (2006), I have used the process of reconstruction as evocative showing, not telling, to engage the reader. The scenes I share emerge from my own experiences and readings across this inquiry, and again are situated to provoke the reader to connect and think with the concepts and literature shared.

With all of these elements in mind, I begin with the bees….

Bees and the research project

> The subtle smell of honey fills the space between the trees and bracken ferns. I edge my way towards it, gently parting the stems of the fern, and carefully following the path worn by the footprints before me. The ferns are nearly my height and I feel the remnants of a fine spider web float across my face hoping the owner is not at home! Children in front of me are laughing, moving quickly but excitedly towards the sweet aroma. Their bodies nestle closer together as they jostle to take their place on the log, searching for the bees and fixing their eyes on the entrance to the hive. The hive sits in an ancient log, lying across the ferns near the creek, and quietly resting after years of giving shade and standing tall in the place. Rotted sections of its trunk create living spaces for creatures, mostly insects, sheltering from the weather and predators. Busy movements signal the comings and goings of the bees and hushed voices of children speak in wonder as they follow the flight paths of the bees. The log sitters already know so much about bees, just by watching and listening with bees.
>
> Pedagogical Narration: Bees, 2019

I begin here with the bees on purpose. Here in this moment, teacher identity and the image of child as capable are made visible and offer a provocation to consider what might be possible in a primary school classroom.

This research focuses on teacher identity and how the image of the child influences everyday teaching and learning in a primary school. Central to this understanding is how meaning is made for both student and teacher. Over time, as a white settler woman, teacher, researcher, reader, and writer, I have increasingly noticed the different ways in which teachers engage with students, both in informal and formal situations, and how teacher identity influences these moments of engagement (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). I have come to understand how teacher identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Moss, 2010; Parnell, 2010; Rogers & Scott, 2008) and how a teacher views a child (Moss, 2010; Malaguzzi, 1994; Rinaldi, 2006) are entangled and how this entanglement becomes present in all teaching and learning through co-participation between child and teacher (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al.2015; Britzman, 2003; Rinaldi, 2006). The relationship between child and teacher is complex and a very real part of teaching and learning that cannot be ignored – and through this realisation, teaching can be transformed (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015)

Aim of research

Through this research, I aim to understand teacher identity, teacher identity in relation to the image of the child, and how teacher identity and image of child construct teaching and learning, specifically teacher response. Since the teaching and learning relies upon the entangled and complex relationship between teacher and children, this research will also identify how I as teacher see myself through my own identity, how I view my role, and how I instinctively and

purposefully support children to think, question, and wonder (Pacini-Ketchabaw, et al. 2015) as capable and contributing members of the community (Rinaldi, 2006).

Research questions

How does teacher identity construct teacher response in a primary classroom setting?

What role does the image of the child have in teacher identity and everyday practice?

Teacher Identity

> I used to be quite scared of bees, perhaps more wary but now I'm up close to them. Being on this adventure with the children has opened my eyes again to wonder and awe of all creation. I feel a like a child again! I have always paid close attention to the flora of my place (wherever that might be) but not so much to the fauna. I begin to see creatures in a different light, noticing spider webs, ant hills, burrows, creatures in logs and insects scurrying. We have encouraged these children to be researchers, but we didn't realise that we as teachers are becoming researchers with them. It's in the moment of these times that I have looked at the place with a different lens and with a different focus. I think I used to look for teaching moments by prompting discussion with a clear intent of what I wanted children to notice, but now I'm just there, eyes wide open with children. They have taught me to explore again and search for the beauty in this place. I feel I am discovering who I really am and what is important to me. There is a sense of calmness about this, the joy of growing older and working out what I stand for in the world.
>
> Pedagogical Narration: Bees, 2019

In this moment, my own identity as a person, teacher, and researcher are offered as a way to think about how teacher identity is related to teaching. For me, this is a moment that has changed my teaching as my own identity is made visible and provides an opportunity to reflect on how I co-participate with the children.

During my career as a primary school teacher, I have attended many professional development conferences. Most have been inspiring; however, some have truly changed my thinking about teaching and learning. One of these moments occurred approximately twenty years ago. The Catholic Education Office in Melbourne presented a strategy to improve Literacy learning in all schools in Victoria, focusing on improving the skills of Prep to Year Two teachers. The presenter, Carmel Crevola, stated that high expectations for all students, regardless of their circumstances was crucial. At the time, I was quite affronted by this assertion—is it really possible for all children to engage, think, question, and learn at the same level? I struggled with this for some time, but it kept niggling at me, and I gradually realised that setting high expectations for all students was not only achievable but actually did make a difference.

My understanding of this educational philosophy steered me towards a deeper knowledge of how students learn and make meaning, rather than what they should learn as deemed by people other than the student. With that came a responsibility to nurture learning, provoke curiosity, engage learners, and promote thinking. It also prompted me to view children differently. No longer did I believe that their capabilities were a finite set of skills, but instead the possibilities of what students might achieve were endless as well as exciting and always unfolding.

I think I had known innately for some time that my views on teaching and education had to change. My own three children had prompted me to consider the whole child by exposing them to imaginative and creative pursuits, and in doing so I tried to replicate my own childhood where the bush was part of our daily life, the freedom to explore was innate, and meaningful moments with friends and family were centred around the world and all its wonders. Part of these moments include meaningful conversations and occurred with a range of people and their views

of the world. How can we create these moments in primary classrooms of today? And how does this relate to teacher identity and how we view children, as teachers and learners co-participate together?

Central to our relations with children is the notion of the teacher's image of their own capabilities. How does the teacher see herself? What is her notion of 'being a teacher' and what does it mean 'to teach'? We all have a preconceived idea of what it means to be a teacher, what school is about and what it means to learn. Each teacher's life experiences, history and professional knowledge influence how they view their teacher identity (Beltman, et al., 2015). Teacher attitudes and beliefs are also influenced by other factors, such as national curriculum and assessments, and impact on teacher's pedagogical practices (Beltman, et al., 2015).

The image of the teacher is portrayed through many different lenses in society, such as media, books and social platforms (Parnell, 2010). How does this affect the teacher's image of him/herself when engaging with children? Does this 'self' image influence how teachers interact with students, and how they view them as capable learners? If teachers see themselves as capable professionals and seek to learn more, is this how they view the children we work each day? Images of teachers are influenced by historical views of teachers, such as caretakers or 'non professionals' (Parnell, 2010). There is a need to reimage the perceptions of teachers in society through the notion of teachers as co-learners with students, engaging in co-participation. Different images of teachers, such as teacher as researcher (Rinaldi, 2003) enhance student and teacher learning and create positive connections with communities (Parnell, 2010).

Image of the child

> The children's bodies have changed since they have found these bees and their log at Deep Creek. They move differently. Bodies move quietly and deliberately near the bees, voices are quietened and eyes are centrally focused on the log. Children move towards the bees

> with considered effort, not moving too quickly or urgently but with a respect for the creatures and their environment – their home. They sit on the log and stare at the opening, rotting away from the ravages of weather. Staying very still, the children edge closer each time they come here, with no sudden movements and wanting to learn more about these creatures and their lives. The bee colony inside seems to thrive as the worker bees take turns flying in and out, foraging for food.
>
> Pedagogical Narration: Bees, 2019

The teacher's image of the child influences everyday teaching and learning in the classroom. In these moments with bees, the children are seen as capable, they are trusted to listen with bees, to situate themselves to respond to the bees, to spend long periods of time with bees. This moves against the usual enacted image of the child as innocent, incapable, dependent, and deficit.

The long history of the image of the child begins with the child as 'innocent' during the Middle Ages and continues through the implementation of Kindergarten and work of Fredrich Froebel (Sorin, 2005). This influences the way in which we view children today as deficit, needy and dependent on adults and continues to inform the structure of schools, curriculum, and assessment with the hope of 'fixing children (Iorio & Parnell, 2015). Children, in this sense, are equated with an empty vessel that requires filling with knowledge and facts from parents and teachers. Readiness for life and school is determined by others as children are considered as incapable to make decisions and contribute to their own lives.

Children as capable are seen as having potential and competence to construct meaning for themselves (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015). Rinaldi's (2001) description of the child as capable"….*child as capable and strong, not fragile, needy and incapable"* (p. 79) offers a way to see children in a way that positions children as active and contributing to teaching, learning

and their community. Activating this image of the child sees children as capable of creating theories and searching for meaning through individual and shared experiences as well as constructors of their own knowledge, rather than passive participants in life, unequal to adults (Moss and Petrie, 2002). Children as capable express their thinking in different ways, using symbols and languages, and creative interpretations of their discoveries (Moss, 2010). If teachers nurture and support this image, children's curiosity and learning will flourish and lead to new discoveries of their world (Ayers, 2010).

Significance of this research

The importance of this research has implications for teachers in all learning communities. Teachers engage every day with children. Teachers can create classrooms where there is a more equal share of power in the child-teacher relationship (Iorio, 2006; 2008). These relationships (Project Zero, et al, 2001; Edwards et al., 2014; Parnell, 2010; Iorio, 2006) impact everyday teaching and learning. If we can understand the power of the image of the child and teacher identity, this will support teachers to respond to children and engage in complex teaching and learning moments.

The ways in which teachers engage as teachers (and this is interconnected with teacher identity) and with children (in particular, through the image of the child) impacts how teachers and children make meaning of ideas, concepts, content, and their worlds (Moss, 2019). By seeing children as capable (Rinaldi, 2006), teachers open possibilities for discussions and actions, create opportunities for theorizing and pose questions to enable critical thinking. Expectations of teachers have a profound influence on learning, therefore everyday moments with children should reflect our expectations too.

At the start of this research, I was teaching in a Year 5/6 learning community of 140 students and six teachers. I remember the questioning, feedback and comments generated by teachers, noting at times, there seemed to be an underlying message of each child's perceived capabilities. At the heart of this--the image of the child and how teachers see children. Some teachers view the children as listeners rather than participants, some view them as needing every step of their learning explained, and some use 'watered down' language when engaging with students. There are others however who speak to students using high level language and specific technical terms and ask questions that promote a sense of confidence and risk taking. They offer opportunities for deep meaning-making with materials, activities, and relationships with people, place, and the more-than-human. How does this difference in the image of the child construct teacher response?

Situating this research project

This research took place over two years in a primary school located in a regional coast town in Australia. Serving children from foundation to grade six, this school is located within walking distance of the beach, creek, and reserve. During this time, I worked with two teams—one at the 5/6 grade level and the other at 3/4 grade level. These multi-age communities had several teachers who met fortnightly for a full day to plan.

Using my researcher journal and documents generated through the ordinary moments in the daily classroom, I created pedagogical narrations (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015) that brought together data collection and analysis. As noted at the start of the introduction, writing was central to the research process and became how I came to understand the data in terms of the research questions and beyond.

Ethics

This project is part of a larger project Children as Capable (HRE 15-234, Victoria University) with Co-Principal Investigators Dr. Jeanne Marie Iorio and Dr. Catherine Hamm. This project focuses on the teaching practices used that hold the image of the child as capable. I am an identified graduate student researcher on the ethics application.

Overview of the thesis

Each chapter in this thesis is reflective of different perspectives on this research and are connected across the entire document. Chapter 1, Introduction, shares key ideas, situates the research, shares the aims and research questions, and offers the significance of the research.

Chapter 2 focuses on the literature review while Chapter 3 offers a new way think about methodology as a refusal of methodology and towards post-qualitative inquiry.

Chapters 4 and 5 are pedagogical narrations--Bones and Stories--which bring together data, analysis, and data creation.

The final chapter is the discussion which considers the research questions, the unexpected, limitations and possibilities, research implications, and further research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

SCENE ONE:

A school leadership meeting. A room filled with mostly male teachers who embrace direct instruction and teaching practices based on the view that teachers have all the power and children are incapable. One middle-aged woman, JOAN, embracing contemporary teaching and learning, and viewing children as capable, sits at the table.

COLIN

Let's look at how we can improve our students' writing because I don't think it's good enough.

JOAN:

(thinking in her head – voiceover)

What Colin really means 'I don't have samples with me, just the writing section of the curriculum at one year level, old NAPLAN tests, and a whole lot of worksheets from the 1960's.'

JOAN:

(Trying to stay positive at this stage and celebrate what the children are learning, and hoping Colin and she can come to a consensus. She's attended many of these meetings with Colin.)

Oh, we've had some great examples of different types of writing from our students. They're loving exploring different ways of writing and you can really hear their voices in each piece. I remember in our annual action plan that student voice is a focus across the school and it's great to see this evident in their writing.

COLIN:

Yeah, we all know that, and we give the kids a voice. I listen to them and when I take home their writing to correct, I give them feedback to make it better.

(Joan thinking in her head, 'So….no conferencing with the authors?')

JOAN:

Ok, well I guess we should discuss what a 'good' piece of writing might look like, and it might be worthwhile looking at the writing samples as a group and see what we notice and where to next. We (Joan thinking in her head – 'because I always work with others to get their opinion and expertise') have been looking at some samples of student writing across two year levels, (Joan thinking in her head – 'because learning happens across a continuum and not everyone is at the same stage') and noticed that there are some areas we could focus on then we could run some workshops that explicitly teach certain skills.

COLIN:

(chuckling)

Oh, I think we all know what a good piece of writing looks like, don't we?

(Joan thinking in her head what Colin really means, 'But I'm not going to discuss it with you, because I really don't know and I'm not interested in hearing what anyone else has to say anyway.')

JOAN:

It's interesting to see what the children are reading now and how that might influence their writing. Writing has changed a lot since we were at school and many authors use phrases rather than whole sentences now. In the right context, it's very effective and powerful.

(Joan suggesting in her head, 'Maybe you should take an interest in what they are reading and even read some yourself.')

COLIN:

Yeah, but is that right? Where does it say that in the curriculum? They should be writing full sentences.

(Joan thinking in her head what Colin really means, 'Because I'm not interested in thinking outside the square because it's hard work and I'm happy to stay in my traditional bubble. I'm also not sure of some of the vocabulary in the English curriculum but I don't need to because I know what it's all about anyway.')

JOAN:

Well, we've been asking the students to share their writing with us online and they're very creative writers. Lots of detail and descriptive language. We just need to focus on some of the editing skills as their stories are quite powerful. They love receiving feedback online using the editing tools and it seems to be working well.

COLIN:

Why are they writing on computers and not in their books, because that's what we should be teaching so they're ready for NAPLAN?

(Joan thinks in her head what Colin really means, 'In fact, let's get out the old inkwells and fountain pens as well. Maybe slates might be an option too. And what the hell is an online editing tool? How do you do that? I refuse to ask because I don't view myself as a learner, more of an expert really. And even though I'm at least fifteen years younger than you Joan, I bet I have more old school tricks up my sleeve than you!')

JOAN:

Well, we actually gave the students a choice because some of them do like to write in their books as well. Ok then, maybe we

could look at how we give feedback and whether that is consistent among all of us? Should we be expecting the students to edit and revise their own work first, then conference with a friend before they chat with the teachers for feedback?

(Joan thinks in her head, 'Knowing I have evidence that this is not happening with Colin (even though the curriculum expects this) and that the students are capable of doing this but are not expected to because the teacher wants to hold the power of the big red pen!')

COLIN:

Oh, I think we're all doing that (frowning and exaggerating a confused face) so do we need to discuss it? (And that's the end of the conversation. Moving on!)

In this moment, I am Joan and I should not have let that go! This scene brings together remembered conversations over my teaching years that tend to pop into my head at the most peculiar times. The people in these play scenes are a merger of colleagues and administrators (a mixture of gender, age and position) with whom I have worked over the years. It sounds like I have regrets and, although I do, the moments of joy in teaching far outweigh those of disillusionment. But time now for reflection on those moments in my teaching career when I should have spoken up, questioned a comment or clarified an issue. I wonder why this is where my writing and research has led me at this moment? Maybe it's my age and becoming more aware, or maybe it's my time now. So, this is the time--time to assemble all those moments of uncertainty, and sometimes intimidation, and make sense of who I am as a teacher. How do I construct 'teacher'? What is my teacher identity? Words and conversations randomly appear in my head as I revisit interesting and challenging conversations from my teaching career. How did I let that person treat their colleagues like that? Did that person consider what was best for the

children? Why did I let that person express their ideas without including other points of view? How did we all just accept that we are not treated equally and not say anything?

I sit here, at home, during the second COVID -19 lockdown in Victoria, Australia and wonder how to write a literature review after teaching online lessons with five- and six-year-old children this morning, and then spending all afternoon giving the required feedback for each online post, then planning ahead for tomorrow. It's like groundhog day again and again…My eyes often divert to the window, wondering how I can plan to go for a walk or get outside in the garden and the sun. Maybe I could set up a desk on the back lawn?

The irony is that working from home as a teacher finds me spending endless hours sitting in one place in front of a computer, with little or no conversation during the day--and rigorous conversations with my colleagues and children provokes my thinking and learning. I miss the real-life interactions with the children and with my colleagues--the moments of discovering, the sharing of challenges, the enlightenment of achievement. My brain is a digital conglomerate of wires most days now, as my onscreen time has dramatically increased--and we won't mention the hours I spend sitting! So now that I have to write about teacher identity and how that links to viewing children as capable, I consider many key moments of my life and the effect they have had on my own teaching and my learning.

I draw inspiration from the work of Vicars (2006) in formatting this literature review. In his article "Queer Goings-On': An Autoethnographic Account of the Experiences and Practices of Performing a Queer Pedagogy", Vicars "reconstructs scenes" from his experiences as a teacher (p. 21). He shares that through reconstruction of these scenes he wants to "engage the active reader" and "attempt to create impressions of places and people that led me to question the ways that I belong, act, and represent myself as a Gay/Queer man and as a teacher" (p. 22).

While I do not identify as Gay/Queer man, I do find kinship in how the scenes provoke myself as a reader and as I write to understand, the act of writing my own experiences in teaching is part of understanding teacher identity and my own views of children and teacher response.

Therefore, in writing this literature review, I depart from the conventional format, as the many experiences, reconstructed scenes, as Vicars (2006) describes are shared through a performative social science approach that does not tell but shows the reader. The rich dialogue and conversations within this research exemplify the changing dynamics between teachers, and the challenges faced by contemporary educators. Vicars (2006) gives a detailed account of conversations between colleagues, students and himself that forces him to question his own identity and the role he plays as person and teacher. Reflecting on the personal and professional intersections of his life, Vicars prompted me to think about possibilities for sharing my own narrative. Vicars' honesty and vulnerability connected to moments in my own story and through a series of conversations in his career, he makes meaning of his experiences by questioning the status quo and reflecting on the person and teacher he had become on his journey. So, my own journey of becoming a teacher is my reality and my perspective, bringing together stories from life events and conversations.

Overview of this literature review

This literature review brings together an amalgamation of conversations, reflections, and research over the years that have formed part of my teacher identity and the journey leading to this research. "Each teacher's life experiences, history and professional knowledge influence how they view their teacher identity" (Beltman, et al, 2015). My passion for teaching and my identity is strongly linked to all these influences and life experiences and a myriad of others which often have mysterious ways of revealing themselves. Through a series of discussions over decades of teaching, I re-enact conversations with peers and groups of peers and document my

thinking during these conversations. These have strengthened, validated, reaffirmed, prompted and challenged me to reflect on my identity as teacher.

The story of my journey as a teacher is entangled with both moments of pure joy and enlightenment and yet, moments of discomforting conflict and tension (Henry, 2019). As a beginning teacher, my days were busy and focused on ensuring that I had completed all the expected lessons, ticking the boxes and getting to know the children in my cohort. There was little time to acknowledge those moments of delight and engage in authentic conversations, as I learned to navigate the system and search for appropriate lessons (or should I be honest and say 'activities') to teach each day. But as time passed and as I matured, I began to notice that learning is dynamic and not easily confined to individual subject areas or one focus. Some research suggests conflicting ideas of what it means to be a teacher (Henry, 2019) and also discusses the struggles and conflicts encountered in our journey as teachers. My personal struggles with being a teacher are interwoven with my professional tensions, as my views of teaching and learning were (and still are) disrupted by conversations with children and a myriad of others, both professional and personal.

My story is told within a narrative of colourful and interesting characters, a range of settings, many problems and solutions and endings that make way for new chapters. On the one hand, I have been inspired by knowledgeable mentors and inspiring leaders and yet, adversely, my identity as a teacher has also been influenced by colleagues who have dampened my enthusiasm and been reluctant to embrace change or to question the status quo. In fact, I believe sometimes those teachers who consider themselves as having reached the pinnacle of learning and teaching are more of an incentive to improve my pedagogical knowledge. There's an urgency to explain oneself and clarify my thinking around the future of these children that have been entrusted to us.

My own identity as teacher is entangled with my lived experiences, and in all that coexists with me. My lived experiences have a strong connection to place and history. And yet it causes me trouble, as Haraway (2016) writes, to 'stay with the trouble', and question my identity. So, writing to understand these experiences and make meaning (Richardson, 2001) unearths memories, connections and realities that I'd never considered. I begin to ask questions of myself and others, wondering, observing and eager to find out more. Interrupting the discourse (the way in which we talk about school and children) and rethinking the image of the child--how is it connected to teacher identity construction? My thinking and assumptions of what it means to be a teacher have been disrupted. I find myself unlearning and rethinking who I am as a teacher.

Studies in teacher identity vary greatly from graduate teachers to teachers with careers spending several decades (Graham & Phelps, 2002; Henry, 2019; Skott, 2019). Dispositions also have a significant role to play when considering the effect of these on how teachers approach their teaching--and their learning. I view myself as a teacher and a learner. I learn to teach but I teach to learn too. I not only observe and listen, but I have honest and authentic involvement with my students and learn with them. I now engage in purposeful co-participation in learning, with a focus on 'encounter and connection' (Rinaldi, 2006).

Learning is co-constructed with the children as we find meaning together and even struggle together (Rinaldi, 2006). The experience of visiting the Educational Project in Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy (where exemplary early childhood education is a priority) ignited an emotional response for me that filled me with hope. Hope for me as a teacher, but also hope for the future of children. The joy that comes with learning (both child and teacher) was so evident in this city that it created a sense of wonder and a world of possibilities in my mind. My teaching

would be changed forever through this experience and my learning would evolve in ways that I could only imagine.

Even my language has changed considerably, as I still call myself teacher, but I'm an educator, a researcher and a learner too. These are not distinct from one another. And my personal life is entwined with my professional life now and they cannot be separated. This idea had not occurred to me before. My language about teaching and learning is different, more specifically about the entanglement of being a teacher and a learner and learning with the children. I use words such as 'encounter, entanglement, disruption, relational' when I talk about teaching and learning. I reflect on experiences that promote curiosity, critical thinking and new perspectives. I discover that viewing children as capable changes the narrative to think about what is best for these children and what is important for them to know and learn.

SCENE TWO

Next discussion…

So here we go again. A room filled again with teachers who work as lone wolves, not collaborative educators, and are reluctant to reimagine what assessment and reporting might look like for our 21st century students.

COLIN:

Right, everyone got the agenda and all good to go for reports this term?

JOAN:

Actually, I just want to check some aspects of our reporting process. Our team leader has been away and as I'm here to represent our team, we just have a few questions. We're not sure about...

