Narratives of Learning at the Cultural Interface:  
The Influence of Indigenous Studies  
on Becoming a Teacher

Katrina Rose Thorpe

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Sydney School of Education and Social Work
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
University of Sydney
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Statement of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

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Name:
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Date:
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Abstract

This research explores the ways in which three non-Indigenous preservice teachers’ life experiences prior to entering university and subsequent engagement in Indigenous Studies curriculum and pedagogy at university influenced their professional identity development. Drawing on the narrative inquiry methodology of Connelly and Clandinin, this study positions personal and professional experience as key to understanding teacher professional identity formation.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted over one year with nine preservice teachers. Three participant stories were selected from the nine participants who volunteered. These narratives emerged as those ‘needing to be told’ because of the depth of insight they brought to the complex pedagogical space of the Cultural Interface.

Nakata’s Cultural Interface was used as a theoretical framework to illuminate the influence of biography on the ‘locale’ of each learner as well as the agency and tensions they experienced over time in a range of social and educational contexts. The Cultural Interface provided nuanced insights to the experiences that supported or inhibited preservice teacher learning and development of a personal and professional commitment to Indigenous education. In the process of ‘storying’ their experiences, forward thinking aspirations and imaginings about the Indigenous Studies teacher they hoped to become also emerged.

While each narrative is unique, common experiences were shared. Emotional labour was required to manage the tensions of being with university peers who were resistant or indifferent to Indigenous Studies. They experienced curriculum content and pedagogical approaches that were either tokenistic or misrepresented Indigenous knowledges. Professional Experience challenged preservice teacher confidence to teach Indigenous students or embed Indigenous perspectives.

Sachs’ work on teacher activist identity formation guided findings that participants had developed an Indigenous education activist identity. This research has
implications for teacher educators to build ‘communities of practice’ that nurture preservice teachers who are developing this activist identity. Authentic ways to embed Indigenous perspectives in university curriculum was also identified as requiring attention.
Acknowledgements

To begin with, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the preservice teachers who were so generous to volunteer their time during the final year of their study. You were all very inspiring to me as you shared your thoughts and reflections with such honesty and care for the bigger picture of social justice for Indigenous Australians.

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To Leah Lui-Chivizhe, Susan Poetsch, Lorraine Towers, Cathie Burgess, Jess Czaban, John Hobson, Sharon Galleguillos, Kate Smyth - how fortunate I have been to have such supportive colleagues. To Professor Janet Mooney and all my old Koori Centre colleagues who are too many to mention here but you know who you are – thank you for providing a collegial and supportive workspace to begin this thesis. Thank you to Professor Martin Nakata for encouraging me to enrol in a PhD. Dr Christine Asmar, your early feedback during my enrolment in the Professional Certificate (Indigenous Research) was most appreciated. Dr Kate Russell and Associate Professor Alyson Simpson, thank you for assisting with me with the recruitment process. To Professor Susan Page, I have valued your insights immensely. To my colleagues at CAIK, thank you for sharing your collegial space. Thanks to Ruth McHugh, my copy editor for proofreading my thesis. To my long suffering uni friends - thank you for your encouragement, laughter and for asking how “it” was going.

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and always being there and listening.

The final words go to Pete and Leila who have had to put up with my work on the dining table for much longer than they expected. Pete, thank you for giving me the time to finish this and for all the meals you have cooked for us – I am eternally grateful. Leila, you are like a magic wand of positivity in my life. Thank you for all the encouraging surprise notes you have written to me, especially during the last six months. I’m deeply grateful for your patience and love.
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### List of Definitions and Abbreviations

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<thead>
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<th>Definition/Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Aboriginal / Indigenous Australian person</strong></td>
<td>This description is the three part government definition for the purposes of service delivery and the census - An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which she or he lives. Some Aboriginal people are offended by the term “Indigenous” and instead prefer the term “Aboriginal”. Others are comfortable calling themselves “Indigenous”. Ultimately, there is no one agreed form of naming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - the first peoples of Australia. I primarily use the term “Indigenous” for ease of writing although I do use the term “Aboriginal” interchangeably - as I do in conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australian Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>The Australian Curriculum has been phased in nationally to deliver the same content to all Australian students with their achievement judged against national standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards</strong></td>
<td>The Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards was responsible for curriculum, assessment, school regulation and teaching quality in NSW. The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) replaced the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW (BOSTES) on 1 January 2017.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bringing them Home Report</strong></td>
<td>The Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families. The report documents the impact of the forcible removal of Indigenous children from their families and provided a number of recommendations for reparations to ensure that this history is known in the wider Australian community and never repeated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Charles Perkins</strong></td>
<td>In 1965, Charles Perkins was one of two Aboriginal students at the University of Sydney who, with a group of non-Aboriginal students, led the Freedom Ride. See next page for description of the Freedom Ride.</td>
</tr>
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### Cross-curriculum priorities

The inclusion of content pertaining to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture is one of three “cross-curriculum priorities” within the Australian Curriculum (others include Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia and Sustainability). These cross-curriculum priorities seek to offer depth and richness to student learning.

### The Freedom Ride

Inspired by the 1961 Freedom Rides in the United States, students from the University of Sydney travelled on a bus through western New South Wales in 1965 to expose and challenge the normalised discrimination experienced by Aboriginal people. The media attention was successful in mobilising awareness nationally and internationally of the poor health, housing and education outcomes influenced by racial discrimination of Aboriginal people.

### Indigenous Studies

Used to describe a broad area of inquiry related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, cultures and heritages, histories and issues which impact upon or are of interest to Indigenous peoples and communities today, such as health and education. Indigenous Studies describes both the 'stand-alone' and embedded Aboriginal perspectives within a degree program. For ease of use, in the school context I have also used the term “Indigenous Studies” to describe the teaching of Indigenous content and perspectives within all K-12 syllabus documents.

### Koori Centre

Aboriginal academic and support unit at the University of Sydney in operation from 1992 - 2012.

### Mandatory Indigenous Studies unit

In order to meet professional accreditation requirements, the mandatory Indigenous Studies unit must be successfully completed by all preservice teachers enrolled in Bachelor of Education degrees at the University of Sydney. The mandatory Indigenous Studies units covers key themes in Indigenous Studies such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, cultures, histories and perspectives. The unit also addresses pedagogical approaches and curriculum developments around the learning needs of Indigenous students and how to teach non-Indigenous students about Indigenous people and cultures.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>NAIDOC Week</td>
<td>National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee. NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia each July to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSWIT</td>
<td>New South Wales Institute of Teachers. Teacher accreditation authority in NSW up until 2012 after which time it became part of Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards [see BOSTES].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalised Learning Pathway</td>
<td>A Personalised Learning Pathway is a tool for supporting Aboriginal student engagement in learning. Teachers use the plan to engage with parents/carers and the student to develop a customised academic, social and emotional wellbeing learning pathway at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservice teacher</td>
<td>A student currently enrolled in an undergraduate education program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority Area</td>
<td>BOSTES stipulates that initial teacher education programs should ensure that graduate teachers have demonstrated skills and/or knowledge in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Experience</td>
<td>The teaching experience of each preservice teacher in schools as part of a teacher education program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning</td>
<td>Training and development undertaken by teachers in schools to maintain their accreditation and enhance their teaching related skills throughout the life of a teacher’s career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-Indigenous person</td>
<td>Used to delineate newcomers to Australia, whether this is recently or over 200 years ago.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbit-Proof Fence</td>
<td>An Australian film based on a true story about two Aboriginal children who ran away from the Moore River Native Settlement in Western Australia to return to their Aboriginal families. This film is often used by teachers because it demonstrates the impact of the removal of Aboriginal children from their families and the various government policies impacting on Aboriginal people during this the 1900s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary mentor</td>
<td>A university lecturer [or tutor] who visits a preservice teacher while on professional experience, observes lessons and provides feedback and support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Torres Strait Islander

Indigenous Australian from the Torres Strait islands north of Queensland
Prologue: A Narrative Beginning

Teaching Indigenous Studies 101

Week 1, Semester 1, sometime over a decade ago.
There are about 20 students cramped in the room before I enter and the air conditioning doesn't work. That’s not unusual though. I can hear a band practising outside, “…one two, two, two”. I can hear the students laughing and talking and for a brief moment I am lost in that sound and I’m back in the 80s (heaven forbid!) when I was the undergraduate and I’m thinking about how good it was to be at Uni socialising with friends and watching a band.

But now, I am getting ready, smiling, moving desks and welcoming students as they enter the room. I try to look relaxed and I am to a degree, after all, I’ve done this for years now. I rearrange my papers and I’m trying to look organised but hoping that in my rush to get here, I’ve remembered to grab the right roll… it’s ok I have it. I’m as organised as I’ll ever be.

I’m wondering… if I were entering this classroom 20 years ago what would I be thinking? Would I be looking forward to this subject, or would I feel sick to the stomach knowing that some of my peers would equate this class with some form of intellectual and emotional torture. An attempt at indoctrination! This subject didn't exist then…times have changed though…well kind of. There are 20 faces sort of looking at me; some are ready to go, others texting, others are chatting and some are looking bored already. I am thinking… which students will be optimistic, full of animosity, engaged, resentful, negative, want to save the world, indifferent, racist, moved, surprised, thankful, and resistant… at the same and differing times. All these responses will be here in this room.

Then I am struck with the thought – how the hell did I get HERE - at a University, teaching! But I am here. It is 5 past the hour and it is time to get on with it. The journey starts now. Let the (difficult?) dialogue (Nakata, 2004b) begin.
Chapter 1: Introduction

University students bring to their studies a range of differing attitudes and knowledge about Indigenous Australians, as well as preconceptions about the value and significance of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives as a mandatory requirement of the university and school curricula (D. Phillips, 2011, p. 139). Some of these attitudes (whether they be positive, negative or indifferent) and understandings were formed through personal interactions with Indigenous Australians at school or in their home and community settings. However the experiences of most non-Indigenous university students reflect those of the wider population who have had little personal contact or friendship relationships with Aboriginal Australians. Academic Marcia Langton aptly described the nature of the broader relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, arguing that:

The most dense relationship is not created between actual people, but between white Australians and the symbols created by those predecessors. Australians do not know and relate to Aboriginal people. They relate to stories told by former colonists. Films, video and television are powerful media: it is from these that most Australians ‘know’ about Aboriginal people. (2003, p. 119)

Australian universities play an essential role in challenging pervasive colonial narratives that manifest in stereotypical and often negative understandings of Aboriginal people. Nakata, Nakata, Keech, and Bolt (2012) highlight the significance of Indigenous Studies programs for developing both Indigenous and non-Indigenous student’s understanding of the "knowledge, cultures, histories and contemporary concerns of Australia's First People" so they are able to work and engage responsively with Aboriginal people and communities in their future chosen profession (p. 121). Part of the agenda of Indigenous Studies then is to “re-contextualise” (D. Phillips, 2011, p. 6) powerful and enduring colonial ‘stories’ so that students position
themselves not as “distanced observers” (D. Phillips, 2011, p. 276) of Aboriginal people and cultures but rather as “interested knowers” (Nakata, 2006) who are committed to grow their knowledge in professional and personal contexts.

This research explores the life histories and educational journey of three non-Indigenous preservice teachers; Blaze, Melissa and Thea [pseudonyms], all of whom had become ‘interested knowers’ of Indigenous Australia as they were about to embark on their teaching career. Their narratives illuminate the complex interplay of personal, social, professional and political experiences influencing their emerging professional identities which embodied a commitment to nurturing the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and embedding Indigenous Studies in their future classrooms.

The research was inspired by my experiences of two decades of teaching Indigenous Studies in three Sydney universities. I was first employed to teach in a mandatory Indigenous Studies unit (see List of Definitions and Abbreviations) for preservice teachers enrolled in a Bachelor of Education (Primary) degree which subsequently extended to teaching in compulsory units in nursing and social work along with elective units focused on Indigenous history, culture, health and community development. Like D. Phillips (2011) I noticed that students enrolled in mandatory Indigenous Studies units appeared to resist both the content and process of their learning more strongly than those who selected Indigenous Studies as an elective (p. 1).

I wrote a version of the ‘Prologue: A narrative beginning’ in my diary over a decade ago as a consequence of reflecting on the diverse student cohort I faced at the commencement of another year of teaching a mandatory Indigenous Studies unit.
Tentative thoughts and feelings had been common for me at the commencement of a mandatory unit, for the first few weeks have always held a degree of gravitas for me – it has been my perception that if a tutorial class didn't begin well, it could be difficult (but not impossible) to create a supportive yet challenging learning environment over the remaining weeks. I have always felt both a sense of optimism along with feelings of uncertain anticipation as I begin each semester.

The ‘Prologue: A narrative beginning’ tries to capture the fact that as the semester progresses it is highly likely that I will engage in “difficult dialogue” (Nakata, 2004b) in order to disrupt hegemonic, stereotypical and sometimes racist thinking about Aboriginal people. Student resistance to Indigenous Studies is well documented (Aveling, 2006; O'Dowd, 2010; D. Phillips, 2011) and therefore becomes an important pedagogical consideration for those who teach in this disciplinary area. In my early years of teaching at university I was daunted by the prospect that in each tutorial group there would be students who have entered the classroom predisposed to resistance because they had, metaphorically speaking, a “master script” in hand. Swartz (1992) argues that the “master script” acts to silence multiple voices and standpoints while legitimising dominant, White male voices as the “standard” of what students need to know (p. 341). While there is no escaping the fact that the masterscript is still a powerful force, the participants in this research demonstrated that other scripts were legitimised in this teaching and learning space.

Although a preservice teacher may have personal experiences and attitudes which initially manifest in subversion or resistance (O'Connor & Scanlon, 2005) to Indigenous Studies pedagogy and content, there is encouraging research (D. Phillips, 2011) indicating the possibility of transforming such attitudes to levels of engagement
and acceptance (O’Connor & Scanlon, 2005). The curriculum content and pedagogy pre-service teachers perceive to be meaningful, ‘transformative’ or perhaps counterproductive to their learning when engaged in Indigenous Studies is an important area of research for teacher educators like me. Significantly though, S. Page (2014) has identified that the research has largely focused on what should be taught in Indigenous Studies, leaving considerable scope for systematic attention to “how students learn and indeed experience teaching” in order to improve these learning environments so they are both inspiring and challenging (p. 22).

Nakata’s (2002, 2003, 2006, 2007a, 2007b), ‘Cultural Interface’ has been used as the key theoretical framework in this research to unpack how pre-service teachers experienced their learning in Indigenous Studies. The Cultural Interface is the interface that occurs when Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges intersect – it is a complex space as Nakata (2007d) describes:

It is a multi-layered and multi-dimensional space of dynamic relations constituted by the intersections of time, place, distance, different systems of thought, competing and contesting discourses within and between different knowledge traditions, and different systems of social, economic and political organisation. It is a space of many shifting and complex intersections between different people with different histories, experiences, languages, agendas, aspirations and responses. (p. 199)

Indeed the complexity of the Cultural Interface provided the impetus to consider how pre-service teachers dealt with conflict, contradictions and ambiguities experienced at the Cultural Interface during their degree and helped to illuminate how they made sense of these experiences.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this research was to develop new pedagogical and theoretical insights aimed at improving teaching and learning for pre-service teachers engaged in
Indigenous Studies by:

• investigating how preservice teachers’ life experiences prior to entering university and subsequent engagement in Indigenous Studies curriculum and pedagogy at university influence professional identity development;
• exploring the ‘stories’ preservice teachers create about their experiences of a mandatory Indigenous Studies unit and other units that incorporate Indigenous perspectives;
• retelling individual narratives to provide more nuanced understandings of preservice teachers’ experiences of Indigenous Studies at the Cultural Interface of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges.

Research Questions

The research is framed around two key questions:

1. How do preservice teachers ‘story’ their experience of Indigenous Studies at the Cultural Interface?
2. What is the relationship between these experiences, their life histories and their emerging professional identities?

Significance

This research provides tertiary educators with a deeper understanding of the life histories and learning experiences that support and inhibit preservice teachers in the process of becoming interested knowers with a personal and professional investment in Indigenous education. The research is significant as it provides nuanced insights regarding how preservice teachers are brought to their learning in Indigenous Studies and why they may choose to “resist, oppose, defend, convert, patronise,
tolerate, or thoughtfully engage the content of their courses to the best of their ability” (Nakata et al., 2012, p. 136). Furthermore, the research extends this frame to consider how these learning experiences impact on the professional identity formation of preservice teachers.

The connection between professional identity formation and the work of teachers in the classroom has been widely researched (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Day, 2004; Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006; Ji Y, 2010; Walkington, 2005) particularly those transforming moments that occur during Professional Experience (see list of Definitions and Abbreviations) as this setting provides a “‘sharp learning curve’ about teaching and about themselves as teachers” (Walkington, 2005, p. 59). Although research on Indigenous teacher identity formation is gradually developing as a field of inquiry (Burgess, 2012, 2014; Reid & Santoro, 2006), research that focuses on preservice teachers’ professional identity formation as influenced by Indigenous Studies is scarce.

Given there has been little detailed research that explores the connection between Indigenous Studies and preservice teacher professional identity formation, this investigation is timely. D. Phillips’ (2011) thesis examined non-Indigenous preservice teachers’ resistance in a mandatory Indigenous Studies subject and found that:

While shifts can and do occur, one subject can only achieve so much; for some students, it does not make any discernible difference to how they begin to think about their social location, and their professional identities. Specific ways to extend the learning of pre-service teachers as they progress through their degree is thus essential. (p. 274)

As a teacher educator, it is important to examine my own teaching area as well as look beyond this discipline based literature to consider how preservice teachers are
encouraged to collude with the pursuit of quality education for Indigenous children (C. Sarra, 2011b, p. 116) as well as encouraged to embed Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in their chosen teaching areas.

Summary of Chapters

In this thesis, Chapter 2: The narrative journey shows how the act of narrative inquiry shifted and sharpened the direction of the research across time. I achieve this by addressing some of the tensions experienced in retelling the participants’ stories along with an explanation why the three narratives included in this research emerged as those ‘needing to be told’. Finally, I use diarised entries to outline the key moments that focused the research as I moved back and forth between the literature, reflections on my teaching and listening to the participant stories that were unfolding in the midst of the research process.

Chapter 3: Indigenous education and Indigenous Studies provides a contextual appraisal of the significance of Indigenous Studies as a mandatory requirement of preservice teacher education. It achieves this through a consideration of the role of ‘quality teaching’ in transforming education outcomes for Indigenous students. A brief history of the aims, theoretical debates and challenges involved in teaching mandatory Indigenous Studies at university provides important insights into the experiences of the participants in this study as they engaged in these learning spaces.

Chapter 4: Teacher professional identity formation examines key literature pertaining to teacher professional identity formation as this situates the complex interplay of personal, social, professional and political milieu impacting on the participants. I use Sachs’ (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002; Sachs, 2001, 2003a,
2003b, 2005, 2011) notion of the ‘entrepreneurial’ and ‘activist’ teacher identities to examine the external political forces that influence teacher professional identity. The chapter also covers a breadth of literature that assisted in later chapters to ‘unpack’ the various influences of preservice teacher experiences at the Cultural Interface. Here literature on the significance of reflective practice, ‘communities of practice’, teacher agency and emotion was addressed for this purpose.

**Chapter 5: Theoretical framework** begins with my search to locate a theoretical framework that will allow my analysis of the narratives to move beyond the binary oppositions and knowledge contestations between ‘Western’ and ‘Indigenous’ positions. In this chapter I explore a range of theoretical positions working towards my justification to employ the Cultural Interface as the theoretical framework. The three key principles that are said to shape the Cultural Interface; the locale, agency and tensions are explored as productive sites to understand how the participants experience Indigenous Studies.

**Chapter 6: Methodology** situates narrative inquiry within the qualitative research paradigm and establishes how the Cultural Interface will be mobilised in this narrative inquiry. Here I explain how I will ‘think narratively’ about each participant’s life history and experiences at the Cultural Interface. This chapter also considers important ethical processes when engaged in a narrative inquiry.

**Chapters 7, 8 and 9** comprise Blaze, Melissa and Thea’s narratives. ‘Found poetry’ of taken words from the transcripts is used to contextualise each life history in the participant’s own words in preparation for the ‘conversational’ analysis which follows. The term ‘In conversation’ is used to capture the process of critically engaging with and synthesising the literature presented in chapters 3 and 4. New
literature is also brought into dialogue with the narratives as new perspectives are gleaned.

**Chapter 10: The narrative coda** presents the findings in light of the original research questions as well as future directions for teaching and learning in mandatory Indigenous Studies and research beyond this thesis. The chapter identifies the existence of Indigenous education activist pre-service teachers who developed a commitment to the implementation of Indigenous Studies pedagogy and curriculum perspectives throughout their degree. It is argued that teacher educators need to be alert to the presence of activist pre-service teachers in their midst in order to facilitate ‘communities of practice’ so that their dedication to Indigenous education is supported. Furthermore, the experiences of Blaze, Melissa and Thea indicate that while they experienced good will from staff to embed Indigenous content, there is still much work to do in order to develop deep, nuanced and thoughtfully scoped curriculum.
Chapter 2: The Narrative Journey

Introduction: Telling the Stories that Need to be Told

It is important to disclose upfront, that the stories retold in this research are not the kind I initially hoped to hear and retell. At the beginning of the research, I had wished to meet and interview some preservice teachers who were vehemently opposed to (or even mildly apathetic to) the imposition of mandatory Indigenous Studies as part of their teaching degree. The resistant student who appears to have little understanding of Indigenous issues yet purports to be an “expert”, as well as the preservice teacher who expresses stereotypical or racist ideas, tended to capture my attention and imagination (‘what is she or he thinking?’, ‘what informs this racist stance?’) and for good reason – their words and ideas have, at worst, the potential to wound and perhaps at best, leave Indigenous students to flounder in a classroom of low expectations. Such resistant preservice teachers led me on a professional journey to seek out pedagogical ‘solutions’ (‘what can I do in my class to shift or transform this belligerent approach to learning?’; ‘what can I say next time that will address this racism?’). Alas, no such preservice teacher ventured through my door holding a Consent Form ready to give up their time to talk about their initial (or ongoing) resistance to mandatory Indigenous Studies. Paradoxically, the ‘failure’ to recruit the archetypal defensive and resistant preservice teacher opened up new avenues of exploration as the stories shared by the preservice teachers in this research challenged me to refocus my attention and find new meanings from their experiences. Prosser and Trigwell (1999) argue that:

We need to help our students develop a sense of wonder about our subject matter. There can be no good learning or teaching without a sense of excitement, without an awareness that we are all, students, teachers and
academic developers, on a path of continuous discovery. (p. 175)

Always present in my thoughts are the Aboriginal students who will be given an opportunity to thrive at school because their teacher cared enough and knew enough about the world they inhabit to ‘make a difference’ to their education. This research contributes a small piece to a bigger research ‘puzzle’ looking for creative responses to improve preservice teachers’ learning experiences so they will be better positioned to graduate prepared and confident to meet these expectations.

Hollinsworth (2014) captured the spirit of my early thoughts when he said, “Sometimes the intense challenges of teaching anti-racism courses and addressing student resistance can occupy all our thoughts and energies, but the ultimate aim is to enable our students to take their learnings and responsibilities beyond campus” (p. 16).

The preservice teachers who participated in this narrative inquiry pushed me to think more deeply about shared hope and the development of sustainable ethical relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers across the sectoral divides between university and schools. These students were emotionally committed to growing their ethical positioning and teacher identity as they relate to Indigenous Studies and they grappled with the process of developing an ‘ethics of voice’ (Healy-Ingram, 2011). Healy-Ingram (2011) suggests that “an ‘ethics of voice’ is an opportunity to understand the way my subjectivity turns, adjusts, narrows and widens through my conversations with Aboriginal people” (p. 91). For the participants, an ethics of voice involved a consideration of teaching Indigenous Studies in ways that centred ‘Indigenous voices’ while recognising their future power and responsibility as a teacher in this complex teaching space. Certainly, Blaze, Melissa and Thea were
passionate about developing ethical pedagogies and developing relationships with Indigenous people which would sustain them in their teaching careers. They all had unique yet equally inspiring stories to tell about their learning journey.

**Tensions in re-telling inspiring stories**

There were tensions for me in retelling the three narratives presented in this research, as at times, their stories rubbed up against important scholarship in teaching and learning in Indigenous Studies. While the various “negative” responses some non-Indigenous students have toward engaging in Indigenous Studies during their degree is an important dominant story in this field of the academic literature, the participants who arrived at my door ready to share their stories were not resistant to Indigenous Studies from the outset and had a deep and seemingly intrinsic capacity for critical self-enquiry. Their different life histories and experiences had conspired such that part of the reason they arrived at my office ready to be interviewed, appeared in part as another welcomed opportunity to engage in reflexive thinking about their learning. They were also interested in the possibility of making a contribution toward improving the teaching of Indigenous Studies at the University of Sydney. While they had not perceived themselves to be ‘critical allies’, as each interview progressed I came to view these preservice teachers as such. McGloin (2015) provides an informative definition:

‘Critical Allies’ refers to non-Indigenous listeners, participants, activists, supporters and advocates of Indigenous rights who see themselves as working with Indigenous people as allies, comrades, learners as well as teachers rather than spokespeople for Indigenous people and rights. As a somewhat nebulous term, the notion of critical alliance requires continual scrutiny in order not to be perceived as a folksy descriptor for supporters of Indigenous peoples and rights, but rather, as a term that denotes an active role where participation/activism takes the form of a genuine alliance alongside recognition of white privilege and the on-going effects of colonial power.
Unsurprisingly, I’ve always been extremely grateful to discover that I have such students in my class. Anecdotally, I have a sense their numbers are increasing - blind optimism perhaps or as one of the participants in this research suggested, We are Mabo’s children, born after Mabo. So have lived in a country our entire lives where terra nullius has been a historical thing of the past (Blaze, participant interview, April 2014). Sometimes such preservice teachers make themselves known in class through proclamations of their social justice agenda or when speaking back to and challenging their colleagues. Other times, locating them is more difficult and subtle, a knowing look, ‘Really, did my friend just say that!’ I have also experienced students who straggle behind their peers at the end of a class to make an apology (seemingly on behalf of White people) and to share their feelings of distress about the poor behaviour and ignorant opinions of his or her peers.