COLIN:

Well, it's all been decided. Leadership has agreed on it and all the leaders knew about it, so that was passed on to your leader to tell your team. *(Colin rolls his eyes and makes an aside comment to another teacher about Joan)*

JOAN:

(Thinking to herself and feeling intimidated and shocked……'I'm frozen and furious!')

So again, I should not have let that go! I have always believed in equality and professionalism within staff and here I am questioning my own values and my identity. It happened so fast and it seems that everyone is turning a blind eye. Personal and professional collide as I struggle with how to deal with these confrontations. "We live in a world where the paradigm of regulatory modernity and the regimen of neo-liberalism are hugely powerful – not totally dominant, since there are many resistances, but dominant enough to stifle alternative thinking and to constrain what can and cannot be thought and said" (Moss, 2016, p. 13). This is part of the reason I sometimes feel limited in what I can achieve with children because the dominance of closed and uncreative thinking penetrates into each area of teaching and learning. Truly inclusive and professional environments within schools are open to diverse opinions, but with a sense of safety in disagreeing with a viewpoint--respectfully, not dismissively. Children

are capable of doing this, which leads me to wonder how adults dismiss these subtle pragmatics of conversation.

Reflecting on my career at this stage is multifaceted--how did I get here? What choices did I make to be this teacher? Skott (2019) defines teacher identities as "their shifting experiences of 'being, becoming and belonging" related to the profession" (p. 1). 'Being' a teacher has presented so many learning opportunities to me, but in hindsight, I embraced these and often sought them out in my own time and for my own interest. In 'becoming' a teacher, there is no endpoint for me as the journey continues. My experiences with becoming a teacher are still evolving as education continually evolves. Over my career, one element has been consistent and that is change. I think I've come to realise that I thrive on change for the excitement it brings and the possibilities it presents. Sachs (2005) discusses how teachers construct their own ideas of 'how to be', 'how to act' and 'how to understand' their work and their place in society. Changes occur within the teaching world but also in the outside world. So why is it that some teachers may not evolve and change with new ideas and others do? Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) also talk about the dynamic rather than stable dimensions of being a teacher and the many elements that influence teachers. Teaching is dynamic as knowledge is dynamic. And 'belonging' as a teacher occurs when you are part of the learning community of teachers and children. "In learning to teach, identity construction takes place in the midst of complex systems of different relationships" (Henry, 2019, p. 264). These relationships present ways of becoming a teacher, provoking ways of thinking and challenging assumptions about being a teacher. My relationships during my career have definitely influenced the teacher that I've become but this is still evolving as I enter a new phase of teaching during the era of COVID-19 remote teaching in 2020.

Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) in their studies involving pre-service teachers discuss the complex issues of the many factors that have an effect on teacher identity--the self of taking into account both professional and personal influences (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). I see myself as a co-participant in building a culture that promotes reflective teaching and learning. I've had to rethink what a teacher is and does and explore multiple perspectives of being a teacher (Britzman, 2003). As a co-participant in the learning, the teacher and child are learning together, constructing knowledge between them and discovering new ways of being. The image of the child becomes more visible when the teacher engages in co-learning, being part of the conversation and actively listening.

Child as Capable

SCENE THREE

A primary school setting where teachers and children interact in a shared flexible learning space.

CHARLIE (12-year-old boy):

I can't find my pencil, so I can't finish my work.

TEACHER ONE:

Here! I'll get one for you. And don't worry about finishing your work. Just do your best.

(Teacher One is thinking, 'And that's the tenth one I've given you this term, but that's OK because that's my role, isn't it? I'll do everything for you because I don't see you as capable,

just needy, and I won't encourage you to solve even simple problems on your own.')

TEACHER TWO:

Oh. I wonder where you might have left it last time you used it, Charlie. How might you solve this problem? Where might it be and what could you do if you can't find it?

(Teacher Two is thinking, 'I see you as capable of solving these simple problems and I'll also encourage you to be responsible for yourself and have high expectations for your learning.')

ANOTHER DAY...

RUBY (8-YEAR-OLD GIRL):

I've finished my writing.

TEACHER ONE:

Well done, Ruby! You can get a book now and read or just have free time.

(Teacher One is thinking, 'I see she's only written one sentence and I can't be bothered sitting with her and having a conversation with relevant feedback. There's not much in it, and she should be able to write a more in-depth response, but I'm going to have to think about where to next for her. She's probably capable of more but it's neat. Good enough!)

TEACHER TWO:

That's a great start with your opening paragraph. I wonder if you could add more detail about what you were thinking in this part of your writing Ruby. Maybe you could use some ideas from our class discussion and write about how those ideas connected to you. Let's meet again after you've discussed your writing with a friend.

(Teacher 2 is thinking, 'I know this child is capable of more and just needs reminding about what that might look like. I've seen her often go to Teacher One because she knows that teacher will accept whatever she writes, with no feedback. How can we support her to view herself as capable so she can move forward and take risks with her learning?'

Viewing children as capable is made evident to me when I witness children and teachers interacting. I've been a listener of many of these conversations and yet I know that the five- and six-year-olds I teach every day can locate a pencil and can refine their writing without input from teachers and other children. And they know that I know! Do I sound cynical? Yes, I am, because our job is to empower children to be capable and confident, and become problem solvers for future challenges. It even says this in the Australian Curriculum that the curriculum is "designed to develop successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens" (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], n.d.). The rationale for the Critical and Creative Thinking component of the Victorian Curriculum

(Victorian Curriculum Foundation - 10, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority [VCAA]) states, “responding effectively to environmental, social and economic challenges requires young people to be creative, innovative, enterprising and adaptable, with the motivation, confidence and skills to use critical and creative thinking purposefully.” And to elaborate further, “Developing critical and creative thinking capability is an essential element of developing successful, confident and innovative members of the community” (Victorian Curriculum, Foundation - 10, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, [VCAA]).

The Early Years Learning Framework [EYLF] (2014) also speaks of the importance of viewing children as capable. “High expectations and encouragement are closely linked with children’s agency and sense of capability.” One of the five main outcomes of the EYLF, “Children are confident and involved learners” undeniably views children from early ages as being capable and ‘active learners’, promoting positive attitudes towards learning and able to face challenges.

The children I learn with each day demonstrate these attributes regularly and consistently. Their capabilities are shown in the conversations, the wonderings, the questions and the connections they make as they encounter new learning and information. They know that I trust their capabilities and their insights to explore complex thinking, discern different forms of information and engage in rich dialogue. The Ontario Early Years Policy Framework [Canada] (2013) also presents a view of the child as “competent, curious, and capable of complex thinking” offering an international example of this view on children. Providing opportunities for the children to engage as capable is paramount, which also leads to enhancing teacher capacity and builds on teacher identity. If our Australian Curriculum focusses on capabilities of critical and creative thinking, then this indicates that teachers have a responsibility to create environments where children as capable can be practiced. How can that happen if we solve

simple challenges for them? How is that supporting children to be capable and become contributing people to their local communities and the wider world?

The teacher's image of the child is a key indicator of how classroom learning evolves. Rather than focusing on student needs or deficits, teachers are encouraged to view them as having potential and competence to construct meaning for themselves (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015). Contrary to this knowledge, children have been viewed as deficit--needy, incapable of solving problems, unprepared for life (Iorio & Parnell, 2015). Traditional early education views children as incapable and innocent and are considered as 'objects' for research rather than being researchers themselves. Teachers too are rarely the focus of research projects (Iorio & Parnell, 2020), however there is a shift towards the importance of qualitative data from this type of research based on learning communities--children, families and teachers. When teachers' identities are constructed around the image of the student as capable, teachers open possibilities for rich discussions, create opportunities for theorizing and pose questions to enable critical thinking. I use Rinaldi's (2001) description of the child as how I understand capability, "child as capable and strong, not fragile, needy and incapable" (p. 79). Positioning children as "capable and strong", as Rinaldi articulates, informs how learning happens and continues between student and teacher. I believe this view of the child contributes to the construction of teacher identity.

So how do I respond with these children if I view them as capable? There is excitement in learning with children as a co-participant (Rinaldi, 2006) and also excitement learning with other teachers who display the same characteristics. Taking ordinary moments to reflect on with children is never predictable and uncovers a multitude of pathways for future learning. This is the unknown--where will it lead us? Our teaching moments, inclusive of conversations between children and teachers, provoke ideas and wonderings that are open ended and not finite. Not only is it about the relationship between identity and teacher response but it relies on the relationship

between teachers and children. My identity as teacher is ever changing and reflective, bringing my moments with children to be surprising and often revealing extraordinary understandings.

Conversations with children as teaching moments

I love conversations with children. I find they know more than we could ever imagine and their wonderings and revelations open up a plethora of ideas and possibilities. The language and dialogue within these dialogic classrooms have a direct influence on the dynamics of the classroom and shape the conversations that take place (Gallas, 1994). This may imply that when teacher's identity is built on the view of the student as capable, conversations are open to shared power. This can create classrooms where there is a more equal share of power in the relationship between student and teacher conversations (Iorio, 2006, 2008). The dynamics of talk in the classroom can be further built on by listening and questioning--practices that need to be nurtured both by students and teachers (Iorio, 2006, 2008) from the view of the child as capable. Words and expectations convey how we view the child and our responses reflect if we have been an active listener or dismissed their thinking, signifying the view of child as incapable.

Relationships are imperative to these moments and enliven the learning space. The joy of learning is promoted when children, teachers, families and communities learn together. These crucial relational aspects of learning come into play where the agency that links learning and teaching (Britzman, 2003) brings together children and teachers as co-participants in daily conversations of learning. This often presents the unexpected and uncertainty (Rinaldi, 2006) of finding out together and building on the ideas of others, as well as provoking doubt and challenges. How we express our learning is also significant as we all have different and sometimes preferred ways of communicating our discoveries. Edwards et al. (2014) reminds us that all children are capable of communicating their thinking and learning through a multitude of

expressions, the hundred languages, which was first articulated by Loris Malaguzzi (1994) and the Educational Project in Reggio Emilia Italy. Described as being the ways we express and communicate with others through different representations of our learning (Edwards et al. 2014; Reggio Children, n.d.; Vecchi, 2010; Gallas, 1994), the hundred languages use a range of media and symbols. These languages include (but are not limited to) "expressive, symbolic, ethical, communicative, cognitive, logical, imaginative, and relational languages" (https://reggioaustralia.org.au/the-hundred-languages-of-children/). The emphasis is also on treating each language equally, not in a hierarchical way, by giving credence to each and every child's preferred method of response.

Assemblies (The Many Faces of the Assembly, DVD, 2017) or class meetings (as articulated in the Educational Project, Reggio Emilia, Italy) are important moments and discussions of shared learning between children and teachers, seated in a circle. A provocation is presented, a question or statement, which engages conversations of shared understandings, ideas and opinions. During assemblies, the responses given by children often provide insight into deeper thinking and connections that children have made. It is the power of shared dialogue which encourages all children to participate and often leads to moments of insight and wonder for both children and teachers. Building positive relationships is integral to these assemblies, allowing children to express ideas and wonderings in a safe but stimulating environment. It requires the teacher to learn with the children, not to dominate the conversation, but to be part of it. The art of knowing when and how to provoke towards digging deeper shows children that the teacher is genuinely engaged in the conversation, but also that the teacher is attuned to the capabilities of the children, moving them further with confidence. There are "moments given to pausing, lingering, and reflection" (Mulvenna, 2019, p. 1) when the sound of silence is accepted and encouraged, leading to more depth in thinking.

I see all children as capable--capable of knowing, being, wondering, connecting. The genuine conversations and rich dialogue become the vehicle by which we travel together towards a greater understanding of each person and their world. I don't choose the path as I would have previously. The image of the child gives us endless possibilities for explorations and discoveries. And the image of the teacher identifies how a teacher sees herself in the conversation, how she views her role, and how she instinctively and purposefully supports the student to think and question (Pacini-Ketchabaw, et al. 2015) -- constructing teacher identity.

Posthumanism

SCENE FOUR

A team planning session for upper primary students. Six teachers – a mixture of age and genders – sit around a large table, laptops and diaries open. Some teachers have professional learning texts ready and a sense of anticipation for planning some rich authentic learning for our more than capable students. Joan sits beside one of the younger teachers who is enthusiastic, open minded and inspiring. They chat about the children who are thriving in extension groups for literacy and mathematics. Colin is checking emails and has only a diary in front of him. The other two teachers, one male, one female stare at their screens. Their involvement in collaborative planning

consists of agreeing with everything that Colin says - maybe because they've seen what happens if you disagree.

COLIN:

(sitting in the same place at the table each week where he can monitor our behaviour):

Ok we're going to 'do' the environment. I've already got lots of activities I've used over the years to teach about the environment. I'll print them out. There's next term planned.

JOAN:

Great idea to focus on learning about the environment, so maybe we can look at how we might embed it in all parts of the curriculum.

ALICE: (young teacher and new to the school)

Yes, I checked areas of the curriculum and there's links to science, literacy, maths, Indigenous perspectives, history, geography, the arts, critical and creative thinking and of course, sustainability. The kids would benefit greatly with such a strong focus on environment in all areas of the curriculum. It'll really make strong connections for them.

JOAN:

Yes, Alice. A lot of these kids have a real connection with nature and thrive on learning about and caring for their world. Maybe we could give them a chance to explore our local environment firsthand and then we can discuss what choices they might have to investigate an area of their own interests or passions. We have some beautiful natural places close to our school we could visit regularly.

COLIN:

But they'd have to leave the classroom to do that? When are we going to fit in everything else we have to teach?

JOAN:

They'll be doing a lot of learning out in the environment and our provocations for their responses can be based around the curriculum. Maybe some children could write some poetry, make models, conduct experiments or they could reflect on it through artwork and a written response?

ALICE:

We could even connect with experts, such as scientists and Indigenous elders. Lots of opportunities for authentic learning. I have some ideas here in these books and some fantastic websites too. The kids can develop theories, devise questions and work in teams, depending on their interests.

COLIN:

I don't think that will work. A lot of these kids need help with their spelling and times tables, so we won't have time to go out. And they all need to do the same thing and just focus on one area of the curriculum. We don't have time to organise all the other stuff.

(Joan thinks in her head what Colin really means, 'I can control it then, otherwise you risk these kids having their own ideas and opinions and that could be dangerous and unpredictable. I might even discover they know more than me!')

JOAN:

You should see how these children engage with the environment when they visit their local place. They notice the changing seasons, they look at bees up-close, they play in the arms of the magnificent gumtree elder. They love the place and they have such a strong and caring connection to place now. If we want the children to experience the environment through their senses and establish a relationship with it, surely that's more powerful for their learning?

COLIN:

No, they should be all inside writing a persuasive text about how to care for the environment. We don't have time to be 'playing' outside.

JOAN:

Oh, we can arrange it all, can't we Alice? The children usually help us too and come up with their own ideas for responses when we're back at school--often ideas we haven't thought of. We'd love to share some of the creative and insightful learning these children have done before that shows a true connection to place (a place we visit regularly that has become part of us and we have become part of the place).

COLIN:

Takes too much time to keep visiting that place. Should be in school learning.

(Joan thinks in her head what Colin really means, 'I'm not sure what they are talking about because I teach each subject separately and how can you learn outside the classroom anyway?')

JOAN:

(Thinking but wanting to shout it out, 'Aaahhhhhhh! Get me out of here! I want to go straight to the place!')

Posthuman thinking urges humans to reconsider their place on this planet – in this place (Haraway, 2016; Moss, 2019). In a time where human actions affect every living entity on Earth,

it becomes increasingly evident that we as humans need to change in order to sustain our planet. Seeing ourselves as entangled with the fragile ecosystem rather than controlling it, prompts us to consider ourselves living well together with all life forms. The way we engage with other living things changes how we view ourselves. Our role as the dominant creature shifts to being one of many lifeforms, equal and as important to each other. These ideas create a space to bring your identity as teacher and the image of the child as capable together in teaching and learning. My role as teacher researcher has opened new ways of viewing the world and my place in the world of education. It has brought together my teacher identity, image of the child as capable, and connections with the local community. There comes a point when you start thinking about what is to come and what we are leaving behind for all children. In living together on Earth, the ethical and political considerations (Taylor and Giugni, 2012) become a matter of urgency for us but more importantly for our children.

Posthumanism (beyond humanism) has prompted me to think differently about my place in this world (Iorio et al, 2017; Taylor, 2017; Haggstrom, 2020). With that, I am confronted by expectations of being a teacher and how that is evolving as I consider that the non-human forces around me might be integral to life on earth. “Posthumanist research practices offer a new ethics of engagement for education by including the nonhuman in questions about who matters and what counts” (Taylor, 2017, p. 8). It prompts me to unthink our place in the world as humans. The children I learn with every day are witness to the devastation of different life forms around the word, both flora and fauna, at the hands of humans. And yet, I see the passion and care they take when given the chance to be involved as custodians of our earth. Experiences that directly relate to instilling a genuine love and concern for the more than human (everything that lives on earth) can spark children to listen with the Earth and respond through their actions, by learning to live on a damaged planet (Merewether, 2019). This is why it is paramount for children to engage

with place (Iorio et al., 2020)--to see the dynamics of nature, the beauty of ecosystems and see that ultimately, we are all connected. It prompts the notion of common worlds where humans, animals, plants, materials and histories are all entwined (Blaise et al., 2017) and that 'matters of concern' in the environment should be given more consideration, rather than 'matters of fact' (Latour, 2004). Relationality is central to Latour's (2004) description of 'matters of concern' offering a way to "engage with complex relationality of humans, place, and more- than-human" (Iorio et al., 2017, p.1). 'Matters of fact' (Latour, 2004) do not engage with complexity and are constructed as abstract and without connection to context (Blaise et al. 2017). Children have an innate connection with nature. (Taylor, 2013) which creates a prime opportunity for rich discussions and deep learning, but also calls us to consider the ethical and political challenges of the natural world and rethink how we teach children about 'nature' (Taylor, 2013).

The Victorian Curriculum - Sustainability (Victorian Curriculum, Foundation - 10, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, [VCAA]) addresses the interconnectedness of all life on earth, indicating the move towards caring for more than humans, and states that this should be incorporated in all relevant areas of the curriculum. Focusing on "a renewed and balanced approach to the way humans interact with each other and the environment" (VCAA, 2017), it prompts me to think differently about how I view and teach sustainability. Traditionally, I believe that humans concentrated on protecting the environment for their own benefit, but in realising the interconnectedness of all life, this thinking must change. Being involved in a research initiative called Out and About (see www.goingoutandabout.net) brings me new perspectives to the relationships between children and our planet (Iorio et al. 2017). Going out and about each fortnight to a local place with the children has created more than just 'learning about' the environment. The children now view themselves as part of this place,

'learning with' and living with all the 'more than humans' and truly seeing that all of creation is connected.

The rich dialogue and learning that has emerged from going to a familiar place regularly has shown children as more than capable of understanding the larger issues that confront our planet. This connects with the notion of 'common worlds' (Taylor & Guigini, 2012), in which the place has a history and a future, that sustains all who live within it. That has a powerful influence on the child's relationship with the place, viewing it through different lenses and from historical, ethical and political perspectives (Iorio et al. 2017). Even considering the words 'our planet' as a provocation to explore who is 'our'. Do we as humans have an entitlement to this planet, more so than the 'more than human' with whom we coexist? When children start talking about the 'symbiotic' relationships between living organisms and giving examples of their own real-life observations when visiting local places like beach and creek, you know this is making a difference. We, as teachers, have seen the power of children immersed in nature and how their attitudes and behaviour changes. The children approach each visit to these local places with excitement and joy, engaging in rich dialogue and unearthing its secrets for future investigation. And teachers do too, learning with them.

Delving into posthumanism has opened a new door on politics and ethics and my role in caring for our world as explored in the Pope's encyclical titled *Care for our Common Home* (Pope Francis, 2015). This speaks of a posthuman paradigm with a focus on the concept of 'integral ecology', a person's relationship with self, others and all living things. The heart of Laudato Si is: "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" With this in mind, there is no doubt that a focus on our place in the world needs to be questioned. Donna Haraway's (2003, 2008) thinking about humans being but one "companion species" in a world of many others, alerts us to the urgency of seeing our world

differently. As Haraway (2008) notes, “caring means becoming subject to the unsettling obligation of curiosity, which requires knowing more at the end of the day than at the beginning” (p. 36). In Australia, this includes a commitment to foreground Indigenous Worldviews through teaching and learning, “disrupting dominant settler perspectives” and making visible a “commitment to engage with the full range of historical, political, and ethical contexts” (Hamm & Iorio, 2019, p. 3). This alternative narrative “generates multiple perspectives and diversities while also offering a provocation to rethinking and pondering what is possible” (p. 2) in considering how might we care for something and what does that mean.

In my role as teacher, again I reflect on my identity and how these ideas change my view of what to teach and how to teach. My teacher identity and my personal identity are more strongly connected than ever before as I sense the fragile world in which we live. My lifelong affinity with the natural environment continually urges me forward, searching for innovative ways to teach and learn about our world in a relevant and meaningful way. I begin to see that maybe that is why I view the curriculum as an endless source of possibilities (not a list of subject areas) to explore the world and learn to live with all of creation. It’s almost a justification for what I’m trying to achieve, giving me permission to install the urgency of changing our ‘human’ ways. If we give young children multiple experiences with the natural world, we can have hope that they will grow to be adults who have a genuine connection with and concern for the environment (Duhn et al., 2017). Young children need to be involved in discussions about the natural world and the problems confronting the environment, so their voices are heard and “to ensure civic-political dimensions of environmental education from children’s perspectives” (p. 6).

During this time when human activity has been the dominant influence on our climate and the environment, which has given rise to an understanding of the Anthropocene, Taylor

(2017) urges educators to consider what it means to be human in light of sustainability. She believes there needs to be a paradigm shift towards learning 'with' the natural world, rather than 'about' it. This conflicts with the view that we are stewards of the earth (Bennett et al, 2018) promoted through most environmental education. Immersing children in nature surely leads to a greater connection and understanding of the world around us, instilling a genuine care and concern for 'more than human'. Engaging with place requires us to rethink pedagogy and focus on how we as humans are entwined with the environment, bringing with us our own stories and histories, as well as our political and ethical views (Iorio et al. 2017). Using a multisensory approach (Iorio et al. 2017) children and teachers together explore and connect with the local place, creating a relationship of care and concern for all that inhabit the place. The interconnectedness of human and more than human creates a complex web of relationships, made more visible when real experiences bring the fragility of life into play.

I think about teaching and learning and how we have a responsibility to be sustainable and teach sustainability, but more importantly to have a connection with our place on this earth. But what does that look like? We need change and we need to do things differently, not just on how we live with the environment but in how we teach and learn about the environment. Sustainability is commonly discussed across all sectors of our community, but what does it really mean and how can we teach it? According to the Victorian Curriculum (2017), one of the key areas states, "actions for a more sustainable future reflect values of care, respect and responsibility, and require us to explore and understand environments" (Learning about Sustainability Mapping document 20 Jan 2017). Bringing together the expectations of the Victorian Curriculum with posthuman practices and actions offers innovative ways to create teaching and learning moments that connect with the planet.

SCENE FIVE

A room filled with passionate and inclusive educators, mixed genders and cultures, and diverse age groups. All the educators embrace creative and innovative ways of teaching and learning and listen respectfully to others' ideas and opinions, even though they may not always agree. They are all aware of current pedagogical thinking, view all children as capable and see so much potential in creating authentic and relevant learning experiences in educating children for the futuristic world.

COLIN:

Welcome everyone to our meeting today. It was great to see ideas and suggested readings added to our shared agenda this week. Leona had asked if we could discuss her professional reading for next week and see how we might incorporate some of those higher order thinking skills into our lessons.

LEONA:

Thanks Colin. Yes, I was talking to a colleague at a university and she shared this reading with me. It fits in so well with our next provocation and the children engaging with environment, and thinking critically about their role in the world and their future.

JOAN:

Looks good Leona. I read another article by that author and found it very inspiring and relevant, and it connected well to our school vision, as well as the curriculum focus we are planning for next term. I wonder if we could ask the children for some feedback on paths for next term too.

ALICE:

That would be interesting, and we have been talking about student voice this term. I have some ideas for resources we might use for immersing children in some learning about the local environment and also some contacts who have expertise in knowledge of this area. The local council might be worthwhile contacting too. I think there's an Indigenous elder we can contact as well. I'll follow that up--might ask my auntie.

JACK:

Great idea! If we look at all the areas of the curriculum, we can really focus on deeper learning and encourage the children to use their own passions for sharing their learning. I saw some nature journaling recently in a book and thought maybe we could introduce the children to that skill. I'd like to have a go myself with the children--I enjoy learning with them and they enjoy it too! And some of the kids are great at Stop Motion too. They could run some workshops for others.

COLIN:

Thanks everyone for your ideas and input. You always put children at the forefront of our learning and teaching and your enthusiasm and professionalism is much appreciated. Working in an effective and collaborative team like ours really does make a difference. Wouldn't it be great if everyone could work with a team like this all the time? OK let's get started……

I end with this scene on purpose as a moment of hope but also as a moment connecting teacher identity, image of the child, and teacher response. These are the possibilities that I am provoked to think about when seeking to create something new—something that responds to context and offer multiple truths as ways to think, know, and do which also embracing uncertainty as part of teaching. In the next chapter, I offer these ideas as I discuss my methodology or rather, my refusal of methodology.

Chapter 3

Methodology, or rather refusal of methodology

This is not a typical methodology. And this is not surprising as this work is rooted in post-foundationalism, challenging the elements of positivism—a paradigm rooted in predictability, control, and single truths, often further systematic or universal understandings of knowledge (Moss, 2019). A post-foundational lens is a lens of potential, uncertainty and complexity where connections, relationality, entanglements, multiple truths and interpretations, and subjectivity exist and thrive (Moss, 2019). Looking at education through this lens gives us alternative narratives (Moss, 2019), presents us with diverse ideas and perspectives, showing a democratic society at work. For example, the dominant discourse of child development so present in education today, dismisses these alternative stories made visible through post-foundationalism, inferring that different points of view are irrelevant. And yet, stories that focus on alternative paradigms (such as post-foundational) and theories give us more complex understandings and make meaning of our world, our communities and our relationships. In continuing the child development example, post-foundational perspectives expand ideas of development beyond a discrete list of skills or milestones and open development up to be connected to context and value multiple interpretations of how development might be discussed. Universal milestones are forgotten, and development becomes a rich story reflective of communities, local knowledges, and image of the child as capable and contributing to communities.

And so, this chapter is not a typical methodology and actually "refuses methodology" (St. Pierre, 2021, p. 5). St. Pierre (1995) shares how she believes "the persistent critique urged by poststructuralism enables a transition from traditional methodology to something different" (p.

209). Emerging from this transition, St. Pierre (2021) suggests the use of "post-qualitative inquiry", creating the space for something else to happen, something beyond methodology. It begins with a deep study of post-structural ideas, opening up thinking to multiple theories, theories that provoke new ways of doing research (St. Pierre, 2021).

Beginning with post-foundationalism required a deep dive into multiple readings, readings sometimes I did not understand, and others that connected immediately to my thinking. St. Pierre (2021) recognizes how post-qualitative inquiry "must be invented, created differently for each time" and how it will "not systematically repeat a preexisting research reprocess to produce a recognizable result but to experience and create something new and different that might not be recognizable in existing structures of intelligibility" (p. 6). These words resemble my own journey of creating within this inquiry and how within this research, I found news ways to travel that morphed and changed as I moved through the ordinary moments of teaching.

This post-qualitative inquiry is represented as a story--a story of children and teachers learning to be with each other, discovering together and telling the whole story co-participating together. This calls for my story to naturally becoming part of the narrative, making visible the entanglements between teacher, student, local place and context. Thus, I gravitated towards pedagogical narrations (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015; Atkinson, 2012) as inquiry, to tell the story of my journey as researcher and educator and how I questioned teacher identity and transformed my understanding of teacher and image of the child during this time. I focused on the ordinary moments with children always viewed as capable, and how that linked with my own identity as teacher and how that plays a significant part in the way I approach my teaching and learning. I wanted to first explore the power of conversations with children and how those conversations influence my responses as teacher. But along the way, other unexpected and surprising ideas emerged as well, moving me beyond conversations and thinking with the

ordinary moments of the daily life in the classroom. The richness of the story that emerged and the struggles to make meaning from these stories are integral to the narrative that weaves through the everyday moments of a classroom. It tells the story of collaboration and teacher identity and how we are as humans in this world, moving beyond the classroom and recognizing how teachers and children contribute to communities. How we talk with children, the environment we create for learning, tells us a lot about how we view children as learners, capable of making decisions and understanding complex ideas.

Positionality

Choosing to focus on myself for this research was the first step. My journey as a teacher (and a learner) had already taken different routes and detours, finding myself sometimes lost in a vast forest with no defined pathway, teaching to requirements and forgetting how children and teachers can co-participate together. The knowledge about teaching and learning I had acquired over many years was circling constantly and gathering momentum, trying to reach some form of balance. There were many moments of uncertainty and wondering 'what if' about decisions in teaching which gave me the urge to explore further--and question my purpose as a teacher. Questions filled my mind: Are there different ways of thinking about this teaching concept? What would the children gain from this experience created by me as teacher? What is the most important idea from our learning today? How crucial are the capabilities of the curriculum for creating learners? What if the children took ownership of the learning? And what if they gave us feedback about our teaching? Many paths have led me to these questions. Life moments, teaching moments, family moments, professional moments of discussion and awakening. I began to ask questions of myself and others, wondering, observing and eager to find out more.

How do I interrupt the discourse (the way in which we talk about school and children) and rethink the image of the child--how is it connected to teacher identity construction? My thinking and assumptions of what it means to be a teacher have already been disrupted. I find myself unlearning and rethinking who I am as a teacher and examining myself as researcher. The questions I shaped for this research are obviously not random, so my position in this research provokes me to reflect on my journey. I've pondered this question many times during this research--the notion of 'how did I get here?' I still see the world with wonder, and this has been nurtured in me since I was a young child. Most of my most memorable experiences as a child are of being outdoors, with nature and being free to explore. It's funny now to remember that being indoors was only really for eating and sleeping, being together to talk about the day and maybe watch some TV before bed, reading a book. I know this is why I truly am a co-participant in the learning, as I seek and find wonder in the natural environment but also in spaces and beautiful things around me.

As a white settler woman and a teacher, I have a strong sense of equality and social justice. This naturally evokes feelings of discomfort for me when I sense that issues of local and global significance are not addressed by the world leaders who hold all the cards. I have a strong sense of fairness, seeing girls and boys as equal and capable and I make a concerted effort to make this visible in my interactions with children every day. This was modelled by the people most dominant in my early life--my mother who worked and studied, my aunties who showed incredible resilience when faced with challenges and my sisters who were never just 'girls'. My assumptions about equality and identity of others in the world have often been challenged when I have witnessed injustices toward women based purely on their gender. At times I have felt unable to speak up against this, which has caused me frustration and anger, and yet as an educated and confident woman, I can only imagine how this presents to ore vulnerable people.

Respect is a key priority for me in teaching and for all to have a voice at the table. I believe this happens when children are invited into the conversation and when the dominant voices are not the only ones heard, creating a more balanced view of different perspectives.

This is the reason I'm drawn to human stories--stories of resilience and everyday challenges--when the stories exemplify the human spirit and show the dynamics of the relationships between people. I am a person and teacher who makes meaning of my life through my relationships and conversations with others, piecing together ideas and perspectives to understand the full story.

So, it seemed there were signs all around me forcing me to rethink my role as a teacher but also about what my role meant as a woman, a researcher and a student. Somehow, these all started to become interconnected and entangled within my identity as a person and not as separate parts of my identity. As an educator, I began to feel the need for a more meaningful way to engage children in issues and ideas that are outside the usual classroom skills of literacy and numeracy. Issues like environmental disparity and gender equity arising from around the world continually played on my mind and I felt compelled to 'make a difference'--not just for these children but for all children, no matter their status or culture.

Climate change, gender and racial inequality, technology saturation, sustainability and poverty were daily news events and I was drawn to investigate further for myself and to inform my teaching. The Australian Government was ignoring many of these issues and I became concerned about the legacy we were leaving for our children and for their children. Maybe this is what age does, brings about a more reflective and honest view of our stance and our obligation in the world. My natural affinity for the environment was always at the forefront and opportunities

to explore and expand my knowledge in this area began to entangle my personal and professional life presenting authentic and rich opportunities for learning and conversations with children.

Locating the research

The political and ethical responsibilities of education (Dahlberg and Moss, 2004) were becoming more evident to me with the burgeoning intrusion of fake news and dominance of conservative governments across the world. Social justice issues linked with all of these concerns were leading me to rethink again about how I could make a difference as a teacher. At the same time, in my thirst for continual and innovative professional development, I discovered teaching approaches that included viewing children as capable, thinking routines, high expectations (Saffigna et al., 2011), student voice (Robinson & Taylor, 2007), SOLO taxonomy (Biggs & Collis, 1982), play based learning in primary schools (Briggs & Hansen, 2012), developing theories with children (Rinaldi, 2006). The list seemed endless and yet inevitably they were all connected, all focusing on 'children as capable'. I use Rinaldi's (2001) description of the child as capable as how I understand capability, 'child as capable and strong, not fragile, needy and incapable' (p. 79). Children as capable and strong, as Rinaldi articulates, informs how conversations and ordinary moments happen and continue between student and teacher, encouraging deep thinking and complex understanding. If we view 'the child as a rich child, a child of infinite capabilities, a child born with a hundred languages' (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 2013, p. 129), we focus on the immense potential of each child rather than the deficits which may impede their learning. It became exciting to delve into this research as well as learning theories, which affirmed my transformation of what it means to be a teacher and how that is inextricably linked to me as a person.

Where do I stand? You get to certain key stages of life where you start to truly think about what you believe in and what you stand for. But my driving force at this particular time in my life is what sort of world we are leaving for our children and for the next generations. That's how simply it happened! But I also realise to get to this point, my views have merged over life experiences. My experiences in life are abundant, and as a privileged woman, I have a voice to express opinions, particularly in the area of social justice. I believe in equality--people being treated equally, regardless of gender, race, social standing. This was modelled and is modelled by those who I choose to be with, both in my professional and personal life. Treating others with empathy and seeing the potential in others is how I choose to be. It is not surprising to me to find this within me as teacher and the complexity of how teacher and myself are entangled.

My political and ethical stance (Dahlberg and Moss, 2004) comes in to play when I consider that I was searching for change--not for me but for the children. Viewing this through a post-foundational lens, empowered me to question the traditional ways of knowing and seek to understand education from other perspectives. The restrictions of only viewing our world through our Western lens ignores situated realities of our world. For example, the knowledge of our First Peoples in Australia is becoming more relevant every day to our wellbeing with the uncertainty of global warming and natural catastrophes, such as bushfires and the destruction of the land.

During the time of this research project, we were invited to be part of a research initiative called Out and About (http://www.goingoutandabout.net), which envisages a hopeful attitude towards climate change. This research focuses on children engaging with their local places, making strong connections to build authentic relationships with the environment and seeing themselves as part of the ecosystem, rather than a dominating force. This is centred around both ethical and political projects (Pacini-Ketchabaw, et al. 2015), inviting us to respond to the

challenges of our planet and its sustainable future. Rinaldi (2013) discusses the importance of educating children to be "citizens of the world", not just of their own communities, but having the power to be instruments of change. This called for a change in our thinking too and therefore a change in practice in our teaching and learning. Treating children as active citizens who bringing their own varied experiences to the classroom enriches the learning environment. My own lived experience came into play here, making my teaching visible and forcing me to reflect on my own practice. Pedagogical narrations (Atkinson, 2012; Hodgins, 2012; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015) became the natural inquiry as I constantly searched for meaning and my role as teacher.

In reflecting on my evolving role as teacher, I began to search for ways of documenting and making sense of my journey, which was leading me in many directions. My connection to the power of story and storytelling led me to pedagogical narrations as they are pedagogy in action (Vintimilla, 2019) and this was the intention of my research. Pedagogical narrations are different from a story or narrative as they are pedagogy, "responding to the conditions of our time" (p.4). Using pedagogical narrations as a tool makes children's and teachers' thinking visible, activating critical reflection for me as a teacher in my own pedagogy and practices. In writing the narrations, the stories that emerge show me how children explore relationships with others and how they make meaning from the continual process of learning (Atkinson, 2012. P.2) as well as the teaching pedagogies that are enacted.

The experiences we present to the children emerge from critically reflecting on these pedagogical narrations, supporting children to create their own theories and paths of learning. Listening to conversations, taking photographs, gathering samples of learning form a picture of the child that supports teachers to plan for the next learning experiences. Discussing the information in the pedagogical narrations with colleagues is a key factor in ongoing learning –

creating collective knowledge, not engaging in a lone pursuit of interpretation and discovery. This is different than just relaying or recording text or ideas of children. Pedagogical narrations that focus on pedagogy create a shared body of knowledge, a co-participation with children and with colleagues (Vintimilla and Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020) and take into account the context, challenges and issues of the current time.

Doing research: Context, Everyday, and Pedagogical narrations as inquiry

The following section shares the elements of this post-qualitative inquiry including the context of the research, how the daily life in the classroom is part of the inquiry, and the use of pedagogical narration. As pedagogical narration is not a common way of thinking with data, I offer a short description to connect the reader with these practices.

Context of research

Understanding where this research took place offers another facet to creating pedagogical narrations and writing to understand as well as illustrating the entanglement between identity, context, and practice. This research project tells the stories of an Australian regional coastal primary school (foundation through year six) of approximately 350 students. The school is located within residential houses and is approximately a 20-minute walk from the beach. The school grounds are well maintained and have a vast array of Indigenous trees and plants, a large playground and sports oval. There are also several outside areas accommodating vegetable gardens watered by rainfall tanks.

The structure of leadership includes a principal, deputy principal, four team leaders from foundation–year six, fifteen classroom teachers, as well as specialists for art, music, sport and language.

All of the learning spaces are open plan with dedicated places to engage in small group lessons, and with doors that can create separate areas. The school is extremely well resourced but with a focus on levelled readers and matching year level learning materials. There are abundant laptops and iPads allocated to each area, which are used for children to respond in creative ways for learning and to communicate their learning to families via Seesaw, an app that works to document children's work, communicate with families, and is used to connect with learning objectives.

Each learning space has a team of teachers who collaborate to plan and teach that year level. All the classes are multiage, Year 1/2, Year 3/4, Year 5/6 except for the Foundation classes. Most of the year level buildings are separate from the main building and are situated around the large school grounds. Some of the buildings are thoughtfully curated with artefacts, inspiring displays and materials that engage student thinking and exploration. Other buildings are set up traditionally with the teacher's desk at front, teacher generated displays and no items that inspire student conversations or participation.

Each year level team is given one day each fortnight to plan the next two weeks of learning. An agenda is shared beforehand by the team learning leader and team members can add items for discussion if they wish. The meeting generally starts with discussion around either a reading, video, data or work samples. These are often shared beforehand to ensure that everyone has had time to read or view information, and then to contribute to the conversation. The planners are generated on Google Docs (an online sharing platform) and are visible to all

teachers both in their team and to the whole school. The school aims to have consistency across teams with the format in these planners.

Working with my own team: How ordinary moments generated data for this research

As a team and part of our daily work in the classroom, we document class discussions, referred to as 'assemblies' (meetings involving all the students and teachers, where children are encouraged to share and discuss ideas freely), and analyse them together to find commonalities, insights into what the children were thinking and a focus for future learning. We often conduct these assemblies with another teacher, so that one teacher is part of the discussion and the other teacher can scribe the conversation, acknowledging and naming the children's thoughts and ideas. This is important so that we can fully focus on the discussion and contribute, question, or clarify when needed. These usual practices are referred to as co-participation between children and teachers (Rinaldi, 2013). Documents generated during these sessions became documents I reviewed and often wrote about within my researcher's journal.

To make visible the thinking and learning of the children and for us as teachers to reflect on and connect with further learning, we also use the process of pedagogical documentation (Rinaldi, 2006) and these became other documents for consideration within my researcher's journal. A large wall is allocated in one of the learning spaces to use as a place for sharing our learning using pedagogical documentation. We start with a statement or question that reflected the focus for our learning but would also provoke children to ponder and investigate. This provocation is then used as a vehicle to connect the curriculum, searching for links to each area of learning, including the capabilities. For example, if this is our statement, what opportunities can we present for learning in science or technology? How does it link with our literacy and how can we build on the children's understandings through reading, writing, viewing, and speaking

and listening? What learning can we connect to the capabilities to create a holistic and authentic approach to the explorations of the children? It becomes a shared experience where children and teachers add ideas, thoughts and wonderings to the wall and inspires us to be co-learners and co-constructors with the children. There are sticky notes, photos, diagrams on scraps of paper, quotes, curriculum segments, arrows linking ideas and children's and other's artworks. The pedagogical documentation becomes a living and evolving document that we all own and demonstrates that "powerful learning is purposeful, social, emotional, empowering, and representational" (Krechevsky,et al. 2013, p. 54). Documents generated through pedagogical documentation also became part of my researcher's journal.

Planning meetings, an occurrence every fortnight, generated documents and my own notes contributed to my researcher's journal. As documents and anecdotal notes were central to our planning sessions, I would also record notes within my researcher's journal, noting my thinking and my challenges. Often ideas would surface that we used to drive our learning and there seemed to be an infinite array of directions we could explore. My journal seemed to grow each week, at times leaving me overwhelmed with the vast amount of data and ideas. It provoked me to explore further reading and research, which I then shared with our team. This became reciprocal when other team members presented their own interests and passions, building on our team efficacy and respectful relationships.

Pedagogical narration

Pedagogical narration (Atkinson, 2012; Hodgins, 2012; Pacini-Ketchabaw, et al. 2015) is a form of documentation that provokes us to view all aspects of collaborative learning of children and teachers. It attends to the complexity of childhood and makes the stories public so that communities can be part of the learning (Hodgins, 2012). Pedagogical narrations challenge

our assumptions about children and address the social, ethical and cultural aspects of a society. With this in mind, there is huge potential to engage in research around these narrations (Hodgins, 2012) and reflect on practice for future learning. Documenting stories of conversations can reframe a problem into an opportunity and create experiences that lead to a greater engagement of children and teachers. It is also about the 'unexpected' (Rinaldi, 2006) where we find ourselves unable to predict the outcomes of learning experiences, thereby opening doors to new ways of thinking and learning.

Reading pedagogical narrations, beginning with J*ourneys: Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Practices through Pedagogical Narration* (Pacini-Ketchabaw, et al. 2015) presented meaningful insights into conversations with children. This text is based on the work of a group of early childhood educators meeting regularly to share the complexity of their journeys through story, emerging into pedagogical narrations. The teachers wrote each narration to challenge preconceived ideas and assumptions but to also critically reflect on their practice connecting to the process of writing to understand (Richardson, 2001). Through collaboration and dialogue, the teachers sought to explore theories from different perspectives and discuss possibilities for rethinking and complexifying practice in early childhood education. For example, one narration in *Journeys: Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Practices through Pedagogical Narration* (Pacini-Ketchabaw, et al. 2015) focuses on Princesses and Pirates telling the story of a group of four-year old children acting out stories. The children, over many months, continue to take on stereotypical roles when acting out the story until the teacher questions their roles and realises that that there are more complex issues around the choices made by the children. As she writes her pedagogical narration, the teacher becomes more attuned to the conversations and learning of the children as well as the influence of the society around them. Over time, some children explored different roles, negotiated with each other and constructed their own knowledge. The

teacher's pedagogical narration provoked her to rethink her assumptions, her questioning and her theories related to gender and identity.

Through pedagogical narrations, the story of children's learning emerges slowly and becomes a means to provoke conversations about teaching and learning, uncovering the identity of the child and the teacher. Atkinson (2012) describes pedagogical narrations as a way of observing everyday moments. Further, pedagogical narrations often present uncertainties and prompts us to question the status quo. Isn't this what research is? Finding out new possibilities? There is no limit or set agenda with pedagogical narrations which allows us time for interpretation and reflection of data. The learning that comes from the narrations creates more stories with more chapters. Pedagogical narrations as inquiry can transform our educational practices as the process encourages us to look at where we live and how we live and encompasses the political and historical contexts as well as addressing the challenges that confront our world. Research using pedagogical narrations, as a means of making visible rich conversations, are ways of telling the whole story. Stories give us information otherwise unseen, data that is only made visible through reflection and with others, leading to daily construction of 'self' (McAlpine, 2016) whereby we become an 'active agent' in our own story. The experience of pedagogical narrations also provides the power to change the way we teach (Nxumalo, 2016) by closely analysing the words and actions of children and teachers as they embark on their learning journey together.

Pedagogical narrations, analysis, and writing to understand

In looking at my research, there is no defined linear endpoint for where knowledge ends and begins, as fragments of knowledge presented themselves along the way through the ordinary moments I encountered as teacher. Alecia Youngblood Jackson (2017) talks about the idea of

strategies and how they reveal themselves along the way, mutating into new ideas and possibilities. Thinking is not fixed but happens during encounters. I realised I was analysing the narrations whilst writing, not only telling the story but thinking and making meaning as I was constructing the narrative. As authors we become part of the writing, as we cannot separate our social and historical context of our lives (Richardson, 2001). We bring our own selves to the story as researchers and as writers, therefore I could not have engaged in this research without the context of my teaching career--from a personal and political perspective of writing stories (Richardson, 2001)

The process of writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson, 2001) brings about this analysis, as thoughts and connections merge through the writing. Not only is qualitative writing a way to explain our research, but in the creative and reflective process of writing, we learn about ourselves in new ways, which may not be evident when using more numerical types of data. Data analysis is not separate from the process in pedagogical narration; analysis of the data happens as pedagogical narrations are written and when teachers engage in dialogue with others around the narrations. Through the process of writing, the analysis gently unravels, becoming evident when often revealing hidden assumptions or preconceived ideas. Revealing the hidden aspects of our writing can generate questions and bring about change and reflection. It prompts us to make meaning of our experiences and presents us with different perspectives.