The other tension in presenting this research extends to finding the significance of their stories without slipping over into naïve, idealised or generalised versions of where the majority of preservice teachers are at in terms of their knowledge, understanding and commitment to Indigenous education. Clandinin’s (2005) work was helpful to clarify the importance of the stories presented in this research through highlighting the significance of exploring stories of teachers’ lives as they are nested within the stories of systems. Clandinin (2005) drew inspiration from Maxine Greene (1995) to explain the different ways that we can view stories, either by “seeing big or seeing small” (p. 6):

To see things or people small, one chooses to see from a detached point of view, to watch behaviours from the perspective of a system, to be concerned with trends and tendencies rather than the intentionality and concreteness of everyday life. To see things or people big, one must resist viewing other human beings as mere objects or chess pieces and view them in their integrity.
and particularity instead. One must see from the point of view of the participant in the midst of what is happening if one is to be privy to the plans people make, the initiatives they take, the uncertainties they face.

When applied to schooling, the vision that sees things big brings us in close contact with details and with particularities that cannot be reduced to statistics or even to the measurable. (Greene, 1995, p. 10)

This thesis was written with a mindfulness to ‘see big’ but not to ignore ‘seeing small’. This work shifts back and forth between seeing small narratively; that is from the perspective of broader historical, social, cultural and institutional plot lines, and on the other hand, to ‘see big’ narratively; that is from the perspective of preservice teachers’ unique lives and experiences as well as my own “plotline” (Clandinin, 2005, p. 6) as an Indigenous researcher and teacher. In reality, the spaces we inhabit are complex, and so there is a false dichotomy between ‘seeing big’ and ‘seeing small’ as, Clandinin argues, “stories are a way of staying open to those complexities, those contradictions, those enigmas. Stories are a way of blurring boundaries” (2005, p. 7).

While Chapter 6 provides a detailed methodological description of this narrative inquiry, at this early stage I draw attention to Caine, Estefan and Clandinin’s (2013) argument that there are certain ontological and epistemological commitments that underpin a methodological commitment to narrative enquiry. Part of this commitment is to the study of an individual’s experience over time and within particular context(s) which,

attend to place, temporality, and sociality within our own life stories and within the experiences of participants. Within this space, each story told and lived is situated and understood within larger cultural, social, familial, and institutional narratives. Narrative inquiry is marked by its emphasis on relational engagement, whereby the understanding and social significance of experience grows out of a relational commitment to a research puzzle. For these reasons it is important that narrative inquirers carefully consider who they are, and who they are becoming, in the research puzzle. (Caine et al., 2013, p. 577)
This narrative inquiry arose from my puzzles around the relationship between preservice teachers’ life histories and their resistance, indifference or commitment to Indigenous Studies. Caine et al. (2013) argue that while an inquiry may arise from puzzles of people’s experiences, a narrative ontology calls forth obligations and commitments at each stage of the narrative inquiry:

As we consider our research puzzles we draw upon our own experiences, which orient us to the inquiry. As we negotiate entry into the field our ontological commitment makes possible a relational means of researching, of being able to “work out” what to do in the field, how to work with participants, and decide together what we want to achieve as our inquiry unfolds. This ontological stance underpins a central epistemological commitment of narrative inquirers, that experience is knowledge for living. (2013, p. 576)

Making sense of the participants’ stories in the midst of inquiry

At the time I was in the process of transcribing the first round of interviews with the research participants, I chanced upon an ABC Radio National interview with Maria Tumarkin a writer and cultural historian who spoke about her recently published essay “This narrated life: The limits of storytelling” (Tumarkin, 2014). During this interview, Tumarkin acknowledged the important role of storytelling yet challenged the limits of narrative and the degree of fanaticism that she believes currently exists in Anglophone societies. I heard her say:

This whole idea that we can get to the heart of all sorts of really difficult questions about the life that we lead now, about our past, or our future by way of narrative… that narrative as a vehicle will take us there, to the very heart and will make us see and understand I think that is a kind of false consolation, I think we are telling ourselves lies. (M. Williams, 2014, 23 July)

Later, I followed up by reading the article in which Tumarkin argued:

I am not against stories. I am, in fact, very much for stories – a big fan, that’s what I am – but these days when I hear someone talk about the universal power of storytelling I do feel like reaching for my gun. No one needs to convince me of storytelling’s power, but it’s not a no-brainer, okay, not a ready-made thought. It has to be, or rather it should be, what journalist
Katherine Boo calls an ‘earned fact’. (2014, p. 181)

Indeed, stories are not enough and defending one’s position (Tumarkin, 2014) is but one fragment of a deliberative research process (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007) and as Caine et al. (2013) have highlighted, the ontological and epistemological commitments that underlay the methodological approaches to narrative inquiry must also be adopted (p. 574) to develop academic rigour. Consequently, the chapters in this thesis follow an arrangement that provides opportunities to engage in “a particular kind of wakefulness” (Clandinin et al., 2007, p. 21) to stories of experience and of narrative inquiry. Part of this wakefulness requires the researcher to justify the study from three perspectives: the personal, the practical and the social (Clandinin et al., 2007, p. 24).

The next section provides a chronological overview to show my deliberations as I “work out” the focus of my research in relation to the participants’ experiences. Furthermore, it synthesises my personal (situating of oneself in the study), practical (how the study will be insightful to changing or thinking differently about my own and others’ practices) and social justifications (broader social and educational issues the study might address), all elements that Clandinin et al. (2007) suggest are essential to consider in a narrative inquiry. Clandinin (2013) also posits that given narrative inquiry is a relational methodology, the relational aspect of the three dimensional narrative inquiry space of ‘experience’ requires that in making sense of the world, we must travel back to our earlier landscapes (p.82), although the journey back (through reflection) may not form part of the final public research text (p. 83). Subsequently, what follows in the next section is a distilled account of this process from a personal perspective.
Personal, Practical and Social Justifications

Clandinin (2013) argues that the question of “who I am” in this inquiry must be considered throughout the inquiry process - because narrative inquirers are “living and telling of who we are and are becoming, as we begin our inquiry with participants” (p. 82). This section attempts to provide a personal context to the research in order to be attentive to how my own life experiences, tensions and personal inquiry puzzles (Clandinin, 2013, p. 36) interact in relation to each of the participants. I have presented my justifications in a diary format given that the direction of the research transformed throughout the life of the study. The diary entries began in 2013 after I received confirmation of the research proposal and were made when shifts in my thinking occurred.

August 2013: Beginning with personal puzzles

My personal inquiry puzzles have evolved as a consequence of countless critical conversations (Brookfield, 1995) with trusted colleagues over many years. These critical conversations included our ponderings around the appropriateness of our curriculum and pedagogical choices in Indigenous Studies as well as our concerns about negative classroom interactions with some preservice teachers. My colleagues and I have embraced insightful feedback from preservice teachers and wondered why we hadn’t thought of their ideas earlier. Some feedback however, has come from a very different place - these responses could be described as ‘fighting words’ had they been said face-to-face; ‘What a bunch of racists! Shame on these lecturers’ one preservice teacher wrote on the anonymous end of semester feedback sheet. In my early years of teaching I allowed the vitriolic statements to take hold in my imagination, however I have since learned to diminish these thoughts for “thick skin
and secure identities are essential job requirements” (Nakata, 2006, p. 266) in Indigenous Studies.

At a very simple level, this research has emerged from a personal desire to develop a deeper understanding of what preservice teachers know and believe when they begin mandatory Indigenous Studies. What do they want to learn (if anything) about Indigenous Australia and Indigenous education? What life histories and experiences do they bring to the learning environment, which create both opportunities and challenges for teacher educators? Importantly, if preservice teachers do not want to engage in this learning, then what can my colleagues and I do to make Indigenous Studies a thought-provoking, safe and transformative learning space? As preservice teachers prepare to leave university, have their learning experiences impacted on their professional identity as beginning teachers? These basic questions provided the impetus for this research.

**May 2014: Looking for answers in theory**

Reflecting on the above statement, I can see that while the questions were priorities in the early stages of my research, there was a degree of simplicity in my personal positioning. At this moment, Toni Seidel’s chapter heading, “So What the Hell Am I Doing?: Looking for Answers in Grad School” (as cited in Ritchie & Wilson, 2000. p. 116) sparked my attention. While the catchy title resonated in the midst of writing Chapters 3, 4 and 5, Siedel’s writing also provoked thoughts about the place of theory in understanding what one does as a teacher, or to use her words, “I was looking to theory to help alleviate my painful sense of inadequacy” (p. 116). Siedel quotes bell hooks who said, “I came to theory because I was hurting…. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend - to grasp what was happening around
and within me” (hooks, 1994, p. 59). Siedel led me back to hooks’ (1994) text, Teaching to Transgress (a book that has lain idle on my shelves for some years now) for its inspiration to connect with and develop a knowledge of theory that will assist me to grasp what is happening around me and within me as I work as an Indigenous Studies lecturer. The range of theoretical approaches surfacing as I read are complicating the analytical space. Pinnegar and Hamilton (2012) argue, “When we engage in interpretation in narrative inquiry we engage in a perpetual motion of looking internally/externally. In this motion, what we know from theory and what we know from practice become entangled” (p.16). I understand that the research literature justifiably focuses on the challenges such as racism and resistance involved in teaching mandatory Indigenous Studies to preservice teachers, however my practice and the participants in this research are challenging me to divert my attention to the role of ‘critical allies’. So while I previously thought of these preservice teachers as ‘good to have around’ in the classroom, now I’m interested in how they experience the difficult dialogue of the Indigenous Studies classroom and the role of universities in supporting and extending the learning of preservice teacher ‘critical allies’ during their first years of teaching.

**July 2014: Thinking with the stories of my participants**

The concept of thinking with stories is said to oppose and modify (not replace) the institutionalised Western practice of thinking about stories. Thinking about stories conceives narrative as an object. Thinking with stories is a process in which we as thinkers do not so much work on narrative as simply allow narrative to work on us (Morris, D. 2002 in Clandinin 2013, pp. 29-30).

I’ve been listening to the stories of nine preservice teachers since the
beginning of April this year. Of these nine participants, seven participants are non-Aboriginal and two are Aboriginal. They are all very passionate about becoming teachers and they enjoy Indigenous Studies. Their narratives are ‘working on me’ such that in their retelling I am more attuned to the ongoing dialogue that occurs between each preservice teacher’s life experience outside university and how these experiences influence their engagement with Indigenous Studies at university. At times we share stories of our past experiences of speaking back to racism within our personal lives and in our ‘professional’ lives at university. Their experiences are filled with tensions, anxieties, opportunities and thoughts of hope for their future work in Indigenous education. As the participants and I are in the midst of this inquiry, our conversations appear to open up a space for them to reflect on the occasions they have felt challenged when ‘talking back’ to stereotyping of Aboriginal people or when they have taken an antiracist stance. Surprisingly, some of the participants want to use our ‘interview’ time to talk with me about how they grappled with (they believed somewhat ineffectively) racist or ignorant comments from peers. Although certainly not the focus of our conversations, there appeared to be, even if opportunistically, a desire to ask questions that were perhaps pondered before, yet there had been, until now, no one to ask. For example, “Did I respond appropriately?”, “How could I handle the situation better next time?”, “Do you think I offended that person” were some general deliberations that arose for some of the participants during our conversations. Each of these questions demonstrates the complex ethical dilemmas that confronted them.

Flores (2006) notes that teacher identity formation is multidimensional, idiosyncratic, context specific and is “…a process that involves complex interplay
between different, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives, beliefs, and practices that are accompanied by the development of a new identity” (p. 2021). Thinking with each individual participant’s story shines light on the specificity of their different, occasionally conflicting, perspectives and beliefs. Re-telling all nine stories appears too much for the scope of this thesis. Attention to ‘seeing big’ is important in order to capture the particularities of the participants’ deliberations, events and debates that developed through participating in a range of intellectual and ethical positions at the Cultural Interface (Cardozo, 2006; Healy-Ingram, 2011).

March 2015: Shifting directions

While each of the shared stories has impacted on the direction and shifting personal justification for this research, the time has come to choose the stories to retell in this thesis. I quote at length from Maxine Greene (1995) as her writing inspired my decision making process:

Imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible. It is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called ‘other’ over the years. If those others are willing to give us clues, we can look in some manner through strangers’ eyes and hear through their ears. That is because, of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions. (p. 3)

To tap into imagination is to become able to break with what is supposedly fixed and finished, objectively and independently real. It is to see beyond what the imaginer has called normal or ‘common-sensible’ and to carve out new orders in experience. Doing so, a person may become freed to glimpse what might be, to form notions of what should be and what is not yet. And the same person may, at the same time, remain in touch with what presumably is. (p.19)

Three participants, Blaze, Melissa and Thea are introduced in detail in Chapters 7, 8 and 9. Their stories were selected because of the intensity of their commitment to centre Indigenous Studies as a significant part of their professional identity. Each participant told stories which involved pushing back against their peers
and sometimes strangers if they believed that others were acting in unethical or racist ways in relation to Indigenous Australia. As previously mentioned they appeared to have a propensity towards reflexive thinking and a vision for social change. While the other 6 participants’ stories were equally significant, they will be retold elsewhere.

The stories shared by Blaze, Melissa and Thea appeared of practical and social significance given they opened new ways of thinking about the diversity of preservice teachers and the responsibility of teacher educators to mobilise the energy and enthusiasm of preservice teachers who view Indigenous Studies as agential for social change and improved outcomes for Indigenous students.

The participants’ experiences were also cause for me to reflect more deeply on collegial critical conversations in which we have reinforced in each other our feelings of being unjustly rebuked (Faulkner & Crowhurst, 2014, p. 399) by students when given negative student feedback. I wanted to move beyond what Brookfield (2006) has called a “conversional obsession” which “happens when you become obsessed with converting a small and easily identifiable minority or hard-core resistant students into becoming enthusiastic advocates for learning” (p. 213). The participants’ stories also challenged me to keep awake to reciprocal empathy - to think about how I decentre my own entitlement so as to be careful not to slip over easily into generalisations about the preservice teachers who enter the Indigenous Studies classroom. Faulkner and Crowhurst (2014) eloquently encapsulate my thoughts at this stage, “The pedagogical challenge lies in learning to look not for what we usually expect to see, but for what could surprise us” (p. 400).

April 2015: A conversation with Steve

I had a great yarn with an Aboriginal academic from another university this
month. We shared stories of our experiences of teaching Indigenous Studies as well as thoughts about the future directions of teaching mandatory Indigenous Studies to preservice teachers. Part of our conversation focused on the complex emotions involved in this work - not just the difficult dialogue (although that came up in conversation too), but also our emotional responses to positive remarks from students. It might seem slightly foolish, however we had both reflected on our positive end of semester feedback with some unease. Steve spoke of feedback from a preservice teacher who indicated she had a positive experience because “she wasn’t made to feel guilty”. That question got Steve thinking, had he “let the students off the hook”? had they not “heard the whispers in their own heart”? We spoke of our concern that we had not challenged the students enough. Had he or I “let the racists off” by not making them feel discomfort?

Our conversation reminded me of another I had a few years ago with a Māori academic. We were talking about mandatory Indigenous Studies and the negative comments that we often find on the end of semester feedback sheets. I observed that our team didn’t always receive negative feedback and recently we had glowing feedback from students and even received a letter from the Dean of the Faculty of Education and Social Work, congratulating the team of lecturers (employed by the Koori Centre – see List of Definitions and Abbreviations) for our excellent end of semester feedback results. With quick wit our Māori colleague joked that if the end of semester results came back with high praise, his colleagues would question whether they had been doing their job! We all laughed and I was reminded of the expression, ‘There’s many a true word spoken in jest’.

Steve and I wondered whether we might, at times inadvertently placate those
with racist views by making them feel too comfortable. I pondered whether my pedagogical approaches were rather pathetic. My self-critic had at times led me to believe that I fell very short of engaging preservice teachers in critical and transformative pedagogy. Alas, I was merely engaging my students in a great LIMP forward!

It would be a falsity to suggest though, that these ‘worries’ were the main focus of my attention because as articulated earlier, during the first years of teaching I experienced my fair share of rumination on the nasty and revengeful comments on the University’s end of semester unit of study evaluation. The comment “the lecturers are a bunch of racists!!” has appeared with regular frequency over the years and is one of a number of arguments used as a defence to deny the existence or impact of racism and White privilege (Case & Hemmings, 2005; Picower, 2009) on Aboriginal people. The experienced tutor is familiar with the repertoire of comments written with anonymity as part of the formal evaluation process (“we are made to feel guilty”, “we are not responsible for the past”). These comments appear as evidence of resistance to the learning experience and of work still to be done and common ground yet to be forged to create space for different kinds of dialogue for individual learners.

Curry-Stevens’ (2007) research examined how to assist the transformation of ‘privileged learners’ on issues of race, class and gender. She developed a pedagogical model involving a 10 Step learning journey which followed a process of “confidence shaking and confidence building” (p. 33). Curry-Stevens addresses the diverse manifestations of ‘privileged learners’ who enter our classrooms, and in reporting her key findings in relation to their transformation she notes:

It is an original contribution that [the model] emphasizes the significance in sequencing of the activities so as to allow certain learning to be accomplished before more resistance-inducing and psychologically imperilling lessons can
be learned. It also takes into consideration the need to transition out of awareness-building and into confidence building activities that are necessary in preparing learners to take action as allies for change. (2007, p. 55)

I agree with Hollinsworth (2014) that such a journey is rarely linear and has “numerous reversals, detours, and dead-ends” (p. 14), however to return to my earlier reflections: whether my colleague Steve and I have not pushed some students far enough or the pedagogical practices of a mandatory unit have failed to engage some of the resistant learners is not worth “beating ourselves up over”. Each of these perspectives does however provide the impetus to continue to understand the diversity of the locale of the learners who enter our classrooms and how we support them in their journey whatever stage they are at.

**December 2016 – January 2017: Writing a (non)ending**

As the thesis writing draws to a close I have had the good fortune to meet again with Blaze, Melissa and Thea. It was exciting to catch-up and listen to their latest life experiences given they had finished their second year of teaching. Their narratives in Chapters 7, 8 and 9 and the (unplanned) ‘Epilogue’ to their stories will continue to grow beyond this thesis as each participant has agreed to meet again. Each story of professional identity formation has only just begun, for the narratives that are told in this thesis have invited new stories.

In this final stage of writing, I have been challenged to question if this research was descriptive or interventionist. Clandinin (2007) asks narrative researchers to consider “does narrative inquiry set out to change the world as people engage in the process of narrative inquiry with their participants, or is it a more descriptive kind of inquiry” (p. xv). It is not possible for me to take sides on this debate, for this research is both descriptive and (unintentionally) interventionist. The
(descriptive) retelling of each participant’s experiences was essential in “excavating the stories” in order to use them “as seeds for social justice” (Kim, 2015, p. 238) as exemplified in the recommendations reported in Chapter 10: The Narrative Coda. The inquiry process was also interventionist for each participants’ reflections and consequent dialogue with me brought them to deeper understandings about their own actions, teaching strengths, weaknesses and hopefulness of expectations yet unrealised. Their stories have intervened in my life – they have changed the way I think about teaching mandatory Indigenous Studies – the prologue must now be re-written. ‘Another narrative beginning’ is therefore included in Chapter 10: The Narrative Coda.
Chapter 3: Indigenous Education and Indigenous Studies

The quest for equitable educational outcomes for Indigenous students has been described as a “formidable challenge” (Gray & Beresford, 2008, p. 197), indeed the failure to close the educational gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students across measures such as attendance rates, performance in literacy and numeracy and year 12 completions has led some academics to describe the situation as a “crisis” (Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003; Rigney, 2002, 2011a). The responses required to address inequities in Indigenous education are complex and as Māori academic G. H. Smith (2011) has argued, transforming strategies are “predicated on the presumption that the necessary changes that need to occur are many; our needs are to be found in multiple sites; [and consequently] our strategies also need to be multiple” (p.7).

This literature review illuminates one site to address such change – that of preservice teacher education. It begins with a brief contextual overview of the important role of teacher quality in transforming educational outcomes for Indigenous students. The review then focuses on Indigenous Studies in preservice teacher education programs. Here I consider the aims, theoretical debates and challenges involved in teaching Indigenous Studies to diverse cohorts of preservice teachers. This literature helps to foreground the factors impacting on Blaze, Thea and Melissa as they engaged with Indigenous Studies pedagogy and curriculum throughout their degree.

‘Quality teaching’ in Indigenous Education

The Report of the Review of Aboriginal Education (New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2004) emphasised that although family, social, economic and
personal factors were all found to be contributors to successful learning in schooling for Aboriginal students, the work of teachers was singled out as, “the ‘make or break’ element” (New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2004, p. 189). The role of primary and high school teachers in transforming the educational outcomes and life opportunities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students cannot therefore be underestimated. Hattie’s (2003) meta-analysis of over 500,000 primary research studies on the effects of various influences on student achievement adds credence to this argument. Hattie (2003) found that the major influences on students’ achievement were reflected in what could be identified as ‘quality teaching’, and concluded that:

> It is what teachers know, do, and care about which is very powerful in this learning equation...Interventions at the structural, home, policy, or school level is like searching for your wallet which you lost in the bushes, under the lamppost because that is where there is light. The answer lies elsewhere – it lies in the person who gently closes the classroom door and performs the teaching act – the person who puts into place the end effects of so many policies, who interprets these policies, and who is alone with students during their 15,000 hours of schooling. (p. 2)

The relationship between improved student outcomes and ‘quality’ teaching has been a focus of educational research (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hattie, 2012; Ministerial Advisory Committee For Educational Renewal, 2004) and public policy for the last two decades in democratic countries committed to excellence in teaching and learning (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005, p. vii). Teacher quality is also a priority area in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy 2015 (Education Council, 2015) and was discussed in the Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (L. Behrendt, Larkin, Griew, & Kelly, 2012) as a key enabling factor for improving student learning outcomes. While the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2016
Report notes that “Teacher quality is considered the most important ‘in-school’ influence on student education outcomes...there is currently no nationally agreed measure of teacher quality” (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2016, p. 7.3) There are also a range of different political perspectives and research claims regarding the best way to achieve ‘quality teaching’ as Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) noted:

There is now a sense of urgency in politics, in the teaching profession, and also among the public about the need to get more high-quality teachers....But alongside the urgency, or perhaps even because of it, there is a lot of argument and more than a little aggravation about what high-quality teaching looks like and what's the best way to get it and keep it. (p. xii)

Despite these debates, some general themes emerge from the literature indicating that effective teachers have deep knowledge of their teaching area and create inclusive learning environments that focus on student needs and readiness. Quality teachers also promote high expectations of all students, work collegially with peers and engage in ongoing professional development to enhance their knowledge. Furthermore they engage in feedback and reflective practices which demonstrate a commitment to improving their professional practice (Productivity Commission, 2012).

Preparing preservice teachers for what is significant to “know, do and care about” (Hattie, 2003, p. 2) in their future imagined classrooms is primarily the responsibility of the academic staff who perform the teaching acts at university along with the preservice teacher’s school and tertiary mentors during professional experience. They are the people who put in place the end effects of policies and research and share their knowledge of theory and practice to plant the seed for ‘quality teaching’. Although, as D. Phillips (2011) acknowledges, it would be a
stretch to directly link the education of non-Indigenous preservice teachers as having
an immediate effect on the lives on Indigenous children (p. 5), evidence suggests that
teacher preparation is fundamental to the professional development of ‘good’ teachers
capable of creating quality learning environments for Indigenous students (Mellor &
Corrigan, 2004).

Preparing teachers to teach Indigenous students also has a social justice
agenda aimed at creating Indigenous educational equality (Ministerial Council for
Education Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Taskforce on Indigenous
Education, 2001). A social justice agenda is often implicit in the “purposeful and
instructive structure” of Indigenous Studies which aims to educate all students in all
schools about Indigenous peoples and cultures, histories both past and present (G.
Sarra, 2011, p. 618). Furthermore it has been argued that teachers who adopt critical
approaches to teaching Indigenous Studies in schools can contribute to an evolution

While contentious, the development of professional standards for teachers has
been viewed by policy makers as vital to ‘producing’ quality teachers (Santoro, Reid,
Mayer, & Singh, 2012). The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers were
released in 2011 and are said to “make explicit the elements of high quality teaching”
(Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2011, p. 2). The
standards are divided into three domains; 1). Professional knowledge, 2). Know the
content and how to teach it, and 3). Professional practice (AITSL, 2014). There are
two standards that address key priorities within Indigenous Studies:

Standard 1.4

Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
Graduate teachers must “demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of
the impact of cultural identity and linguistic background on the education of
students from Aboriginal and Torres Islander backgrounds (AITSL, 2014, para, 4);

and,

Standard 2.4

Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Graduate teachers must “demonstrate broad knowledge of, understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages. (AITSL, 2014, para, 10)

Later in this chapter, I highlight some of the debates surrounding the imposition of the abovementioned Australian Professional Standards for Teachers as they relate to the literature on teacher professional identity formation. Suffice to say, while the standards are not a focus of this research, brief mention is required as they are important to the extent that they influence preservice teacher learning in Indigenous Studies.

**Indigenous Studies in Tertiary Education**

**Historical and theoretical perspectives**

A number of academics have mapped the history and theoretical priorities which have emerged across the decades within the field of Indigenous Studies (C. Bourke & Bourke, 2002; Cowlishaw, 1992; Langton, 1999; Mulvaney, 1986; Nakata, 2004a, 2006; Nakata, Nakata, Keech, & Bolt, 2014; Peterson, 1990). C. Bourke and Bourke (2002) clarified that the term ‘Indigenous Studies’ has been used in recent times in Australian education given, “it is the more inclusive successor to Aboriginal Studies and includes Torres Strait Islander Studies, and so embraces all studies about Australia’s Indigenous peoples and their affairs” (p. 181). In its original form, Aboriginal Studies focused on the study of Aboriginal people by ‘White expert’
anthropologists. Fuelled by the belief that Indigenous Australians were doomed to extinction, Aboriginal people were studied as ‘objects’ providing access to “authentic pre-colonial practices that were about to disappear” (Peterson, 1990, p. 4). The creation of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS) in an Act of parliament in 1964 defined Aboriginal Studies as, “anthropological research and study in relation to the aboriginal [sic] people of Australia” (Commonwealth of Australia, 1964, s.4). The speech made by Senator John Gorton who introduced the Bill for the AIAS into the Senate on 7 May 1964 provides an insight to the priorities of that time:

I think it is important to clarify to the Senate the Government’s concept of the role of a permanent institute of aboriginal studies [sic]. The permanent institute will not be concerned with current problems as they affect the Australian aborigine [sic]. Its work will be scientific and anthropological. This is made clear in the bill in the section dealing with the functions to be assigned to the institute; but I think it is important to stress the academic nature of the work of the institute. (cited in Mulvaney, 1986, p. 51)

The slow shift in focus from this ‘scientific’ and anthropological study of Aboriginal people began to emerge around the 1967 referendum (see list of Definitions and Abbreviations] into the 1970s, and accelerating in the 1980s and 1990s (Nakata, 2004a) with a greater emphasis on self-determination in these latter decades (C. Bourke & Bourke, 2002). Nakata (2004a) explained however that knowledge production throughout this period still continued to focus on Indigenous Australians as subjects of disciplinary inquiry. A diverse range of disciplines were employed in this endeavour for example: history, sociology, law, education, literature, and later the emerging cross-disciplinary areas of cultural studies, Australian studies, and post-colonial studies (p. 4). While Langton’s (1999) review of Aboriginal Studies aptly described Aboriginal Studies as “an artefact of the colonial encounter” (p. 39) she also noted its role as a “principle irritant” responsible for challenging some of the
powerful colonial images that have formed our nation (p. 40). Indigenous political activism alongside a slowly increasing presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in higher education have heralded important transformations in Indigenous Studies over the last three decades. I turn now to these developments.

**The role of Indigenous Studies**

Aboriginal academic P. Behrendt (1993) positioned Indigenous Studies as offering the key benefits of firstly; creating improved educational outcomes for Indigenous students and secondly, improved knowledge and understanding of Indigenous people and their cultures. As Cindy Berwick, President of the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group noted - these two areas cannot be achieved without each other (Berwick, 2011, p. v).

As increasing numbers of Indigenous students enrolled at university in the 1970s and 1980s, evidence emerged that their experiences were fraught by feelings of isolation, and curriculum that continued to omit and/or denigrate Aboriginal history and people. Loos (1989) for example, examined Indigenous teacher education students’ experiences at James Cook University noting that “we had come to realise how alien and friendless most of them had felt and how irrelevant to their cultural experience tertiary education had seemed. Most quietly withdrew” (p. 18).

Embedding Indigenous content which meets rigorous academic standards within university curriculum (L. Behrendt et al., 2012) according to a culturally competent pedagogical framework (Universities Australia, 2011) was seen as part of the response required to increase enrolments, retention and completion rates of Indigenous students (Lampert & Lilley, 1996).

Bin-Sallik (2003) used the term ‘cultural safety’ to encompass a range of
strategies to improve Indigenous student outcomes including the creation of
designated Indigenous spaces, culturally appropriate curricula, culturally appropriate
courses and behaviours, alongside the need for Indigenous academics to teach
Indigenous Studies (p. 27). While the terms ‘cultural awareness’, ‘cultural safety’,
‘cultural competence’ and ‘culturally relevant’ (Ladson-Billings, 1995) are sometimes
used interchangeably; and ‘cultural competence’ has recently been contested as
essentialising culture (Garneau & Pepin, 2015; Hollinsworth, 2013; Thackrah &
Thompson, 2013) and ignoring the influence of racism (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Pon,
2009), the argument nonetheless is that universities must embed Indigenous Studies to
support the educational journey of Indigenous students. This was a call for Indigenous
Studies to transform so that it was active in facilitating the kinds of changes desired
by Indigenous people in education and broader society. Nakata (2004a) articulated
this point when he challenged Indigenous academics:

> It is time we generated a new purpose for Indigenous Studies, one that
generates knowledge for us. Whilst Indigenous Studies in the academy will
always be study about us, we must shape it to ensure it is also study and
inquiry for us [author’s emphasis]. (pp.15-16)

Part of this inquiry ‘for us’ is the role of Indigenous Studies as an important
site to move students beyond the deficit, objectified ways of ‘knowing about’
Aboriginal people. Deficit discourses apportion blame for poor student outcomes as a
‘lack’ within the student and their family. Furthermore, the family and the student are
blamed for their own so-called ‘deficits’. Aboriginal teacher and academic Chris
Sarra has received wide publicity for the ‘Strong and Smart’ agenda that was
successfully implemented at Cherbourg Public School (Sarra, 2005; C. Sarra, 2011a,
2011b). The Strong and Smart philosophy rejects deficit thinking and instead nurtures
Aboriginal cultural identity and focuses on the strengths of students to build high
expectations relationships between teachers and students (Stronger Smarter Institute Limited, 2014). N. Harrison (2007) argues that it is often assumed that educators have moved beyond deficit discourses in Aboriginal education, yet these deficit discourses persist in the way teachers talk about Aboriginal students, “messages that are secretly transmitted both inside and outside the classroom when Indigenous students are constituted in discourse as behind or below and having to catch-up [authors emphasis] to the non-Indigenous students” (p. 41). Here I am reminded that while Indigenous content is important, the tone of teacher talk is equally significant – if a teacher educator comes across as despairing about Indigenous education, preservice teachers are left feeling sorry for Aboriginal people for being disadvantaged (N. Harrison, 2007, p. 50) which does little to develop a sense of hope and agency. N. Harrison (2007) argues that teacher talk models a power relationship that either guides students to “link or separate themselves from Indigenous people” (p. 40). While it is easy to identify forms of ‘Othering’ that occur when some preservice teachers speak and write about ‘the Aborigines’ in binary opposition to themselves, creating an “us and them” discourse (Said, 1978, p. 7), teacher educators need to be aware of their influence on producing relationships that separate themselves from Aboriginal people (N. Harrison, 2007). To address this, N. Harrison (2007) provides an insightful recommendation:

Universities and departments of education could encourage pre-service teachers to embrace the teaching of Indigenous perspectives and Indigenous studies in their classrooms by representing Indigenous education as an adventure of insight rather than situating it as besieged with problems. (p. 51)

**Strategies and research supporting pedagogical excellence**

Optimistically, Indigenous Studies is a site for transformative learning and for emancipating Indigenous peoples (D. Phillips, 2011). To achieve this, difficult
choices are made about which pedagogical, emotive and theoretical approaches facilitate preservice teachers’ learning. There has been a sustained research effort alongside practical resource development to promote excellence in teaching and learning in Indigenous Studies, of which the Commonwealth funded programs such as the Teaching the Teachers: Indigenous Australian Studies for Primary Pre-service Teacher Education Programs (Craven, 1993, 1998, 2011; Craven & Miller, 1996); What Works. The Work Program; Stepping up: What Works in Pre-service Teacher Education (K. Price & Hughes, 2009), and the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI) (see www.matsiti.edu.au) are notable. Teaching the Teachers Indigenous Australian Studies was funded by the then Department of Employment of Education and Training. This funding throughout the 1990s supported the development of a prototype unit for teaching mandatory Indigenous Studies. This project of ‘National Significance’ addressed Recommendation 295 of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody which asserted the need for non-Indigenous teachers to develop an understanding of Aboriginal historical, social, cultural matters during their initial training in order to teach these perspectives in their future classroom (Craven, 1993, 1997). What Works. The Work Program developed a series of materials to support educators in schools and universities as part of a national effort to improve outcomes for Indigenous students. The publication Stepping up: What works in pre-service teacher education included examples of how to incorporate What Works materials into preservice programs (K. Price & Hughes, 2009).

The MATSITI program ran from 2011-2015 and aimed to increase the number of Indigenous people enrolling in preservice teacher education programs as well as
retaining and supporting Indigenous staff in the profession. During this period of activity, the Australian Council of Deans (ACDE), assisted by an Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership grant in collaboration with MATSITI, developed a prototype website called the 3Rs of Teaching: Respect, Relationships and Reconciliation. Accessible through the website (http://rrr.edu.au/) is an online module designed to support teacher educators to address Focus Areas 1.4 and 2.4 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (see pages 30 and 31 of this thesis for details on the standards). The site was launched in June 2016 with the intent to maintain the resource in consultation with the ACDE and the Australian Indigenous Lecturers in Initial Teacher Education (AILITE) (Australian Council of Deans of Education, 2014). The formation of AILITE in 2015, the first national Indigenous teacher educator association in Australia, is another step towards collaborative scholarship and professional advocacy of Indigenous Studies in preservice teacher education.

Navigating preservice teacher responses to Indigenous Studies

Teaching mandatory Indigenous Studies in the university setting is known to be challenging and there are complex reasons for this. Some preservice teachers admit little interest in Indigenous Studies viewing it as irrelevant and a waste of time (see for example, Mooney, 2011, p. 134) while others perceive it to be controversial and biased (Mooney, Halse, & Craven, 2003). Furthermore, given that preservice teachers are raised in diverse community settings and have equally diverse learning needs, it is challenging to address such demands during one semester in a mandatory Indigenous Studies unit.

E. Bourke (1998, p. 10) argues that “in academic discussions culture,
oppression and racism are simply concepts; in the context of Aboriginal Studies they are issues at the heart of relationships between Indigenous and other Australians” (p.10). This ‘race’ related content can generate emotional responses in students including guilt, shame, anger, despair (Tatum, 1992; R. Williams, 2000) and defensiveness (Nicoll, 2004). Jensen’s (2010) concept of unresolved “bitter knowledge” provides a language to speculate why such emotional responses may occur in the Australian classroom. Writing about post-Apartheid South Africa, Jensen argues that revealing and challenging the unresolved problems of “bitter knowledge” lay at the heart of creating a transformed South African society. “Bitter knowledge” about history, identity, culture and politics “exists in the bodies in the classroom” [authors emphasis] and if left unchallenged can result in further alienation, hatred and division between Black and White students (2010, p. 380). Bitter knowledge is a consequence of the power of ‘indirect knowledge’ in the classroom. This is the knowledge that students bring to the university classroom which includes powerful ideas and constructs about the past that they did not live but which still has a powerful influence on how they live. This knowledge is not just cognitive but also emotional knowledge strongly tied to students’ ethnic, cultural, religious, language and political identities (Jensen, 2010, p. 370). It is precisely because this indirect knowledge is also emotional knowledge that teachers must be aware and able to address its potentially explosive consequences.

Navigating a productive and respectful teaching and learning space where difficult dialogue occurs frequently or sometimes without warning necessitates a degree of ‘emotional muscle’. Jensen (2010) argues for a ‘post-conflict’ pedagogy where teachers create the atmosphere and structures that reduce the risk of speaking
openly about direct and indirect knowledges. This is a deeply challenging and risky terrain in which the university tutor plays a crucial role in modelling respectful critical dialogue and appropriate teaching strategies. This task may sound easy, however it requires a highly skilled and confident teacher. I have listened to many conference presentations over the years and been involved in many informal ‘debrief’ sessions which bear testament to the unfortunate reality that even the most competent tutors can be “emotionally drawn into student stories in ways that could render them off-balance in critical dialogues of the kind required for cross-border engagements” (Jensen, 2010, p. 370).

Asmar and Page’s (2009) research on sources of satisfaction and stress among Indigenous Australian academics provides an insight to this notion of getting ‘off-balance’, finding that teaching non-Indigenous students is a major source of stress. Asmar and Page (2009) drew connections between their research and that of Harlow (2003) who described the “emotional labor” experienced by African-American academics who teach racially-mixed classes. Harlow found that emotion is a workplace commodity and most work involves some kind of emotion. A distinction is made between emotional work (e.g., holding back anger) and emotional labour which involves the more sophisticated and complex work of “evoking, performing, and managing emotions that are a required aspect of the job or occupation” (Harlow, 2003, p. 349). Harlow expanded these ideas to develop the notion of emotional management, which is said to incorporate the personal (emotional work) and professional (emotional labour). Asmar and Page (2009) argue that while Harlow’s framework cannot be superimposed given the different cultural context, there are parallels useful for considering how potentially stressful and emotionally draining the
Indigenous Studies classroom can be for Indigenous academics.

Certainly, my colleagues and I have all experienced the need for emotional management in our teaching. There is also a degree of ‘performance’ involved in sustaining a professional and ‘objective’ stance when classrooms become sites of difficult and uncomfortable dialogue. Harlow explains:

College teaching requires extensive emotional labor: professors try to perform and evoke emotions such as enthusiasm and excitement while also managing or suppressing their own immediate feelings and moods (Bellas 1999; Harlow 2002). These performances are affected, however by the degree to which students and teachers begin their relationship with a mutual acceptance of the professor’s status and identity. (2003, p. 349)

Norman’s (2004) overview of a simulation case study implemented at the University of Technology Sydney for an Indigenous Studies unit also illustrates that emotion in the classroom is not just a consequence of student antipathy or bitter knowledge, but it also arises due to the confronting and sometimes deeply personal realisation of Aboriginal peoples’ experiences of injustice. Norman (2004) explains that sensitivity and time to discuss emotional responses (to their character’s role in the simulation) is an important part of the learning as is the opportunity to debrief the learning.

My personal narrative in the prologue to this thesis alludes to my anticipation that some form of emotional management will be required as a consequence of the diverse student expectations and responses. An important aspect to consider is that if teacher educators feel stressed by preservice teacher responses to Indigenous Studies, how do preservice teachers who are engaged and interested, experience being with peers who are indifferent or resistant to engaging in Indigenous Studies?

As mentioned earlier, student resistance to Indigenous Studies is a common experience and therefore has been an ongoing focus of research for academics in Australia and internationally (Aveling, 2006; Aveling, Roberts, & Rodriguez, 1995;
Nicoll, 2004; O'Dowd, 2010; M. Page, 2009; J. Phillips & Whatman, 2007; Picower, 2009). Part of this resistance occurs in the context of discussions on ‘Whiteness’ of which the work of Aveling (2006) J. Phillips & Whatman (2007), Nicoll (2004), O’Dowd (2010) are important, given their reflective analysis of their experiences of employing pedagogy that engages with issues of ‘race’, racism, power and White privilege. Vass (2013) has argued that it is imperative that preservice teachers engage with issues of Whiteness during their teaching degree. In the context of reviewing a textbook *Teaching Aboriginal Studies* (Craven, 2011) written by a number of authors who led the 1990s project *Teaching the Teachers Indigenous Australian Studies*, Vass (2013) was critical of the texts’ lack of engagement with research that addressed the entrenched Whiteness of education policy, curriculum and pedagogy. This is an important argument given the majority of preservice teachers have attended White middle-class Anglo–Australian schools, leaving them with little exposure to cultural, linguistic and social diversity (Santoro & Allard, 2005). Picower’s (2009) research attests to the enduring influence of life experiences on how preservice teachers make sense of ‘race’ and difference. Picower (2009) concluded that a lifetime of hegemonic socialisation which constructed students of colour through a deficit lens, necessitates the interruption of the Whiteness of teaching “from multiple angles, repeatedly and continuously throughout their teacher preparation” (p. 213).

**Future directions in transforming Indigenous Studies**

D. Phillips’ (2011) provides significant insights into the early stages of transformation that occurred for preservice teachers enrolled in a mandatory Indigenous Studies subject taught at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) titled *Cultures and Indigenous Education* (p.5). This research is significant because of
its analysis of preservice teachers’ responses through each stage of the unit. D.

Phillips notes two aspects to the transformation that begins for many students enrolled in this subject:

The first level is the affective development of students, the maturing of their emotional management of conflict as a result of reflection and intellectual enquiry into the nature of conflict. The second level relates to the developing capacity of students to be critical thinkers in relation to the colonialism, but also generally to their ability to apply the principles of critical thinking to other layered and complex situations in Australia. (2011, p. 275)

These transformations are significant when one considers the initial resistance expressed by some preservice teachers during their engagement in the unit. Phillips’ (2011) research has also provided a timely insight to the possible stages of transformation for preservice teachers. A key question though is what should this so-called ‘transformation’ entail in the lives and professional identities of preservice teachers who are expected to enact positions of social justice, reconciliation and quality teaching in the context of Indigenous education? C. Sarra’s comment below provides a preliminary response to this question:

For me, within the context of Indigenous education, ensuring and upholding our integrity as educators is simple at one level, yet complex at others. It is also exceptionally hard work and I would never pretend otherwise. At one level it is as simple as this – we either believe a ‘stronger smarter’ Aboriginal identity exists, or we don’t. We either believe it exists, to the extent that our actions, beliefs and behaviours as educators are designed to collude only with this pursuit of quality education for Indigenous children; or we don’t. When it is personal for all of us, we will deliver on the promise of social inclusion and project our children into an Australian future in which they can stand alongside each other with pride, respect and dignity. We, as educators, are the architects of that positive future. (2011b, p. 116)

This is a vision for transformation in Indigenous education that challenges educators to pursue a personal and professional stance that seeks ‘quality’ education for Indigenous students. How, and in what ways, preservice teachers imagine themselves (if at all) ‘colluding’ with this personal and increasingly institutionalised endeavour
was an important research puzzle. C. Sarra’s quotation also provides a challenge to the perennial ‘problem’ of teacher education as a source for reproduction of the status quo of teaching (Green & Reid, 2008, p. 27) or a site open to Indigenous knowledges and perspectives and for contesting ideas.

The challenges in teaching Indigenous Studies occur not only in the day-to-day classroom dialogue with students, but also in the academic milieu where theoretical frameworks are contested. Intertwined and running concurrently to issues of pedagogy are the debates around the future direction of Indigenous Studies. Andersen (2012) argues that Indigenous Studies scholars have “spent the bulk of our time discussing our discipline’s core intellectual components and aspirations rather than institutional configurations or strategies for creating and sustaining institutional space” (p.57). While it is not within the scope of this thesis to examine the institutional barriers for holding ground or growing Indigenous intellectual spaces on university campuses, some key intellectual components will be examined briefly.

An important part of the transformation of Indigenous Studies from its colonial roots was to forge an anti-colonial discipline that would not only challenge Western knowledge systems and educational processes but also ‘decolonise’ them (Walker, 2000). Sherwood, Keech, Keenan, and Kelly (2011) assert that “decolonisation is a process that requires the positioning of oneself in history and the recognition of ideas and assumptions that have informed one’s worldview” (p. 194). When applied within pedagogy, the process of decolonisation is seen as a vehicle for critiquing and revealing colonial relations in contemporary contexts as well as creating spaces for Indigenous autonomy (D. Phillips, 2011) and sovereignty (O’Brien & Warrior, 2016).
Nakata et al. (2012) have raised concerns that some recent pedagogical approaches which attempt to ‘decolonise’ student thinking as a first step in ‘decolonial practice’ in the classroom are seriously flawed. They argue that it is counterproductive for students to be forced to change their thinking, through constant engagement with or reflection on their complicity with colonialism, its knowledge, and its privileges [as it] personalises a deep political and knowledge contest. (p. 121)

They argue that it is problematic not only because the practice is mentally disorientating but it also positions Indigenous Studies as a practice of “asserted beliefs” (Gordon, 2006, p. 2). Significant to their research is the consideration of how such an approach “positions non-Indigenous students as objects of the teaching act, not subjects of knowledge who have come from a range of social locations to learn and understand the most complex of knowledge contestations that possibly exist” (Nakata et al., 2012, p. 134). Nakata et al. also argued that how students are positioned to engage in the knowledge and political contests of Indigenous Studies is paramount to their engagement and that:

A simplified decolonising framework, as a rationale for teaching, too often bypasses assisting students to think and navigate through complex and contested knowledge spaces on their way to understanding Indigenous worldviews, colonial experiences, contemporary dilemmas, and future goals. (2012, p. 136)

Moreton-Robinson (2016) has challenged Nakata et al.’s (2012) claims that decolonising frameworks are predominant in universities citing the findings of a report on preservice teacher education (Moreton-Robinson, Singh, Kolopenuk, & Robinson, 2012) which found no-evidence that a decolonising framework was commonly implemented, and instead Indigenous Studies units were pragmatically framed around Indigenous history and pedagogy (p. 106).
The recently published text *Critical Indigenous Studies: Engagements in First World Locations* (Moreton-Robinson, 2016) provides a timely analysis and reflection on the development and shift from Indigenous Studies to the emerging discipline of ‘critical Indigenous Studies’. The inclusion of the term ‘critical’ in Indigenous Studies is invoked “to qualify Indigenous studies by making a separation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous analytics” (Moreton-Robinson, 2016, p. 4). Moreton-Robinson (2016) contends that this separation is justified because Indigenous knowledges, modes of enquiry, methods, and ethical and cultural protocols that inform academic practice are not the same as those of non-Indigenous people (p. 4). This edited text instigates decolonising aims “to mobilize Indigenous epistemologies to serve as foundations of knowledge informed by the cultural domains of Indigenous peoples” (p. 4).

Part of my research puzzle involved an exploration of these theoretical positions in order to develop deeper insights into the contested pedagogical spaces and reflect on where these positions might lead in teacher education. This research considered these pedagogical debates in the context of a student centred approach which is predicated on an awareness of student diversity, their current learning positions, and a search to understand the way students perceive the learning and teaching situation (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999). It provides deeper insights regarding how preservice teachers encounter Indigenous Studies beyond the mandatory unit, including during professional experiences, and the full range of learning spaces where Indigenous content and pedagogies are embedded within other units of study.

It has been argued that Indigenous Studies has a critical role in challenging preservice teachers to develop a professional teacher identity that incorporates
“alternative epistemologies, Indigenous histories, multiple perspectives and critical multicultural pedagogies which would lead them to different ways of educating” (Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2004, p. 54). Thus, the teaching and learning space becomes a site where subjectivities are challenged and invisible epistemological relations, authenticity and authority are exposed (Healy-Ingram, 2011, p. 72). Throughout this process, preservice teachers are “a professional identity-in-motion” influenced by both professional and social subjectivities (Green & Reid, 2008, p. 20). It is imperative that research is conducted to elucidate how Indigenous Studies specifically influences the process of teacher identity formation because, “teachers’ identities are central to their beliefs, values and practices that guide their actions within and outside the classroom” (Walkington, 2005 in Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010, p. 455).

**Summary**

This literature review provided a brief overview of the notion of ‘quality teaching’ and argues that Indigenous Studies plays an important role in creating culturally responsive learning environments in which Indigenous children will thrive and all Australian children will develop more nuanced understandings of the histories and cultures of Aboriginal Australia. The chapter also traced the history of the emerging discipline of Indigenous Studies and key theoretical debates within the discipline that inform pedagogical practice in the Indigenous Studies classroom. Furthermore, student resistance and antipathy towards engaging In Indigenous Studies was identified as a challenge for teacher educators. Each of these perspectives established the milieu within which the preservice teachers encounter Indigenous Studies throughout their teaching degree. The following chapter delves into the
literature on teacher professional identity formation to highlight the diverse influences on their journey towards becoming a teacher.
Introduction

There is a rich body of education research literature pertaining to teacher professional identity formation and along with it, a variety of theoretical frameworks utilised to bring meaning to the concept. Teacher identity formation is also an important field of inquiry for educators of preservice teachers (Beijaard, 2011). Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) analysed research on teachers’ professional identity formation and found the concept could be divided into three categories: studies in which the focus was on teachers’ professional identity formation, studies in which the focus was on the identification of characteristics of teachers’ professional identity and studies in which professional identity was (re)presented by teachers’ stories (p. 107). This study falls within the third category where professional identity is represented through preservice teachers’ narratives of experience.

In re-telling stories of professional identity formation, this thesis draws heavily on the work of Connelly and Clandinin (1999), which Beijaard et al. (2004) have identified as focusing on teachers’ personal practical knowledge (p. 123). In the 1980s and 1990s Clandinin and Connelly attended to ‘personal practical knowledge’ “as embodied, narrative, emotional, moral knowledge which was expressed and lived out on what we saw as storied professional knowledge landscapes” (Clandinin, 2012, p. 143). Beijaard et al. (2004) indicate that while much of the research they reviewed fell within this category, it did not make explicit connections between personal practical knowledge and professional identity formation. Connelly and Clandinin’s work did make them explicit though by identifying that “teachers’ answers to their questions about knowledge seemed to be answers about their identity” (p. 123). This
is to say that they began to notice teachers focused more on “Who am I in this situation?” compared to “What do I know in this situation” (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999, p.3). As time progressed, Connelly and Clandinin continued to reflect on their narrative inquiry research, identifying a “theoretical puzzle” which was to link knowledge, context and identity – a concept which they named ‘stories to live by’ (Clandinin, 2012, p. 144).

Given ‘Chapter 6: Methodology’ of this thesis provides a detailed explanation of narrative inquiry as a relational methodological approach, this literature review instead provides a contextual overview of the research on teacher professional identity as it links to narrative inquiry.

**Tracing key theories on identity formation**

When discussing teachers’ professional identity formation, Day (2004) notes that the terms ‘self’ and ‘identity’ are often used interchangeably in the literature as they are closely related concepts and “both draw on the research and theoretical areas of philosophy, psychology, sociology, and psychotherapy” (p. 53). Beijaard et al. (2004) found the range of definitions and understandings of teachers’ professional identity called for clearer conceptual clarity of “relevant concepts such as ‘self’ and identity, the role of context in professional identity formation, what counts as ‘professional’ in professional identity, and research perspectives other than the cognitive one” (p. 126) as important areas to address in future research.

Cote and Levine (2002) traced the development of the concept of identity formation, arguing that matters of identity are a recent concern associated with contemporary late modern societies (p. 3). They suggest that for most of human history, consideration of individual identity formation was not important because
people were not accustomed to living with a great deal of choice over matters of personal meaning (2002, p. 3). Although there has been a “veritable discursive explosion” in recent times around the concept of identity and running alongside this “a searching critique” of identity; what appears to have had some consensus is the assertion that identity is not “integral, ordinary and unified” (S. Hall, 1996, p. 15), or as Beijaard et al. (2004) point out, identity is not something one has but instead it develops throughout one’s lifespan (p. 107).

Much of the research literature on teacher identity formation begins by tracing concepts of identity formation established in the social sciences and philosophy. Two theorists, George Herbert Mead (1934) and Erik Erikson (1968), are commonly referred to as forerunners generating knowledge about identity formation (Beijaard et al., 2004; Vloet & van Swet, 2010). Cote and Levine (2002) propose that Erikson and Mead were preoccupied with the relationship between self and society and “both theorized this relationship with a common focus on the fundamental issue of meaning – the meaning of self and self concept” (p. 109). A point at which these two theorists diverge is Mead’s dominant interest in the “meaning” of symbolic interaction or “the act” (Cote & Levine, 2002, p. 109).