Writing in the form of pedagogical narrations can also unearth the unknown and make visible new thinking and ways of knowing. The ongoing construction of this story brings meaning to our experiences as we search for connections and relationships. Traditionally data analysis involved discourse focused on quantifying (Moss, 2016) and standardisation, however a paradigm shift encourages us to adopt alternative ways of analysing data (Moss, 2016).

Pedagogical narrations create the space to do this, by encouraging individuality and not restricting us to a generic way of presenting our research and learning.

Ordinary moments as provocation: Data collection and creation

Data collection within the inquiry was situated within the ordinary moments of my daily life. As indicated in the previous sections, documents and my own researcher's journal became the data informing the writing of pedagogical narrations. Data collection was never in addition to what already happens in the classroom but rather was generated in the ordinary daily moments in the classroom and planning.

My researcher journal represented how I came to know and understand, inspired by Richardson's statement, "Writing was and is how I come to know" (Richardson 2001, p.33). As I wrote in my journal, I realised as Richardson (2001) reminded me, writing is not a lone pursuit as we bring others into the dialogue; it connects us to others by building relationships. Through my interactions and dialogue with children and colleagues, I made meaning and deepened my understandings by analysing and reflecting on the whole experience (Moss, 2016) through my researcher's journal.

Documents including photos, notes, communication messages, were all part of my researcher's journal, further generating data from ordinary moments. My researcher's journal became a living and morphing document. "Documents are literally all around us, they are inescapable, they are an integral part of our daily lives and our public concerns. In our personal, private dealings, documents are basic and indispensable requirements" (McCulloch, 2004, p.1). These documents, reflective of the everyday and not generated for the research, made visible different reasons, priorities, and understandings (McCulloch, 2004, p. 2) that are part of the complexity of teaching and learning, the image of the child, and the identity of myself as teacher.

Documents became provocations for further consideration and impetus for my writing to understand first through my researcher's journal and then as I wrote each pedagogical narration. Creating the pedagogical narrations was a process of engaging with my researcher's journal. As I read, re-read, wrote more, and re-read my research journals, I began to write, critically reflecting and making meaning of each event, many events, ordinary moments, making visible my own practice and the children's learning (Dahlberg et al., 2013). Writing and reflecting about our own lives and the ordinary moments we live can be challenging, bringing discomfort and upheaval, exposing ourselves and our vulnerabilities. Ethical or moral agendas may come to the forefront, pushing us to question our values and beliefs and provoking us to search for more. Writing to understand these moments brings analysis and teaches me the importance of narrative as a reflective tool (Richardson, 2001). Narrating classroom events through the moments of my own life, created ways for me to consider identity and view learning through multiple lenses. This writing can construct new plots through the narrations, by not accepting traditional structures of how I am telling stories, bringing forward the possibility of change and how we make sense of the world.

Olsson (2009) discusses the complexity and open-endedness of pedagogical narrations for disrupting the stabilised understandings we have of children. Through this process of creating pedagogical narrations, my own understandings of teaching, teacher identity, and the image of children disrupts and provokes the construction of teacher. The following two chapters are the created pedagogical narrations, bringing together the data and analysis and making visible the complexity of teaching (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015).

Chapter 4

Pedagogical Narration: The Bones

I'm driving to school, a daily half hour commute each way from home. Music of many genres has always sustained this journey for me, but lately I have discovered podcasts and find I'm truly addicted to the vast array of interviewees and the plethora of information. I seem to be at a time in my life where my thirst for knowledge is insatiable. Why is this? Is it time or age, or is it something that has always been there? Alan Alda comes through my car speaker, being interviewed on a podcast, ironically titled *Conversations*. Alan is famous for his role as Hawkeye in MASH, but today he is discussing his research on Einstein's life. Alan has a particular interest in science and engages my thinking when he starts discussing curiosity. He is talking about the joy of discovery, "Surprises that come from questioning your own hypotheses and then you test it and you find out it's not that way at all" (Fidler (Host), 2016). He believes that this denotes the "highest achievement of thinking", especially when your theory is proved incorrect. Immediately in my head, I find a relation between this and children--that natural curiosity that children bring with them and how it can be nurtured or denied. Running through my mind are those moments when I have nurtured; and moments when I have denied. I take a breath and think about the theories the children have developed over my time as a teacher and the realisations the children have when they find the opposite is true, or that the theories provoke them in another direction. Alda has reminded me of the endless possibilities for exploration and the excitement when discovering something new or making a connection or sharing this learning with others; and how the relationships and conversations between children and teacher are critical to these moments.

But wait, this is how I live life as well! I am reminded of my own natural curiosity; a curiosity that I bring to teaching--the 'what ifs' and 'maybes' and 'could we'--enlivens my own learning and opens up so many possibilities, even and often with internal and external restrictions. And creativity! Yes, this also plays a role in this possibility-making that Alda has awakened inside of me. Being creative with curriculum, resources, learning spaces and teaching engages both teachers and children and makes learning (and teaching) exciting. Yes, curiosity and creativity have led me here—to this moment in my car, listening to a podcast, to an epiphany of understanding that anything might be possible. What am I curious about in this moment? I'm curious about children learning--the pedagogy of learning and what it means to be educated. I'm curious about the footprint I leave as a person and a teacher, whether this has made, and will make a difference. This curiosity is an opportunity, a space to process new knowledge and engage with new ways of thinking.

But what underlies my curiosity? I hear Alda's words about Einstein—how did this actor know he could also be a researcher? Is he viewing himself as capable? Is he enacting the image of being capable, part of being curious? I see myself as capable. Capable enough to undertake this research, to 'become' as a teacher, learner, co-participator, listening with the children and colleagues I work with each day. The words curious, capable, and creative run through my mind. This is me! If I could join the podcast with Alda, we could share these ideas and make the connections through intellectual curiosity together. I see this as a necessity as a teacher but also as someone active in life. I wonder what Alda would say back to me.

I turn the corner and imagine our conversation, in the car, on my way to school. One can only imagine sharing a conversation with Alan Alda…...

So, Anne. Tell me what makes you think you're capable. Isn't that rather arrogant?

Yeah, I imagine people would think that, but I guess it's actually saying to yourself, "I reckon I can have a go at that. What have I got to lose?" Taking a risk and putting in some effort can only go one of two ways. You succeed or you fail. Is that so bad? Life is not always full of wins. I think I can cope with that.

But won't others think you might be too confident?

Not the people whose opinions count to me. People who are truly capable themselves celebrate the success of others. I know when a friend or colleague achieves something great, I feel a genuine sense of happiness for them. Maybe it's because I know how that feels.

You mean you feel happy with your success?

Of course! If you put in the effort, why shouldn't you feel like that? And the more capable you show yourself to be, the more you want to achieve. It's like being capable leads you on...and on...and on to endless possibilities.

So, you're saying that once you achieve, it sets you up as capable so you then look for the next opportunity to show your capability?

Yeah, it's definitely infectious. I've only started thinking about this as I've gotten older - never had time before...

I bounce back to reality, turn on my indicator and move the car across the intersection, towards my destination. The turn provokes me, how do I know I am capable? I'm off to my teaching job and wonder how this all started.

My life flashes through my head—feet walking to school at five years old, hands cooking in the kitchen, body pushing the mower through the tall green grass, hands pegging the clothes on the line, and moving the hot iron across my primary school uniform. These moments were possible because of my own capability and the beliefs of my parents about my capabilities. They always made me feel capable and this was instilled in me from an early age. I'm walking to school at five years of age, staying close to the fence, knowing this was safe and looking for my friends in the playground. I know exactly where and when to cross the road, looking both ways and listening for unfamiliar sounds. I feel a bit unsure at times but I know what is expected and I just do it! Reflecting on this, I have many memories of times when my parents showed me I was capable. Travelling to and from boarding school on the train each term, a ten-hour trip in each direction; enrolling in university, a six-hour road trip from home and I am the only student here without a parent! And yet I know they would be here if they thought I might need them to be here. I guess they know I can do it! Day to day events, family gatherings, trust--it all feels so natural that I was considered capable of many things. I didn't know any different. I just thought everyone was like that.

My mind moves like a film on fast forward. I see myself thirty years later. There I am, in front of a classroom, transmitting knowledge and filling up brains; yes, a noun is a person, place, animal or thing, verbs are action words. When did I begin co-participating, fast forward some more, there! I see it! I am watching children at play--developmental play, discovery play, play based learning, investigations……. I am teaching Year 1/2 children and for the first time in my career, I'm not sure what my role is as teacher. I have always been aware that I am a learner too

and have thrived on exploring new and innovative ways of teaching, however this 'play thing' is confronting and uncomfortable. I have no idea what I'm meant to be doing! What am I meant to be focusing on? Am I meant to be prompting the children or observing behaviours and noting changes? What do I do with that boy running around in the bear suit every session, the child who always plays with construction blocks, the girl who paints the same type of picture every time? I'm frustrated and so is my co-teacher. We are uncomfortable and we know it.

I discuss these challenges at length with my co-teacher as we search for our purpose and role description - a new role and purpose as a learner and teacher. We watch the children at play and talk, and we mull over our observations.

So, what are we meant to be doing? I'm trying to get my head around this.

I think we observe and make notes on what each child is doing? Maybe see if they are using creativity…. and record what they are saying….and how they're working together. How on earth are we going to do that for every kid, most of the time?

Do we intervene or move them on with a prompt if they're not 'doing' anything?

Or just mucking around? I don't know.

It's funny how some children go to the same area or provocation each day. What do we do when that happens? I don't think that's a good idea, do you?

I might ask them what they're doing and then encourage them to try something different. I don't think they should be doing the same thing every day, do you?

I'd like to see this in action, to see how the teachers engage with the children. I want to see how the teachers monitor each child and how it works. I'd <u>really</u> like to see it done properly, because right now…. I have no idea!

I need to know! Where do I start? Again, that yearning for learning creeps in and I set out once again to find out about this 'play' thing. My colleagues and I visit a kindergarten and the learning space strikes me straight away--the different levels and hidden spaces, the plants that grow into the space and the everyday, natural materials that decorate and inspire. It feels inviting and calm, and yet there is a vibrancy and excitement as my eyes scan the room and all its contents. Yes, it feels like a home. It's comfortable and clean, messy but cared for, a juxtaposition at every corner. The children move confidently in and out of the space which is connected to the outdoors. I follow them and find more places to investigate. There are places for sitting and hiding, places to explore and play, items to build with or make something with or play with. The natural environment is made up of plants and trees, some in containers, others planted around the space. The children seem to be quite independent, not looking for adult assistance, but

talking, laughing and sharing with each other. It almost seems the adults are just in the background, observing and supporting when needed but creating a space that inspires and presents so many possibilities. I want to play here and be part of this! So many questions! How can I create this in a school learning space? What will I bring to this in the way I teach? What possibilities will this present for learning? What do I need to change? I feel this is a start but there is a yearning for more information. Where to now?

I begin to read articles on play and the benefits of giving children lots of time and opportunities for unstructured play. Interesting! I feel a sense of at least achieving something as a parent as I think again of my own children. And then I think about my own childhood and the complete absence of structured play. I remember the weekends and school holidays. We go out all day, but somehow, we know the boundaries. Plenty of outdoor activities and plenty of time to explore the outdoors. We just ride our bikes, hang around the local pool, slide down sandhills, explore the bush. Actually, there are plenty of times to work through boredom as well! Maybe this is the missing link for some children? Why are some children not yet ready for diving into learning? I look at the benefits of play and think of my own children and the diverse range of opportunities they had to explore and play and discover. So really, I was 'doing' this play thing anyway. I didn't teach them the alphabet or how to add numbers or the solar system, but I did take them to interesting places and let them play outdoors and in the pots and pans cupboard. I introduced them to music (maybe 'overloaded' is the correct word), sandpits, rainforests, gardens, and the wonders of the natural world. And the experiences I gave them were more art galleries, picnics, national parks than theme parks (just a few maybe). The energy is growing in my quest to just dive in and start this, but I realise that I still have the expectations of meeting the outcomes of the curriculum. Our school principal senses my frustration and knows I need time to absorb all this information and treads lightly while I gather my thoughts. I sit in her office asking

questions and wanting to see play in action. Where can I go? I now feel uncertain and concerned. Why do I feel uneasy about this because it should be exciting for the children and for me as well? I feel restricted by all the boxes I must tick as a teacher and yet my curiosity and my creativity start to merge and I glimpse some possibilities.

I ask about schools and places to visit. A school in Melbourne is suggested and we arrive with enthusiasm and open minds. The learning spaces are open and beautifully arranged, mostly natural materials and lots of white and light. The children are calm and engaged and the teachers are a presence to support the learners. There are art areas with clay and wood, writing spaces with papers and colourful pens, swatches of fabric to design or dress in, books, games and a science corner with plants, seeds and magnifying glasses. I sit down in each learning area and talk with the children, who confidently share what they are exploring and what they are learning. They are articulate and focused, and I have a feeling that they are used to adults talking to them about their learning. So, I begin to wonder about the potential for this play-based learning and how children might follow their own passions and interests within the play environment.

The boy in the bear suit becomes my own challenge! He is obviously passionate about this dress up costume so where might this lead? I make it a priority to observe him, to discover what he does each day and record his conversations and behaviour. Every day during Investigations, he makes his way to the dress up box, searches for the bear suit and carefully moulds his own body into the shape of the furry suit. He actually takes on the persona of the bear, changing his voice and even moving differently around the room--more bumbling than stalking! He's an observer of others, making his way around the learning space, chatting with others (mainly boys) and trying to make them laugh with his antics. Is he not sure how to engage with others or even how to approach different learning activities? I sense the latter is true as he's not sure where to start. I watch him as he begins the daily ritual. He wanders over to the dress up

box, rifles through the mismatched and random pieces of clothing until he finds the Holy Grail--the bear suit! It's rather grimy now and needs some repairs. My sewing skills beckon but that's not my focus today! He grabs the suit before anyone else might happen to choose it and steps into it. He's quite confident where arms and legs fit now as he's done this many times. He doesn't bother with closing the back of the suit, just flips the head hood on and off he goes, leaving a pile of discarded clothes on the floor. He wanders over to a group of boys playing with construction blocks and stands there waiting for them to acknowledge him. They don't, so he tries the humour approach, speaking in a 'Father Bear' voice and circling them while he's talking. They look at him briefly, laugh at the outfit and then return to their engineering feats. Success! He's been noticed, so on to the next group. A small group is at the art table with chalk pastels and an array of art pieces for inspiration. He watches them, looking closely at what they are doing and again waits for their approval. One girl asks him why he always dresses up in the bear suit and he just shrugs his shoulders. He's not sure whether she's genuinely interested or thinks he's being silly. He almost looks embarrassed until he sees another boy dressed up in lady's clothes, complete with handbag and shoes and his face lights up. Another similar soul to play with finally! Let the wild rumpus begin! He runs around and makes noises and tries to lure the 'lady' into his play, but 'she's' in character and chastises him for running around. This is getting interesting!

I begin to see the purpose of play and how it might be different for each child. Maybe for some children it has a social purpose, others might have a creativity purpose, and others might have a physical or intellectual purpose. This starts the soul searching and investigation for me. I wonder where this will all lead for me as a teacher and my many questions radiate in many directions. Confusion abounds but also a longing to discover more, almost as if I've been given a glimpse of an adventure but I'm not sure if I want to go there or stay where I feel comfortable.

This takes me to new places of learning, new discussions, new relationships and a new sense of purpose. It isn't easy to completely change your way of thinking about teaching and learning, but I think innately it was always there, in my disposition and thirst for learning. It was probably inevitable to reach this point where I am a co-participant and investigator, sharpening my senses to observe and fully understand the learning process. So here I am. I see my body move as I bend to be involved in children's conversations, witnessing and documenting, children's discoveries, children pondering and wondering—all challenging me as I think, respond, and think some more. This is me as co-participant. Is this me naming myself, constructed by children as capable?

Naming, working, being co-participant

Our school has embarked on a learning journey as part of a research program to deeply connect educators and children with nature. Our relationship with Earth and all its inhabitants, the vast ecosystem of life, is in dire trouble and action is needed to protect the future of our planet. If we see human and non-human linked, we can then know ourselves better and understand our role in the world as one of interconnection with all life.

With our university researcher colleagues, our teaching staff meet on this cold winter's day to walk our local beach area and discuss what is means to go 'Out and About'. Coffee is first at a local cafe, thank goodness! We amble over the road into a park for a chat. This is the beginning of an adventure for us and for our children. Where will it lead? I feel a sense of uncertainty but excitement. The air is crisp and the remnants of fog are still hanging above us. I've worn the wrong shoes and want to get started so my feet warm up. Let's get moving! We walk slowly and mostly quietly after meeting to discuss our purpose. I'm not quite sure at this stage what I am thinking. Confusion is felt within our team. Should we maybe separate and walk in different places? Time moves quickly but my senses are alert. I'm looking more closely,

hearing more sharply and sensing something different. I'm walking towards the end of the beach and stand on the edge of the cliff. I've never been to this end of the beach and wonder what's below. Peering over the edge reminds me of being a kid--the unknown and with some trepidation--and wondering if I should venture into that space. Will I? Well, my colleague is going so I'm stepping out. Down the cliff, over the rocks and onto the sand. It's silent, except for the sound of waves, the wind and muffled voices. I'm just walking over the stones, thinking about what might be possible for the children and their exploration of this place. We are encouraged to 'walk with, and in the place', seeing possibilities to engage the children in becoming connected to the place. This is quite challenging for some educators as they grapple with the unknown, and yet I can see where our path might lead us. Yes, there are uncertainties, but there are also endless possibilities to explore. What might this look like for children? What might they focus on? What might engage their thinking and wondering? How does it fit with our curriculum?

A place for us to visit—us meaning the educators and the children-- has been chosen by our team, Deep Creek Reserve, a natural place close to our school The Wadawurrung call this place home, as they are the Traditional Custodians of Deep Creek Reserve. Feet can reach this place in a ten-minute walk, a walk that moves bodies past family homes, into the local community, crossing one road. Deep Creek is a narrow waterway, surrounded by Indigenous flora as well as invasive species. Can these two exist in this place together? Possums, honeyeaters, bees call this place home and leave traces for us to wonder where they may be hidden during our visits. Ancient gumtrees stand majestically protecting the creek and nurturing the wildlife at their feet.

In the moment of arriving at Deep Creek, I return to the bush I visited as a child, the land of the Dja Dja Wurrung people. I've only just found out that this is the name for the place where

I spent my childhood. I think back - does this name seem familiar? No. I can feel my feet on the pedals, riding my bike to View Point along gravel tracks; the feel of the bark under my fingers as I run my hand up the trunk of a tree, rocks under my feet causing my body to bend and dip in order to make it to the top, and naming Indigenous plants for their spots or stripes. I find my brain only being able to say one word; freedom! Freedom to explore this place enables us to go there whenever we wish and do whatever we wish with one caveat—returning home before dark. Fingers pushing into dirt, pulling up yams; hands in ponds collecting tadpoles; chalking the walls of rock with our name; and words daring each other to eat witchetty grubs. In this moment, at Deep Creek, I realise my connection to the place of my childhood. It's only as I've grown older that I realise I have a connection to that place and the vivid images of the colour of yellow rough gravel and rivulets of muddy water running down road after rain continue to fill my mind. Grey green of leaves of eucalypts and spikes of growth we called 'egg and bacon' plant (which I have since found out is actually called *Eggs and Bacon* (Dillwyina retorta) because of its yellow and brown flowers pop into my head. My feet recall the memories of climbing huge boulders covered in lichen, a place of viewing the whole country town resting below. Spending time with Deep Creek brings me to the moments with childhood friends, and make visible my connection to place, a part of my being, my outlook on life, and my relationship to nature. Recognising this in this moment provokes me to wonder how these memories might influence my engagement with Deep Creek and how this will further influence the learning that will be generated from this connection.

Thinking with each other, with place, and the possibilities

Our fortnightly planning session begins. As a team, a conversation begins with the technical. What time might we visit Deep Creek? What are the risks? Do we need a learning focus? Purpose leaks into the dialogue and a little glimmer at the possibility of documenting

these experiences—making visible what we are doing with Deep Creek. We know the relevance and importance of the children connecting with the place and the learning that emerges from this experience but reluctance has also joined in the conversation. How will this satisfy the expectations of the curriculum? What about literacy and maths? When will we get time to teach everything else? Frustration bursts inside of me. How can such a lack of knowledge of key areas of the curriculum inhibit some teachers from linking our experiences with Deep Creek to what we are required to teach? Do these people even look at and read the curriculum? I want to yell, "Seeing the links between curriculum areas and then connecting that with other resources adds to the depth of experiences for teachers and children! It makes learning authentic and relevant and gives us a holistic view of learning rather than separate subject areas! This leads to deeper learning, incorporates capabilities and gives children the breadth to explore wonderings across all curriculum areas!"

Adventures with Deep Creek

It is Wednesday, our day to visit Deep Creek. It has already been a fortnight since we last visited the place; time moves slowly until the next visit. Conversations between children in anticipation of the usual visit make the sounds of symphony of what might be possible—*I'm going to climb the log across creek, will you help me find the biggest tree, I think there might be a possum living there*—and so our adventure begins. Discovering, connecting, wondering, noticing, communicating—actions driven by curiosity and capability. The trepidation at the beginning of building a relationship—either with a person, or in this case, the place—has been replaced with a confident bodies moving and knowing the spots that call them into connection with Deep Creek. Maybe it is the understanding and the reminder by us as educators that this is Wadawurrung Country and deserves great respect. Maybe it is the trust we are attempting to practise as educators—the trust that the children will respect the land and the ecosystem here

while also ensuring care of themselves and each other. Ownership of the land emerges, and space is given for the children to theorise. I listen to and record their words...

Who owns this land and can you own a creek?

How long has this creek been here?

When Indigenous people lived here, what did it look like?

Has it changed?

There is a limitation made visible in the children's knowledge through this collaborative conversation. We understand that Aboriginal people maybe existed here long ago, lived in bark huts, hunted animals, painted rocks and maybe there aren't many who survived. I wonder with my colleagues, what is the origin of these beliefs? Texts, media, experiences at home and school may have all contributed to this narrow vision. What have we, as teachers, shared with the children regarding our Indigenous Worldviews? How will we address this in our teaching and how can we make a connection to the questions surrounding Deep Creek and its history and significance? As expected, the universe, or in this case, Deep Creek provides the answers by unearthing some of its secrets.

The Bones

Bones are found at Deep Creek! Under gumtree, entwined with invasive ivy, bones move to the surface of dirt. Hands of 9- and 10-year-old boys touch the bones and begin an excavation.

What sort of bones are they?

What creature are they part of?

How long have the bones been here?

Is it a complete set of bones?

I think it might be a dinosaur.

Maybe they're dog bones?

We need to get everyone together so we can find out what it is. This is the ribcage.

We found a head! WE FOUND A HEAD! Someone found a SKULL.