*Mead*

My interest in identity formation as an on-going social process led to a fleeting exploration of Mead’s (1934) understanding of the formation of ‘self’ and identity. Herbert Blumer is credited with coining the term symbolic interactionism – as a student of Mead, Blumer drew inspiration from his work (Appelrouth & Edles, 2008, p. 476). Stets and Burke (2003) suggest that “The symbolic interactionist perspective…sees the self as emerging out of the mind, the mind as arising and
developing out of social interaction, and patterned social interaction as forming the basis of social structure” (2003, p. 130). Put simply, the self develops only through the interaction with others (Cote & Levine, 2002, p. 109) in a social setting where there is social communication, and it is during this communication we assume the roles of others and monitor our actions accordingly (Beijaard et al., 2004, pp. 107-108). The development of self is therefore an on-going social process (Cote & Levine, 2002, p. 109). O’Connor and Scanlon explain how the self is conceptualised according to Mead (1934, p. 175) where the self is divided, into the ‘I’ and the ‘Me’, with the I representing the reflective inner self and the Me referring to the more visible social self. Both parts of the self come together during the process of roletaking [sic], as the reflective I guides the active Me with an interaction. (2005, p. 3)

O’Connor & Scanlon (2005) also draw on Schon’s (1983, 1987) concept of “reflection-in-action” to elucidate the significance of Mead’s notion of role-taking which is said to be an important part of developing one’s professional identity. Given there is no one definition of what a teacher is or should be; teachers, they suggest, need to experience the process of role-taking and this requires reflective thinking which enables the self to structure and respond to its own experiences (O’Connor & Scanlon, 2005). Reflection-in-action does not just concern self-reflection about how others might perceive us, but also involves adjusting one’s behaviour in response to this reflection (O’Connor & Scanlon, 2005).

The likelihood that preservice teachers’ socialisation, their individual life histories, values, educational experiences and so on (Day, 2004) may not cohere with the imposed institutional goals and demands (in this case mandatory Indigenous Studies), introduces challenges for tertiary education. O’Connor and Scanlon have suggested,
the demands of the school system often lead to a divided or resistant sense of identity amongst teachers, and personal and professional dilemma result when an individual’s actions do not cohere with their reflective philosophy. A teacher may publicly accept some aspects of a situation whilst maintaining a subversive viewpoint. (2005, p. 8)

This insight is important given some preservice teachers perceive Indigenous Studies as irrelevant to their future teaching responsibilities however they must balance this viewpoint against the requirement to engage in teaching and learning activities and fulfil assessment requirements embedded within the degree that address the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2014).

Mead’s (1934) notion of the reflective self and Schon’s (1983) concept of reflection-in-action also have the potential to unpack the relationship between private thoughts and how these influence public actions in both implicit and explicit ways (O’Connor & Scanlon, 2005). Gaining deeper insight into the manifestations of incongruence between the *I* and the *Me* during preservice teachers’ engagement in Indigenous Studies could provide important pedagogical insights for tertiary educators. There is much literature to suggest a key component of effective curriculum development and teaching practices in social justice education and Indigenous Studies requires the inclusion of critical reflection (see for example, Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; M. Page, 2009; D. Phillips, 2011). Exploring the reflective dialogue which occurs at the level of self (between the *I* and the *Me*) in context with the personal and professional environment of preservice teachers was an interesting proposition for this research. Critical reflection is considered a significant process in teacher professional identity (Graham & Phelps, 2003; Hatton & Smith, 1995) and so this is addressed in more detail later in this chapter.
Initially, I was interested in the potential of symbolic interactionism as a framework to give some insight into the meanings preservice teachers created during their social interaction in the Indigenous Studies classroom. The idea that preservice teachers and tutors/lecturers take on ‘roles’ in the classroom and consequently adjust behaviours in response to the action of one another (Smit and Fritz, 2008, p. 92) seemed to open the possibility for theoretical insight into the transformational moments that occur for students when engaged in difficult dialogue. I was interested in the notion that professional identities of preservice teachers could be influenced by taking on the perspectives of others (e.g., peers and lecturers / tutors) through their engagement in Indigenous Studies over the duration of their teaching degree. This ‘roletaking’ could occur during assessment, class discussion and debate or perhaps while on their professional experience.

Although I was interested in the core principle of symbolic interactionism as a way to uncover the subjective meaning of social interaction, there are two other aspects to this theoretical framework which digressed somewhat from my overarching focus on understanding meaning making through experience – these aspects were: how language gives humans a means by which to negotiate meaning through symbols (Smit and Fritz, 2008, p. 92) and the role that language and thought play in our interactions (O’Connor and Scanlon, 2005, p. 3). Although the socially mediated aspect of identity formation is an important consideration embedded within the narratives presented in this thesis, I was less concerned with unpacking the nuances of the role of language and thought, and so departed from pursuing the symbolic interactionism perspective at this point.
Erikson

The psychologist Erik Erikson (1968) suggested that identity develops as a consequence of social interactions that occur in stages throughout an individual’s life span. Erikson described eight stages at which an individual addresses particular challenges or “crises” and these are said to influence one’s identity at each stage. Erikson’s focus on stages is also said to illuminate the significance of the social context of identity formation (Beijaard et al., 2004) and is pertinent in understanding professional development as running parallel to human growth and development (Öhlén & Segesten, 1998, p. 724).

Erikson was also considered an influential pioneer in the development of narrative inquiry as he used life history to explore how the historical moment (its culture and history) influenced lives (Chan, 2012, p. 115; Plummer, 2001, p. 30). Identity is considered a psychosocial process and, “only through a process of ‘triple bookkeeping’ (Erikson, 1963, p. 46), an analysis of biological, psychological, and social dimensions of the individual might we come to a comprehensive and meaningful understanding of a given person’s identity” (Baddeley & Singer, 2007, p. 177).

Dan McAdams life story theory of identity (1988, 1993, 2001) offered a significant extension to Erikson’s work on identity (Baddeley & Singer, 2007). While Erikson’s stage model confined identity formation to the emerging adult stage, McAdams (2001) argues that identity work continues across the adult years. The life story is the central way we come to know ourselves and has a strong influence on the way others come to know that person too (Baddeley and Singer, 2007, pp. 177-178). McAdams argued:

If you want to know me, then you must know my story, for my story defines
who I am. And if I want to know myself, to gain insight into the meaning of my own life, then I too must come to know my own story. I must come to see in all its particulars the narrative of the self—the personal myth—that I have tacitly, even unconsciously composed over the course of my years. It is a story I continue to revise, and tell myself (and sometimes to others) as I go on living. We are all tellers of tales. We seek to provide our scattered and often confusing experiences with a sense of coherence by arranging the episodes of our living into stories. (1993, p. 11)

For McAdams, life stories are embedded in cultural contexts such as values and norms, race and class— they give us meaning and they provide points of differentiation from one person to the next (2001, p. 101). Once life stories begin to be viewed as socially organised biographical objects, Plummer suggests we come ‘to story’ our lives through the culture in which we are embedded, and this culture writes itself into who we are (2001, p. 43).

Dewey

To understand the development of Clandinin and Connelly’s approach to narrative inquiry, it is necessary to develop an understanding of John Dewey’s writing on the nature of ‘experience’. American educator John Dewey (1859-1952) believed that education, life and experience were intrinsically linked. Dewey’s (1938) text *Experience and Education* argues for a theory that sees education in terms of life experience (p. 51). The quality of the experience is important, and the quality of the experience is exemplified through two aspects: whether the experience is agreeable or disagreeable to the individual and secondly whether the experience has an effect on future experiences (p. 27). Dewey (1938/63) believed that not all experiences are equal—some can be mis-educative in that they distort or hinder further experience. Dewey wrote:

Just as no man lives or dies to himself, so no experience lives and dies to itself. Wholly independent of desire or intent, every experience lives on in future experiences. Hence, the central problem of an education based on experience is to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and
creatively in subsequent experiences. (1938/63, p. 27-28)

Dewey’s (1938/63) notion of ‘mis-education’ is also an interesting area to explore with regards to professional identity formation because it is often difficult to know whether the preservice teachers’ stories bump up against academic discourse(s) within the university resulting in mis-educative experiences; for example, curriculum and pedagogical experiences in Indigenous Studies could inadvertently entrench racism and stereotyping about Aboriginal people or perhaps reinforce deficit thinking about Aboriginal students. It is important to uncover the circumstances surrounding such mis-educative experiences in order to prevent their recurrence.

Furthermore, Dewey turned the notion of experience into an inquiry term with three criteria; continuity, interaction and situation, and each criterion shapes his theory of experience. Continuity links the past, present and future – that is to say experiences grow out of experiences and lead to future experiences (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 2). Interaction acknowledges that experience is both personal - what the individual experiences, and social – the individual interacting with others (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 50). The situation incorporates the notion of place – which attends to the physical and topological boundaries of the inquiry landscape (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 51). Dewey’s notion of experience and Clandinin and Connelly’s adoption of this framework facilitates a focus on preservice teachers’ life histories, their current experiences while at university, their future desired professional and personal trajectories in schools and their interactions with family, friends, university staff, students and their peers.

Another way of conceptualising the inquiry space is through the ‘four directions’: inward and outward, backward and forward. The inward facilitates a
consideration of the internal conditions of preservice teachers such as their feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions towards Indigenous Studies as a mandatory requirement of their professional development. The outward considers the existential conditions - the environment preservice teachers encounter as they engage in their Indigenous Studies learning journey. The backward and forward direction illuminates preservice teachers’ experiences across time (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 50), in this case their experiences of learning about Indigenous people and cultures before and during university. Inquiry that enabled this holistic approach to analysing life experience was an important consideration in conducting this research.

Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) contend that the Deweyan theory of experience provides an ontological ‘home’ for narrative inquiry:

We can see that not only is a pragmatic ontology of experience a well-suited theoretical framework for narrative inquiries, narrative inquiry is an approach to research that enacts many if not all of the principles of a Deweyan theory of inquiry. In fact, we offer that narrative inquiry as we describe it is a quintessentially pragmatic methodology. What genealogy is to post-structuralist Foucauldian sociology, what critical ethnography is to critical theory, what experiments are to positivism, narrative inquiry is to Deweyan pragmatism. (p. 42)

Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) mapped the theoretical landscapes between narrative inquiry (as Deweyan experience) and the ‘borderlands’ of other research methodologies such as post-positivism, Marxism, critical theory and post-structuralism (pp. 43-71). While it is not practical or desirable to unpack each of the differences in detail, it is important to acknowledge that dialogue with other methodological approaches can provide constructive critique as well as a kind of wakefulness and consideration of the philosophical emphasis made in this thesis compared with others. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) draw on the metaphor of “good neighbours” to describe the type of relationship narrative inquirers might have across
methodological borderlands, so that “we recognise the good neighbors in others, even if they speak different theoretical languages” (p. 70). With this in mind, the next section attempts to shift from individual theorists, to specific themes in the literature relating to teacher identity formation across theoretical borderlands.

The influence of changing, socially mediated contexts

Professional identity formation, like that of personal identity formation is not a fixed characteristic but a “continuous dynamic process of interpretation and reinterpretation of meaningful experiences from teachers throughout their life path and in their professional practice” (Vloet, 2009, p. 70). The preservice teachers interviewed for this thesis all upheld a deep sense of the importance of self-reflection about their changing social contexts. The influence of teaching contexts on professional identity formation is an important consideration in the literature (Flores & Day, 2006; Vloet & van Swet, 2010, p. 151). The matter of context is pertinent to this study for there will be shifts in context(s) for preservice teachers as they progress through their degree – contexts of learning, contexts of professional experience and bureaucratic and policy contexts imposed on preservice teachers which are outside their personal control. Vloet suggests that:

Professional identity relates to the person in context and refers to both the influence of the image and expectations created by others – within the context, widely accepted professional images in society about what a teacher should know and be capable of – and to what teachers personally find important in their profession and in their life (values). (2009, p. 70)

The socially mediated nature of professional identity formation is presented as a key influence within the literature (Mockler, 2011a; Vloet & van Swet, 2010). Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark, and Warne (2002) find that today’s professionals mobilise “a complex of occasional identifications in response to shifting contexts” (p. 117).
Flores and Day (2006) conducted a longitudinal study of 14 teachers in their first two years of teaching – they were interested in how the participants’ different personal and professional contexts alongside their (taken for granted) assumptions and values were tested in two different school settings. Their research found that the teachers who worked in collaborative, supportive environments were more likely to hold positive views about their teaching. Interesting though, personal biography also played an important role in mediating how these new teachers made sense of their teaching and learning experiences, with some new teachers beginning with strongly embedded identities which were destabilised by negative school contexts and cultures. While this destabilisation occurred for some, Flores and Day (2006) reinforce that despite this “it is clear that in most if not all cases, history was mediated by [the school] context” (p. 230). The research findings also demonstrated a “relative strength of the key influencing contexts on biography, pre-service programs and school culture” with a suggestion that the preservice programs may be a relatively weak influence by comparison (Flores & Day, 2006, p. 230). While it was not within the scope of this research to track the preservice teachers into their first year of teaching to gauge how their professional identities in relation to Indigenous Studies have been challenged by the school culture, Flores and Day’s (2006) research does highlight the important role of preservice teacher education programs in strengthening opportunities to reflect on personal biographies and how these might be challenged in different school contexts (particularly for those who are passionate about Indigenous education). Furthermore, collaborative, supportive environments, those that support learning communities, should not go unnoticced in this research, for it was within these contexts that preservice teachers’ interviewed for this thesis were seeking to build
confidence to push themselves outside their ‘comfort zones’.

Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) published the text Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation, which is said to have taken learning “out of the clutches of individualism” (Elkjaer, 2009, p. 87) through the introduction of the concept of “communities of practice” – that is, learning is situated in particular contexts. The concept of legitimate peripheral participation describes “the early stages of a learners’ journey from being an apprentice on the periphery of the community of practice to becoming a full participant” (J. Williams, 2013, p. 33). Later, Wenger (1998) enhanced this concept in the text Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity. Wenger (2000) sees learning as involving ‘social learning systems’ which he describes as encompassing “social competence and personal experience, and three distinct modes of belonging through which we participate in social systems: engagement, imagination and alignment” (p. 226).

The competence of the social learning system in which we engage is historically and socially defined over time and is mediated by our ongoing experiences within a particular community context. The competence of others in a community can drive experience by challenging us in new ways and we too can drive the experiences of others (Wenger, 2000, p. 227). Wenger argued belonging to community involves doing things together – engaging with one another and through this we learn what we can (and cannot) do and how others respond to our actions. Imagination involves constructing an image of ourselves and of our communities which is important to our sense of self and for engaging with our colleagues. Finally there should be an alignment of our activities which involves “a mutual process of coordinating perspectives, interpretations, and actions so they realize higher goals”
Wenger specified three dimensions of ‘communities of practice’: mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire (1998, p. 73). The joint enterprise of a ‘community of practice’ holds each person accountable and is enabling when members understand the enterprise. Members of a community of practice build engagement through their relationships and interactions, and their shared repertoire of resources and passion for building a community of practice (Wenger, 2000; Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Learning communities encourage lifelong learning as they help to sustain those involved through dialogue and reflection about one’s work. Wenger (1998) also argues that a community of practice is “about being together, living meaningfully, developing a satisfying identity, and altogether being human” (p.134).

Writing on research into teacher educators and the education of teacher educators, Cochran-Smith (2003) found that, “Much of this work suggests that the opportunity to engage in inquiry within a learning community may be a vital part of teachers’ and teacher educators’ ongoing education” (p. 7). Certainly for at least one of the participants in this study, the desire to be part of an Indigenous education ‘community of practice’ while studying was yearned for, yet was perceived as being largely unmet throughout the university experience. Flores and Day’s (2006) longitudinal research of 14 teachers in their first two years of teaching found that the teachers who worked in collaborative school cultures developed positive attitudes towards teaching. Writing about reform in educating preservice teachers in Indigenous Studies, Reid (2009) makes an important observation about learning in university settings:

While students can and do form study groups to share their learning… the situation in most universities is that students are not collectively engaged in shared tasks over sustained periods of time. Much of the learning that takes
place is ultimately individualistic, competitive and strategically focused on achieving an optimum grade and positioning for future employment. (p. 13)

The preservice teachers in this study shared stories of their frustration around the negative and antipathetic attitudes of their peers when engaged in Indigenous Studies. During the process of listening to their stories, my attention began to refocus on what I might contribute (alongside my colleagues) to support preservice teachers who were optimistically engaged and yet were finding hostile or ambivalent responses from those around them. Stories abound in popular culture and the media of the seemingly intractable problems in Aboriginal education – problems that some preservice teachers might perceive as outside their scope of impact or interest. For preservice teachers who are willing to ‘step up’ and contribute in the face of negativity, building and nurturing ‘communities of practice’ seems paramount to creating sustainable sources of emotional and intellectual support. As J. Williams (2013) notes, “engagement in the practices of the community, and the development of a sense of belonging and an identity of participation, should be essential aspects of their experiences in teacher education” (p. 37).

**Teacher professional identity formation – a non-linear process**

Britzman challenges educators to be alert to the “myth of development that presupposes a chronology from immaturity to maturity” (2007, p. 1). This point resonated over the duration of the interviews as the participants shared stories, went away and returned to share deeper insights in light of learning something new or when time enabled them to reflect on their own thoughts. Britzman’s (2007) suggestion that one’s development is “uneven and uncertain” (p. 1) opens the space for questions and analysis about shifts in student learning in an Indigenous Studies
context over time. While the participants’ learning did not ‘regress’ as such, there were other shifting and complex processes of professional identity formation that occurred in a non-linear form. Professional ‘becoming’ or identity construction is therefore iterative and emergent (Scanlon, 2011), produced as the lived experience of participation in learning communities (Wenger, 1998, p. 151) which is ongoing and pervasive – a lifelong ‘trajectory’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 163). Using Ibarra’s (1999) notion of the ‘possible selves’ – “defined as ideas about who one might become, would like to become, or fears becoming” (p. 766), Scanlon suggests identity formation involves the search for a best ‘fit’ which is in a “constant state of becoming” (2011, p. 15) as preservice teachers strive to improve the ‘fit’ between themselves and their work environment. The preservice teachers in the study found themselves in new situations over the duration of the degree, these situations demanded ‘evolving repertoires of possible selves’ (Ibarra, 1999) as they navigated their changing circumstances.

**Teacher professional identity formation as reflective practice**

Face to face with my students, only one resource is at my immediate command: my identity, my selfhood, my sense of this “I” who teaches—without which I have no sense of the “Thou” who learns. Here is a secret hidden in plain sight: good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher. (Palmer, 1997, p. 2)

Palmer’s (1997) work guides the reader to consider the notion that “we teach who we are” (p. 1). Just as Clandinin (2012) argues that narrative inquirers are beginning to ask different questions “not about teacher educators’ knowledge, not about teacher educators’ contexts, but questions about who they are, and who they are becoming as teacher educators” (p. 144); so too Palmer’s work emphasises the importance of
knowing oneself alongside knowing one’s students and subject. How then do preservice teachers come to self-knowing? How does knowing one’s self influence identity formation and does this consequently influence one’s teaching? Some answers to these questions lie in the exploration of the role of reflection in self-awareness - a process said to be critical to engage with in the teaching profession (Warin, Maddock, Pell, & Hargreaves, 2006).

I return again to Dewey to begin to explore the link between reflection and identity formation, for the literature often draws upon his work to develop links between experience, reflection, learning and identity formation. Dewey believed that teaching and learning is a “continuous process of reconstruction of experience” (1938/1963, p. 87). Dewey argued that not all experiences are equal and the quality of experiences could be educative or mis-educative. An area of inquiry for this study was a consideration of the experiences that might be considered mis-educative in relation to Indigenous Australia, and to identify which processes might trigger some kind of transformation - to an educative experience. Dewey (1910) offers guidance here regarding how learning can be transformed, outlining four modes of thinking: imagination, belief, stream of consciousness and reflection. Reflective thought, suggests Dewey (1910) is an “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends” (p. 6). While imagination, belief, and stream of consciousness are all forms of thinking, reflection is considered to be different in that it is rigorous and creates personal growth and lifelong learning (Rodgers, 2010, p. 48).

While this argument places imagination, belief and stream of consciousness as
subordinate forms of thinking compared to reflection; Dewey’s acknowledgment of these different forms nevertheless reveals they influence human action. Although this literature review asserts the significance of reflective thought, it is important not to dismiss as irrelevant other forms of thought such as creative and non-rational thinking. Korthagen (1993) writes that while most conceptualisations of reflection assume that teachers should use “logical, rational, step-by-step analyses of their own teaching and learning”, there are other effective ways that the mind operates to interpret information and guide future actions (p. 317). Korthagen (1993) posits that the human brain has both rational and gestalt capabilities, both of which need to be considered in the professional development of teachers. He provides examples (use of metaphors, drawing, painting, photographs, presentation of pictures, Kelly’s repertory grid – an activity used to help teachers identify their personal theories) that can be used by teachers to become aware of non-rational thinking processes that guide their actions. These examples coalesce with Arts informed educational processes which foster human knowing and being through imagination, aesthetic knowledge and translation and expression of ideas (Ewing, 2010, p. 5).

In the process of developing a model of reflection, Boud and Walker (1993) concluded that, “Much as we may enjoy the intellectual chase, we cannot neglect our full experience in the process. To do so is to fool ourselves into treating learning from experiences as a simple rational process” (p. 86). Korthagen (1993) provides a pathway out of this unhelpful binary by suggesting that building awareness of the non-rational process of teachers’ behaviour can be the precursor to more rational analysis. Such a process moves beyond antithetical positions to one that focuses on a creative and imaginative dance between innovation and logic (Ewing, 2010; Messer,
Dewey saw the opposite of reflective inquiry as routine thought which is guided by impulse, tradition or authority (Farrell, 2012, p. 9). Dewey was concerned about the influence of habits, customs and non-reflective experiences on the learner—all concerns that are explored in this research in relation to Indigenous Australia. Dewey’s notion of experience assists in unpacking how preservice teachers’ taken for granted patterns of behaviour (habits, customs and non-reflective experiences) provide barriers to engagement in Indigenous Studies (for example, reactions of personal resistance and antipathy). Hildreth (2012) argues that Dewey’s work illuminates what non-reflective thinking entails as well as offering up opportunities for taken for granted experiences to be challenged with moments of disturbance and the provision of new situations (p. 921). These moments of disturbance are what Dewey calls “felt difficulties” (Hildreth, 2012, p. 921) and they “disrupt taken for granted norms and function as pivot points between non-reflective and reflective modes of experience. Dewey’s theory of reflective experience offers a pedagogical account of how we might take advantage of these disruptions” (2012, p. 924). While non-reflective experiences are an important form of thinking because they allow us to navigate the world, reflection is considered to be “the better way of thinking” (Stanlick & Strawser, 2015, p. 5) when it comes to lifelong learning. Reflection is an active process that embodies an inclination to overcome stereotypical thinking, and although discomfort is considered to be part of critical reflection, it is this kind of doubt that leads to inquiry. Stanlick and Strawser (2015) suggest that reflective thinking is thinking with questioning (p. 5), or as Dewey states there are two subprocesses in every reflective operation, “(a) a state of perplexity, hesitation, doubt;
and (b) an act of search or investigation directed toward bringing to light further facts which serve to corroborate or to nullify the suggested belief” (1910, p. 9). Dewey believed reflection in isolation is incomplete as we need the input of others to broaden our perspectives, and furthermore it is through dialogue with others that we open ourselves to new ideas that can sharpen and refine our thinking (Rodgers, 2010, p. 48).

Zeichner (1996) is critical of the reflective practices’ ‘bandwagon’ espoused in teacher education programs, programs which nevertheless fail because they do not connect to broader social justice agendas. One of the criticisms is that reflection is oftentimes facilitated such that it focuses teachers on thinking about themselves and their work, side-tracking reflection as a “social practice where groups of teachers can support and sustain each other’s growth” (p. 205). Dewey also believed that reflective thinking was not something that just happens – it must be nurtured - and he encouraged teachers to engage in decision making based on conscious reflection rather than relying on fleeting thoughts in order to experience growth as a teacher (Farrell, 2012, p. 11).

Dewey (2003c) claimed there are three attitudes necessary for reflective action all of which were embodied in the preservice teachers I interviewed – these are: open-mindedness, wholeheartedness and responsibility. Dewey (2003c) argues that open-mindedness is “a freedom from prejudice, partisanship, and such other habits as close the mind and make it unwilling to consider new problems and entertain ideas” (p. 136). For Zeichner and Liston (1996) open-mindedness involves an active disposition to listen to other perspectives along with recognising that previously and possibly long held beliefs may be wrong and in need of correction (p. 10).
The second attitude leads from the first in that not only should teachers be open to new ideas but they should also take responsibility for scrutinising these, “To be intellectually responsible is to consider the consequences of a projected step; it means to be willing to adopt these consequences when they follow reasonably from any position already taken” (Dewey, 2003c, p.138). Zeichner and Liston (1996) argued that an attitude of responsibility involves taking responsibility for the consequences of the teaching act including the personal – that is the impact on students’ self-concepts; the academic – the impact on intellectual development, and the social and political consequences - that is the projected impact of one’s teaching on the life chances of students (p. 11).

The third attitude, wholeheartedness, involves “a genuine enthusiasm… that operates as an intellectual force” (Dewey, 2003c, p. 137). Zeichner and Liston (1996) believe this involves challenging one’s own assumptions with a view that through this approach, new learning will take place (p. 11). Wholeheartedness provides an internal strength, passion and level of intellectual conviction for as Dewey (2003c) writes, “There is no greater enemy of effective thinking than divided interest… [but] “when a person is absorbed, the subject carries him on” (p. 137). Dewey’s work is said to provide a systematic approach to reflective inquiry into teaching (Farrell, 2012, p. 10) and guides a mindfulness to reflective disposition that,

emancipates us from merely impulsive and merely routine activity, it enables us to direct our activities with fore-sight and to plan according to ends-in-view or purposes of which we are aware, to act in deliberate and intentional fashion, to know what we are about when we act. (Dewey, 1993/2003, p. 125)

*Other works on reflection*

Schon’s (1983, 1987, 1991) research on reflective thinking (mentioned fleetingly above) also forms a major segment of the literature on reflection. Schon’s
doctoral thesis was based on Dewey’s work, and he later noted that when writing *The Reflective Practitioner*:

I realized that I was reworking that thesis, now on the basis of empirical studies of professional practice, I was attempting, in effect to make my own version of Dewey’s theory of inquiry, taking ‘reflective practice’ as my version of Dewey’s ‘reflective thought’. (1992, p. 123)

Perhaps one of the significant contributions attributed to Schon in the literature on reflection, is the distinction between reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action - although Clarà (2015) argues that this is surprising given “in his two main books on reflection, Schon does not give special importance to this distinction… in fact is quite ambiguous” (p. 266).

Zeichner and Liston (1996) describe reflection-on-action as the kind of reflection that can occur before or after an action, (for example, the kind of reflection that occurs before or after planning a lesson) in comparison to reflection-in-action that occurs when practitioners attempt to understand and solve problems on the spot. This reflection-in-action is the type that occurs when teachers adjust their instruction to take account of unexpected events or student responses in the classroom (p. 14). Schon believed that reflective practitioners engage in both forms, that is “in” and “on” action (Farrell, 2012, p. 14). Both Dewey’s and Schon’s work posit reflective teaching as ‘evidenced based’ given the reflective process engages teachers in gathering data about their work with subsequent reflection on the evidence to make informed decisions about future practice (Farrell, 2012, p. 14). This is a view of professional knowledge production occurring in the doing of the job, or what Schon called ‘knowing in action’, which develops from a teacher using knowledge from past experience as a frame for action (J. Harrison, 2008, p. 10). Schon’s work keeps alive and values the tradition of experiential knowledge (Smyth, 1989) and challenges the
theoretical split which positions academic theory on the high ground of knowing and teachers’ knowledge as lesser and therefore requiring advice from theory making ‘experts’ (Craig & Huber, 2007, p. 262).

The role of reflection is well established in adult and higher education literature for its suggested influence on pedagogical growth of academic staff (see for example, Brookfield, 1995; Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2004; Vloet & van Swet, 2010). Reflection is also considered important to develop more sophisticated conceptual structures which in turn, it is anticipated, will lead to enhanced teaching practice and improved student outcomes (Kreber & Castleden, 2009, p. 511). Brookfield (1995) and Mezirow (1998) argued that reflection plays an important role in challenging assumptions. Brookfield (1995) was interested in the role of reflection particularly critical reflection, which he said becomes critical when it has two distinctive purposes:

The first is to understand how considerations of power undergird, frame, and distort educational processes and interactions. The second is to question assumptions and practices that seem to make our teaching lives easier but actually work against our own best long-term interests. (p. 8)

Using Freire’s (1974) concept of ‘conscientization’ and ‘critical pedagogy’ as inspiration, Mezirow (1998) focused on the critical reflection of assumptions (CRA) as a concept which he argued was “central to understanding how adults learn to think for themselves rather than act on the concepts, values, and feelings of others” (p. 185). Mezirow (2009) introduced the concept of transformative learning in the field of adult education in 1978 –initially calling it ‘Perspective Transformation’ (p. 90) but it was subsequently developed into ‘Transformation Theory’ (Mezirow, 1998).

Mezirow (2009) defined transformative learning as follows:

The process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – sets of assumption and
expectation – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change. Such frames are better because they are more likely to generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (p. 92)

Mezirow’s definition brings another moment of clarity to this thesis in regards to contemplating exactly what I might mean when I write about Indigenous Studies as a potential site for transformational learning. Looking back over this document, I observe that the potential for Indigenous Studies as transformative learning goes to the core of this work. I have already discussed the long term goal of the transformation of education systems that succeed in improving the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students on parity with the non-Indigenous population. I have discussed Indigenous Studies as providing a potentially transformative learning space which in turn works toward transforming belligerent and resistant approaches to Indigenous Studies as a mandatory requirement of preservice teacher education. I have explained that Indigenous Studies aims to transform hegemonic knowledge systems and I add to this list, the Freireian tradition of developing conscientization which involves, “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions – developing a critical awareness – so that individuals can take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire, 2000, p.35).

Mezirow’s transformative learning theory further sharpens my attention to be alert to the problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) as they relate to preservice teachers’ experiences of Indigenous Studies. Mezirow (2000) considers a frame of reference to be a “meaning perspective” and these are said to be the results of ways of interpreting experience which may be within or outside our awareness (p. 16). A frame of reference often represents cultural paradigms - learning that is “unintentionally assimilated from the culture – or
personal perspectives derived from the idiosyncrasies of primary caregivers” (p. 16). Frames of reference can also include “world views” that unite the particular with universal systems of belief. Mezirow (2000) argues that a frame of reference has two dimensions: a habit of mind and resulting points of view- that is to say a habit of mind becomes a point of view. A point of view often operates outside consciousness, yet is so powerful it will direct and shape a specific interpretation and influence how a person makes judgements of others, understands cause and effect and develops an idealised image of him- or her-self. Transformational learning involves becoming critically reflective of our assumptions developed through our habits of mind. Some varieties of habits of mind include:

- Sociolinguistic (cultural canon, ideologies, social norms, customs, “language games”, secondary socialisation)
- Moral-ethical (conscious, moral norms)
- Epistemic (learning styles, sensory preferences, focus on wholes or parts or on the concrete or abstract)
- Philosophical (religious doctrine, philosophy, transcendental world view)
- Psychological (self-concept, personality traits or types, … emotional response patterns)
- Aesthetic (values, tastes, attitudes, standards and judgements about beauty and the insight and authenticity of aesthetic expressions, such as the sublime, the ugly, the tragic, the humorous, the “drab”, and others). (Mezirow, 2000, p. 17)

Finally, Infinito (2003) explains that Foucault’s work connected reflection with the process of becoming ethical:

Who one is (and who one might become) is produced mainly out of one’s struggles. And yet, it is only when we critically consider our struggles – our actions of forming, altering, or defending our own (or another’s) being – that
we move into a free, and thus an ethical space. (pp. 160-161)

Further, Foucault stated, “Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion which one establishes it as an object and reflects on it as a problem” (1997, p. 117) and “Freedom is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection” (1997, p. 284). Each of the participants’ narratives illuminates a kind of identity work (Clarke, 2009) aimed at becoming ethical teachers in relation to (but not limited to) Indigenous Studies. Self-reflective practices were an important part of the process of nurturing an ethical identity (Niesche & Haase, 2012).

**Teacher identity – a political lens**

Research on teacher identity has recently been defined through a political lens (see for example, Clarke, 2009; Mockler, 2011c; Zemblyas & Bekerman, 2008). Zemblyas and Chubbuck posit that the political lens is an important emerging perspective (as opposed to psychological or social cultural lenses) because it, promotes a more holistic understanding of teacher identity that does not ignore the influence of power relations and politics in teacher identity formation and …it recognizes the prospects of developing a critical and transformative orientation towards the conceptualizations of teacher identity. (2015, p. 187).

Sachs’ (2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2005) research is also informative as it illuminates how broader societal / political priorities (such as a neoliberal market driven policy focus) can exert power and influence over education systems and teachers’ professional identity. Coldron and Smith (1999) also raise concerns about the imposition of professional standards and frameworks that create a one-dimensional technical and skills based focus on the work of teachers - resulting in a narrow and impoverished set of potential positions from which teachers are directed to develop their professional
identity. While this thesis did not set out to include a detailed analysis of the impact of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2014) in relation to Indigenous education, I have included some brief commentary below because the Standards cannot be ignored when incorporating a political lens of analysis. The politics surrounding the imposed Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the political and moral agency that a preservice teacher might exercise as part of their developing professional identity form part of the political lens relevant to this research. This section focuses on Mockler’s (2011c) and Sachs’ (2001, 2003a, 2003b) work to further elucidate how politically mediated contexts contribute to the construction of teachers’ professional identities. I will also justify how their research links Indigenous Studies to preservice teachers’ professional identity formation.

Mockler (2011c) developed a conceptual model of teacher professional identity which described three domains constituting teachers’ work and professional practice: personal experience, professional context and the external political environment which are said to influence substantial aspects of teachers’ work (p. 520). See below Figure 1 as presented by Mockler (2011c).
While I have already addressed the influence of personal experience and professional contexts above, Mockler’s (2011c) model enhanced my understanding of the political dimension of teacher identity formation and opened new ways of contemplating how the Cultural Interface intersects within and across each overlapping domain above. The model also prompted interest in theorising how initial teacher education processes can be harnessed to develop a capacity for the enactment
of a ‘moral purpose’ for those preservice teachers interested in social justice and political advocacy for Indigenous education.

Mockler’s (2011c) model captures the overlapping and distinct factors influencing the identity formation of each of the preservice teachers interviewed for this research. Personal experience framed by issues of race, class, gender, religious beliefs and sexuality – exerted influence (in different ways) on each participant’s storied identity. Mockler (2011c) notes that personal experience outside the professional domain also includes ‘extra-curricular activities’ (for example, involvement in community groups) along with their individual family contexts. The narratives presented in Chapters 7, 8 and 9 attest to the significant influence of the personal experience domain.

The domain of the professional context includes: career and professional development histories and pathways, teacher education – initial and ongoing, experiences internal to the professional world of teachers such as professional association engagement, union activity, professional networks and processes of accreditation, registration and recognition of professional competence. These are said to be the facets that impact on ‘professional selves’ (Mockler, 2011c, p. 521).

The final domain in this model is the external political environment, which encompasses governmental policy, political ideology, media discourse and other external lobby groups impacting on the teaching profession (Mockler, 2011c, p. 521). Indeed some of the participants in this research believed the media’s portrayal of Indigenous people alongside patronising and conservative commentary about Indigenous education by politicians, had caused some consternation about what could be achieved in their future imagined careers. This was not because they were swayed
by their political arguments - rather they felt that negative media and deficit constructions of Aboriginal people by politicians exerted influence on some of their peers and consequently this impacted negatively on classroom interactions and their sense of agency in the learning space.

Sachs’ (2011) research pays attention to the political nature of teacher professionalism and professional development. Her work challenges political agendas that see educational reform and improved student results arising from increased regulation and compliance of the work of teachers. Gains in Indigenous student outcomes and the promotion of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians requires a sustainable approach whereby teachers themselves are committed to their own professional development in Indigenous education. Or expressed another way, a commitment to Indigenous educational reform must move beyond addressing minimum imposed professional standards to become a personal professional commitment. Sachs’ (2001) notions of managerial professionalism and democratic professionalism are revealing because they provide an insight into understanding how such a personal commitment might be nourished or how this might be delimited.

**Managerial professionalism versus democratic professionalism**

Sachs (2001) provides an analysis of two discourses, “managerial professionalism” and “democratic professionalism” both said to be implicated in shaping the professional identities of teachers. Sachs (2001) suggests two professional identities emerge from these discourses; the “entrepreneurial” and the “activist” identity. Sachs articulates the key differences as follows:

The managerialist discourse gives rise to an entrepreneurial identity in which the market and issues of accountability, economy, efficiency and effectiveness shape how teachers individually and collectively construct their professional
identities. Democratic discourses, which are in distinct contrast to the managerialist, give rise to an activist professional identity in which collaborative cultures are an integral part of teachers’ work practices. (2001, p. 159)

It is important to note that Sachs does not see these two different forms of identity as oppositional to one another, nor are teachers polarised in ‘becoming’ one and rejecting the other; instead teachers shift between each identity at different times and in different contexts (2005, p. 10). The values and philosophical frameworks (e.g., social justice, decolonisation and reconciliation) that dominate the discipline of Indigenous Studies do not coalesce naturally with that of the managerialist discourse in which, for example, education becomes a commodity and schools develop a competitive ethos rather than a collaborative one.

*The entrepreneurial identity*

Sachs argues that recent education reforms and policies in Australia, New Zealand and the UK have increased state control over the teaching profession and this has promulgated a teacher who will identify as “efficient, responsible and accountable” (2005, p. 10). Forde, McMahon, McPhee, and Patrick (2006) suggest that a ‘discourse of derision’ has been sustained in the UK, Australia, the USA and New Zealand since the 1970s. This ‘discourse of derision’ has questioned teachers’ professionalism and led to a lack of trust between the State and teachers, with governments focused on trusting the “power of outcomes” and creating systems of educational testing and accountability to attempt to force improved standards. The onus then is on the teacher to continually ‘improve’ within a narrow conception of effective teaching (Forde et al., 2006, p. 63).

This ‘audit culture’ runs counter to developing trust, a notion which Groundwater-Smith and Sachs (2002) believe is a social and professional resource in
the educational context. Groundwater-Smith and Sachs argue that professional
teaching standards,

> become an instrument to achieve the end results of an audit society and to put
> in place systematic rituals of verification to ensure the achievement of the
> goals of the state to have an effective but possibly compliant teaching
> profession. (2002, p. 350)

Such controls consequently set boundaries on teachers’ professional identity (Sachs,
2005, p. 9). There is however an argument that such auditing and systematic
verification is long overdue when it comes to the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge
and perspectives in the tertiary and school education curriculum.

A report titled, *A Study of Best Practice in the Teaching of Indigenous Culture
in Australian Schools* (Department of Education Employment and Work Relations,
2008) noted increased accountability was required in schools for the teaching of
Indigenous culture, language and history for the benefit of both Indigenous and non-
Indigenous students. The report also suggested that when educating preservice
teachers, tertiary institutions need to put more emphasis on teaching these aspects
(Department of Education Employment and Work Relations, 2008, p. 46).

As acknowledged earlier in this paper, the *Australian Professional Standards
for Teachers* (AITSL, 2014) contains Indigenous specific standards which, one could
argue, are an important and overdue accountability measure. The emergence then of a
‘compliant’ preservice teacher who willingly addresses the Indigenous specific
standards may be seen as a positive step forward for Indigenous education. In the
NSW context, the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* along with a more
explicit set of criteria pertaining to the “Priority Area” of Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander education (Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards, 2015)
provides authority to ensure tertiary institutions incorporate Indigenous Studies
content and pedagogy as part of preservice teacher education, however the focus of these Standards has been questioned as Burgess and Berwick write:

Professional Teaching Standards now provide ‘de-facto’ guidance to teacher education courses through the accreditation system, another gap emerges around genuine and authentic teacher training that will significantly influence approaches to the teaching of Aboriginal students, subject content or perspectives. While Aboriginal Education is one of eight mandatory areas within the NSWIT [see definition section for explanation - now superseded by the AITSL] accreditation system that must be addressed by teacher education courses, it presents like a random list of ideas more applicable for use as a checklist rather than any real basis upon which to design courses. (2009, p. 8)

The Professional Teaching Standards were originally developed under the jurisdiction of the State and Territory accreditation bodies (see for example, New South Wales Institute of Teachers, n.d; Northern Territory Teacher Registration Board, 2012), before their adaption into the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2014) causing considerable debate. As mentioned earlier, one side of the debate contends that professional standards are an important means for publically articulating and defining what constitutes ‘quality teaching’. On the other side, there is scepticism and concern that ‘quality teaching’ will be stifled by narrow, homogenising and bureaucratically defined standards (see for example, Burgess & Berwick, 2009; Connell, 2009; Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002; Sachs, 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2005, 2011). From this viewpoint, professional teaching standards are said to operationalise a professional identity that suits individualised, neoliberal ideology (Connell, 2009). Connell (2009) argues that “if teachers’ occupational identity is defined from outside, by the power of the state or the pressure of the market, it is likely to be limited in important ways (p. 222). Connell (2009) alludes to the significance of agency when suggesting that in educating students from diverse backgrounds, it is necessary to
have a model of professionalism that gives teachers room to manoeuvre in order to teach well (p. 222). There are concerns about the potential for the professional teaching standards to reinforce hegemonic notions of how the ‘good teacher’ (quality teacher) is defined within these standards (Connell, 2009, p. 226). Further Palmer (1997) argues for an approach to teaching beyond the focus on technique, explaining that good teachers join self, subject and students to evoke a “capacity for connectedness” so that “I [Palmer] no longer need suffer the pain of having my peculiar gift as a teacher crammed into the Procrustean bed of someone else’s method and the standards prescribed by it” (p. 3).

Hayes (2006) on the other hand suggests that debates about professional teaching standards have led to a ‘creative tension’ between the capacity of standards to encourage professional learning versus their application merely as a measurement of teacher performance (p. 2). It is important to consider this ‘creative tension’ as it applies to Indigenous focused standards imposed on the preservice teachers who shared their stories for this research.

Nurturing a preservice teacher activist identity could go some way to move the Indigenous education specific standards beyond a checklist approach attentive to performativity, towards an authentic expression and prioritisation within their career trajectory.

*The activist identity*

Sachs (2005) argues the entrepreneurial professional identity dominates given the “emphasis on compliance to standards regimes and the strong managerialist tendencies of government policy as it relates to initial teacher training” (p. 15), however she also believes there are possibilities for tertiary institutions to “act in
socially and professionally responsible ways to produce different kinds of teachers”,
those who are able to “teach the mandated curriculum, but at the same time recognise
the important intellectual, social and political work that teaching involves” (p. 16).
The struggle for equity in access to quality learning environments for Indigenous
students and the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in syllabus material provides an
exemplar of the significant political, social and intellectual engagement required by
teachers to make this access and inclusion a reality in contemporary times.

The ‘activist’ identity provides a suitable focus for the type of professional
identity teacher educators would (in part) hope to inspire. Using the work of Beane
and Apple (1995), Sachs (2001) argues the activist identity grows from democratic
discourse - it is borne of collaboration and collegiality and includes:

- The open flow of ideas, regardless of their popularity, that enables
  people to be as fully informed as possible.
- Faith in the individual and collective capacity of people to create
  possibilities for resolving problems.
- The use of critical reflection and analysis to evaluate ideas, problems
  and policies.
- Concern for the welfare of others and ‘the common good’.
- Concern for the dignity and rights of individuals and minorities.
- An understanding that democracy is not so much an “ideal” to be
  pursued as an “idealized” set of values that we must live and that must
  guide our life as people.
- The organization of social institutions to promote and extend the
democratic way of life. (Beane and Apple, 1995, pp. 6-7 in Sachs,
First and foremost democratic education and an activist identity are concerned to reduce or eliminate exploitation, inequality and oppression. Accordingly, the development of this identity is deeply rooted in principles of equity and social justice. Such principles are not only desirable for the teaching profession but also for a broader education constituency of parents and students (Sachs, 2001, p. 157).

In a general sense, these ideals resonate with some of the broader goals of Indigenous Studies as a discipline, which is focused on creating informed understandings of Indigenous Australia, that in turn promote action leading to social justice and equality for Indigenous Australians. Nurturing an activist identity calls for tertiary educators to encourage and develop in preservice teachers an understanding of the significance of collaboration and partnerships in educational contexts (Sachs, 2005). Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting and Whitty elaborate on the notion of a collaborative partnership, which they say, requires the commitment by teacher educators and school-based practitioners to develop a program where students are exposed to different forms of educational knowledge, some of which come from the school, some of which come from higher education or elsewhere. Teachers are seen as having an equally legitimate but perhaps different body of professional knowledge from those in higher education. Students [preservice teachers] are expected and encouraged to build up their own body of professional knowledge. (2000, p. 80)

Mandatory Indigenous Studies at the University of Sydney provides preservice teachers with an insight into the benefits of forming collaborative partnerships in their future workplaces and with the wider (particularly Aboriginal) community. Lecturers share with preservice teachers their stories of their approach to Aboriginal education, of which collaboration and the building of participatory relationships with diverse communities is fundamental to success (Furlong et al., 2000, p. 175). The sharing of
knowledge about such processes is also intentionally modelled to students by reinforcing the importance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working collaboratively together within the University setting and building relationships with those external to it, including Aboriginal community organisations, school principals, teachers and those working within Indigenous policy areas (Thorpe & Burgess, 2012).

Indigenous Studies hopes to nurture preservice teachers’ confidence to work with others to meet the challenges of complex social and political workplaces and to create positive opportunities for Aboriginal students and the development of an Indigenous Studies curriculum. Sachs notes that, “teacher professional identity… provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of “how to be”, “how to act” and “how to understand” their work and their place in society” (2005, p. 15). Indigenous Studies challenges students to think about each of these positions from the perspective of Aboriginal students and communities and more broadly within a social justice agenda whereby preservice teachers develop “a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of their responsibility toward and with others and the society as a whole” (Bell, 1997, p. 3).

Perusal of the “Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students” below (Figure 2) which form part of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2014) suggest an activist professional identity would be better prepared for the challenges faced in Indigenous education, for it requires of an individual “risk taking and working collectively with others” (Sachs, 2003a, p. 153).
As I have positioned the development of an activist professional identity as exerting a potentially positive influence on Indigenous education outcomes, I was inspired to uncover whether an activist identity emerged in the narratives shared by the preservice teachers who contributed to this research. I was also attentive to reflect on the nuanced representations of those sceptical of the imposition of the Indigenous specific Australian Professional Standards for Teachers – particularly on their agency as teachers and those who believe that these will (finally) deliver basic accountability measures in relation to Indigenous curriculum perspectives and Indigenous student outcomes. The introduction of professional teaching standards has the potential to provide a sense of agency for those preservice teachers who want to be supported in their endeavour to include Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum.
Ethical identity formation

Teachers will define themselves not only through their past and current personal and social experiences, but they will define themselves through their beliefs and values about the kind of teacher they hope to be within the context of their changing political, social, institutional, and personal circumstances (Day, 2004, p. 57). During the process of listening to and re-reading each of the participant’s interview transcripts, I came to hear in their stories an assertive declaration of how they want to be and act in relation to engaging with Aboriginal students and speaking about Indigenous peoples. Maclure suggests that identity formation can be understood as a form of argument, “a resource that people use to explain, justify and make sense of themselves in relation to others, and to the world at large” (1993, p. 311).

Maclure’s (1993) notion of identity formation as a process of ‘teachers arguing for themselves’ offered an insight into the ways the participants in this research gave ethical and moral accounts of themselves. Maclure (1993) has coined the term ‘biographical attitude’ to describe the lens of the ‘teacher-as-person’. This concept encompasses teachers’ personal qualities, values, expertise alongside their search for self-expression, improvement and self-knowledge (pp. 311-312). Identity is seen as a form of argument holding moral claims such as justifications for personal conduct (Maclure, 1993, p. 312). The significance of the biographical attitude rests in its potential to illuminate the ways preservice teachers use identity as a form of argument to invoke their passion for Indigenous education as part of their moral disposition and agency. I was interested to examine how notions of social justice and commitment to Aboriginal education might be used by each preservice teacher to defend their actions or make a claim to a particular moral stance (Maclure, 1993, p. 314) against racism or
stereotyping for example.

Clarke (2009) expands on Maclure’s work to argue that teacher identity formation is not only a matter of “arguing for yourself” but it is also a moral imperative for teachers. If identity formation is something to be claimed it therefore involves effort and there are political and ethical dimensions embedded in this process. Clarke (2009) argues that, “As socially oriented professionals whose work shapes the identities of our students, the case can be made that we all have an ethical obligation to reflect on our identities and engage to some degree in ‘identity work’” (p. 187). Clarke (2009) developed a diagram for ‘doing identity work’ (see below Figure 3) based on the work of Foucault (1983). Foucault did not focus on ethics as requiring adherence to a moral code, but rather theorised how human identity can be ethically self-created (Clarke, 2009; Infinito, 2003). Infinito (2003) also draws on Foucault’s theorising to argue that education is important to self-formation as it is the best method for resisting normalising identities and, ethics as freedom means that we must fashion ourselves a mode of being that emerges from our own history and our own critical and creative thinking and action. The moral subject, … is one who is actively involved in creating of himself or herself (among others) and who is the arbiter, within given limits of contingent circumstances, of his or her own freedom. (p. 160)
Becoming ethical, for Foucault, calls to attention our relationship to ourselves and this notion of ethics is captured in the expression “care of the self” (Gore, 1993, p. 128) which focuses less on moral duties and codes but instead on moral choices (p. 129). In Figure 3 above, Clarke (2009, p. 190) uses Foucault’s four ‘axes’ of the relationship to ourselves, “the substance of ethics, the authority sources of ethics, the self-practices and the telos, or endpoint, of ethics (O’Leary, 2002, chapters 7 & 8; May, 2006, pp. 109-109)”, to provide a translation of these into the ‘ethico-political’ aspects of teacher identity formation:

1. The substance of teacher identity: what part of the preservice teachers’ identities pertains to teaching, how do they constitute their teaching self and how does the teaching self relate to other aspects of their identity?

2. The authority sources of teacher identity: this axis is focused on issues of power and politics. What sources of discursive authority do the preservice teachers recognise as an authority in relation to Indigenous education?

3. The self-practices of teacher identity: this axis considers the practices preservice teachers use to develop and influence their teaching selves including those outside the formal university setting which develop teachers’
knowledge and thinking in relation to Indigenous education.

4. The telos of teacher identity: considers the goal or purpose as a teacher – in the context of this research it could be a vehicle for recognising slippage between stated goals of working for social justice or ‘making a difference’ in Aboriginal education alongside some of the challenges they face. (Clarke, 2009, pp. 190-191)

I have noted earlier that pedagogical processes which provide preservice teachers with the opportunity to reflect on their own life-history alongside their ‘critical’ learning experiences, events, people and places can provide important insights to the cognitive level of professional identity and also the underlying emotions (Vloet & van Swet, 2010) influencing preservice teacher identity formation. Infinito (2003) argues that Foucault’s notion of ethical self-formation holds promising theoretical insights for education, “Conceiving of education as an effort to aid individual self-construction is educationally sound, ethically responsive, and politically valuable” (p. 171). Further, Foucault’s work provides the theoretical tools to recognise and build ethical professional agency (Clarke, 2009) in relation to Indigenous education.

Agency of the learner

The link between teacher agency and development of teacher professional identity forms an important facet of the research literature (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Vloet & van Swet, 2010). ‘Agency’ has been defined as “one’s ability to pursue the goals that one values” (Day et al., 2006, p. 611) and “the influence we and others can have” (Day, 2004, p. 57). Lewis, Enciso, and Moje (2007) argue that agency does not stem from an internal state of mind but rather is, “a way of positioning oneself so as to allow for new ways of being, new identities” (p. 5). Vloet and van Swet (2010) argue that Wenger’s (1998) work incorporates the
significance of agency, when suggesting the development of identity involves two processes: “the degree to which professionals can contribute to their own practice, and the degree to which they can or may participate in that professional practice (Vloet and van Swet, 2010, p. 152). Clarke believes that if teachers wish to exercise professional agency, then they must engage in ‘identity work’ (2009, p. 187).

Coldron and Smith’s (1999) paper provides theoretical examples which explain how the imposition of external power influences professional identity formation. They draw on the work of Foucault (1981) and Bourdieu (1984) when they argue that the context of teacher identity formation is subject to the assertion of power which constrains people’s choices and limits agency (Coldron & Smith, 1999, pp. 712-713). Tensions may therefore arise as a result of shifting contexts, particularly when the ‘agency’ of the teacher as a person and the ‘structure’ in which a teacher finds him/herself (within a particular context) differ (Beijaard et al., 2004). Zembylas and Chubbuck (2014) attempt to unpack the agency/structural aspects of identity development and the tensions which arise from the debate over “being born a teacher” (an expression of agency) versus “becoming a teacher” through structural influences such as teacher education programs or professional development (p. 183). After considering the research literature, they reach the following ‘conclusion’:

Individuals are born with personality traits and talents which may support successful teaching in a given context. They are then apprenticed through society and their own schooling experience to sets of beliefs and dispositions that may or may not be supportive of good teaching. The two realities are present in preservice teachers who enter the structures of preparation programs, where varying degrees of adjustment change and/ or enhancement can occur. Teachers then enter the profession where the support and pressures of colleagues, context, students, and political environments, interact with personal identity characteristics to constitute professional identity. (pp. 184-185)

The above statements neatly review earlier work by Zembylas (2003b) which
described the notion of agency as portrayed by Western psychology and philosophy as a property of the individual (the freedom and ability to act on one’s own) compared to socio-cultural approaches which recognise agency as socially mediated, given individuals are embedded in a variety of cultural, historical and institutional contexts (p.225). Zembylas (2003b) locates post-structural theory as shifting these understandings “a step further” to a richer position where cultural and political contexts are included because “agency cannot be isolated from the dynamics of power from which it is constructed” (p. 225).