Tree is ancient and bones undisturbed for some time. Not ancient bones, in my opinion, but resting nevertheless. Jawbone is first, but there is some confusion about what it actually is. Then another jawbone is unearthed and matched with the first. Could it be from the same creature or are there multiple sets of bones buried here? Each piece is extracted from under the protection of tree and the level of excitement grows. Bones call to other children; more expertise is offered. *Is it a velociraptor? I think it's a baby pterodactyl!*

Air is filled with sheer excitement, filling me up with a sense of wonder and excitement too. Delight and joy, discovering something unexpected. I know that feeling well, the joy of finding out. Is it missing from many children's life experiences now? What are the children's thoughts on this perspective? I return back to my own childhood, images of living close to the bush and being free to explore and discover, populate my mind. I believe that's why I value this experience for these children. It provokes such strong memories for me, visual memories, sensory memories, and moments I still reflect on, especially in this moment. Maybe this is what I want to share with these children--a sense of place and how that connection lives in us even as we live well into adulthood, influencing our actions and how we care for a place. Affect—how am I affected by place? How are the children affected by place? Are natural places my kin? Is this a version of "environmental justice", where I view the land as having agency, rather than

being an object to be used where the human is most important? Deep Creek is a living place, an organism that changes and continues with the seasons.

An 'assembly line' emerges, children's bodies lined up to collect all the bones, treating them as treasure for them to plunder and keep and bring back to school. I don't really consider this until later…. but I know in my gut, I am uncomfortable.

Bones in the classroom, far from Deep Creek

Bones are on display in the classroom. Large table frames the display as hands move and rearrange bones. Neatly sorted into types, bones coming together as human hands attempt to 'make' a complete skeleton. Books collected that might give information on the origin of the bones, websites checked to see if the bones can be identified. I am provoked as the room feels alive with wondering and pondering but is it at a cost? Bones seem to create a provocation for exploring identity and how important this is to us and to all people—but which identity is most important in these moments?

Mungo Man

The spirit of Deep Creek beckons again one night as I am watching ABC News. The bones of Mungo Man, an ancient inhabitant of the Willandra Lakes Region in the semi-arid zone of southwest New South Wales, might be returned to his resting place. Memories come flooding back of my own children visiting this sacred and spiritual place twenty years ago. There is much excitement that morning as my family sets off through the emerald green tree-lined streets of Mildura, nurtured by the Murray River, and thirty minutes later, heading across the ochre red dirt of the outback roads. Dust flying up behind us, vast plains ahead, sparse trees and silver leaves of brush lining the road. Distance up here is just a word, as sheep stations and neighbours exist hundreds of kilometres apart. The vast red unsealed roads go on in front of us stretching up to the

horizon, never ending and not a landmark in sight. “Are we there yet?” is repeated a number of times. I’m feeling a bit like that too, as it seems to take ages to arrive. And then, all of a sudden, there it is. A massive inland lake surrounded by sand dunes and eroded clay pinnacles. My three young children jump out of the car and run straight to the visitor centre and map, planning their adventure to explore this place. A road winds through the middle of the dry lake, which we follow to a car park. Confusion arises as to which direction we head towards in this vast open space--the sand dunes, the lake, the scrub or beyond? The decision is made for us as three sets of feet run towards the dunes, laughing and chatting on the way. The towering sand dunes seem out of place here as their sheer height breaks up the flat landscape around us. I imagine there are crashing waves on the other side as I’ve only ever seen sand hills like this at the beach, and yet over and beyond this, is Mungo National Park, vast infinite spaces of land and sky. Questions abound from our children. *Who is Mungo Man? Is he the first person on earth? What did he look like? Was he like a caveman? How many people lived here? Were they all Aboriginal?* Sand is dripping through fingers and unearthing small shells and stones and I hesitate. Are we allowed to touch these treasures or should they be left in their place? The children edge towards the Walls of China, tall walls of clay pinnacles rising from the edges of the lake. Water rivulets decorate each pinnacle, deep ruts worn around the base of each one. How many years of rain made these amazing sculptures? They look like termite mounds and the breeze picks up pieces of sand and swirls around us. Could these be spirits? There is definitely a presence here. You can sense the feeling of people who once inhabited this place, fishing, collecting, sharing stories and living as a community. We are surrounded by them now and yet we feel welcome too, and privileged to be here. Do others feel this? How will the children I teach remember the place of Deep Creek?

The news and memories of Lake Mungo sends me on another tangent of thinking. The children would love this story and there is so much potential for rich conversation on this topic.

A bit of 'Googling' locates a *Behind the News* segment telling the story of Mungo Man, and with much enthusiasm we view it with the children. As always after viewing digital information, the children know it is time to talk! And talk they do!

Why did they take him away?

I don't think it's fair.

I can't believe they just don't leave him there. That's where he belongs.

It's really sad because his family are still there.

The scientist has to use him to get information though.

But then he should take him back.

Is he the oldest person in the world?

Yeah, but there must be other skeletons there too. I think there's a lady one.

How will they know where to put him - will it be in the same spot?

I think it's pretty exciting to find something that old. I don't think the bones they found at Deep Creek are that old. Do you think they are? I don't think they're ancient.

Why do people think they can just take something special like that? Maybe they didn't think they were special? They thought they were just bones but the Aboriginal people think they are really special.

We give them time to ponder the information and robust conversation ensues. They are intrigued with the story of the ancient bones taken to the university, examined for scientific purposes, and question whether the bones should be taken back to Lake Mungo for burial. It's noisy, but everyone is talking, and talking excitedly about Mungo Man. So many ideas and

viewpoints are expressed and we are surprised by the engagement of all children. It strikes my co-teacher and I that no matter what the children believe about the rights and wrongs of whether Mungo Man should be kept for science or returned to his resting place, they are all able to justify their reasoning. How has this happened? Did we nurture this passion and confidence in the children? The feeling that we can create moments like this in a classroom is empowering and exciting for us. How I wish it could be like this all the time and in every learning space! Do we allow enough time for children to engage in discussions on important issues like this? How do we as educators set the tone for deep and rich conversations with children of all ages? We see the power of creating shared knowledge with the children which leads to more robust conversations as educators and children learn together and question more deeply.

One young boy seems particularly interested in Lake Mungo and tells us he has visited there. He is adamant that Mungo Man should be returned to his ancestral land, however others are convinced that science is the important focus and we could learn more about ourselves from Mungo Man--his bones should stay at the university. How does the conversation and information lead children to these conclusions? Have they connected the removal of the animal's bones from Deep Creek with their views of Mungo Man? There is certainly a disconnection here regarding humans and animals. I wonder if they believe that human bones are more important than animal bones? And I am prompted to question myself too? Do I value human life over animal life? If a loved one was involved and I had to make a choice, I would certainly choose the human life. But would I choose human over animal in any situation? With little prompting many children who otherwise are not contributors to discussions are passionate about this topic and present valid and thought-provoking ideas.

I think Mungo Man is special just like we have God.

I wonder if he knew lots of other Aboriginal People who lived around here.

How do they know the story of Mungo Man? Because he lived a long time ago so how do we know about him?

Maybe we can go and visit the place one day – where Mungo Man lived.

Are his bones sacred to other Aboriginal People too, not just his own people?

Will they bury him again in a special ceremony?

I don't think he was buried ever. I think he just died. I wonder if it's a different ceremony.

Seeing the child as capable is certainly evident within these discussions and even those children who become distracted are quickly returned to the conversation with a focused and meaningful prompt. This is authentic and relevant learning in action. I am witnessing how teachers really make a difference in instilling this curiosity and engagement in conversations with children, by probing for high order thinking, targeting questions and valuing the children's input--or not.

Teachers Talking Together

We gather again at our fortnightly planning session and ponder how we can immerse the children in Indigenous culture and history of this place. We search for engaging videos or texts to continue discussion and support children in their understanding so they can explore their wonderings further. We view a *Welcome to Country* ceremony, which some children have been part of, and find the children fascinated and inquisitive about the ceremony. This important ceremony was traditionally used to welcome Indigenous groups into each other's country but continues on now to welcome all to gather on country through rituals such as dance, song, smoking of leaves or speech. To further explore this idea, we read *Welcome to Country* (2016)

written by Aunty Joy Murphy, and beautifully illustrated by Indigenous artist Lisa Kennedy, welcoming us to the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri People. The narrative opens up conversations about the land, the people, the ceremonies and the language. The words and images in this book are exquisite and give us so many ideas for learning--exploring artwork, using the languages of weaving and sewing, building vocabulary and exploring Indigenous culture through viewing, reading and discussion. The children become immersed in deep discussions and become aware of the issues surrounding Australia's history and contemporary society. We are inspired too and seek other contemporary books to share with the children. We learn together as we explore and investigate and discuss the past and the present. The innocence and genuine remorse for the treatment of our Indigenous peoples is heavily evident in the responses of the children. How could people do that? Why did they do that? It makes me think of how I would have responded when I was that age and yet the true horrors of what has occurred is important for us to know. Would I want my own children to know these atrocities at this age? Having read *The Secret River* (2005) by Kate Grenville some years ago, I remember vividly the scenes of the Indigenous children being slaughtered and sobbing for the sheer cruelty of this but also for my ignorance of not knowing the extent of this.

Memories again--my own school life was limited in learning about Australian Indigenous culture. In fact, my Australian history education began with Captain James Cook landing in Botany Bay in 1770, land of the Gweagal and Bidjigal people, tribes of the Dharawal Eora nation. We were briefly introduced to the notion that some people were living here already but they were fairly insignificant compared to the conquering legends from England. Our teachers read us English stories of history and our Australian literature was 'colonial' and based on bushrangers, squatters, gentry and mateship. I had a privileged education, surrounded by books and family conversations that revolved around storytelling. Most of my knowledge of Aboriginal

culture came from my mother who spoke of what she learned from stories, but also from her strong sense of social justice and her recognition that our Indigenous people had been treated unfairly and with little respect. I often wonder where her thinking about these issues began and how that has influenced my teaching and my views about equality. Not only has it made me aware of racial equality but also gender issues and other issues that involve inequality. This has become increasingly obvious as I become older--or am I just growing more aware?

For now, we decide that teaching about the rich culture of our Indigenous people and their connection to this sacred land will plant the seed for future learning and make connections with Deep Creek. My own thinking and even the way I talk about this subject has changed too. I start to use more Indigenous texts when reading to the children and encouraging them to read books about Indigenous stories and issues. I delve into the curriculum and find many connections and foci for learning about the First Australians. I create opportunities to discuss stories about this ancient land and speak about the care that has been shown to this land for thousands of years. I talk about the spiritual connection to the land and how that might be interpreted in our own religious beliefs. Reading all the stories and information about the land has opened up more questions and a sense of regret and sadness for the Indigenous People. I feel a sense of urgency to make sure the stories of the First Australians are told and carried forward. I wonder if this is because I have grown up in a family of passionate storytellers? How would I react if all my family stories were lost, or forgotten, or just not shared anymore? I feel I have to tell the stories so they remain and yet I feel somewhat inadequate to share the knowledge. Can I do this in a way that respects the ancient stories or would it more appropriate to engage someone with a greater understanding of Indigenous culture? I have always held a deep respect and somewhat sadness for our Indigenous people, but in knowing more about the history of this place, my feelings have strengthened. There is hope too, that this knowledge will be embedded in this

generation of children to walk beside each other and live in the true sense of reconciliation and mutual understanding.

Assemblies

Our assemblies become more animated. I can hardly keep up with the comments of the children and consider audio recording them rather than try to keep up with typing or scribing! The circle of children gathers once again. They settle quickly and wait for the new questions, statements or provocation. There's a 'buzz' of conversation and the talking starts as soon as we begin. Bodies shuffle in, trying to get closer to the action and be part of the gathering. Eyes focus on the teacher, but I encourage each child to talk to the group--my way of transferring the focus to the children rather than me. I find this interesting--that the children often respond to me instead of each other. My contributions to the conversations are minimal and yet they still look at me. I hope they're not looking at me for affirmation! Should I sit elsewhere and become more of an observer? There is a change in engagement and in their conversations. The vocabulary is richer, the opinions more passionate and the ideas resonate with empathy and understanding of our past history. The children are more than capable and offer suggestions for other discussions: the First Fleet, our local Wadawurrung people, land rights, language.

Another assembly and another gathering. The question is asked about the ownership of the bones and whether we can own them or whether we should return them to their place of rest. Six weeks after the bones are removed from Deep Creek, they are still sitting on a table in the classroom, calling the children to reflect on their decision to keep (or not keep) them. As the children speak, I respond inside my head. (For this section, my conversations in my head are indicated on the right of the page with the essence of the children's ideas on the left side of the

page.)

I think we should leave them there (Deep Creek) because the animals might have a family and they might be looking for them.

Interesting. The children believe animals have feelings of family like us. I have seen elephants and penguins mourning the loss of their children. There's something to this opinion.

I think we should leave them there too because if you were an animal, you would want to stay there.

These kids are showing true empathy. It makes me feel that we are doing something really worthwhile here. They are showing feelings of compassion for animals and connecting those with their own feelings. There is empathy for the bones, and for the family of the animal and an idea that people and animals might be considered equal.

But they don't have a brain and a heart - the bones wouldn't know it.

People care about Mungo Man but I don't think people care about the animal bones.

A statement of human importance. It touches on ethical issues and I think about the ability of children to make ethical decisions. When did I start to think about these issues as a child? I reminisce about my childhood and wonder what age I engaged in discussions about ethics. It certainly wasn't named 'ethics', but I do remember feeling empathy during class discussions and when reading books. I often think about my Catholic education and what effect that may have had on ethical views. I also think of my family and how they 'taught' me empathy. I know not every child has this gift too.

We could investigate how they live if we bring them (the bones) here. Like a scientist.

So ethically, is it acceptable to use animals for scientific purposes to the advantage of humans? This would be an interesting scenario to present to the children. What if it was an animal you had a connection with? The dilemma of choosing.

I disagree. They might not have a brain and a heart but his family does.

He might not have a heart but his people do.

Was this a reference to Mungo Man? Are we talking about the notion of a collective heart?

How would we feel if our bones were taken away?

Our spirit is what makes us unique and there's an idea here about an afterlife. Where do we go when we die? What is left behind and will we have feelings? How will we show those feelings even after we die?

It's just like when you're in a grave and if people dig it up and take you out and take you somewhere.

Too many scary movies here! Reminds me of that series on ABC…...

We wouldn't feel it, but our families would.

There's no use for us to keep them. Only scientists could use them.

A totally different view from the previous comment. I'm reflecting on my own stance now because I think the bones of human and animal should remain where they belong, but I also believe in scientists' right to research.

If my bones were taken away, I would feel honoured – if they did it in a good way – for the purpose of science.

This is a very mature response! I wonder where it came from, but I'm not quick enough to follow this up.

I think it's a good thing.

So, the person who put them there doesn't mind.

Most of us thought that they shouldn't take Mungo Man but we think it's OK to take the animal bones.

And I'm thinking that too. My own thinking about the bones is questioned when I'm asked about my feelings about the animal bones. I was so adamant that Mungo Man should be returned to his resting place and yet, I hadn't really considered the animals' rights. Do I think animals are less worthy than people too? Human domination seems to be the main focus of our decisions all over the world. Our effect on the environment is obvious.

And we are displaying them at school.

I kind of agree and if it was a sheep we could use if for kids to learn about bones.

It's OK for the bones to be put on display. It's something for a lab.

So, what is the role of a scientist? Maybe we could look at the ethical standards for scientists and how they deal with the decisions they make regarding use of animals.

How does the farmer find the bones?

Are people more important than animals?

They can control themselves.

Not always! I can think of many occasions when humans haven't been able to control themselves!

I reckon we're more important because we can do more things.

Not really. Some of these views seemed so simple as a child but becoming an adult changes this. Some decisions are not always black and white, and the children are showing this through their discussions.

Dinosaurs were here before us and they survived.

There's a group of children who have a broad knowledge of dinosaurs.

I respectfully disagree because they survived.

So many ideas and opinions here, but respectful interactions! I love the way the children are using the terms “respectfully agree or disagree”. They could certainly show some adults how to engage in conversations when different points of view are presented.

I think we shouldn’t take them because they’re as special as us.

I wonder if this has come from the conversation or this child thinks this. This makes me consider my own point of view. If we talk about interconnectedness, then how can I justify my thinking if I find this to be true? This is new thinking for me.

I disagree because we would have been able to save them.

I love this conversation! The many opinions and ideas urge me to think about ‘all’ the talking. Who’s doing the talking? It’s not the teacher so I've learned to listen. And it’s taught me that children know much more than we assume. I listen and I learn--a shift in my thinking and then a shift in my teaching. It’s been happening for a while. Am I feeling a bit redundant? You bet I am! But the elation I feel at the children controlling the discussion makes up for this. Isn’t that what we’re aiming for? Children who are articulate, confident and creative thinkers.

I sit back and observe and listen, only contributing when I notice that there is a new direction or idea, or when it needs redirecting. Most children eagerly listen, waiting to add their

voice or affirming what others say. They have the power in the discussion and yet I feel empowered too. We have brought them to this place, not with the ideas and opinions, but in giving them this space to freely express themselves and providing them with provocations that evoke passion and depth of learning. I feel this is where learning should be, a space where each person has a say and each person feels valued for being who they are. I feel that strongly in this space, but not in other spaces within my work environment. I reflect continually on how I got here and where the path changed for me to reach this point in my thinking about the definitions of teaching and learning. It's also interesting to note the engagement of children who may not offer their thinking to previous conversations. Before these assemblies, the discussion is dominated by a small group of articulate children, but that has changed. It starts with prompting that quiet girl by asking her how she feels about what is being discussed. A one sentence reply was given, accepted and planted the seed. Then in the next gathering, it might happen again and I begin to notice the children who are intently listening but not contributing. They know what's going on but I always thought there might be a reluctance to contribute. I think now that maybe the opportunities to join in may not have been given, or the children perhaps needed time to think and consider their thoughts. It seems there's a shift in these discussions where more children are involved. Is that because of the topics or is it because of the way we have set this up--the notion of assemblies and the understanding that everyone can contribute in a safe and accepting community? It has changed the way we view class discussions as well as our role in the discussion.

The conversation opens up so many possibilities for our learning. It provokes in me the notion of human domination over the environment and non humans. Elements for ethical consideration include:

- humans being more important than creatures

- humans having the right to take whatever they want from the land
- humans having control over their actions
- humans having abilities not present in non human
- humans showing care and empathy towards non human
- science and ethics
- ecological concerns

One student continually touches the bones which are displayed on a low table, checking they are all still there and not joining in with the discussion. He is one of the 'bone finders' and consistently sits near the table whenever we gather in the space. He seems quite fascinated with the animal bones and was a keen 'paleontologist' at Deep Creek when exhuming the bones. Eventually he does make a comment and thinks we should be able to use the bones for scientific purposes, until another child questions him on this, stating that the bones have just been left on the table. No one has really used them to further investigate or for scientific purposes. And what does that mean anyway? This is the time in the discussion when I could intervene and prompt with my own opinions, but I decide not to, which is a considered change in my thinking and in my role. "The trouble with teaching is it answers questions that haven't been asked" (Fidler (Host), 2016). As a teacher, I have learned to let the conversation happen, to not intervene all the time and to value all of the comments - and the silence. Listening to children has taught me to not make assumptions of their abilities and thinking. It has also taught me not to take for granted what they might not know. My role has changed. I've become a co-participant, one who notices more - more learning, more opportunities, more connections, more ways of thinking. There is a resistance to the expected way of teaching, the traditional way, the notion that there is only one way of being a teacher. This has happened over time and has caused me to question the status

quo but to also search for more. I am now a co-participant in the learning and thinking about possibilities rather than restrictions.

It's an art to know when to add my thinking or prompts and when to wait and observe. We have to finish this conversation and the children reluctantly agree. There's an obvious change in engagement. I notice my interest in ordinary moments, and wonder where our next conversation will lead.

Each day, the bones continue to lure the interest of the children and are continually touched, moved around on the table and investigated with magnifying lenses. The children are distracted by them. It's almost like they have a spirit of their own, calling the children to unlock their secrets. The table is small and low, the bones inviting us to look and talk. Each piece is examined and I hear words like ribs, skull, skeleton…. Hands carefully try to form the bones into some type of skeleton, moving them around to see where they fit. Some fall on the floor and disappear under the table. No one has noticed but then another child joins in and tries to match these missing bones with others on the table. There are so many bones, dirty, broken and mismatched. The children are excited and discuss (or debate) whether there are different creatures and multiples of types of bones. They know a lot about bones--*these are the ribs and I think there's some missing, how many leg bones do you have because these ones don't match, I reckon this is part of a skull*. They use the correct names for the bones, measure similar types against each other and compare the bones with their own bodies. Again, we are surprised by what they bring with them to process new learning. They discuss how the bones may have found their resting place, sharing their theories about dinosaurs or sheep from down the road. It's difficult not to smile at some of their ideas and theories and takes some holding back on my behalf not to offer my own thinking and interrupt the flow of talk.

They could even be a neighbour's old dog because he lost one last year.

Why would they bury it here though? Maybe the dog just wandered here because they do that, you know? Just wander off when they're dying. My gran's dog did that.

It couldn't be megafauna because they were huge and I don't think the bones are old enough. They'd turn into fossils. Maybe we can find some?

The bones remain in the classroom.

Chapter 5

Pedagogical Narration: Stories

We walk into the library building standing tall overlooking the bay, beckoning anyone who wants to listen. This is a place of stories--old stories, new stories, stories of lives and stories of our world. The place is a gathering place, where you come to hear others speak and where you reflect on your own story. It's a place of connections, connections to each other and connections to our stories. It's a place of history and herstory where we can listen to each other and gain some understanding of where we've come from and where we belong.

I bring my mother to this place often. She is my storyteller, coming from a long line of storytellers, and has been as long as I can remember. She has given me the gift of story, both as a child and an adult. Reading to me every night and sharing her story as an adult, a mother, a grandmother, a sister, a wife, a teacher. We walk towards the building, a dome that fills the skyline and surrounding gardens and talk about the book we are here for. It's NAIDOC (National Aborigines Day Observance Committee) Week, a week to celebrate the cultural knowledge and history of our First Peoples of Australia and their connection to country, so it seems more meaningful to listen to stories in this traditional space of story. This is Wadawurrung land and the stories of this place are all around us.

We enter the building through large glass doors and make our way towards the elevator. Feet are moving quickly and with agility as we all gather in the elevator. Happy faces and joyous chatter is natural for this generation of older people and I instantly feel young again. I like these book talks--good for the soul! I wonder why older people are so interested in story? Does that make me old too because I'm quite fascinated with stories? Is it because when you're older you

have time? Is it because story becomes more important? I think about all those nights when my children were young and I had not much time to listen to the stories of others. Busy with reading to them, busy with the washing and cooking, busy with life. But I did love that time--the joy of reading a much-loved book to a young child bringing happiness to reader and listener. I loved the times when "you missed a page" or when my children finished a page because they knew what came next. So now I have time to be slower and listen--to stories, to life experience, to history (and herstory) and the idea of story excites me because I now have a significant lifetime of stories too.

As we reach the top floor, we file out slowly as we do with older people, carefully moving and urging forward to make sure we get a good seat. My mother and I are here for a book talk (as we often do) to listen to an Indigenous author named Tony Birch. He sits across from the interviewer and talks about every Australian sharing the story of our history to take the burden from Indigenous people who often feel they are the only ones carrying the story. The stories, both tragic and hopeful, have much to teach us about ourselves and Aboriginal People. I feel a bit ashamed and emotional about the terrible atrocities that white people inflicted on Indigenous people and find my eyes watering when he is telling the story of his family and his people. He speaks of culture and stories and connection--and loss and resilience. All part of our history, but a different history for all of us.