In Chapter 5: Theoretical Framework, the agency of the learner (i.e., preservice teachers) is identified as a key principle of the Cultural Interface; consequently I was interested to investigate how the preservice teachers’ sense of agency was influenced by the structural features of their learning experience and also how their sense of agency shaped their future imagined career trajectory and professional identity. Further, drawing on Zembylas (2003b) post-structural perspective, the possibility for illuminating teacher identity formation as “both the effect of prior power as well as the condition of possibility [author’s emphasis] for a radically conditioned form of agency” (p. 225) is possible.

**Emotion and professional identity formation**

Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) explain that the literature focused on teacher identity formation does not always clearly delineate one aspect impacting on identity formation from another, “and so any discussion of emotion and identity, for example, overlaps with discussion of the self and also with discussion of the factors that enter into the shaping and the expression of identity” (p. 176). This overlap is evident in my review of the literature so far, as the impact of emotion has been referred to in relation...
to the emotional labour required of teachers when teaching Indigenous Studies (Asmar & Page, 2009) along with the role of emotion in transformational learning (Mezirow, 2009). In many ways, my reflections offered in the vignette “Indigenous Studies 101” (see Prologue: A Narrative Beginning) encapsulate my emotional engagement when preparing to teach in a potentially hostile space. As Zembylas (2003a) points out, diverse emotional responses are produced in socio-political contexts, through teacher – student interactions and these are also influenced by “the role of other people’s expectations about how one should do (and feel) and how these influence one’s emotions” (p. 104).

Certainly, there is much ‘emotional work’ involved in becoming a teacher. Evans (2002) argues that emotional work is part of a process of identity negotiation which involves “the work that people do consciously and unconsciously as their individual experiences interact with broader concepts of self. Emotional work comprises the conscious and unconscious efforts of the individual to express a (many-faceted) self” (p. 4). For Evans (2002) the “negotiation” aspects of identity formation acknowledge the effort required when one’s identity interacts with others and with discourses circulated about how one should be and act. Margolis (1998) suggests that emotions keep one alert to the changing self as they are the,

means through which we keep track of changing boundaries. Each orientation to the self erects a different boundary, an imaginary wall. Within each wall lies a sense of the self, …With so many boundaries, so many different orientations to the self and others, we need to be always sensitive to what is happening at the many boundaries to the self. Our emotions are like a sensory organ letting us know what is happening at these boundaries. (p. 131)

These are important points to be mindful of when taking account of the emotional labour required of preservice teachers (and their tertiary educators) engaged in Indigenous Studies. Questions can be raised with regards to how preservice teachers
navigate new emotional boundaries, how they made sense of particular types of emotions that were evoked during the experience of Indigenous Studies. Evans (2002) argues that emotions provide deeper insights into how we negotiate ourselves in relation to others and “how comfortable or uncomfortable I am with where I/you are can motivate the making or remaking of my self” (p. 30). Certainly, there is much to be said about the discomfort expressed by the preservice teachers in this study and how this motivated students to think and act in new ways.

Palmer’s (1997) work challenges the profession to nurture preservice teachers’ emotions as part of their professional development as well as “mine” their emotions for knowledge. “Mining emotions” involves developing a more sophisticated appreciation of the source of feelings and naming them without being overburdened and dominated by them. Instead, emotions are reflected on and explored as sources for ideas for change to create new teaching and learning strategies. Palmer (1997) links the heart, mind and spirit in terms of the “inner landscape of a teacher’s life” to assert that good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher, “Good teachers join self and subject and students in the fabric of life….The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts – meaning heart in its ancient sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit will converge in the human self” (p. 11).

Zembylas and his collaborators (see for example, Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; Zembylas, 2003c, 2005; Zembylas & Barker, 2002; Zembylas & Chubbuck, 2009; Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012) have researched extensively on the role of emotions in teaching. This work provides a post-structural perspective which positions teacher emotions as embedded in school culture, ideology and relationships.
(Zembylas, 2003a). As outlined previously, the significant offering of the post-structural perspective is in the provision of evidence that, along with cultural and social relations, power relations are also demonstrated as impacting on teacher identity formation (Zembylas, 2003a; Zembylas & Chubbuck, 2014). Zembylas (2003a) argues that emotion is an important area of investigation because it provides deeper understandings of how “teachers’ emotions can become sites of resistance and self-(trans)formation” (p. 106). In developing this position Zembylas (2003b) posits that self-knowledge and transformation becomes possible through the awareness of teacher identity formation as affective, and dependent on power and agency. Zembylas (2003b) like Palmer, acknowledges that emotions can be used (mined) “to care about and transform their identity” (p. 223) through developing a sense of agency which can be mobilised to create strategies of resistance (Zembylas, 2003b).

Furthermore, Zembylas and Chubbuck (2009) developed the term critical emotional praxis to describe “critical praxis informed by emotion that resists unjust systems and practices as well as emotion that helps create a more fair and just world in our classrooms and everyday lives” (p. 345). Chubbuck and Zembylas (2008) suggest that ‘socially just teaching’ involves the acknowledgement of the role of emotions in power relations within a classroom and society along with developing an understanding of the role teachers play in facilitating emotional (their own and the students) responses in the classroom and then translating these emotional understandings into relationships and pedagogical approaches that lead to social justice.

Teachers’ work also has a caring dimension which O’Connor (2008) suggests has professional, performative and philosophical features. Her research found that
caring for students was an important part of the participants’ work and kept them motivated in the face of professional demands. The teacher participants also used their sense of identity as justification for their caring behaviour. O’Connor (2008) argues that it is folly to focus on the needs and values of institutions alone (for example, professional teacher standards) as the drivers of policy direction, as this ignores the personal and emotional side of teachers’ work.

I have already drawn on Sachs’ work in relation to teacher identity formation (activists and entrepreneurial identities), and it is pertinent to go back to her earlier work given she argues that “the intellect and the mind shape and control educational practice while the emotions and feelings which are central to human interaction are left unacknowledged and in some cases even denied” (Sachs, 1997, p. 62). Sachs (1997) argues that educational communities focused on compliance are much less successful compared with those which nurture affiliation and inquiry, “the emotions generated in these communities are passionate, strong and lead to rethinking aspects of practice and conduct between people who participate in or are associated or identify with these communities” (p. 62). Through reflection on personal experiences and a review of literature, Shapiro (2010) posits that continued research and pedagogical focus on the legitimation of emotional identity will help to grow solidarity and enhanced sensitivity towards peers and students with benefits beyond the individual, including challenging dehumanising policies (p. 620). hooks (1994) provides an insightful final note to this section:

Few professors talk about the place of emotions in the classroom. … If we are all emotionally shut down, how can there be any excitement about ideas? …When we bring our passion to the classroom our collective passions come together, and there is often an emotional response, one that can overwhelm. The restrictive, repressive classroom ritual insists that emotional responses have no place. Whenever emotional responses erupt, many of us believe our academic purpose has been diminished. To me this is really a distorted notion
of intellectual practice, since the underlying assumption is that to be truly intellectual we must be cut off from our emotions. (pp. 154-155)

**Preservice teachers’ professional identity**

So far, I have presented a review of the literature that covers teacher professional identity in a general sense. In doing so, I have made an implicit assumption that the literature applies across the different learning spaces for both preservice teachers at university and while on professional experience with supervision from experienced teachers working in schools. There is however a growing body of literature which specifically focuses on supporting the development of preservice teacher professional identity formation. I make this distinction to highlight that such literature often argues for the inclusion of university learning experiences which lead to developing an understanding of identity formation for preservice teachers (Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010). Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1996) suggest preservice teachers,

> negotiate at least three conceptions of self-identity: the ‘pre-teaching’ image of themselves as teacher [sic] they bring to teacher education; the ‘fictive’ image that develops while they learn to teach; and the ‘lived’ image that forms during their interactions with students in the practicum. (p. 67)

Sumara and Luce-Kapler’s (1996) paper highlights the dissonance that preservice teachers may experience during the process of learning to become a teacher as their ‘pre-teaching’ image is often influenced by cultural myths and personal experiences and these bump up against their new experiences at university. A ‘fictive’ identity (perhaps one that is committed to social justice) may be challenged as preservice teachers are faced with confronting experiences during professional experience. They may be shocked by their own responses to unfamiliar situations. During this process preservice teachers may question their capabilities and
whether they can be who they want to be in the classroom. Creating learning environments that explore the “(un)becoming of the identity one brings to the process of learning to teach” is essential (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1996, p. 81) to sustain a solid identity and an adaptive professional identity throughout one’s career (Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010).

**Summary**

This chapter examined the complex area of teacher professional identity formation by tracing key theorists insights into the development of the concept of identity formation. John Dewey’s writing on the nature of ‘experience’ was presented as influential to the development of Clandinin and Connelly’s narrative inquiry methodology (examined in more detail in Chapter 6: Methodology) and key to understanding teacher professional identity formation within the context of this research. This chapter grew over time through my ‘back and forth’ engagement with the themes that emerged from the participants’ stories as I contextualised their experiences within the academic literature. The literature illuminated the complex interrelationship between the personal, professional and political factors influencing teacher professional identity formation. Finally, the role of emotion and reflection were explored for their potentially transformative influence in learning to become a teacher.

The following chapter details my search to locate an appropriate theoretical framework for this research and selection of the Cultural Interface as a productive site to understand the process of preservice teacher professional identity formation.
Chapter 5: Theoretical Framework

Deliberating an Appropriate Theoretical Framework

The preservice teachers interviewed for this research had different cognitive and emotional experiences as they navigated Indigenous Studies throughout their degree. In order to frame and understand the complex interplay of these experiences, a range of theoretical perspectives can be mobilised. Wrench (2011), drawing on the work of McLeod and Yates (2006), argues that a single theoretical framework cannot render the lives of individuals comprehensible. Certainly my own experience in preparing this thesis attests to the range of theoretical perspectives that could be applied as a framework for analysing the data.

My initial reading on Indigenous Studies pedagogy and teacher identity formation has led me on multiple theoretical pathways, each with their own set of assumptions which have provided useful insights for understanding the process of ‘becoming’ a teacher of Indigenous Studies. Similarly, the literature that seeks to assert appropriate theoretical frameworks for pedagogy in the Indigenous Studies classroom has been no less daunting.

As an Aboriginal person who has spent most of my working life involved in Aboriginal education I felt compelled to seek out the writing of Indigenous academics who assert the importance of employing Indigenous research methodologies, decolonising methodologies and Indigenous Standpoint theory (to name a few). These theoretical positions are inspiring given their emancipatory and transformative goals and their claims of providing Indigenous responses to the research agenda. It was somewhat seductive to align my research solely to an Indigenous research methodology and argue that my research will fit neatly within the process of
decolonising Western ways of thinking, seeing and doing.

Certainly, the limitations of Euro-Western research paradigms are well documented in the Indigenous literature, particularly with regards to the way these knowledge systems silence and exclude the views of non-Western, former colonised societies (Chilisa, 2012). Research is often seen as a site of a power struggle between the researchers and the researched, with the researcher acquiring the power to “label, name, condemn, describe, or prescribe solutions to challenges in former colonized, indigenous peoples and historically oppressed groups” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 7). In his “Foreword to the 2008 Edition” of *Black Skin, White Mask*, Ziauddin Sardar argued that the colonisation process extends beyond the acquisition of land and becomes a psychological process resulting in a colonised mind where the colonised end up emulating their oppressors (Fanon, 2008, p. x). Alatas’ (2004) idea of the “captive mind” also provides a way of thinking about the all-encompassing influence of colonisation on the Indigenous person. The [Indigenous] “captive mind” is said to be a product of higher institutions of learning, …whose way of thinking is dominated by Western thought in an imitative and uncritical manner (Alatas, 1974, p. 691 in Alatas, 2004, p. 21).

A counter argument is provided by Tuck and Yang (2012) who became frustrated when listening to academics refer to a need to “decolonize our schools,” or “decolonize student thinking” (p. 2). They assert that decolonization is not a metaphor for other actions such as social justice and anti-racism education. For Tuck and Yang (2012) real decolonisation occurs not in the mind but with the return of stolen land:

We agree that curricula, literature, and pedagogy can be crafted to aid people in learning to see settler colonialism, to articulate critiques of settler epistemology, and set aside settler histories and values in search of ethics that reject domination and exploitation; this is not unimportant work. However, the front-loading of critical consciousness building can waylay decolonization,
even though the experience of teaching and learning to be critical of settler colonialism can be so powerful it can feel like it is indeed making change. (p. 19)

The many arguments Indigenous researchers have used to justify Indigenous research methodologies provide a personal challenge; that is to question whether the social science methodologies that have originated in the West could be appropriately applied to my research. What moments of insight could Western frameworks bring to my research and on the other hand, what potential understandings will be denied if I employ ‘Western’ frameworks in this research? There is no doubt that my personal experience of growing up and working in the ‘Western’ higher education sector along with my completion of a number of formal tertiary qualifications during this time has influenced my ontological and epistemological stance. If I employ social science theories derived from the West to this research, could I be accused of acquiescing with the ‘captive mind’? Responding to these questions has required consideration of a range of theoretical approaches that I could work with authentically and which would speak to these concerns. There are well-established pathways for navigating these theoretical problems that I will now consider.

One perspective is to consider Indigenous research methodologies within the broader social sciences research milieu. It has been argued that anti-colonial, critical, post-structural and post-colonial theories should be recognised as a starting point for Indigenous researchers involved in the project of decolonisation (L. T. Smith, 1999; Yunkaporta, 2009, p. 55). Indeed, a range of theoretical perspectives have inspired my own evolving teaching philosophy including post-colonial theory, critical theory, decolonisation theory and Indigenous critical theory. I believe there are dangers if Indigenous academics do not engage with the Western knowledge corpus as Nakata et
the utilization of simple Indigenous critiques of the Western reinforces the logical sense of simplistic representations of Indigenous knowledge and regenerated practices presented as the path to solving Indigenous contemporary ‘problems’ in different subject areas, such as health, education, and governance. (2012, p. 132)

I want to avoid the reifying and oversimplification of both ‘Western’ and ‘Indigenous’ theoretical positions. Yunkaporta argues that theoretical dichotomies damage both oppressors and the oppressed because they promote difference and separation (2009, p. 55). Oversimplification can also lead to a situation where researchers (and students) are forced to ‘take sides’ in the contestation over ‘Western’ and ‘Indigenous’ knowledges (Nakata et al., 2012). Problematically then, researchers are engaged with the surface level of each knowledge system where only the differences in cultures are highlighted. Consequently the common ground and interfaces that occur between cultures are ignored unless these are explored at a deeper level (Yunkaporta, 2009, p. 5).

In preparing this thesis, I have looked therefore to frameworks that move beyond the binary oppositions and knowledge contestations of ‘Western’ and ‘Indigenous’ research methodologies. As a starting point, it is informative to consider Homi Bhabba’s concept of “the space between” or “the third space” to begin to conceptualise how Indigenous and Western methodologies could be positioned without slipping into binaries (1994 in Chilisa, 2012, p. 25). Bhabba writes that “all cultural statements and systems are constructed, therefore all hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or ‘purity’ of cultures are untenable” (1994, p. 54 in Chilisa, 2012, p. 25). Chilisa (2012) therefore contends that the “space in between” allows for a borrowing of less hegemonic Euro-Western knowledge and its democratic and
social justice elements to combine it with the best democratic, liberatory and social justice essentialised Indigenous and sub-group knowledges (p. 25). This ‘culture-integrative’ framework allows for the borrowing of the ‘best of both worlds’ and is an opportunity to synthesise them to create something new. Whilst Bhabba’s ideas about the fluid nature of cultures is useful in preventing false dichotomies and Fahlander adds “social collectives are heterogeneous and consist of a series of individuals and groups with different means of agency and power” (2007, p. 19), there are some theoretical limitations to pursuing ‘third space’ methodologies which I will briefly outline.

One criticism of Bhabba’s notion of the ‘third space’ is the ambiguity around whether such a ‘space’ is ‘virtual’ or ‘real’ (or both). If social groups and ‘cultures’ have no or little ‘essence’ but instead are mainly the “effects of expressions of power and certain discourses” (Fahlander, 2007, p. 26), then is the ‘third space’ more of an intellectual exercise intent on analysing “discourses” and “diverging subject positions” rather than engaging with the ‘real’ experience of real people? Certainly, C. Sarra’s self-described “polemic against the increasingly fashionable post-structuralist approach to education” (2011a, p. 164) provides some convincing arguments that challenge postmodernist approaches to the humanities. C. Sarra examines post-structuralism, post-Marxism, post-feminism and post-colonialism under the ‘postmodern’ umbrella, with a particular focus on challenging and refuting Nietzsche’s scepticism about the possibility of truth (2011a, p. 21). I read with understanding, C. Sarra’s assertion that:

To deny the possibility of truth one has to be, I am inclined to think, a tenured academic. Certainly, in everyday life we encounter lies, so there must be truth as well. So the book that states that truth does not exist or is impossible is frankly counter-intuitive. (2011a, p. 21)
C. Sarra’s (2011a) book, *Strong and Smart – Towards a Pedagogy for Emancipation* employs Roy Bhaskar’s Critical Realism to explore the reasons why Aboriginal children are not reaching their full potential in Australian schools. Matters of identity are a core focus of the text, where Critical Realism is said to provide an appropriate theoretical framework to address how the lived experience of Aboriginal people can be at once false (e.g., negative stereotyping of Aboriginal people) but also real (the consequent self perpetuation of negative stereotypical attitudes and behaviours of mainstream society) (2011a, p. 165). C. Sarra presents a number of emancipatory school strategies aimed at reinforcing a positive Aboriginal identity. C. Sarra (2011a) argues that while post-structuralism has some strengths, it has debilitating weaknesses - one of which is “the linguistic fallacy that reality is created through discourse” (p. 45). C. Sarra is particularly critical of the post-structural lens employed by McConaghy in the influential book, *Rethinking Indigenous Education: Culturalism, Colonialism and the Politics of Knowing* (2000) and examines how McConaghy attempts to address “the problem of whether ‘Aboriginality’ is simply a ‘construction of the West’ or whether it might be, at some level, real” (2011a, p. 47). C. Sarra takes umbrage with McConaghy’s discussion about Aboriginal identity, for example her assertion that “the issue is whether we believe this essentialism to be indicative of an epistemological reality or a constituted and strategic one” (2011a, p. 47). The “third space” could provide a construction of Aboriginality which is not limited by essentialising “essences” and it opens a space for Indigenous Australians to negotiate in their everyday lives, their on-going positioning (McConaghy, 2000, p. 48). C. Sarra believes that such “post-Aboriginalism” comes close to eliminating Aboriginal people in theory and fails to grapple with the lived (real) experiences of
Aboriginal Australians (2011a, pp. 48-49).

To bring this discussion back to locating a theoretical framework for this research, C. Sarra’s (2011a) critique is cause for thinking about theory and how it is engaged to bring about real change in the work I do. In the search to locate a theoretical framework which navigates the complexities of Western and Indigenous methodologies, and subsequently positions preservice teachers’ life histories and the influence of Indigenous Studies on identity formation (whether one is Indigenous or non-Indigenous) one should be aware that “cultural notions of belonging and unity among many social collectives are not only matters of ideology and discourse, but is [sic] also rooted in materialities, practices and 'real' space which importance cannot simply be overlooked” (Fahlander, 2007, p. 26). Although I am not suggesting that Bhabha’s “space-in-between” is irrelevant, the debate does provide an important reminder that the framework selected for this research must be grounded in theory and the lived experiences of the preservice teachers who gave of their time to talk with me about their learning experiences. The research must also be respectful and consider the implications in relation to the lived experience and potential impact on Aboriginal preservice teachers. Martin Nakata’s writing on the ‘Cultural Interface’ will now be examined as a reconciling theoretical framework to engage both Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing in a desire to prevent essentialising each source of knowledge production. The Cultural Interface also provides an appropriate framework to analyse the preservice teacher narratives as outlined in Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

The Cultural Interface

The ‘Cultural Interface’ is a term coined by Torres Strait Islander academic, Martin Nakata. Nakata has spent two decades researching and writing about
Indigenous Studies and Indigenous knowledges in higher education. Hart, Whatman, McLaughlin, and Sharma-Brymer (2012, p. 710) posit that the Cultural Interface framework evolved as a consequent critique of the Western hegemonic practice of talking ‘about’ Indigenous peoples and culture without meaningful engagement. They argue that this hegemony must be disrupted if Indigenous knowledge is to be realised.

Nakata’s early writing discussed the Cultural Interface as,

> the intersection of the Western and Indigenous domain...the place where we live and learn, the place that conditions our lives, the place that shapes our futures and more to the point the place where we are active agents in our own lives – where we make decisions – our lifeworlds. (2003, p. 27)

This theoretical position postulates that all knowledge systems adapt, change, have diversity and are culturally embedded. For many Indigenous people, traversing Western and Indigenous domains is a lived reality (Nakata, 2004a, p. 27). In later writing, Nakata questions the idea of the Interface as an ‘intersection’ of different knowledge systems, instead arguing it might be more productive to pursue “inter-subjective mapping of our many relationships, rather than interrogate sites of apparent intersection” (2006, p. 267). This nuanced shift in thinking theorises the Interface as a complex place of contradiction and tension - one where there is constant negotiation (Nakata, 2006, p. 272).

Much of Nakata’s writing on the Cultural Interface challenges Indigenous academics to consider how to theorise and develop Indigenous Studies as a discipline,

> What is needed is consideration of a different conceptualization of the cross-cultural space, not as a clash of opposites and differences but as a layered and very complex entanglement of concepts, theories and sets of meanings of a knowledge system. (2006, p. 273)

Considering that the genesis of the Cultural Interface developed through a desire to theorise how Indigenous and Western knowledge systems ‘intersect’ in the everyday
realities of Indigenous people, then another step to develop deeper insights about this space is to consider what occurs at the Cultural Interface for non-Indigenous people. McGloin’s (2009) reflective paper provides an insightful application of the Cultural Interface from the perspective of a non-Indigenous academic. She offers some pertinent arguments regarding the possible contribution non-Indigenous academics can make to Indigenous Studies in collaboration with Indigenous colleagues:

My intention is to raise questions about what we do… when teaching Indigenous studies, how we do it, and to think how it might be done better with a greater understanding of non-Western knowledge systems and their continued marginalisation in the academy. In marking the limitation of non-Indigenous participation with the disciplinary arena of Indigenous studies, it is important to think about ways of working within those limitations while still making a valid contribution to Indigenous pedagogy, and to students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous who undertake Indigenous studies. (2009, p. 37)

The matters raised here highlight the tension and negotiation required for productive engagement at the Cultural Interface. These points of interrogation also provide opportunities and challenges for tertiary educators involved in teaching Indigenous Studies. At the Cultural Interface of the university teaching and learning environment, there are complex tensions and negotiations between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems (whether taught by Indigenous or non-Indigenous staff), each competing for validity, authenticity and the right to be located in the pedagogic space (Hart et al., 2012, p. 710). The mandatory Indigenous Studies classroom – as a ‘forced’ site to engage the Cultural Interface, potentially becomes a place for transformation as “people discard and take up different ways of understanding, being and acting in a complex and changing environment” (Nakata, 2007, p. 208 in McGloin, 2009). Herein lies the significance of using the Cultural Interface as a theoretical and analytical tool for this research – developing a nuanced understanding
of preservice teachers’ experiences at the Cultural Interface and their inter-subjective relationships, tensions and negotiations that occur there can create new meanings and understandings to influence pedagogy. Yunkaporta’s (2009) doctoral research investigated how teachers in schools can engage with Aboriginal knowledge in respectful and non-tokenistic ways, arguing the Cultural Interface provided a reconciling framework for addressing the tensions and challenges discussed above. The experience of agency when working with the tensions that manifest at the Cultural Interface (Hart et al., 2012) could also be viewed as potentially ‘reconciling’.

Consequently, like Yunkaporta, I am drawn to the Cultural Interface and its reconciling ability to theorise “the dynamic overlap between systems previously defined as dichotomous and incompatible” (2009, p. xv). Yunkaporta’s research which sought to mitigate against ‘taking sides’ in the Western/Indigenous knowledge contest and instead, “harmonise the relationship between the two pedagogical systems” (2009, p. 50) resonates as an approach that will bring to the fore new understandings of how life history and Indigenous Studies influences preservice teacher professional identity formation. Figure 4 below was developed by Hart et al. (2012, p. 711) in an attempt to provide a visual representation of the Cultural Interface. The figure also shows Nakata’s three key principles that are said to shape the Interface:

1. the **locale** of the learner: this is where preservice teachers are currently at in their learning journey;

2. the **agency** of the learner that occurs at the Interface; and

3. the **tension** that occurs when Indigenous Knowledge and Western Knowledge[s] intersect. The tension can be perceived as an assertion of choice or power (as cited in Hart et al., 2012, p. 710).

Hart et al.’s (2012) research applied the above principles in preliminary research
focused on Indigenous preservice teacher relationships and experiences of embedding Indigenous Australian perspectives whilst on professional experience. They were particularly interested in the factors that impacted on the teaching and learning moments between Indigenous preservice teachers and their non-Indigenous supervisors. The figure below was originally created to show the Cultural Interface from an Indigenous person’s perspective. My research took a different direction in that it explored the life history of preservice teachers to bring to light the influence of biography on the ‘locale’ of learners as well as the agency and tensions experienced at the Cultural Interface.

Figure 4. The Cultural Interface

Figures 1. The cultural interface.


Carlson’s (2011) statement that the Cultural Interface, “is a space informed by
particular variables, including time, space, memory, competing discourses and social, political and economic organisations from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal beginnings” (p. 158) highlights the complexity of the everyday influences and experiences of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous preservice teachers engaged at the Cultural Interface. These variables influenced the narratives preservice teachers developed about their experiences of becoming a teacher of Indigenous Studies and potentially a teacher of Indigenous students. Narrative inquiry and life history research enables the rich tapestry of these variables to be revealed in a way that pays attention to the ‘whole story’ of the lives and experiences (Connell, 2010) of preservice teachers in respectful ways.

The following methodology chapter provides justification for the use of life history and narrative inquiry as an appropriate methodological approach to illuminate preservice teachers’ experiences at the Cultural Interface. Life history and narrative inquiry have been selected as the methodological approaches to explore preservice teachers’ professional learning at the Cultural Interface. The Cultural Interface is outlined in this research as a significant theoretical and analytical tool because of its potential to create new meanings and understandings regarding the tensions and challenges that occur when Indigenous and non-Indigenous people come together for learning in Indigenous Studies.

This research is partly guided by Yunkaporta’s (2011) doctoral research which worked with the “powerful metaphors at the Cultural Interface” (p. 164). While Yunkaporta acknowledges that this framework does not provide a “magic silver bullet for Aboriginal education...[it] does provide a way forward for a change in processes and attitudes” (2011, p. 164) because Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers can
engage with Aboriginal knowledge in respectful and non-tokenistic ways. The Cultural Interface provided Yunkaporta with a ‘reconciling framework’ for moving through some of the tensions and challenges discussed previously - particularly given his doctoral research did not enact Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal positions as antithetical with one another:

The interface between these competing realities is a complex space, very difficult to navigate without offending somebody – but this is the space I live in, here in an overlap of worlds. The Cultural Interface. While it’s a difficult space, it is also synergistic and dynamic, a space where creation and innovation can be found. (Yunkaporta, 2011, p. 3)

Summary

This chapter examined my deliberations around selecting a theoretical framework appropriate to illuminating the lived experience of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous preservice teachers as they engaged in Indigenous Studies. It established my desire to locate a theoretical framework that did not force my analysis into ‘taking sides’ and creating a dichotomy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge positions. Finally, I have argued that Nakata’s Cultural Interface theory offered a framework to discover the tensions and agency experienced by each participant in relation to their engagement in Indigenous Studies and how this influenced their professional identity development.

The following chapter explains the narrative inquiry methodology employed in this research and addresses the ethical challenges and processes engaged with to construct the final three narratives.
Chapter 6: Methodology

‘Storying’ the experience... provides opportunities to interrogate the compelling, surprising or puzzling aspects of teaching and learning that bring to consciousness knowledge that may or may not have been realised even though acted upon.

(Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002, p. 21)

Situating Narrative Inquiry

Narrative research is generally portrayed in contrast to positivist accounts of research and it tends to focus on a concern for and interest in valuing individual experience and personal stories instead of ‘generalisable objectivity’ (Griffiths & Macleod, 2008). As Denzin (1997) notes, “although the field of qualitative research is defined by constant breaks and ruptures, there is a shifting centre to the project: the avowed humanistic commitment to study the social world from the perspective of the individual” (p. xv).

This research project is located within the qualitative paradigm whereby, “researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). Polkinghorne (1995) suggests that narrative inquiry is a subset of qualitative research design in which stories are used to describe and interpret human action. Connelly and Clandinin have argued that humans are “story telling organisms, who individually and socially, lead storied lives” (1990, p. 2) and thus any attempt to understand their experiences may be seen as an enquiry into their stories (Griffiths & Macleod, 2008). Using Connelly and Clandinin’s distinction of calling the phenomenon “story” and the inquiry “narrative” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) it then follows that I am interested in the life experiences of preservice teachers and the stories they tell about their experiences of engagement in Indigenous Studies. As a
narrative researcher, I seek to describe, collect and tell stories of their lives, and write narratives of their experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) pertaining to the process of engagement in Indigenous Studies.

Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) work was significant whilst thinking through how I would approach this narrative research. Their narrative inquiry research draws inspiration from John Dewey’s view of experience. Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) reading of Dewey is that experience pays attention to a “metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry” space which includes:

- the personal and social (interaction) with;
- the past, present and future (continuity); and
- the above combined with the notion of place (situation) (p. 49).

In summary, experience involves the interaction of the personal and social; this acknowledges that personal experience exists but such experience exists in relation to a social context. Connelly and Clandinin have since reconsidered the dimension of interaction and now express this through the notion of sociality. Sociality necessitates that narrative inquirers attend to the individual’s personal conditions (e.g. feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions) as well as the social conditions (e.g., cultural, social, institutional and linguistic) in which their experiences and events unfold (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480).

The continuity dimension informs the narrative researcher that experiences grow out of prior experiences and these experiences lead to other new experiences. More recently continuity has been referred to as temporality – where “events under study are in temporal transition” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479). The significance of this for those engaged in narrative inquiry is that one needs to learn to
“move back and forth between the personal and the social, simultaneously thinking about the past, present, and future and do so in ever-expanding social milieus” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 2-3).

Finally, the third notion of place or situation provides the holistic frame for thinking and researching narratively. Here the narrative inquirer’s attention is focused on “the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). All events must occur somewhere and the particular site/s of these events will impact on experiences and the stories an individual tells of these experiences (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Consequently, in relation to this research, an individual preservice teacher’s life and educational experiences can be told and narrated but it is also important to consider the context of their experiences in connection with the social milieu – their family, school/s, friends, a teacher, a particular classroom, and the wider community in which they have lived or currently live and learn.

In ‘thinking narratively’ about preservice teachers’ life histories and educational experiences in relation to Indigenous Australia, I explored how the dimensions of temporality, sociality and place impact at the Cultural Interface. The next section of this methodology attempts to clarify how I ‘think narratively’ about preservice teachers’ experiences in unison with applying the theoretical framework of the Cultural Interface so as to shed light on how individual life histories impact on their learning experiences in Indigenous Studies.

**Narrative Inquiry at the Cultural Interface**

Narrative inquiry and life history research allows for a holistic orientation towards understanding the process of becoming a teacher (Beattie, 2000). By drawing
on the work of educational researchers who seek to understand teachers’ lives and experiences (e.g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) along with that of life history researchers (e.g., Connell, 2010; Plummer, 2001) this research places “biography at the centre of the teaching practice, the study of teachers, and the teacher education process” (Carter & Doyle, 1996, p. 120 in Johnson, 2007, p. 300). Stories provide insights into experience over space and time. Kelchtermans (2010) argues that:

This is most obvious in (auto)biographical stories where experiences from one’s personal life are being recalled (life stories) – thus (auto)biographical stories reveal how the narrator’s understanding of the present is influenced by experiences from the past as well as his/her expectations about the future. (p. 613)

Thinking narratively about the life stories of preservice teachers enabled a potentially deeper and more nuanced understanding of the three key principles that are said to shape the Cultural Interface: 1. the locale of the learner; 2. the agency of the learner and; 3. the space where tensions occur when Indigenous and Western Knowledges intersect (Hart et al., 2012, p. 710).

**Thinking narratively about the locale of the learner**

As previously outlined, the Cultural Interface acknowledges that learners (in this instance preservice teachers) come to the Indigenous Studies classroom with a range of personal experiences influenced by factors including class, gender, ethnicity and ‘race’. It has been argued that often non-Indigenous students have difficulty engaging with Indigenous knowledge systems and perspectives because of the pervasive influence of the Western education system which has normalised Western ways of knowing and created a corpus of knowledge about Indigenous people (Nakata et al., 2012) framed in deficit terms. This research considers the current locale of the learner – their knowledge and experiences that influence the corpus of knowledge
preservice teachers have about Indigenous people and how this manifests as they engage with Indigenous Studies.

I have already presented the Cultural Interface as a site of ‘intersection’ of Western and Indigenous domains and a site of “inter-subjective mapping of our many relationships” (Nakata, 2006, p. 267). It is prudent to draw on Connell’s (2010) life history research, which examined masculinities as influenced by institutional and cultural dimensions over time. Connell argues that life history opens a space not available using other methods particularly in its ability to,

deal with the issues currently called ‘intersectionality’, such as the intersection of class, gender and ethnicity. It treats this not as a static geometry, but as an interplay of determinations and practices unfolding through time. (2010, p. 68)

Nakata (2007c) has identified that both Indigenous and non–Indigenous students enter the learning environment at different locations dependant on a range of factors such as their episteme, knowledge, people, language, community, culture, identity and histories. Life history research therefore enables the uncovering of how and in what ways these locations impact at the Cultural Interface for preservice teachers.

Thinking narratively about the tensions at the Cultural Interface

I have argued earlier that one of the aims of Indigenous Studies is to shift student thinking beyond the dualities that often define Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in competition and in opposition to each other. There are potential tensions at the Cultural Interface as learners and the teacher(s) bring different experiences to this space and navigate the difficult dialogue of the classroom.

Recent debates about what constitutes appropriate pedagogy and content demonstrates there are difficult questions to resolve in the teaching of mandatory
Indigenous Studies and perspectives throughout a teaching degree. Vass (2012) for example, argues in support of the creation of mandatory Indigenous education subjects but posits that the traditional pedagogical approach which focuses on an appeal to ethical and professional rationales will not result in a dramatic shift in outcomes for Indigenous students nor will it improve the pedagogy and curriculum development of Indigenous Studies. What is needed, Vass argues, is an approach that is “reflexively critical” and challenges hegemonic Western ideology; furthermore the way to address this involves coming to terms with and challenging the Whiteness of the educational landscape (2012, p. 242). Nakata et al. on the other hand has warned against pedagogical approaches premised on the assumption that non-Indigenous students are unable to move beyond dominant colonial modes of thinking without first having their own identities and histories disrupted (e.g., Nakata cites the work of D. Phillips, 2011 and Andersen, 2012 in Nakata et al., 2012, p. 134.). In a similar vein, Carey and Prince (2015) argue that for non-Indigenous students engaged in Indigenous Studies as part of their professional learning and experience “teaching what amounts to a rejection of self – a self which only exists in its imperialistic reflection – is, we believe, irresponsible” (p. 275). Their concern here is that when non-Indigenous students are constructed merely as ‘White’ and therefore ‘privileged’ a binary emerges whereby Indigenous people are constructed as ‘Blackness’ and therefore oppressed. Consequently this discourse denies other dimensions of their identities that have or do not have agency by nature of their Indigeneity (Carey & Prince, 2015). Taking up these positions, this research explored how preservice teachers experienced pedagogy that appealed to ethical, social justice or other professional justifications, and where applicable, those approaches which aimed at
disrupting Whiteness and challenging White privilege (for example).

Thinking narratively about the tensions at the Cultural Interface, makes it possible to glean how various theoretical positions were experienced by these preservice teachers. The interviews provided insight to the future hopes and desires preservice teachers have in relation to the education of Aboriginal students and teaching Indigenous Studies. What experiences lead preservice teachers to engage constructively with the tensions of the Cultural Interface? Why, on completion of their degree, did these preservice teachers feel empowered to engage in teaching Aboriginal perspectives? What made these preservice teachers so passionate and optimistic about the possibility of teaching Aboriginal children?

**Thinking narratively about the agency of the learner at the Cultural Interface**

Nakata (2007b) argues that students experience ‘agency’ along a continuum between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge positions. The notion of agency is intertwined somewhat inseparably with the principle of ‘tension’ as Hart et al. (2012) explain:

> The cultural interface allows those who engage to assert their positions and knowledge in relation to others’ positions and knowledge systems. It theorises a platform to describe the locale, reveal the potential agency and understand and address the tensions. (p. 710)

I have found that of the three key principles (locale, tension, agency) of the Cultural Interface, the notion of ‘agency’ has a lesser degree of theoretical explanation in the academic literature. The Cultural Interface originally sought to place the concerns of Indigenous students at the centre of the discussion to demonstrate that Indigenous learners do have agency for “if you only depict people as victims or through a narrative of ‘cultural loss’, then you strip them of agency” (Hart et al., 2012, p. 710).
At times though, the agency experienced by Indigenous students will shift depending on the epistemologies, histories, languages etc. of those with whom Indigenous students interact at the Cultural Interface. While this research was originally inclusive of advancing insights from an Indigenous perspective, as outlined in ‘Chapter 2: The Narrative Journey’, the lens shifted to focus on ways non-Indigenous preservice teachers make meaning from their lived experience, and consequently bring their voices of agency (or lack thereof) to a particular knowledge position when engaged in Indigenous Studies.

Thinking narratively about preservice teacher agency at the Cultural Interface allows for deeper insights to the spaces, times and social settings in which students (some of whom may beforehand have ‘taken sides’ in the Western or Indigenous knowledge position) shift their thinking along the knowledge continuum - possibly in either direction. Preservice teachers may have experienced a ‘critical incident’ which Sikes (1985, p. 57) argues is a key event/s in an individual’s life around which pivotal decisions are made and from these incidents, individuals are provoked to selecting particular actions which lead them on particular trajectories. These critical incidents are useful to consider as they “reveal like a flashbulb, the major choice and change times in people’s lives” (Sikes, 1985, p. 57). Narrative inquiry provides the opportunity to illuminate the critical incidents which preservice teachers experienced as ‘agency’ to move towards more nuanced understanding of Indigenous and Western knowledge positions. Narrative thinking also provides the scope to bring to the fore the life experiences that created the possibility of such agency to emerge. Finally, Hart et al. (2012) found that for Indigenous preservice teachers, a realisation of their own agency as well as the quality and equality of the pedagogical
relationship, was critical to a successful learning experience and completion of their teaching practicum. This highlights that agency can be achieved in supportive contexts. Developing deeper understandings of the ways preservice teachers experience agency at the Cultural Interface will help foster insight to the pedagogical contexts that help mobilise respectful, yet critical, engagement in Indigenous Studies pedagogy.

Concluding thoughts on situating narrative and life history

This section has demonstrated how narrative inquiry can be applied to illuminate the life histories of preservice teachers and the stories they tell about their experiences that subsequently influence their learning engagement in Indigenous Studies at the Cultural Interface. In order to show the complexity of meaning making at the Cultural Interface, my intent was to be respectful to preservice teachers’ ‘whole life story’ because this educational research presupposes that the “connections between life work and personal life are complex and not open to separation” (Mockler, 2011b, p. 162).

I am aware that it would be easy to focus on the ‘parts’ of stories that reinforce common themes in the literature. I could, for example, highlight conversations that reinforced a preservice teacher’s disclosure of ‘bitter knowledge’ regarding Aboriginal people or perhaps focus on the tensions expressed when engaged in learning about Indigenous knowledge positions. Whilst the stories shared in this research were not dominated by stories of ‘bitter knowledge’, I have attempted to attend to the ‘whole life story’ in order to develop a nuanced understanding of preservice teachers’ experience at the Cultural Interface to discover how this impacts on professional identity formation.
The next section describes how I gathered the data, which involved collecting, composing and creating field texts from which I constructed preservice teacher narratives (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Furthermore, key ethical considerations in this process are described to demonstrate how I attempted to mitigate the impact of my voice as the inquirer ‘writing over’ the voices of the participants in the final research text (Clandinin & Huber, 2010) which are presented in Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

Methodological Considerations

Authenticity of the research design

Mockler’s (2011b) “methodological story” of her efforts to be an ethical and “authentic” researcher was helpful in guiding the research design, particularly given her research was a life history study that aimed to explore the development of teacher professional identity. Mockler’s main argument is that creating authenticity during the research process is not as easy as it might first sound; however authenticity can be achieved when there is congruence between the researcher’s own epistemological and ontological assumptions and the “design, process and analysis in the enactment of the research enterprise” (2011b, p. 159). A starting point therefore in creating such congruence involves self-awareness of one’s position within the research field. Given that the research questions emerge from the way the researcher approaches the questions, the individual becomes a “tool” or instrument of the research process (Mockler, 2011b, p. 160). Chilisa provides a succinct synopsis and description of key parameters which I have considered in order to justify the authenticity of this research enterprise:

A research paradigm is a way of describing a world view that is informed by philosophical assumptions about the nature of social reality (ontology), ways of knowing (epistemology), ethics and values (axiology). A paradigm also has theoretical assumptions about the research process and the appropriate
approach to systematic inquiry (methodology). (2012, p. 20)

Figure 5 below identifies the research parameters and critical questions that arise from these parameters in relation to this thesis – or put more simply, it guides how I “attend to the politics of what we [I] do and do not do at a practical level” (Lather, 1991, p.13 in Mockler 2011b, p. 161).

Figure 5. 'Methodological story'

Figure 5. From “Being Me,” by N. Mockler, 2011b, (p. 160) In J. Higgs, A. Titchen & D. Horsfall (Eds.), Creative Spaces for Qualitative Researching: Living Research (1st ed.). Dordrecht: Springer. Copyright 2011 by Springer. Reprinted with permission.
Locating the ontological and epistemological ‘home’ of the research

At the centre of this figure is the ontological parameter, which compels the researcher to “push through” the other layers of meaning by addressing each of the critical questions. The questions, “What are my beliefs about reality?” and “What are my beliefs about ‘knowledge’?” (Mockler, 2011b, p. 160) are important in providing a philosophical grounding to my research. In answering these two questions it was necessary to move backward and forward between ontology, epistemology, research paradigm and methodology to provide a meaningful response. I have also been mindful that it is better not to attempt to “impose a simple classification”, but rather look for the “ontological and epistemological home” (Mockler, 2011b, p. 161). Key assumptions that underpin my particular ontological and epistemological ‘home’ are as follows:

- That “reality” is shaped by historical, social, political and environmental pressures.

- That “reality” is constructed and experienced in different ways by different individuals and communities and can change over time.

- That knowledge is contextual and relational—Indigenous knowledge systems are built on interrelatedness and interdependence with each other and the greater surrounds (Martin, 2003; Thayer-Bacon, 2009).

- That knowledge can be emancipatory but if used unethically it can be harmful.

(Adapted from Chilisa, 2012, p. 40-41; Mockler, 2011b, p. 162)

These philosophical assumptions guided my decision to use the Cultural Interface to frame the research and also underpinned my decision to employ narrative inquiry and life history methodologies to discover how personal biography and experiences of Indigenous Studies influence professional identity formation. As Mockler suggests, there are many ways that one could research teacher professional identity formation,
however life history provides congruence between ontology, epistemology and the methods by paying attention to an individual’s “whole” story:

In the investigation of teacher professional identity, then, life history was seen to be a highly appropriate methodology to adopt, because an understanding of teacher identity, of what it is to become and be a teacher, is inextricably linked to the personal and life circumstances of teachers themselves. (2011b, p. 162)

Thinking narratively (using the three dimensions of interaction, continuity and situation) about preservice teachers’ experiences at the Cultural Interface also provided congruence with my ontological and epistemological assumptions because the research process requires one to ask questions and interpret the stories in a relational manner. The lens is focused on exploring how the locale, agency and tensions experienced by preservice teachers are storied across time in relation to their emerging identity as teachers of Indigenous Studies and teachers of Aboriginal students. Britzman’s (2003) view that educational biography accounts for some preservice teachers’ “persistency of particular worldviews, orientations, dispositions and cultural myths” (p. 27) in conjunction with the argument that learning to teach is a ‘process of becoming’, highlights the complex nature of teacher identity construction. On the one hand identity formation is considered to be ongoing and flexible, yet paradoxically some preservice teachers hold strong views about teaching and learning that if left unchallenged can be problematic as they move into the complex world of teaching (Trent, 2011, p. 530). Narrative inquiry and life history provide a nuanced coming to terms of biography and prior education, contextualised in relation to significant people and places, and it provides a unique opportunity to disclose the often contradictory meanings attached to these experiences (Britzman, 2003).

My belief that knowledge can be both emancipatory and potentially harmful
offers a warning that while this research aimed to provide deeper insight to the experiences of Indigenous Studies on preservice teachers’ emerging professional identities and thus bring light to this important aspect of professional learning, there were important ethical and authenticity considerations to ensure the research process did not inadvertently cause harm to the participants.

Creating an authentic research process – building relationships

Mockler (2011b) argues that where extended interviewing is used to collect data, a key consideration for creating authenticity in the research process is the development of quality relationships between the research participants and the researcher (p. 162). Implicit in the creation of respectful, socially just research processes are the ethical considerations. Therefore, the discussion to follow regarding the data collection procedures also incorporates relevant ethical matters.

The participants

Participants were recruited from final year, Bachelor of Education student cohorts at The University of Sydney. For students enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (Primary), Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Aboriginal Studies) and the Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Human Movement and Health Education), their final year of study occurs in fourth year. For preservice teachers enrolled in one of the Bachelor of Education Secondary: Combined Degree programs (Humanities and Social Sciences), their final year of study occurs in year five.

Some research suggests that the professional identity of secondary teachers is derived primarily from the subject they teach (Beijaard, 1995; Day et al., 2006; Tambyah, 2009). Although a minor facet to explore, given the participants in this study were drawn from diverse degree programs, I was interested to explore how the
subject they teach impacted (if at all), and when coalesced with Indigenous Studies, how did these two disciplines come together to influence professional identity formation?

**Negotiating entry to the field – the recruitment process**

Following D. Phillips’ (2011, p. 121) research, I had no stipulation for selecting participants based on their cultural background, gender or age. Rather, my intent was to enter the research process with an openness to listen to preservice teachers’ stories in a way that did not make judgments nor conjure up stereotypes about their prior knowledge and cultural, religious and political beliefs and attitudes. Although Indigenous preservice teacher participation may have offered different insights, particularly in relation to biography and experiences at the Cultural Interface of Indigenous Studies; I did not want to make assumptions that Indigenous preservice teachers would align their identity with the Indigenous collective for a number of reasons identified in D. Phillips’ research:

> They may have been raised in a non-Indigenous family; they may not articulate their Indigenous identity as a primary standpoint; they may have been subject to multiple forces impacting on them to conform to Western systems and ideologies. (2011, p. 122)

I was also optimistic that a diversity of narratives would be illuminated through the research process and not necessarily through the predefined labelling of demographic characteristics. Moreover, entering the research process with preconceived ideas about preservice teacher identity is somewhat antithetical to the purpose of life history research. Having said this, the participants came from diverse backgrounds as follows:

- 1 Aboriginal female
• 1 Aboriginal male
• 1 Asian-Australian male
• 6 Anglo-European/British descent (1 male and 5 females).

In contemplating how this research might be of personal benefit to those who volunteer to participate, it was difficult to justify (as others have done e.g., Wrench, 2011) that personal professional learning will emerge. Instead, it is fitting to provide the following example as an instructive ethical approach:

In recruiting participants for a narrative research project, we say either explicitly or implicitly that our work offers the potential of benefiting the population the participants represent. We take care, though, not to promise that participation in the research will benefit them personally. (Josselson, 2007, p. 555)

Another important ethical consideration was to ensure that preservice teachers were not recruited using coercive behaviours. A number of specific precautions were taken given I am employed by the Faculty from which the preservice teachers were recruited. Although there was a very small chance that I may have previously taught some of the participants (two years prior to the commencement of this research), this concern did not come to fruition. More importantly though, I do not teach any final year subjects in any of the Bachelor of Education degrees and therefore there was no possibility of interviewing preservice teachers who I would teach and assess during the interview process.

Preservice teacher participation was voluntary. Four colleagues, who coordinate final year students in each of the degree programs, kindly agreed to ‘advertise’ my research during one of their weekly lectures. During this presentation, my colleagues described the research aims and ethical considerations (such as confidentiality and informed consent) and distributed copies of the Participant
Information Sheet, Consent Form and a Contact Details form (approved by The University of Sydney’s, Human Ethics Committee - see Appendix 1, 2 and 3). On completion of the presentation, preservice teachers were informed that if they wish to participate in the research, they must deposit the Consent Form and a Contact Details Form in a specifically marked assignment box located within the Faculty of Education and Social Work. Each degree cohort was given four weeks to decide whether or not to participate and within a period of one month, nine preservice teachers had submitted the forms.

The preservice teachers were subsequently contacted either by email or phone and during this initial contact, I invited them to attend an informal meeting to talk about the project in more detail. A time for this meeting was organised at the convenience of each preservice teacher and a location on campus was agreed to where his or her anonymity was assured. The first informal meeting took approximately 15-20 minutes. The focus of this meeting was to reinforce the information on the Consent Form, provide the preservice teacher with the opportunity to ask questions and to ascertain if the project was of interest given that it was a year-long endeavour. Toward the end of the meeting, I provided each preservice teacher with a handout describing the key themes to be discussed at the first interview. Before departing, another meeting was planned and I reinforced that if they wished to withdraw at any time, they were welcome to contact the staff member who originally ‘advertised’ my research (for indirect transmission to me) or alternatively they could contact me directly. Participants were informed there would be no consequences or impact on current or future study at the University of Sydney if they chose to withdraw at any stage.
Participant anonymity

Pseudonyms have been used to ensure participant privacy and general confidentiality through all stages of the research undertaking, including the analysis of data and reporting of the study findings. Only the researcher has access to the original recordings and signed Consent Forms. Interviews were conducted in a relaxed, private space so peers could not overhear the conversation.

Another key ethical consideration is a concern for the “personhood and wellbeing” (Mockler, 2011b, p. 163) of the participants. Processes should be established to ensure that participants are not harmed psychologically, physically, or emotionally during the research process. While it was not anticipated that the interview questions would cause harm or distress, if this had occurred, participants would have been advised of the University of Sydney Counselling and Psychological Services located on the Camperdown Campus.

Creating field texts (data collection)

This narrative inquiry began like most - the starting point of telling stories (Clandinin, 2013, p. 103). Interviewing is a standard technique for acquiring knowledge which is co-created through the two subjectivities of the interviewer and the interviewee (L. Richardson, 1993, p. 704). The quality of the data collected is largely dependent on developing good relationships in order that participants feel content to engage in interview conversation over an extended period of time. Data collection involved participant engagement in semi-structured, conversational interviews. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in a style that aimed to sustain an on-going authentic conversation which held opportunities for reflection and respectful dialogue.
Plummer (2001), argues that while there are many published guides to interviewing, improving interviewing skills can only really happen through practice, however one aspect that can help the process is to ensure that the interviewee knows what to expect in advance of the interview (p. 144). Prior to each interview, each participant was provided with an overview of the focus areas for discussion. Like Mockler (2011b), I found that this arrangement was particularly helpful to allow participants time to reflect and prepare for each interview.

Conversations were developed around the focus areas listed below (see Appendix 4 for the detailed interview schedule) although this schedule was used flexibly because, as hooks (1997) explains, people’s lived and told stories are not linear, and do not necessarily “move from point A to point B” (p. xx). Focus areas:

- Exploration of personal background and educational experiences
- Motivations for becoming a teacher
- The nature of the preservice teacher’s experiences of Indigenous Studies during primary and secondary schooling
- The nature of the preservice teacher’s experiences of Indigenous Studies during their degree – including the mandatory unit and perspectives embedded in units of study throughout the degree
- Aims and aspirations as future teachers of Indigenous students and Indigenous Studies
- Changes in professional self-image and perceived influences of Indigenous Studies, upon those changes
- Sense of self as a beginning teacher – key influences (Adapted from Mockler, 2011a, p. 129)
The duration of each interview was, on average, between one and two hours. The first interview was conducted in April 2014 with the final conducted in November 2014. Eight participants completed three interviews and one participant was only able to complete two interviews due to personal circumstances.