History is our starting point--the history of Australia from different perspectives. A history that involves colonization and new beginnings, but also upheaval and endings. I remember reading Kate Grenville's (2005) tragic book, *The Secret River*, and it had a profound impact on me. I sobbed in parts at the sheer brutality inflicted on the Indigenous people and their families by the first Europeans to arrive in Australia, but I was conflicted by the young Englishman who was transported here for a menial crime. His life in England was cruel and

harsh and the punishment he received was definitely unwarranted but is that a justification for what he was about to inflict on the First Peoples of this ancient land? I think I also sobbed at my ignorance of the violence inflicted on Aboriginal People by the first white people to journey to Australia but the power of reading it in a narrative deepens the understanding. That power in stories creates empathy in the reader that somehow is not as evident in non-fiction texts. I do acknowledge though, that empathy can be shown through information, but the relationship you have with characters in books creates more emotional connection to the human spirit. How can I bring this to children as an educator, in an age appropriate but truthful way and grounded in my view of children as capable?

Story

My emotions connected to story always bring me back to *Charlotte's Web* (White, 1952). Such vivid memories…...I'm in Grade Three, sitting on the floor in front of my beloved teacher, eagerly awaiting the next chapter of this book which has totally absorbed me. My long, skinny legs with grazed knees are crossed on the floor, sitting right up the front, wanting the words to fall down over me. Miss Langdon reads with a calm and expressive voice. I look up and just stare at her, listening intently to every word and imagining every scene. I can see Wilbur and Charlotte and Fern and even Templeton the rat. We are reading the chapter where Charlotte is dying and I feel the raw emotion rising in my throat. I feel embarrassed that tears are welling in my eyes but grateful that I'm sitting up the front where no one can see me. But someone does. My teacher. And she gently smiles at me and all is well. I feel safe and, at the same time, special. She knows how I feel and she understands. She gets me. I have seen that too in my students. They know that I know how they feel.

Reading has had a profound effect on my life. It opens up unknown worlds, creates moments of challenge, and awakens every emotion. I remember books from a very early age. Pages turning, pictures of babies and children and animals, *Golden Books* (1942) logo with gold and black binding on the side. *The C. J. Dennis Book for Kids* (1921)*, The Coles Funny Picture Book* (1951)*, Heidi* (1881)*, Little Women* (1868). I think as educators we need to stay informed about what is happening around us not just in education but in the world, in all communities and cultures. We talk about being global citizens and that can only happen if we know what's going on in everyday moments of people around the world. Stories of refugees, climate change, drought, family, communities, culture are part of the narrative that informs us but also teaches us empathy and awareness of others. *The Kite Runner* (2003) immerses me in Afghan culture and is both beautiful and tragic. Amir and Hassan bring us every human emotion in their lives as their stories are woven together. These are stories that should be told if we are ever to be truly global citizens. Our children need to hear stories that are different from their own lives and even young children can explore stories that move them and create an understanding that we are more similar than different. Immersing ourselves in the stories of others not only informs us but leads us to listen to others, to truly understand them and become shared stories of our world.

My life story of books and reading leaves me provoked and wondering about how I do this sharing of important stories as a teacher with the children that are part of my life. I often share the joy of reading--both what I am reading and books that I think the students will love. I am drawn to books that speak of human challenges and that provoke me to think about a myriad of experiences. Knowledge is powerful and I am consistently learning more about the first Australians and find I am drawn towards their stories. My initial reasoning for this is because I feel I have a real connection to the land, the country. Not the same as Indigenous people but a meaningful and respectful relationship nevertheless. I found out some years ago that Celtic

spirituality (which is my ancestry) recognises the divine in everyday events and shows concern for the natural world so maybe this is where my connection comes from. Landscapes and natural environments give me a sense of calm but are also invigorating, almost like they convey a spiritual power that I'm addicted to! I love stories from other cultures too, both from this land and further away. It helps create perspective for me about the way I view the world and my place in the world. Stories, both oral and in books, have given me pictures of what it means to be another person in another landscape. *Anne of Green Gables* (1908)*, The Kite Runner* (2003)*, Burial Rites* (2013)*, The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (2019), *The Life of Pi* (2001)*, The Book Thief* (2005) .... teach me and spark my emotions about other people and other times. Reading *Burial Rites* (2013) takes me into Iceland, a world far away from what I know as home. The winter bringing icy days and a sense of isolation that puts you right there. I can feel the desolation of the land and the impending doom for Agnes, the protagonist, as she awaits her fate. I am living in the house in the harsh landscape, collecting water from nearby streams, trudging through mud and blizzards. I loved this book for the strong and resilient characters and the sometimes brutal but stunning settings. Every book should immerse you in a place that makes you believe you are there, in that moment and present, regardless of your age. This is how I felt with Charlotte in her web and now Agnes as she faces execution. I want to give this gift to children, a lifelong love of reading that teaches them and inspires them.

I am always surprised to hear some teachers don't read. I mean really read--read for information, read for enjoyment and read for self-development. My daily routine of reading starts with the digital reading of the newspaper, complete with a cup of tea and TV news on in the background. Obviously, I can't read in the car, so podcasts fill that gap, again listening to words, listening to stories. What is it about the power of words? My day starts with reading and ends with reading a novel, every day. I couldn't imagine a world without books and reading, and

I couldn't even think that as an educator I would not read. Isn't that part of my job description? To stay informed, to see how wordsmiths hone their stories, to enter into the life of another person. Teachers must read themselves. How can they recommend books that move children, open up new and exciting worlds and extend their critical and creative thinking if teachers don't read themselves?

It's Term Three, after lunch and our daily quiet reading begins. It's one of my favourite parts of the day. The rush for a seat on the couch, or the cushion in the corner or under the table. Silence gradually settles over the classroom. Books are grabbed and bodies are spread all over the learning space, some sitting, some laying on the floor, some hiding under tables, as silence falls over all of us. The sound of pages turning and faces focused on words and sentences and images creates a feeling of calm but also excitement about what the next chapter might bring. You can almost feel the children thinking and stepping into the shoes of the characters. There is never enough time for this anticipated daily event. It started slowly of course, building stamina for each child to get to this point, and now the group of fifty children merges into one sustained book club. One of my joys as a teacher is to help children choose a book that they will love, but that will also provoke them to think, wonder and imagine. I start with the question, *What was the last book you read that you loved?* When they respond with *I don't know*, I feel a sadness for them that they haven't discovered that book yet--the one that hooks you for life. This is why we as educators must be readers and have an interest in books of many genres that will ignite the flame of story for each child.

I increasingly feel a sense of frustration too when teachers are happy for children to read the same types of books by the same author over and over again. I'm not talking about those childhood favourites we read with our children, every night for many months. I'm talking about books that are presented to children by teachers who read and who share this passion with young

minds. And with this in mind, the Australian Curriculum promotes the teaching of Critical and Creative Thinking (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA] 2010) as one of the most essential skills we can give children for the future to become "active and informed citizens". Reading books that encourage this type of thinking is, in my opinion, one of our most important responsibilities. I have had conversations with teachers who don't value this and consider reading books as an added extra. Reading 'lessons' for these teachers is taught with comprehension worksheets, followed by a series of knowledge questions that neglect any types of higher order thinking and then the sheets are corrected with ticks or crosses! No valid or appropriate feedback either! No robust discussion around great literature or about themes or opinions that emerge from these books. Can you believe that? Delving deeper, my conversations with these teachers have identified common threads - children should choose what THEY want to read and children should learn how to read and answer national testing type questions so our schools look good! While I agree with children choosing their own books, it's also our responsibility to extend children and move them on, sometimes out of their comfort zone. And surely reading high quality, thought provoking and engaging books will continue to strengthen children's learning and thinking. A world of possibilities opens up for children when teachers care enough to find a book that will change how they view themselves and others. I was lucky to have that opportunity in my childhood and even as an adult, I am continually open to new and exciting books recommended by friends, family or colleagues.

If we share the stories of our lives and our place in this world, there has to be a balance of stories from different perspectives. I wonder how much of the Australian story the children I teach with really know and if they understand the impact of the First Fleet arriving on this ancient land. There are so many stories that tell the history of Australia, both oral and written. Where do we start? I'd like to find out what the children know and think about the First

Australians and the effect that the First Fleet arrival might have had on them. Story is how we start.

The Indigenous Story

It's a typical spring day, quite cool but the sun is well and truly on its way to warm the cool earth. We are visiting a sacred place today to listen to the story told by a Wadawurrung educator. A scarred tree is the focus for our storytelling. I didn't even know there was such a significant treasure so close to our school. We should know these places and the stories connected to them. We drive through the grids of roads that are so new compared to the tracks left by the First Peoples. I wonder what the land would have looked like hundreds (and thousands) of years ago. We've altered it significantly since we arrived. I'm guessing the views from this high road are very much the same, looking back towards the coast and the horizon, but the paddocks and cleared land are very evident on the landscape. The buses arrive and the children eagerly jump off looking for the tree and to hear the story.

Feet scramble through long wet grass as we walk in small groups towards the river. Hushed talking amongst children as we weave through fences and gates making our way to the sacred tree. You can feel a sense of expectation in the children and adults, as they prepare to glimpse this tree for the first time. Suddenly right there in front of us, is the tree. It stands tall with a sense of power and yet sadness. The tree is the storyteller now and holds the stories of those who were here before us, those who lived with the land and those who are now gone. Gentle breezes roll around us and the silence of the group is calming. Looking around the place, I see the vivid green of native grasses that grow near the small creek, swaying slowly in the morning sun. The huge grey trunk of the tree bends around itself, proudly displaying its scar like a medal worn close to the chest. It has long since died but still presents itself as a living thing,

breathing and moving amongst us. I notice the colours of the creek banks and the contrast between all the elements. The greens and greys of the trees and the blues and whites of the sky.

I remember seeing artwork as a child of Indigenous paintings. I'm looking at a painting by a famous artist called Albert Namatjira. The muted colours are not what I have seen of Indigenous art so I look closely and wonder how the artist made these colours. The purple is muted and so are the greens and browns. I've seen those colours in the bush close to our house. They're not vibrant colours like I see in other artworks. They're absolutely the colours of the bush and Albert has captured them so well. How did he do that? Where did he get the paint? Or did he make the paint? Looking back now, I realise this was my first experience of Indigenous art and it seems it made a lasting impression on me. He painted beautiful landscapes that captured the outback.

We hear the stories of the people of this place now and the scarred tree and how they used the trees for different purposes, again only taking what they need. I hear that often--only taking what you need. Different from how many of us lead our lives now.

We gather for the ceremony. The Welcome to Country is prepared. Leaves gathered, sticks and twigs ready for fire and smoking. It's still and the children are sitting in a circle, quietly awaiting for something to happen. A reverence falls over the group as the children sense they are part of a powerful and spiritual gathering. The children sit watching with quiet intrigue and respect for the importance of this ritual. The Wadawurrung woman moves with intent and has more than one hundred children in the palm of her hand, gazing, wondering. She walks with the eucalyptus branch in her hand, waving the smoke over us and saying the words that hold meaning for her, and for the past and future generations. It takes me back to the rituals of my childhood. The incense and smoke from ceremonies at our Catholic Church evokes such

powerful memories for me. And the smoke of our open fire in the loungeroom. And then I realise as an adult how important these rituals are for me now. What memories will these children have of ceremony and ritual and its importance? And what will they remember of the stories told by family, by each other, by teachers and by others? Will they experience the power of story and how it changes you every time you read?

Talking with Story

The children wait on the floor, arms and knees touching each other, jostling for the front seat, eager to see what book or page or image we are exploring today (just like I did when reading Charlotte's Web). We are reading the story of *The Rabbits* (1998) by John Marsden and illustrated by Shaun Tan. One of my favourite author/illustrators is Shaun Tan. He writes and illustrates books that give a wide scope of topics for discussion on a social and historical level. His illustrations are rich with symbolism and background information, building on the beautiful words he has crafted.

How would I have felt listening to this story about *The Rabbits* (1998) when I was a child? Would I have made the connection with my limited knowledge of Indigenous history? The large screen displays the cover of the book and small eyes are scanning the image, wondering, nudging each other, sharing ideas. The background music of the digital text creates a feeling of foreboding and I can sense an unsettling feeling among some of the children. One child asks if it's a mystery, others have puzzled looks on their faces, but there is total engagement. Our provocation is a success!

At first glance, the story is read literally--the introduction of rabbits to Australia and the effect on the environment. But looking more closely, the story tells us about the invasion of the English and the effect it has on the Indigenous people of Australia. It's considered generally as a

text for secondary students, however I know that these Year 3/4 children are inquisitive and capable and have prior knowledge to understand many of the ideas presented in this book. I also know that having read this story before, there are many themes and elements within the text to focus on. The illustrations contain hidden information and symbolism is strong in the book. I imagine how I would have presented this information previously, making sure I had prepared it with my own endpoint in mind, so the children were able to 'learn'. But when you practise the image of children as capable, able to contribute ideas that I hadn't even considered, then it seems irrelevant. We assume what they need to know. I love the idea of sharing books with children, but we decide for this purpose we will share a digital version, where children can view the intricate details and symbolism within the artwork on a large screen. We decide to show half of the story and then open up for questions or wonderings.

The children chat willingly and excitedly with each other and then share their thinking with us. The rabbits are quickly identified as 'the bad guys' and 'they have wrecked the land'. The children love the images and look at the text literally until a question is posed, *so are the rabbits like the white people?* Much conversation flows from this point as the children discuss if this might be so. I'm excited that they have made that connection and are wanting to know more. Eyes scan the image looking for details and hoping to discover something that others have not. I feel the excitement with them and again, the children find treasures within the image that I have never considered. Every new page draws the children in and they respond with increasing joy. Debates begin with,

No, I think that's a symbol of….,

No, it means ……,

He drew that because……

Over the next week, the children run in and ask what page we are up to and excitedly offer ideas on the symbolism of previous pages. Most know basic facts about the history of this country, but some children then add their versions of the story. The Indigenous perspective of the story is very evident and the children notice when the First Fleet arrives, change begins. It takes us more than a week to explore each page in depth and each the children rush in eagerly and sit ready to explore the text and illustrations. I love this! I feel this is one of my moments as a teacher that the children are deeply engaged in learning, they are learning relevant and authentic information as well as using creative and critical thinking to make sense of their learning. And I realise I am learning too as each day a new image uncovers new meanings and interpretations. Children discover hidden meaning that I hadn't considered and now I'm a co-participant in the learning. How can we do this for every session?

Our discussions follow weeks of investigating texts and images as well as viewing videos. We spend time wondering and creating opportunities and moments for children to wonder. I begin to wonder more myself and model this for the children to show that even as adults, we still have a sense of awe and wonder and of uncertainty. The children show an interest in the First Fleet, asking questions about where they came from and how this affected the Indigenous people. Many of their questions stem from *The Rabbits* (1998) and they have made connections to the land and the environment.

During an assembly, a question is posed to me by a child and I respond by sharing how "I am not sure but I will find out." Immediately a child springs up stating, *Don't you know the answer?* I respond explaining how I do not know all the answers. This is surprising as I was queried on the fact that hadn't I gone to university? Interesting to me and probably not so surprising but the children see me as an expert, and yet I see myself as a co-learner or co-participant.

Yes, I can certainly create spaces and provocations for learning, but I don't know where they might lead. There were many times as a teacher when I chose the course and knew where it was leading, but I realise now that the joy of learning comes from learning together and discovering the unexpected. Life is so much more interesting! Not knowing is part of the adventure of teaching and of life. When I look at all the times in my life as teacher and woman, the most significant memories are of those unexpected joys or heartache. The everyday happenings of life are comfortable and reassuring, and we need to have those, especially in times of stress. But taking risks and stepping out into the unknown has a certain exhilaration that urges you forward. It provokes you to think about what might be possible, what might be discovered by yourself and others and where this might ultimately lead.

We settle once again for our assembly, throwing in another provocation.

The First Fleet Story

What would Australia be like if the First Fleet didn't arrive?

As the children speak, I respond inside my head. (For this section, my conversations in my head are indicated on the right of the page with the essence of the children's ideas on the left side of the page.)

We wouldn't have 'unnative' trees, footy ovals and houses. There would have only been native clothes and bush tucker.

Interesting term - unnative. It seems almost naive and yet it shows an understanding that our First Peoples were part of this land before us.

I reckon Aboriginal People would have discovered wood to build houses.

I wonder why this child thinks that wood wasn't around for the time before white people arrived. Does he understand that wood for houses comes from trees? Maybe he thinks we use wood in different ways to build houses.

I wonder if we'd be a country that no one knew.

We wouldn't be discovered.

Really? Again, I wonder about the notion of 'us' finding Australia. There was no one and nothing here before 'we' arrived.

And a different country would have discovered Australia.

Again, the assumption that Australia needed to be discovered.

Maybe America?

The suggestion here is that Australia had to be discovered by people other than the First Peoples who had been here for thousands of years. Why do the children think that? And why would America be important?

Our food would have been different because the English would have brought their own and the Aboriginal People had their own food.

We'd have no chicken.

Another theory I have is that some people in our school wouldn't be playing footy.

I must read that book about Marngrook football. That would be a great way to start the conversation about the origins of football and other sports as well. Why does it keep coming back to this?

I wonder if we would be hunters.

We would still be eating bush tucker.

I'm starting to see a pattern here. The idea that our First Peoples still live as they did hundreds of years ago. They live on the land, hunt for their food, eat only bush tucker, and lead a nomadic life. This is a big issue! How can I as a teacher balance the notion of ancient knowledge and modern-day examples of Indigenous people?

The Europeans brought rabbits.

Yes we did! And how has that worked out? We live very close to where rabbits were introduced into Australia and in two centuries, they have managed to inhabit most of this country....and so have we! So, we really are The Rabbits!

Aboriginal People-- if there was a fire they wouldn't have put it out. They let it burn and it was good for the land.

This comment shows a degree of understanding of the way Aboriginal People knew and cared for the land. That's the difference - they know the land. We see the land and have an appreciation for it but that doesn't mean we know it. This summer has exploded with some of the worst fires known to Australia and only now are we asking our First Peoples to share their knowledge of fire, hazard reduction and prevention. It's taken us such a long time to do this and yet there it was all along. Knowledge and understanding that this land needs to be nurtured and respected. Just like people.

Would the environment have been better or worse?

I'm sure the environment would be better off and I think this child know that. The amount of change in the natural places is profound. Some days I almost think the landscape changes overnight. Our progress is taking over and it seems there is no end. How can we live in harmony with the land and all of nature as we move into the next century? I am hopeful but concerned.

We would be using handmade things.

I quite like handmade things--they have a soul. They have a person's thinking in them and the care and love they've put into creating something unique. And I think people are looking for that in our world today.

I think there's good and bad sides to this.

We wouldn't have found all the amazing things they (Aboriginal People) left behind.

Well actually, they're still here, right under our feet and noses.

The population of Indigenous people would be a lot higher.

Where has this come from?

There's a good side and a bad side.

Now we have all 'yum' food from different countries.

Yes, I can see that point of view. We do have an international smorgasbord from many different cultures in Australia, but we are only just beginning to embrace bush tucker and Indigenous food. We could be planting many types of plants to cook with.

But it's also bad because there wouldn't be as many problems in the world.

So, they think that white people have caused the problems and I guess we have.

There's been pollution since then.

And there is. We have contributed to it significantly.

There's so many things that are amazing in this land. They say it's special – Ayers Rock.

Who is 'they'? Is it only Indigenous people who think it's special? I think about when I first realised that geographically, Uluru is in the middle of Australia, and my first thought was.... it's the heart of Australia!

T: We now call it Uluru as it's been there for millions of years and it's significant to the Indigenous people.

I think we would be living in huts, not proper houses like this.

Another thought that Indigenous people live now as their ancient ancestors did. My ancestors from Ireland would have lived in huts too, and many cultures lived this way for centuries. So, the children assume that the First Peoples haven't embraced change and technological advances. In fact, I think their ancient knowledge of our land and current scientific knowledge may well complement each other. We have to know a place well before we can apply any theory or new belief to that place. Maybe that's what's missing in some of our scientific thinking.

We wouldn't be here; we'd be somewhere else.

Where would we be? Who would we be?

I wonder if they had cafes filled with stuff (food) they found.

I guess they didn't need cafes because they didn't need to. They only took what they needed and lived as communities sharing with each other. We could learn from that sometimes in our

modern society.

There wouldn't be sports like we have now, like football.

T: Well, some people say that Indigenous people made up the game of football and called it Marngrook. Like the TV show.

But what did they use for a football?

T: I think it was made from possum skins.

I wonder what other games they had with the equipment they had.

They would have had many games and activities to entertain themselves.

I disagree. I think they would have found a way to make buildings with what they had but I reckon they used only what they needed from the land.

Yes! Did this opinion come from texts we have explored or from a more advanced understanding of the First Peoples and their respect for and connection with the land?

T: Did their house meet their purposes though?

I don't think they'd spend much time in their houses because they would have been hunting and only coming back sometimes.

Again, the thinking is focused on hunter gatherer notions of Indigenous people. The children believe that most Aboriginal People wandered across this huge land, rather than understanding that they belonged to groups with their own languages and places to gather.

I wonder if they had the food we had, like food we make or food from other countries.

I wonder if they (First Fleet) brought colours with them because we wouldn't have pink.

What would the world be like without pink? I think I could live without that color except in nature where the pinks are a vast rainbow of different shades and hues. Colour in nature compares with nothing else. Such richness can't be replicated and that's how it should be. You can't compete with perfection.

I think they had ochre so that they could make pink.

More of an orange really but it is such a vibrant and rich colour. I didn't really appreciate this colour until I saw it in Broome - the rich ochre against the vivid blue of the ocean and the white sand is truly a masterpiece of nature.

How much did they change it in a day or so?

Many adults haven't associated climate change with human interference and yet these children see it and acknowledge it and wonder how we can work together to solve it. I feel quite hopeful for our future when young people present themselves as problem solvers, not helpless and vulnerable!

Our climate is different.

A very contentious viewpoint at this moment in a world of climate deniers and doubters. But even children notice changes and are aware of the implications of climate change. They are our hope for the future so why wouldn't we give them the opportunity to explore the environment, notice the small things and develop a relationship with the natural world? We care for others we have a deep relationship with so why would this not work with the land as well. If we have a deep relationship with the land, we are more inclined to care for and protect it.

I wonder if any of the food was poisonous?

I wonder if anyone would come if the First Fleet didn't come here?

Does this mean from other places around the world? It's interesting to see that some children still think that this place was nothing without the arrival of Europeans. Why do they think that? Where has all this colonialism come from? Where do I start?

I wonder if there would have been Indigenous animals?

Let's explore that word 'Indigenous'. What does it mean? Where did it come from?

What would Australia look like?

Very different I would think. The landscape would be significantly unaffected, flora and fauna would be more abundant. However, I'm also starting to think about the progress the First Peoples would have made regardless of European settlement. Things may have progressed differently but the knowledge of the land would mean there would be different outcomes.

Would it have been a poor country?

A poor country? And what is the definition of poor? Is it related to money, which was not necessary in Indigenous and many other early societies? This is a modern concept, so maybe these children don't quite understand that societies can flourish without money and possessions. But I also wonder if this is a racist assumption and how this could be unpacked with the children.

I think Europeans built it up and maybe the Aboriginal People built it up too because there was influence from other societies.

There's a lot of thinking in this response. So, we have Indigenous people contributing to build a society, then Europeans, then obviously other cultures have contributed to our way of life as well. Until we have these conversations and listen to the children, we are oblivious to the amount of knowledge they have on a wide range of topics. I am continually surprised and enlightened by their ideas and thinking.

The first fleet – maybe the houses would have been lopsided.

I'm not sure about this idea and need to probe further. Lopsided houses? Maybe it's a style of house? I will go back to that one.

I think that before the First Fleet came – how did Aboriginal People get here?

This part of history is not well known. I'm only just learning about the land before the supercontinent of Gondwana broke apart. I heard some children talking about this last week when they were discussing dinosaurs. They were quite fascinated by the size of the continent and how it became Australia and other lands. And some teachers still think we have all the knowledge to fill up each student like a vessel. Those boys spoke to me at length about Gondwana and how it came to be. They also told me about the dinosaurs and other creatures and plants that existed at that time. Student voice is a powerful reminder of my role as a teacher!

How did the Aboriginal People get to Australia?

That's another story for another day. I wish we could keep going because I'm learning a lot.

Time constraints bring our discussion to an end again. This is a common problem when deep learning is surfacing and we have to bring the conversation to an abrupt end. Deep learning is what we aim for but the expectations of the timetable, leadership and curriculum can either

support this ideal or stifle it. These discussions always bring about such rich and diverse ideas but when school leadership puts less value on this and more on improving our NAPLAN (national testing) scores, we are continually stifled in our conversations. In our world at the moment there is a move towards slow living--slow cooking, slow pacing of life, slow travel--and I wonder how this might look in education. Do we want children to quickly tick all the boxes or do we want them to engage in deep learning, giving them time to explore complex questions and wonderings? If children are the future, then surely, we want them to make informed decisions based on facts, opinions and innovative ideas.

I chat with my co-teacher later that day and we are surprised by some of the comments. The frequent comments about the lack of progress made if the First Fleet didn't arrive is very evident. It's almost saying that we have saved the First Peoples! From what? From all the information I have read or viewed, we have done the opposite. I think they would have been perfectly happy if the First Fleet sailed elsewhere. Many of the children have a very outdated view of Indigenous Australians and their responses and comments imply racism and stereotypes.They perceive them as hunter gatherers, maybe nomadic, and I wonder if they even realise that. many Indigenous people now attend university, have careers and live in cities. These misconceptions and assumptions are a problem. It is a reality that many people today view Indigenous people as well as our society. These assumptions are embedded in our society and media, and we need to address them to ever become an inclusive nation.

This discussion also reveals many diverse themes and ideas. The wonderings are diverse and yet somehow connected. It's interesting to note that again the issues they comment on are the issues of humanity--equity, survival, climate, society, pollution, culture--and that these topics are present in our adult conversations in these times of racism, environmental distress and uncertainty. Do we underestimate the capabilities of children to discuss these ideas and make

valid contributions? I think some of us do and we sometimes encourage this dialogue to continue as well. These conversations have clearly demonstrated the higher order thinking of this generation of students and the importance of the role of the teacher to nurture and encourage this to happen. It shows that children clearly understand the impact we are having on our world and are able to express their ecological concerns but the lack of awareness of racist discourse is troubling. How can we further support conversations and reflections about these issues? Discussions around environmental ethics are important amongst this group of students and topics are often initiated by the students themselves. This is powerful learning. So how can this also be the way in which children talk and articulate an understanding of what is racist and a stereotype? The students are making the connections but more connections need to be made especially if they are contributing to the community. Morals and ethics are mentioned, leading the way to further explore ethical capabilities and critical thinking. What teacher responses are needed that further the political and ethical responsibilities of teaching?

Since we have introduced these assemblies, the students themselves have moved forward, taking ownership of the conversations with little intervention from the educators. Setting up the expectations for these assemblies enabled the students to have a voice regarding the way we discussed our ideas and how we needed to respect diverse opinions. The children suggest some sentence starters we might use, such as:

- I agree with ……
- My opinion differs from
- I respectfully disagree…...
- Going back to what ……. said…….

These suggestions come from a set of Conversation Cards we have used previously as a support for students who may need a cue when joining in or initiating a conversation. I prompt the children to think about the expectation that everyone contributes at least one idea to the discussion and quickly receive a definite affirmation. They show they also believe that children are capable and enact this in their conversations to include everyone and to listen to everyone, no matter what the comment might be.

I feel overwhelmed by the breadth of comments and the children's knowledge of this topic. They are also readily able to connect all these ideas and show that they are also willing to listen to the opinions and ideas of others, a disposition that adults might take note of. Many of the comments link to previous discussions and information we have viewed or read, however there are topics and wonderings that could lead to a greater depth of learning. This is where I can see the value of reading and being informed of current thinking and pedagogy.

We decide to make the children's thinking visible by displaying their ideas and wonderings on the wall of the classroom. Through documentation I have seen of the journey of learning has sparked a curiosity in me about how we might make visible the thinking of the children and the teachers. We have many opportunities to discuss our thinking but we don't always record our thoughts. As educators, we pose questions--to ourselves and to children. How might this look on paper? I feel an urgency to ensure the curriculum is included in this, as we are questioned about how this learning links with our mandated curriculum. Again, I am forced to think about how other educators view the curriculum--as a 'tick the box set of outcomes' or as a continuum of learning that links different subject areas to create a depth of learning experiences.

In previous discussions, I have observed (as many classrooms do) that a small minority of students are actively engaged in talking while others rarely, if ever, contribute. Why does this bother me--and I am bothered by it! Is it because I believe that everyone should have a voice or is it that, at times, I have felt that my own voice has not been heard, particularly in some professional discussions? I reflect on this and note that there are particular times when I am confident to express an opinion without fear of being ignored or denigrated. Those times occur when I am with colleagues where there is trust and respect and a sense that it's acceptable to express an opinion that might not be shared by all. It is becoming evident to me that teachers open to new ideas and possibilities engage in conversations with an inquisitive and discerning attitude, willing to listen to viewpoints of others.

Children must feel the same way, therefore as teachers we can play a significant role in how our students relate to each other and how they feel confident to be part of the conversation. The learning space should be a place where this is possible on a daily basis, and children feel comfortable to share their ideas. How can we create this? Creating a safe space with high expectations, along with viewing children as capable, allows us to develop strong and meaningful relationships with children and other educators while also engaging with complex issues like racism.

Conversations with individuals or groups of students leads me to think about the shared knowledge of all the participants. My conversations or conferences with one child is often giving feedback for learning or to challenge thinking or for improvement. Bur conversations in groups often generates new ideas and possibilities as participants continually add and build on the previous comments. This is the power of shared conversations--always moving forward with new ideas and new thinking. But this must be nurtured too. If we don't expect children to contribute their ideas to discussions, or we don't value their thinking, they become complacent

and disengaged. This also can contribute to the holding on of misconceptions and stereotypes that can hinder contributions to communities that are based in equity. If we move the conversation forward, prompt students to think, encourage questions and elaborate on thinking, we can guide the dialogue into higher levels of thinking.

I think about conversations and oral language and then about oracy. Our ability to express ourselves in words shows what we're thinking and helps others to participate in and connect with us in meaningful conversations. Without conversations with students, how does this impact on students' learning? Words are required for thinking so without the right words, thinking to a higher level is not always possible. Developing vocabulary therefore is necessary on a daily basis and teaching specific or technical words enables children to participate in conversations for learning. There is more and more evidence linking oral language to learning-- linking it to reading, writing, science, critical thinking. I observe that the vocabulary of the children is starting to develop and they seem to search for new words, rather than use everyday words. My co-teacher and I set up a scientific vocabulary wall where the children write new words and their meaning and display them for others to read. We encourage them to use these words in their writing and in discussions. Books about science are collected and displayed for sharing with a partner--conversations arise from the content, diagrams, key words, glossaries. Another opportunity for teaching comes from exploring key features of information texts and we find the children are highly engaged in locating key ideas, new words and connecting these with their experiences at Deep Creek and other places.

Encounters with Deep Creek are documented by children and teachers and added to our own ideas. We ask the children to pose a question, develop a theory and research their questions. The breadth of ideas and wonderings covers many foci for learning and encompass science, history, arts, health, geography and most other areas of the curriculum.

Our provocation for our next visit to Deep Creek is developed after discussion with our team. We express our views on the behaviour of the children. There is a sense of disagreement about what the children should be doing. Some think it's a necessary part of engaging with the place--running and playing with friends--however others think that after a certain amount of time, the children should be focusing on the place rather than themselves. Is this achievable for all children if we consider that learning is continually evolving and is unique to every child? And is it possible for teachers to be on the same learning continuum?

The Deep Creek Story

Feet walk the track to Deep Creek once again, listening to (and participating in) constant chatter and an urgency to get there. Lots of bustling, a bit of pushing and much laughter and excitement. Each time seems to create a new beginning, a new place to discover. We always gather when we arrive, which is a challenge for some children. They just want to go! But we remind them of our purpose and our responsibilities to this special place that we share with others.

Off they go! Walking is not possible for some as they run to their spot! There's the beehive in the log, the hut made of trees, the water trickling through the drain, the grandfather tree, the log over the creek, the hill on the other side, the track worn between the bracken ferns. So many places to explore and just to be with the place. A group of girls is sitting, talking, and quietly looking across the creek to the grasses growing on the hill. And there are the artists, pencils in hand, books on knees, sketching, looking, looking again, capturing the spirit of the place. Then there are the explorers, wandering, observing, magnifying lens in hand, getting right in close. And finally, there are the runners and chasers, moving in the place with their bodies weaving in and out of trees and bushes. I try to refocus some children but struggle with whether I

should intervene or just let it happen. Over numerous sessions, I note that it seems to be the same groups of children who run and chase, paying little attention to the environment and the impact of their games. We have numerous discussions with the children asking them for ideas on our presence at the creek and how we may be impacting the place either positively or negatively. This frustrates me and I wonder why. Is it because I can see so many opportunities to engage with the place but these children can't, or won't or are they not ready yet? Does this disrupt my own view that children are capable?

I see a group of children who are often running but they have stopped and are chatting. I make my way towards them and casually ask them if they have found something. They respond sharing how they have seen an anthill and they want to see what is happening. I'm thinking finally they have observed something and I see an opportunity to keep this momentum. They tell me they've seen a video (which we showed before we visited Deep Creek) about the knowledge shared by Indigenous people about the ant world. They explain to me that ants know which way the rain is coming so they build that side higher to protect their nests. The group squats down and watches the activity of the ants with eager eyes and an excitement that is felt within the group. One boy has a stick in his hand and I wonder if he is going to use it to explore the anthill, but he just keeps it close to him. Another boy gets really close to the top of the hill and remarks that the ants have left little 'bits' of earth all around the entrance. Wondering starts, questioning how do the ants do this, if jaws or pincers are used. I offer to take photos for them, so we can show them to others and they accept. Then they run off. Enough for now! But it's given them an insight into the wonders of this place.

Some time later, the same group is sliding down an embankment and have left very obvious marks of their 'fun'. We have often discussed what our purpose is when visiting Deep Creek but this is overlooked by this group. The teachers take photos of the erosion caused by

natural or man-made causes and display these for discussion. Our human impact is evident at the creek so there is a sense that we are responsible for this, but a reluctance by the children to acknowledge that they may be part of the problem. This is confusing for me. Why can't they see this? Have I assumed they have more connection with the place than they really have? I start to think about the impact I might have had on my childhood places of play.

We drew with chalk on rocks, made bridges over ponds, collected tadpoles and took them out of their home. Maybe this is part of growing up--getting to know a place before you really understand it and appreciate it. It's like knowing people. You meet them, get to know them, find out more about them, develop a deeper relationship with them and then ultimately care for them. Will the children feel like this about Deep Creek in years to come and will that have an effect on the way they treat other places, places they love and care for?

Storying with New Places

Our stories connect us to others and to places. The stories of our own lives and the lives of humans, past and present, cause us to reflect, develop empathy, and make connections with others. The stories of places also connect us as humans and more than humans, creating a space for us in our shared world. This space is ever evolving, depending on where we are on any given day and who holds the power on that day. The perspective of stories tells us where we stand and evokes emotions and feelings that sometimes take up by surprise. Where did that emotion come from and why did I feel like that? That's the power of story and when and where it's told.

The rock stands strong, looking over the trees and natural landscape towards the city. There is a spiritual feeling in standing here. I imagine that many have stood here before me and wonder whether this was a place of importance for gathering or for contemplation. We are visiting the You Yangs today, an ancient place of trees and rocks and creatures that hide from

our mass human invasion. It's the end of the year and we think this is a place the children will appreciate and learn from in their journey as global citizens. The You Yangs are part of an Aboriginal cultural landscape in the Country of the Wadawurrung People. The distinct landscape of granite rocks rise up from the land with views across the surrounding country that stretch for many kilometres. We are Out and About once again, in a different place and different time, but we know how we are in this place. Years of exploring Deep Creek and going out and about to other places have taught us to be with the place and see the place through open eyes now. We look at places in more depth, with more knowledge, with more wonder and awe. A new place is scope for adventure and potential, a place of discovery and contemplation. And yet there is excitement and learning in these places and we can feel it in ourselves and the children. It's a gift to be able to visit these ordinary yet extraordinary places that present us with something new and wondrous every time.

Children are eager to get off the bus, arms flinging around to get off and explore. Feet one to one in front of each other, dust flying up around shoes, bodies edging towards the gathering space, ready for the next adventure. We sense the children have gained a different perspective of this country through their explorations of Deep Creek, so we observe and wonder with them. Tracks wind in every direction, so we make our way towards Big Rock along a dirt track, children chatting, looking for creatures and noticing wonders around them. They see more now, more detail, more movement, more colours. The rock formations, the leaf colours, the lively plants, the creatures slithering past, the way we all move. Big Rock appears after many requests, "Are we there yet?" Sage green and golden lichen covers the granite in patches, smooth edges of the rock folding around the landscape. Children run towards the rock and I feel some trepidation for the vastness of the area and the responsibility I have for their safety. But I have to trust them. Deep Creek has taught me that. There will always be the sense of care for these

children, but they show themselves as capable in all our visits to Deep Creek and explore the place with such open mindedness and inquiring attitude. They play on the rock now, exploring crevices filled with water, stepping up to sloping edges and gathering to chat as the people before them have done.

A child is squatting to look at a space in the rock filled with water, a stick in his hand. He pokes at the water to see the depth. It's not very deep and he looks up at me, asking me what the hole is for. How did they make this hole? Is it natural or did someone make it? I wonder what it's used for? Maybe they cooked in it or collected water? Theories abound and then other children join in to discuss the water hole. They too squat and look at the hole. Could it be where they put their fire to warm at night? Or to cook? Or to store things so they won't lose them? (I could do with one of those!) Children wander all over Big Rock, watching like sentries over the place, exploring each angle of the rock, touching the lichen and textures of the granite, surveying the trees and plants that surround us.

Moving further down the track we find a large pit that seems to welcome us to come and be beside it. We sit on the edge of the pit, a space that looks like a crater filled with water, but with sticks that enclose the edges like a nest. There's a sound coming so faintly below the chatter of the children. There's a hush. *I can hear something ...* Voices quieten, shuffling bodies freeze and all senses are focused on finding what's going on. Then we hear the 'pobblebonk' chorus of many frogs. Frogs chorusing, children and educators listening intently, bodies all sitting closely in a circle. Each movement from a human causes the more than human to be silent, so we change our ways and the magic happens. There's a moment when all is still and the children and teachers are one, listening and knowing that this is special. We are now listening with this place, all living together in this moment and connected to each other. Where will this lead us?

Chapter 6

Discussion

In the following chapter, I will first respond to the research questions in terms of the pedagogical narrations and literature. I will then note the unexpected emerging from this research. Limitations and possibilities will follow leading to a discussion on implications for the research and possible future research. The chapter will end with some concluding ideas which I hope will offer provocations for further thinking.

What role does the image of the child have in teacher identity and everyday practice?

Loris Malaguzzi (1994) says that our image of the child is where teaching begins. If teachers hold the image of child as capable, this changes the dynamics of what it means to be a teacher and the ways educators practice teaching. Learning then begins with the child—not standards, not prescribed curriculum, not the teacher's desires. The image of the child is also linked with teachers viewing themselves as capable as they become co-participants in shared learning experiences. This builds the relationships (Henry, 2019) between children, between child and teacher, between child and the community, providing opportunities for children to engage with each other, with their teachers, and with their community. The teacher's identity is directly related to her image of the child as she sees endless possibilities for what might be possible and her place in the learning. This is illustrated through the following conversation from the Pedagogical Narration: Stories about the origins of Australia,

> I'm only just learning about the land before the supercontinent of Gondwana broke apart. I heard some boys talking about this last week when they were discussing dinosaurs. They were quite fascinated by the size of the continent and how it became Australia and other

> lands. And some teachers still think we have all the knowledge to fill up each student like a vessel. These boys spoke to me at length about Gondwana and how it came to be. They also told me about the dinosaurs and other creatures and plants that existed at that time. Student voice is a powerful reminder of my role as a teacher!
>
> (Pedagogical Narration: Stories, p 120)

This is what child as capable looks like in practice--children and teachers learning together in purposeful engagement (Rinaldi, 2006). In this moment, it is about understanding the origins of the place where the children and teacher live and work. By engaging in conversation with these children, the teacher's role is one of co-participant and the children become co-contributors to the dialogue and the direction it takes. The environment that creates these opportunities is one of shared learning, truly listening to moments of conversations and showing a genuine interest in children and their ideas and passions. "Sitting down and talking with the children" generates discussion where children "confidently share what they are exploring", showing they are "articulate and focused" (Pedagogical Narration: Bones, p 73). This example connects with what Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. (2015) share when they view children as competent and capable of constructing their own learning, children engage in reformulating their ideas and developing theories about the world around them. This becomes evident in the Pedagogical Narration: Bones in the discussions regarding ownership of bones, "space for children to theorise" and "to justify their thinking creates shared knowledge with the children leading to more robust conversations" (p.84). These "spaces" are where children and teacher build complexity in their theories and make meaning in connection to local knowledges and understandings (Moss, 2019).

Complex issues such as racism can and need to be discussed with children, validating the view of them as capable to be involved in discussions that challenge them and their assumptions. This is particularly important in schools where the population is predominantly white settlers and

the diversity of cultures is not present in the everyday happenings of the classroom. The notion of the Europeans 'saving' a 'poor' country and introducing a smorgasbord of different foods, represents the children's thinking that Australia didn't really exist before then and Indigenous People were secondary citizens (Pedagogical Narration: Stories, p119). Involving children in these conversations which question their ideas and causes some uncertainty promotes reflection in everyday and engages with Haraway's (2016) notion of 'response-ability'. 'Response-ability' is "the capacity to respond ethically and politically to everyday moments that emerge spontaneously from being in and with world" (Iorio et al., 2020, p. 2). Activating "response-ability" (Haraway, 2016) includes discussions and provocations "that are intentionally situated as ethical, political and accountable to place, more-than-human others and colonial inheritances" (p. 2).

The dialogue teachers encourage and the dynamics of the relationships (Iorio, 2006; 2008) determines how children express themselves and their thinking. This only happens if the environment teachers create (Gallas, 1994) is conducive to a positive relationship between child and teacher, where the teacher co-participates with children, provoking meaningful conversations and diverse experiences targeting student voice and even choice of topic. Being attuned to individual learners through these conversations, teachers learn more about the children--their interests, their passions, their strengths and challenges--which inevitably means being able to respond to children rather than prescribe a set standard of lessons. This becomes evident as "deep discussions" regarding "the issues surrounding Australia's history and contemporary society" are part of everyday learning (Pedagogical Narration: Bones, p.86). The entanglement of past, present, and futures is being shared and children respond in ways that make visible their awareness of the treatment of Indigenous Peoples on the Stolen Land where they live and learn.

These types of conversations occur when teachers are guided by the children, by listening and responding to their input and negotiating the next learning experiences.

Teachers who view the child as capable of complex thought (Ontario Early Years Policy Framework, 2013; Rinaldi, 2006) change their expectations of what is achievable for all children, regardless of where these children are on the learning continuum (Early Years Learning Framework [EYLF], 2014). Teachers see the strengths of the child rather than the deficits (Iorio & Parnell, 2015), building on the child's understandings through shared dialogue, and leading to new insights and knowledge for each child. While exploring the text and images in *The Rabbits* (Marsden, 1998), the children are "inquisitive and capable and have prior knowledge to understand many of the ideas presented in this book" (Pedagogical Narration: Stories, p.109). *The Rabbits* tells the story of the first arrival of Europeans to Australia and the effect on the Indigenous people. This aligns with Rosenblatt's (1986) concept of aesthetic reading, when readers "focus attention on what is being lived through in relation to the text *during* the reading event" (p. 124). This becomes evident as the children question, wonder, and activate new understandings as I am reading the text.

Knowing the child and seeing the potential to construct situations to allow children to advance, takes the focus to a new level of deeper understanding of each child's capabilities. Conversations about ethical issues throughout the Pedagogical Narration: Bones showed children contemplating the decision of returning Mungo Man's bone to the land and their own dilemma of ownership regarding discovered bones in the local preserve. As teacher, it is seeing these moments as provocation and offering multiple opportunities to build complexity to children who are viewed as capable and contributing to these important conversations.

When educators reflect and analyse what emerges from these experiences, they understand what is made visible in these moments but also see these experiences as a pathway to altering the journey of learning. Reading texts focusing on Indigenous perspectives, children were “deeply engaged in relevant and authentic learning, as well as using critical and creative thinking” (Pedagogical Narration: Stories, p. 110) evident in their conversation and actions of uncovering elements, symbols and hidden meaning in the visual text previously unseen. This teaching practice becomes a form of research itself, presenting educators with multiple ways to view learning and the everyday experiences provided for the children. In everyday practice, teachers provoke children to engage in meaningful and relevant experiences that nurture relationships, with each other and with teachers. No longer in charge of transmitting knowledge but engaged with children in finding out, listening, negotiating, discussing, and disagreeing with each other, teachers can explore complex issues with young children. This connects with what Taylor (2013) believes as the natural connection with environment placing children in a strong place to have an opinion, which is also explored by Iorio et al. (2017) who discuss the relationship between place and children through ethical and historical lenses. This was demonstrated in a discussion made visible in Pedagogical Narration: Stories, focused on the First Peoples of Australia where the conversations illustrated higher order thinking, children’s understanding of the world and ecological precarity, and their own impact on the planet (p. 99).

If all teachers begin with child as capable (Malaguzzi,1994), everyday practice is fluid as the children drive the learning rather than the teacher. Planning learning experiences is akin to a living organism that grows and changes, transforming thinking and creating change. “Creating spaces and provocations for learning often discovers the unexpected” (Pedagogical Narration: Stories, p. 111) and teachers need to feel comfortable with that. The uncertainty of not always knowing can bring a joy to learning for teachers and children, as they discover together and

"develop strong and meaningful relationships" (Pedagogical Narration: Stories). This learning becomes a powerful image of authentic learning which values collaboration between teachers and children, as well as between teachers themselves (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015).

Seeing teachers as capable builds capacity and a sense of belonging, creating teams of educators who strive for exemplary practice that engages and includes all children. Planning and documenting learning experiences plays a significant role in how teachers view children and their capabilities. (Pacini-Ketchabaw, et al. 2015; Iorio & Parnell, 2015). When responding to discussions and wonderings about Deep Creek, teachers developed "scientific vocabulary walls and encouraged children to use these words in discussions and writing" (Pedagogical Narration: Stories, p 125). Books were collected in response to these moments, introducing children to complex scientific theories and knowledge, comparing these with Indigenous knowledge and vocabulary. This prompted children to "pose their own questions, develop theories and research their questions," covering multiple areas of the curriculum and capabilities (Pedagogical Narration: Stories, p. 133). Everyday practice by teachers in entangled with the views of children as capable. The encounters teachers plan for children connect to their image of the child, building relationships and an attitude of genuine inquiry. Engaging in these experiences together brings understanding, joy and rekindles a sense of wonder.

How does teacher identity construct teacher response in a primary classroom setting?

Becoming a teacher is entwined with life experiences and a person's views of the world, bringing a greater understanding of the links between teacher identity and personal identity. This connects with the political and ethical aspects of being a teacher (Dahlberg & Moss, 2004; Taylor and Giugni, 2012) which are key to developing "successful learners, confident and

creative individuals, and active and informed citizens" (ACARA). Choosing to enact the image of the child as capable is a political choice aligning with ACARA's key–as it is the foundation of pedagogy and practice (Moss, 2019). It is in the making of the choice and openness now to debate and critique, creating "education first and foremost a political practice" (p. 50) and constructing a teacher and teacher identity as including political and ethical aspects.

Beltman (2005) states that life experiences as well as professional knowledge become part of teacher identity and that life history plays a major part in determining teacher identity (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009). For example, childhood memories construct teacher response that build on children's knowledge and make more meaningful connections. This became evident as I walked Deep Creek with the children,

> In this moment, at Deep Creek, I realise my connection to the place of my childhood. It's only as I've grown older that I realise I have a connection to that place and the vivid images of the colour of yellow rough gravel and rivulets of muddy water running down road after rain continue to fill my mind.
>
> Pedagogical Narration: Bones, p.76)

This example is how this moment is provocation—provocation to my own memories and how these memories are part of my teacher identity. These is where I understand "how these memories might influence my engagement with Deep Creek and how this will further influence the learning that will be generated from this connection" (Pedagogical Narration: Bones, p. 77) making visible the connection between practice and teacher identity.

Listening and teacher identity

Teacher response to student learning requires an attitude of listening (Rinaldi, 2006) and wondering, building knowledge with the children, but also bringing an adult's perspective to deepen the learning context. How the teacher sees herself as part of the conversation determines how the conversation develops (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015) therefore demonstrating the connection to teacher identity. Noticing more of the intricacies and details of children's thinking and their conversations creates a different role for the teacher. Nurturing an atmosphere where children have a voice (Gallas,1994) and are free to express ideas and opinions should be a natural response to everyday learning, showing that ordinary moments (Atkinson, 2012) are opportunities to grow and learn. For instance, a discussion about the impact of the First Fleet arriving in Australia delivers several pathways for teachers to pursue, where children's voices emerge as provocations for teacher response.

> I think Europeans built it up and maybe Aboriginal People built it up too because there was influence from other societies. (Pedagogical Narration: Stories, p. 119)

> I disagree. I think they would have found a way to make buildings with what they had but I reckon they used only what they needed from the land.(Pedagogical Narration: Stories, p. 117)

> Our climate is different.
>
> (Pedagogical Narration: Stories, p. 118)

Teacher response is a multi-faceted approach to engage children in authentic learning, that builds on children's knowledge but also presents them with new understandings and possibilities. With such a diverse array of theories and questions on the impact of the First Fleet, teacher response focused on areas of the curriculum that linked to the children's ideas. The children

recorded their areas of interest for investigation surrounding the First Fleet topic on Post-It notes and then searched for peers with similar ideas. Teachers then used these to plan provocations for learning during a planning session and decided how their own interests linked with those of the children. Questions and theories were then generated from the ideas of the children and the adventures began. Teacher response clearly connected to teacher identity through the co-participation of teachers to share their own passions and talents to enhance student learning. This is an important shift in thinking--teachers learning with children, taking risks by acting on student voice, supporting learning to evolve in authentic and engaging ways. Teaching is not choosing generic activities that focus on one outcome and ticking boxes but creating opportunities for children to have a voice and have a positive influence on others, by building a culture of community. When choosing how teachers respond to children, the opportunity for children to have input is highly significant. This requires alternative thinking from teachers (Moss, 2016) by opening up the dialogue to question what constitutes 'good' teaching and how that generates teacher response. An example of this was shown when children responded again to the teacher response, "What would Australia be like if the First Fleet didn't arrive?" (Pedagogical Narration: Stories, p. 111). The teacher's and children's responses led to exploration of "themes such as Indigenous fire management, environmental challenges, bush tucker, effect on Indigenous populations, significance of sacred land and places…" and then moved to a new question, "How did Aboriginal People get to Australia?" (Pedagogical Narration: Stories, p. 120). Children's voices and teacher response create teaching as co-participation – and furthers how teacher identity and teacher response are linked. Teachers understand their identity as co-participants in teaching and construct teacher response valuing this identity.

Co-participation

What becomes clear in terms of teacher identity, teacher response, and children's voice is the practice of co-participation. Learning becomes co-constructed with the children (Rinaldi, 2006), changing the dynamics of the classroom and makes visible unexpected outcomes. For example, the relational aspects of teaching and learning (Britzman, 2003) create conditions that transform the separates roles of teacher and child to one of being co-participants in learning. Co-participation is teachers and children learning with each other in purposeful and authentic experiences that connect teachers and children (Rinaldi, 2006). Co-participation changes the role of the teacher, who becomes entwined in the learning with the children. Co-participation exposes the complexities of teaching (Rinaldi, 2006) including decisions teachers make which influence the dynamics of the classroom and beyond. This includes the use of collaborative conversations where the teacher is a co-participant rather than the person directing the dialogue and posing questions, allowing the conversation to flow freely (Iorio, 2006; 2008).

Conversations between teachers and children make visible their thinking and wonderings. When the teacher views the child as capable, the learning is shared, the conversation is rich and the discoveries are unknown (Iorio, 2006; 2008). Teachers can 'talk to' children, but it is only in true conversations when teachers are listening and engaging with the child, that the power of these conversations is revealed—a moment of co-participation. Shared power in the relationship between child and teacher conversations (Iorio, 2006; 2008) supports discussions to flow, guided by the ideas and questions of the children, without the need for teachers to intervene but rather to contribute or question in a more relevant way as a co-participant. Learning to listen and to not assume opens up many possibilities for children to explore and leads teachers and children to more complex ideas that connect all their experiences as a collective group (Edwards et al. 2014). This provides insights into the complexity of relationships and the way we interact with

each other. This relational image of the child as capable gives us endless possibilities for explorations and discoveries.

Moments of co-participation consistently became part of my teacher identity within my research, signifying "a change in engagement and in the conversations. The vocabulary is richer, the opinions more passionate and the ideas resonate with empathy and understanding of past history" (Pedagogical Narration: Bones, p. 88). In Pedagogical Narration: Stories, I note how "conversation flows" between myself as teacher and the children as connections are made as children consider the illustrations in a text and provoke the children for further knowledge. "Eyes scan the image looking for details and hoping to discover something that others have not. I feel the excitement with them and again, the children find treasures within the image that I have never considered. Every new page draws the children in and they respond with increasing joy" (Pedagogical Narration: Stories, p. 109). The ideas shared through these moments become more complex through the co-participation between teacher and children.

Teaching as a collective

The power of belonging to a collective of inspiring educators is another link between teacher identity and how teachers construct response for learning. Teams of educators create opportunities to further explore ideas in a shared space rather than teachers being the sole designer of learning experiences. Skott (2019) defines the journey of 'being' a teacher and links this with 'becoming and belonging'. The value of this collegiality builds a pedagogical culture that children become part of and creates a place that multiplies possibilities. Responding to the provocations of the children, not just in dialogue, but in the way new experiences are planned, creates a community of learners and changes the dynamics of relationships. Deep and authentic learning is a collaborative experience not without moments of discomfort and uncertainty

(Henry, 2019). Britzman (2003) describes the pedagogy of uncertainty, not always knowing the way forward and how this evolves in unexpected discoveries in teaching and learning. An example of this was the continuing discussion about the animal bones and the links with Mungo Man which exposed ethical questions and gave insight about future learning, all considered by a team of educators (Pedagogical Narration: Bones, p. 135).

From this perspective, Haraway (2016) discusses 'staying' with these conflicting moments of uncertainty and sustaining the conversations that encourage humans to look at different ways of thinking and knowing. Through dialogue as a collective of teachers, ways of understanding children's learning is deepened and supports all involved (teachers, children and families) to be active participants in shared learning experiences. Teacher response is driven as a collective where teachers negotiate, discuss, and debate what happens next after seriously considering the theories and questions of the children. Throughout the Pedagogical Narration: Bones, teachers come together in their own uncertainty to understand the complexities of ownership in relation to Mungo Man and the bones found by the children. This offers a way to consider how teaching as a collective can create teacher response that is ethical and responsive.

The unexpected

As part of this research, pedagogical narrations were used to explore teacher identity and child as capable, but unexpectedly the writing and analysis of these narrations unearthed many other insights (Richardson, 2001). Focusing on the two research questions regarding teacher identity and child as capable presented possibilities for further investigation such as questioning the status quo, curriculum links, ethical and political issues, gender and equality, listening, co-participation, entanglement and rethinking the role of teacher.

Being a researcher exploring and analysing pedagogical narrations has given me deeper insight into children's thinking and learning (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015). The process of delving into these narrations and searching for themes, patterns and anomalies opened up many pathways for giving new meaning to my role as teacher and researcher. The amount of qualitative data was definitely unexpected as it provided more opportunities for exploration than I could ever have predicted. The creation of the pedagogical narrations introduced me to authors and thinking that forced me to question the status quo (Moss, 2016) as well as the purpose of education at this point in history (Taylor, 2012; Haggstrom, 2020; Moss 2016; Pacini-Ketchabaw, et al. 2015). The creation of the pedagogical narrations changed my language when speaking about teaching and learning as well as the focus I allocated to certain areas of the curriculum. I began to place more emphasis on the capabilities with the ultimate aim to enhance learning in all other areas of the curriculum. My knowledge of the curriculum became strengthened and I became more adept at linking learning experiences across all learning areas, using shared provocations or questions as a starting point.

Entanglement--the interconnection of humans, more than humans, places and all their relationships (Moss, 2019)— seemed to weave its way through much of the narrations--entanglement of teachers and children, entanglement of children with the environment and entanglement of the teacher's personal and professional lives (Beltman, 2015) connecting my history and my values. The interconnectedness of the stories that evolved demonstrated the many influences that construct a teacher and the ever-changing dynamics of these influences (Beijaard et al. 2004). When reading the previous research surrounding my questions, I found myself often questioning my assumptions and critically reflecting (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015). For example, reading would provoke me to consider how my reflections influenced me as a teacher and a researcher.

Ethical and political issues (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005) often emerged from discussions with the children (as made visible through the data) and prompted different thinking about the perceptions and focus for learning. The children spoke passionately about topics that were relevant to society today and showed maturity in their thinking and responses. Although many of these issues were quite complex, the children displayed empathetic understanding and insightful thinking and reasoning in their responses. This inspired teacher responses and teachers working as a collective, that further advanced our discussion topics and as a consequence gradually increased participation by all children in conversations. At times, children also made visible their assumptions, stereotypes, and misunderstandings about race. This was quite concerning and calls for more opportunities for issues like this to be discussed in ways that are active and provoking. This brings forward what it means to make choices that are ethical and political (Moss, 2019). In this case, by making the political choice to view children as capable, a culture is constructed that supports children to think with issues of race and equity. Initially, exploring the curriculum for links to our investigations was to validate that the teaching was connected to learning areas, but as this evolved, my knowledge of the curriculum broadened. I began to make connections between all areas, not just as separate subject areas. Matching the learning experiences with the capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities such as Indigenous history and culture and sustainability presented a much broader sense of how learning can be holistic, relevant and authentic. Karen Martin (2016) discusses 'coming alongside' with Indigenous people to share their stories, nurture relationships and embed Indigenous worldviews in authentic and respectful teaching and learning. The practices made visible through the pedagogical narrations offer a way to activate 'coming alongside' as Martin describes, especially for me as a white settler woman engaging with Indigenous Worldviews. These types of practices are relevant to the Australian

context, teaching on Stolen Land, and present a way to think about how to foreground Indigenous Worldviews.

Writing the conversations of the assemblies with children revealed many assumptions and misconceptions about Indigenous peoples, indicating racism and stereotypes. Our classroom conversations need to address these concerns from the earliest opportunities to engage children in ethical dialogue and to disrupt racist and narrow thinking. Conversations and pedagogical narrations made this evident, creating spaces for us as educators to address these views. If we view children as capable, they can be involved in both political and ethical discussions that provoke and challenge their preconceived ideas (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015). Discussing texts and provocations that make meaning of Indigenous worldviews is a starting point, but also celebrating the unique contribution that First Peoples have given to our world would create a more complex understanding of our own place in the world.

Posthumanism (Kuby & Rowsell, 2017) thinking became more relevant to teaching with children contributing their concerns for our planet and its inhabitants and environment. The connection to the environment became the driving force for many of the teaching moments shared through this research. Before this, I knew I had a strong connection to the environment, but I had never reflected on the idea that this had shaped the teacher I am today. In particular, this has re-situated place and the more than human as central to teaching and learning, de-centering the human. This inspired a connection to posthuman perspective with key areas of learning, such as literacy, religion and science, rethinking this content and how it is shared with children. As a teacher in a Catholic school, Laudato Si (Pope Francis, 2015) became an important text for us to investigate and one that validated our journey of prioritising care for our planet. The encyclical reminds us that earth is our 'common home' — a home we share with

other lifeforms (human and non-human) —and that the fragile state of the planet is due to human behaviour. Only by caring for and connecting with all of creation can humans preserve the planet for the future—practices made visible through the pedagogical narrations.

Interactions with other teachers revealed the power of collaboration as a particularly strong indicator of student engagement and learning. This approach to teaching as a shared experience of like-minded educators created a depth of experiences that catered for a wide range of children's interests and passions--certainly an ideal that one teacher could not achieve alone. The collaboration between teachers and children created a sense of joy (Malaguzzi, 1994), a feeling that is missing from the more traditional ways such as one teacher, one class, one pathway to learning.

Writing about certain events that have challenged me during my career forced me to confront issues (Henry, 2019) as they surfaced and became more evident in my reflections—issues of gender equality, environmental crises, equity in education, race, Indigenous knowledges and global disharmony. Writing as a way to discover the true self (Richardson, 2001) can be challenging and can bring uncertainty, however it can bring cohesion and clarity to moments in our lives. Finding my voice through writing uncovered moments in my life and career when I was uncertain or confused and as a consequence, these many moments disrupted my thinking. Stories were unfolding in front of me and yet I was the narrator, often not aware of where the story was leading (Richardson, 2001). I found myself aligning with the researchers who used story to frame their thinking and make meaning of their own challenging experiences (Vicars, 2006).

Postfoundational thinking (Moss, 2019) signaled a departure from traditional aspects of teaching to define a new way of teaching for me as I moved towards uncertainty as empowering and rethinking structures to expand possibilities. I questioned the notion of the teacher being solely responsible for delivering the learning and realised that the children are capable of connecting their learning with real life issues. I questioned the emphasis on assessing key learning areas with little attention paid to the capabilities, and yet these are the skills needed to navigate the 21st century. I questioned leadership, when play-based learning after being well documented and effective, was omitted from our timetable. And I questioned why teachers would not consider that learning beside children and with nature can create passion and connection for all involved. My role as teacher was disrupted. I no longer accepted many of the preconceived ideas from society about what an education is. I found my voice, which still wasn't always heard, but I felt more confident and affirmed by the knowledge and research that validated my post foundational journey. My role as teacher was, and still is, evolving —as it should.

Limitations and possibilities

The focus of this research was one teacher and her viewpoints, limiting the findings to one setting and one person at a certain time in history. Yet, I also see this as a possibility – a possibility that supported an in-depth understanding of one teacher in one context creating a detailed story of teacher identity and the relationship to the image of the child and teacher response. The teacher's political, ethical (Moss, 2019; Taylor and Giugni, 2012) and historical influences play a role in how the teacher engages in research and the importance she places on certain elements. The explanation and evaluation of the findings is subjective to this researcher who brings a lifetime of experiences to the research. The inner dialogue of these experiences

whilst writing the conversations was my interpretation of the meaning behind the children's dialogue and may have been interpreted differently by others. These are all important nuances to this research and can be seen as research that is responsive to the complexity of teaching and learning.

My voice is made visible in the narrations, reflecting my thinking and my viewpoints about life and learning. Teachers' worldviews and lived experiences play a major role in how we ask questions, what we prioritise and how we view others. Therefore, my position as researcher and how I view the world affects the way this research was conducted. For example, I realised I have always viewed children as capable, however I had not named it as such. Beginning the research with this in mind, influenced by my political and ethical stance (which researchers always bring with them) has a bearing on the way the research is conducted. I had already begun the journey of seeing children as capable and wished to explore this further.

Discussing and analysing these narrations with others may have presented contradicting points of view (Nxumalo, 2016) leading to different outcomes and focus for learning. This reveals the layers of complexity within teaching and learning. It furthers a commit to debate and dialogue about ideas which is always central to an active and contributing community. The team of educators did discuss the common experiences, however the interpretation within this research is mainly from the researcher herself, making visible the many connections, relationships, and entanglements within a teacher's practice. The relationships of these teachers an important part of this, which prompts me to wonder about the findings of this research if there had been a major difference of opinion in our team. Would I have had the rich dialogue and experiences to include in my data if I had been teaching on my own?

I often felt confined by standard research protocol as this seemed to limit the ways in which I could explore the questions. Refusing method (St. Pierre, 2021) and the use of pedagogical narration (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015) opened up a whole new way to consider the 'doing' of research. This layered with Richardson's (2001) practice of writing to understand, supported me to find the connections and unexpected events within the data (Latour, 2004) and through the process of pedagogical narration. Through my own dialogues across these processes, my story became visible and through this visibility, this offers an example of how to do research differently and makes a "space for difference" to exist (St. Pierre, 2021, p. 7).

Implications and recommendations for future research

Implications from this research include using pedagogical narrations as a means to deepen learning is certainly an area for further investigation across school contexts. Using pedagogical narrations offers a more in-depth understanding of children and their learning and how they can further understandings the curriculum. Pedagogical narration as inquiry has the power to transform teaching practice and expand the knowledge of children's learning (Atkinson, 2012). The narrations present valuable insight into how children develop theories and how teachers might design experiences to unpack these theories. Now towards the end of my career, I consider how my teaching and learning might have evolved had I had the opportunity of using pedagogical narrations earlier and note how engaging in the pedagogical narration process could enhance how teachers approach their teaching and learning and develop a more complex identity of what it means to be a teacher.

This research provides a strong example of how teaching and learning always occurs in relationships and therefore this important focus of working as a team opens new insights into the

experiences that are presented for learning. Further, through the pedagogical narrations, the power of collaboration between teachers and children is made visible and concrete, opening up possibilities for co-participation and creating school cultures where the image of the child as capable and contributing is commonplace. Creating school cultures where the image of the child as capable, teachers are researchers, and pedagogical narrations are utilised calls for school structures (for example, timetables, team teaching, extended planning/collaboration times) that bring together teachers in collaboration to discuss seriously the words, actions, and work children generate as provocation for creating teacher responses that are complex and deepen children's thinking.

Emerging from each of the pedagogical narrations are examples of curriculum that is connected to local place, authentic and related to local community, and the interconnection between subjects/disciplines. Curriculum is not represented as an isolated set of outcomes. Again, this calls for a school culture that does not view disciplines as single subjects but creates multidisciplinary opportunities that reflect the complexity of learning. Working within structures like daily schedules and supporting teachers to work across expertise creates the type of environments that see learning and teaching as interdisciplinary. This also becomes important as issues like race, gender, and inequity are grappled with by children and teachers. Creating curriculum that supports spaces for these complex conversations and sees how these issues are present across disciplines calls for innovative ways to think about the time and space needed to understand and activate responses.

Future research built on these ideas and expanding how teachers view themselves and children would bring a more detailed understandings of the relational aspects of teaching and learning. How teachers view themselves including identity is a consideration from an ethical

point of view as this has an impact on their ongoing learning, whether they see themselves as learners, and how they construct teacher response. This is connected to the importance of the teacher's role in shaping a more just and equitable society and the way we interact with children. Research in these ways resituates the teacher's view of children as capable, rather than holding a deficit model view. This has implications for assessment and reporting where learning is seen as a continuum rather than skills children need in order to be seen as capable.

Concluding ideas, more possibilities

The significance of this study opens possibilities for educators to use pedagogical narrations to better understand the complex relationships of children, teachers and learning together. Pedagogical narrations have the potential to transform the way teachers view children and make visible their thinking--both child's and teacher's thinking. Relationships are imperative to this process, and to children's learning, teacher response, and co-participation. These relational aspects require teachers to redefine their roles as co-participants, rather than as the owners of knowledge. Co-participating with children changes the dynamics of the roles and creates a powerful community of learners. These are the moments Moss (2019) describes as meaning-making, moments that are contextual and complex while embracing uncertainty, subjectivity, and interpretation. These are the rich and needed moments within all classrooms.

Challenging existing theories that focus on children viewed from a deficit point of view (Iorio & Parnell, 2015) rather than being capable limits both children and teachers. If the path is already determined and defines what children are learning at certain times in their development, the parameters are limited and restrictive. Contemporary education should address the challenges and uncertainties of our times, which these children and teachers clearly demonstrated in their

interactions. The results indicate that collaborative learning empowers both teachers and children, learning beside each other and exploring complex ideas. The learning becomes more relevant, more inclusive and more purposeful.

Through pedagogical narrations, I have explored how my teacher identity is linked inextricably now to my view of children as capable and it is impossible to disentangle the personal and professional parts that make me the teacher I am today. Learning with children has taught me to view children differently and to embrace the wonder and beauty of discovering a new idea or a new connection. Telling my story has unearthed my deep connection to the environment and to story, but also my yearning to make change and be part of the change. The joy of seeing how teachers can make a difference to the lives of children and also to the legacy we leave to the next generations is empowering but comes with a sense of urgency. Further, making visible what we may not understand as teachers and children through pedagogical narrations offers teachers provocations of engaging with issues like race (so clearly shared through pedagogical narration creation).

Posthumanism presents a new perspective for me and yet I am drawn to the concept of humans being entangled with the environment. Instinctively, through my pedagogical narrations, I discovered I have always aligned with these ideas, however I have not named it as such. The practices of posthumanism open up the natural world, ready for us all to explore and to contemplate possibilities and solutions for a sustainable and equitable future for our world.

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