**Narrative inquiry interviewing**

Clandinin makes a distinction between narrative inquiries that begin with living stories and those that begin with telling stories. “In the inquiry process, we work within the three dimensional narrative inquiry space to “unpack” the lived [my emphasis] and told [my emphasis] stories” (2013, p. 34). This narrative inquiry began with the telling of stories as I engaged in a conversation with the participants who shared stories of their experiences. The notion of living stories differs in that it focuses attention on the researcher’s relational engagement with the participants - or to use the term favoured by Clandinin; what occurs in the process involves a “relational living alongside” (2013, p. 23) one another as the inquiry evolves.

This focus on relational engagement acknowledges that the preservice teachers and I were “in the midst” of living our own stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 63-64) each time we met for conversation. Thus, although the starting point began with the telling of their stories of experience, as our conversations continued over the months and each person had time to reflect on the discussions and reread their transcripts, the differentiation between the living and telling of stories was often less discernible. An explication of this is included in the narrative chapters (7, 8 and 9) when I discuss how my conversations with participants led to an unintended pedagogical intervention (Olsen, 2008). In allowing participants to speak for themselves, participants come to “know about their being and experience their
becoming” (Hissong, Lape, & Bailey, 2015, p. 112). Some of our conversations appeared to open up unexpected opportunities for the participants to reflect on their experiences and push for deeper self-understanding during the interview process.

**Ethical considerations – interview process**

A number of ethical dilemmas have been identified in the literature with regards to the interview process. Josselson (2007) identifies the essence of the ethical conundrum in narrative research lies with the dual role that the researcher must take on, including both acting in an intimate trusting relationship with the participant and also in a professional scholarly community. Josselson (2007) describes the ‘slippery slope’ of navigating the interpersonal ethics such as ensuring the privacy, wellbeing and dignity of the participants while at the same time fulfilling the academic institution’s demand for accuracy, authenticity and interpretation of the data (p. 538). Therefore, when conducting interviews it is important to be aware of whose interests are being served. As narrative research is embedded in a relationship the possibility exists that the interviewee may divulge more than anticipated, particularly as rapport between the interviewee and researcher develops and personal defences fall away (Josselson, 2007, p. 543). D. Phillips (2011, p. 121) notes that the discussions which occur in Indigenous Australian Studies classrooms can be emotionally charged and unpredictable and therefore, during her doctoral research, students were advised of the availability of counselling services on the University campus. As mentioned previously, I was alert to the potential of this harm, however I considered that initiating the offer of counselling upfront to participants could be somewhat counterproductive, creating an air of unease around my intent. Josselson’s work was informative here, she argues that generally people only divulge to a researcher what
they are willing to tell, and her experience is that “there is no need to warn them that they might become upset. I believe it infantilizes and thereby denigrates participants to tell them they might become upset while talking” (2007, p. 543). So while I did not discount that during an interview there may be some emotion, I worked,

hard to be open with the participants about the process, to use humour where it was appropriate as a tool to ease discomfort or awkwardness on their part, and to share aspects of my own experience when they inquired or, … for other reasons [such as]… a participant asked me a direct question about my experience, rather than at my instigation. (Mockler, 2011b, p. 164)

This point also made me mindful not to waste each participant’s time by indulgent sharing of too much of my personal information which can inadvertently happen in an attempt to develop a relationship through “mutual storytelling” (Munro, 1998, p. 127; Mockler, 2011b, p. 164).

It was also important to be alert to the “slippery slopes” of knowing when one is engaging in processes that shift the power too far towards my self-interest in completing this research. Researcher ‘reflexivity’ is understood to be an important way to navigate this ethical dilemma – this will be addressed later in this chapter.

**Transcription feedback process**

The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Each participant was given the opportunity to read over the transcripts and provide feedback. The ethical integrity and authenticity of the research hinged on the provision of participant feedback in order that the final research text respected participants’ lived and told experiences.

The participants were satisfied the transcript reflected the original conversation and only minor typographical changes were suggested. A few participants wrote notes on the transcripts to prompt discussion and for some, the
transcripts were a source of reflection – with the next meeting providing an opportunity to add something they had forgotten to say previously. Each participant received a copy of the narratives included in this thesis as a final opportunity for comment, from which positive feedback was provided.

**Choosing the stories for the final research text**

While narrative inquiry is often criticised for the small numbers involved in the research, concepts of resonance and verisimilitude negate these concerns and are pertinent to this research (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Schwandt, 2007; Webster & Mertova, 2007). In choosing the stories I returned to my earlier thinking about the decision to use narrative inquiry as a method to conduct this research for this approach focuses on the life experiences of the individual (Creswell, 2013). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) provided direction here:

> We came to narrative as a way to study experience. For us, narrative is the closest we can come to experience….Our guiding principle in an inquiry is to focus on experience and to follow where it leads. (p. 188)

In following where the inquiry leads, resolution comes with not hoping to find a “Hollywood plot” where everything works out in the end (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 181) or for a “narrative smoothing” where there are clean, unconditional plots (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 181) in the final narratives. Instead, the research focuses on the journey of hearing each distinct story of experience, and as Hooley suggests, “the intention of narrative inquiry here is to produce knowledge outcomes that can be further investigated in practice” (2009, p. 183).

While each of the stories held new insights, I had to make a difficult decision about which stories to include. Three participant stories were selected from the 9 preservice teachers who volunteered to be involved in this research project. During
the process of hearing and rereading their stories, I started to reflect on those which were emerging as “needing to be told” (Creswell, 2013, p. 104) as well as considering those that provided new insights to the complex pedagogical space of the Cultural Interface. I chose the stories that challenged my own thinking or provided new insights (even if subtle) or enhanced my understanding of ideas I had come across in the academic literature. I also chose these stories because they brought me reflexively into the study (Creswell, 2013, p. 259) in unexpected ways.

Although I learned much from each of the nine participants, the three selected as the final research texts were those which excited and challenged me to re-think aspects of my work. These were the stories that got me talking with my colleagues about our approaches to pedagogy and provided an optimistic lens to focus my work and research in the coming years.

**Problems and limitations**

The decision to interview preservice teachers during the final year of study was based on my assumption that preservice teachers would be in a better position to ‘look back on’ and reflect on their experiences of the entire degree and thus position Indigenous Studies within ‘the whole story’ of their undergraduate studies and life history. I interviewed preservice teachers over the period of one year in order to allow an acceptable period between each interview, to review the transcriptions and minimise my intrusion and impact on their workload. Unfortunately, one of the Aboriginal preservice teachers I interviewed was unable to complete the final interview due to personal circumstances that took him away from Sydney. As there were some important interview questions that were not addressed, this narrative could not be considered when selecting the final three narratives.
Another limitation of this study was the inability to include the other six participant narratives due to word count limitations. These participants each had important insights and experiences of learning about Indigenous Australia and although their exclusion did not diminish the findings in this thesis, their narratives will be the source of analysis in future publications.

**Narrative analysis – process and considerations**

During the preparation of the narratives presented in this thesis, I was mindful of the criticism outlined earlier by Tumarkin (2014) that “storytelling…does not in itself or by itself take us closer to the truths of our lives with anything like the inevitability that gets ascribed to it these days” (p. 175). Consequently, the need for systematic analysis (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2010) and academic rigour (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006) in narrative inquiry is a concern for researchers. Atkinson and Delamont (2006) argue that narratives are presented by some academics in a celebratory light and that although there are wide ranging opportunities, settings and scope to collect and analyse narratives, often they are presented in an uncritical and unanalysed fashion, an example of which is the “common failing, for instance, to imply that informants’ voices ‘speak for themselves’, or that personal, biographical materials provide privileged means of access to informants’ personal experiences, or their source of identity” (p. 166). This section outlines the processes and considerations I engaged with in order to address the above criticisms.

Narrative Inquiry is an on-going and recursive process (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2010) where field texts are read and reread throughout the period of the research in search for “patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes that shape field texts into research texts” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 133). Clandinin and Connelly have
found there is “no one bringing together” of the field texts to create research texts, as it will depend on the writers’ experiences of the texts as they “lay them alongside aside one another in different ways” and they are read through the context of other research and theoretical perspectives (2000, p. 133). The interview data (transcriptions) went through two iterations as the transcribed interviews were returned to the participants for their feedback and subsequent typographical adjustments were made. Using Mockler’s (2011b) process as a guide, I opened each interview with the opportunity to reflect and comment on the transcript of the previous interview. This process has been described as a way to “democratize the research process” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 155) whereby the researcher and the researched work together on “interim texts” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 133) in order to create the final research text. Carspecken (1996) notes however that this democratisation process is not without its challenges particularly if the research treats the participants as peers and shares all evolving ideas for comment (p. 155). Instead it is important to acknowledge the power imbalance of the lecturer / preservice teacher relationship and minimise this imbalance through acting as a facilitator who constructs “a supportive and safe normative environment with your subjects… [to] help them explore issues with their own vocabulary, their own metaphors, and their own ideas” (p. 155). During the interview process, subjectivities are exchanged and therefore what I claim to know as a researcher in this process is constructed knowledge and consequently this too challenges my authority as a researcher (L. Richardson, 1993, p. 704).

**Ethical considerations – constructing narratives**

I also aimed to minimise the power structure inherent in the participant-
researcher relationship during the writing of each final narrative (presented in the next three chapters as “Conversations”). While I shared Mockler’s optimism that the participants would be willing to work with me on their narratives (2011b, p. 163) correcting or adding more context where appropriate, in fact the participants had little interest in the process. Therefore my original aim of creating a democratic research process was fraught with disappointment as some participants were less inclined to offer deeper level feedback due to time pressures and their trust in me that I would represent their stories accurately. Ultimately the participants provided feedback that I had authenticity represented their stories.

**Writing a narrative inquiry thesis**

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that the process of writing a narrative inquiry thesis is quite different from that of writing a reductionist inquiry where the approach is to write chapter by chapter (e.g., introductory chapter, literature review chapter, methodology chapter and so on) in a sequential manner. Clandinin et al. (2007) and Clandinin and Huber (2010) have provided an overview of the key research design characteristics that are generally addressed in narrative inquiry research:

2. Naming the phenomenon: what are we inquiring into?
3. Consider and describe the particular methods used to study the phenomenon.
5. Positioning: in relation to other research and in relation to research undertaken from different epistemological and ontological assumptions.
6. Uniqueness of each study

7. Ethical considerations

8. Issues and processes in representation: attending to the narrative

‘commonplaces’, textural forms, writing the research as a narrative act, thinking about the audience, and the criteria on which these will be judged and presented in policy and practice.

These design characteristics are not dissimilar to those found in other thesis documents, however the point of difference occurs in the ‘back and forth’ writing process discussed previously. The form of the narratives presented in this thesis emerged as the research progressed and I read other narrative theses and texts for inspiration. These research design characteristics guided the formation of the thesis, although (somewhat ironically) at one stage I attempted, without success to ‘force’ my ideas into the above headings. For a moment, I inadvertently invoked a reductionist approach which was not only antithetical to narrative inquiry, but channelled my attention towards ‘fitting’ text into categories rather than focusing on the creation of research texts that honoured the particularities of experiences shared by the participants. Writing on the process of developing the final research text, Clandinin (2013) argues:

In selecting forms of representation it is important to attend to forms that fit the lives of the participants and the narrative inquirers who are being represented. Sometime particular metaphors or genres become apparent in the field text and are used in representational forms in the final research text. However, these cannot be imposed on the field texts a priori. (p. 207)

Moving on from the ‘research design characteristics’ described above, Clandinin and Caine (2013) describe ‘twelve touchstones’ for narrative inquiry that can be used by narrative inquirers to ask questions about whether and how each
category is visible in, and shapes, the inquiry. Clandinin suggests that while the touchstones continue to evolve, they are important to address in the quest to produce quality work. The touchstones devised by Clandinin and Caine (2013) which add to the above list and are woven into the thesis include an understanding that the narratives are always created in the midst of a life in motion so as “to not lose sight that people are always becoming” (p. 176).

**Researcher reflexivity**

The matter of researcher reflexivity is important to the ethical considerations (Alcoff, 1991; Plummer, 2001; Young, 2000) and the credibility of the research (Chilisa, 2012). Plummer (2001) writes that ‘reflexivity’ is a “difficult and even controversial term” (pp. 206-208) because some see it merely in negative terms focusing on indulgent self-introspection, yet others see it as a precondition for good academic work because through the process of self-analysis, the researcher is better able to identify the range of biases he/she brings to the research process and the construction of knowledge. Reflexivity involves developing an ethical position that uncovers which aspects of my ‘observations’ derive from my own biases as the researcher, which derive from the participants, and which derive (or are co-created knowledge) from the interaction between myself and the participants (Josselson, 2007, p. 545).

Chilisa (2012) argues that given qualitative research often faces scrutiny due to a perception that the subjectivity of the researched and researcher impact on the validity of the research, reflexivity is an important strategy to help ensure that the “over involvement” of the researcher does not threaten the credibility of the research (p. 168). Reflexivity also develops as the researched-researcher relationship emerges
(Josselson, 2007), and consequently I followed Chilisa’s (2012) recommendation to keep a journal and record my “post interview impressions” as prompts to guide reflexive writing (pp. 168-169). Subsequently, some of these thoughts, feelings and experiences were incorporated in ‘Chapter 2: The Narrative Journey’ and have been embedded throughout this thesis.

The “four sets of interrogative practices” providing conditions for reflexivity outlined by Alcoff (1991) for “anyone who speaks for others” (p. 24) was also useful in guiding my reflexive approach.

1. “The impetus to speak must be carefully analyzed and, in many cases (certainly for academics!), fought against” (Alcoff, 1991, p.24). In addressing this aspect I have considered my personal motivations for researching this topic and how my standpoint as an Aboriginal person might impact on my writing about non-Indigenous preservice teachers (See Chapter 2: The Narrative Journey).

2. “We must also interrogate the bearing of our location and context on what it is we are saying, and this should be an explicit part of every serious discursive practice we engage in” (Alcoff, 1991, p. 25). In addressing this aspect I have considered my own life history and educational experiences and how these influenced the theoretical and methodological choices for this research. My ethical and moral positioning within this research also forms part of these considerations.

3. “Speaking should always carry with it an accountability and responsibility for what one says” (Alcoff 1991, p. 25). Here I have considered the way my research impacted on the researched with an openness to explore the positive and negative aspects of the research process and “hear” criticism. Consideration was also made with regards to the accountabilities I had towards the participants, the Indigenous
community and the University along with the possible tensions around these accountabilities.

4. “In order to evaluate attempts to speak for others in particular instances, we need to analyze the probable or actual effects of the words on the discursive and material context” (Alcoff, 1991, p. 26) This aspect challenges the researcher to “remain accountable for the findings we ultimately share” (Young, 2000, p. 643). This point challenged me to think beyond the submission of this thesis and to be alert to the benefits and potential hazards this research may have with respect to the field of Indigenous Studies, the communities the research will serve, and the people who participated. Reflexive processes were engaged with personally and with colleagues like Steve when we deliberated our practices that might inadvertently “let the racists off the hook” (see Chapter 2: The narrative journey, April 2015: A conversation with Steve). I have contemplated whether by shining a light on the preservice teachers’ stories in this thesis, I have naively valourised their experiences and given the impression that preservice teacher resistance and racism is now at the fringe of my concerns.

While the origins of the stereotype of the three types of people who work in ‘development roles’ in Indigenous communities is unknown (Stirrat, 2008); the labels, ‘mercenaries’, ‘missionaries’ or ‘misfits’ is widely used in Australia (Kowal, 2006; Michie, 2011; B. Price & Price, 1998). In research conducted by Auld, Charles, Dyer, Levy, and Marshall (2013) with preservice teachers while on their professional experience in a remote community in the Northern Territory, one preservice teacher described this stereotype as it had been relayed to him:

So missionaries are trying to save the world. Mercenaries are here because you get a remote bonus on pay and 6 months holiday. And misfits who just can’t get work elsewhere. And there are some at this school. There’s one teacher
who kind of pulled me aside, said if you want to make money this is where you’ve got to teach. And there’s a few who are close to retirement and are here to save for retirement. (p. 4)

While I agree with Michie (2011) that these stereotypical labels are of dubious value (p. 270), they are a reminder of the sometimes less than altruistic, possibly naively self-absorbed and complex personal motivations for engagement in Indigenous education. The issue for me was to maintain an awareness of this complex space and draw findings that moved beyond disparaging stereotypes of each participant while they were in the midst of their journey towards becoming a teacher.

Found poetry and the ‘conversations’ with each participant’s narrative

I have chosen two different literary forms to retell and analyse the participants’ stories; firstly found poetry and secondly a ‘conversational’ analysis. This section explains why I have chosen to introduce each participant using fragments of their stories by way of found poetry and how this contextualises each life history in the participant’s own words in preparation for the ‘conversational’ analysis which follows. L. Richardson (1994) writes:

I consider writing a method of inquiry, a way of finding out about yourself and your topic… a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable. (p. 516)

Choosing a rhetorical form to present each narrative became a thought-provoking process. I was initially seeking a form that would authentically represent each preservice teacher’s experiences in a way that would keep the reader interested while maintaining the academic integrity of the research. Nelson’s (2011) paper argues that such a convergence is possible and should be encouraged so that there is “a commingling of analytical and artistic ways of knowing” (Conquergood, 2002, p. 151
in Nelson, 2011, p. 480). By way of example, Nelson applies different narrative forms (poems, stories and plays) to argue that “evocative narratives of classroom life” can foster creative thinking, aesthetic rigour and academic artistry that “not only reflect changing understandings of knowledge but also help to change the knowledge landscape” (p. 481). Further, Nelson argues that explaining why one chooses a particular narrative form is akin to explaining one’s analytical approach and why this choice advances a particular argument (2011, p. 478).

Qualitative researchers who encourage others to experiment with different forms and writing practices do so to inspire research that will want to be read by diverse audiences, and be more honest and less boring (e.g., Caulley, 2008; Glesne 1997; Prendergast, 2006; L. Richardson, 1994). Ely’s (2007) chapter, In-Forming Representations offers a “smorgasbord” of suggestions for representing and strengthening the “readability of the whole text so that readers may envision cohesive, meaningful stories about people’s lived and relived experiences” (p. 596). I was drawn to the use of poetry to encapsulate the ‘heart of the matter’ of the experiences of each preservice teacher. Although defining precisely what counts as poetry is difficult (Glesne, 1997, p. 213), I hoped to illuminate the ‘essences’ of each story. Poetry enables this and pays attention to rhythm and to atmosphere – each word matters (Nelson, 2011, p. 478). L. Richardson eloquently states:

> The poem is a whole which makes sense of its parts; a poem is parts that anticipate, shadow, undergrid the whole. That is poems can be experienced simultaneously as both whole and partial; text and subtext; the tail can be the dog. (1993, p. 704)

A search then, for a poetic form led to a range of possibilities including:

virtual poetry which Langer (1953) describes in Feelings and Form as the “semblance of events lived and felt, …a piece of virtual life” (1953, p. 212); dramatic poetry
which allows for the pauses and inflections in speech to be portrayed in contrast to prose which is said to distort these (Tedlock, 1983), and found poetry created from the transcripts of field texts so that found words and phrases are pulled together to create images from each participant’s story fragments (Clandinin, 2013, p. 152).

Found poetry is described as a “close cousin to narrative form” because the writing stays very close to the data/transcripts, limiting the choice of words (Butler-Kisber, 2005, p. 96). Laurel Richardson (see for example, 1992, 1993) is credited as being one of the first to introduce the idea of using found poetry to transform a qualitative interview into poetic form (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 333). While L. Richardson tends to draw attention to how her work has been received rather than describing the process of creating her works (Prendergast, 2009, p. 549), Glesne’s (1997) writing fills this gap and was helpful in guiding my own process of transforming transcripts into poetry. I have used Glesne’s (1997) suggestion of creating self-imposed ‘rules’ which, for me, involved using the exact words of each participant. In the first iteration I kept enough words together to represent the speaking rhythm and maintain the coherence of the narrative. The second iteration occurred at the final stages of the thesis writing process and provided a challenge to capture their experiences succinctly on two pages.

Earlier in this methodology chapter, I described the process of “thinking narratively” about Nakata’s notion of the locale of the learner. Consequently, it was important to capture each participant’s stories of their lives before they attended university – particularly in relation to their prior experiences and thoughts about Indigenous Australia. Janesick (2013) writes, “by laying out the details of the story, the thick description to set the scene and the details of the words of the participants,
we have the beginning of the documentation of lived experience” (p. 160). A life history context was essential to analyse the students’ experiences at the Cultural Interface of Indigenous Studies pedagogy and curriculum. I sought to capture the poignant memories and pivotal moments of the students’ thinking and learning about Indigenous Australia – all of which appeared suited to poetic representation (Butler-Kisber, 2005, p. 95).

**Analysis as ‘conversations’**

The second approach engages in an analysis of each narrative through the notion of a ‘conversation’ between the literature, theoretical frameworks, reflexive passages shared throughout this research and the participant interview data. Given the many hours of digital recordings and subsequent transcription pages, it was important to capture the critical events and the experiences that emerged. A critical events driven approach to narrative inquiry research provides a mechanism for dealing with large amounts of data and for studying human experience and its complexity (Webster and Mertova, 2007). Webster and Mertova (2007) argue that “because events are critical parts of people’s lives, using them as a main focus for research provides a valuable and insightful tool for getting at the core of what is important in that research” (p. 71). These authors also suggest that collecting large amounts of data can encourage a narrowing view of the data which does not allow the story to evolve or identify the critical events. Therefore they promote the focus on critical events as a *broadening* approach to prevent the problem of “endless burrowing” (2007, pp. 114-115) into the data. While some “burrowing” was important to elucidate each participant’s dilemmas or how certain events or sites affected their learning experiences (Kim, 2015, p. 207), it was important to analyse these experiences within
their broader social and historical contexts.

The development of each conversation required a ‘back and forth’ process of engagement with the literature reviews (Chapter 3 and Chapter 4), the theoretical framework (Chapter 5) and the methodology (Chapter 6). The literature reviews expanded because of the complexity of the experiences shared by participants. Consequently the conversations presented here went through a number of iterations as I analysed the field texts to develop the final research text. I required different lenses to develop nuanced understanding beyond that which I had originally anticipated. This iterative approach emerged as a way of addressing the tensions which arose at “the boundary between thinking narratively and thinking formalistically” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 40) and continued to the conclusion of preparing this thesis. Formalistic thinking positions theoretical frames at the heart of the research (a structuring framework) in comparison to narrative where dissertations are written without a specific literature review and instead the literature is woven throughout “in an attempt to create a seamless link between the theory and the practice embodied in the inquiry” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 41). Although I have made an effort to foreground the key literature and theories which informed or were discovered during the writing process as a way of introduction; analysis also occurred in the following chapters “as a kind of conversation between theory and life or, at least, between theory and the stories of life contained in the inquiry” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 41).

Following the found poetry and conversational analysis of the participants’ stories, I present the key findings as a “narrative coda”. Kim (2015) clarifies that “the word coda [authors emphasis] came from Latin, cauda, which means tail” (p. 228).
She challenges narrative inquirers to think about the ‘tail end’ of their research and consider “who cares”? In the final chapter I clarify what comes after the story and find new meanings from this research to keep the stories going (p. 229).

**Summary**

This chapter established narrative inquiry as an appropriate methodological approach to study the intersection of life history and preservice teachers’ experiences of engagement in Indigenous Studies at university. I applied the notion of ‘thinking narratively’ about the participants experiences at the Cultural Interface to develop an understanding of the relationship between their experiences of Indigenous Studies and their professional identity development. This chapter also examined the ethical processes that were employed during the data collection and analysis of this narrative inquiry. I move now to the participants’ found poetry and narratives.
Chapter 7: Blaze

Found Poetry

Educational journey and learning about Indigenous Australia

My parents thought their children would complete in the public system. Ideologically they would have liked that.

I was struggling, they were concerned about the trajectory of that.

The school promised a progressive framework, music and drama.

At the public school kindergarten to Year 3, I don’t remember Indigenous Australia.

Year 3, I remember convicts and settlement, as it was called.

About the race to discover Australia, Captain Cook claiming it for the British Empire. Australia being a colony, About colonial life.

The idea of invasion, first contact, treaty anything like that, was not discussed that I can remember.

I do remember, the librarian sometimes used to read stories from the Dreamtime, as it was known then.

Then we used to do activities, finger painting, colouring in the frog, performing the rainbow serpent. Just what we did in library.

A distinct memory doing the creation story of Adam and Eve. They read the story about the rainbow serpent and the creation of Australia. I remember coming home confused. There can only be one explanation of how the world came to be.

Hey mum, Dreaming stories, do you think they’re real? Yeah, I do think the land has some sort of possession, a spiritual knowledge. I just thought if mum thinks that it must be right.

I went to private school. I can remember, a unit in the library. It was all past tense, I remember thinking, so what do Aboriginal people do now? They’re not dead!

The only explanation given. In remote Australia these things still continue.

There was the national apology. The whole school came to watch live streamed.
We always did a Welcome to Country. Little things, the Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal flag they were just there.

The disconnect. No emphasis to incorporate Indigenous perspectives.

Studies of religion, Aboriginal spiritualties. Elective.

Oh, we had smoking ceremonies. Aunties and Uncles would come in, for really significant opening events.

I had significant detours. A term at boarding school I was naughty.

A term in Hong Kong It taught me a valuable lesson, you can be in a context you don’t particularly enjoy.

I couldn’t wait to get out of school. I always liked learning. Just the freedom I didn’t have, my biggest gripe.

I never got the correlation, leaning against a wall when listening quietly to a teacher was disrespecting the school.

Year 10, 11 and 12. A lot more freedom. I was able to choose the humanities.

Inspiring, I loved it. Great friends, great teachers. Great everything.

Never thought I’d be a person loving school by the end.

Family influence and learning about Indigenous Australia

The first memory I ever have in my entire life relates to Aboriginal Australia. Camping, I was turning three the election.

Issues related to land rights, Mabo, Native title. My parents, very interested in the land rights movement.

Sitting around a camp fire at night listening to ABC radio, mum crying. Paul Keating lost. A real sense, I can’t believe this is happening. That’s my earliest memory.

It’s beyond my comprehension, how people could think, terra nullius was a legitimate thing. I just can’t relate.

My parents, a significant impact on why I chose to become a teacher.

Education is an equaliser.
In Conversation with Blaze’s Narrative

Blaze is in his early twenties. During one of our email exchanges I explained that I had to come up with a pseudonym for each participant and asked “If your name wasn’t [name removed], what would it be?” His response was quick, …it would be Blaze as I like to think of myself as a small, controllable fire¹. Blaze takes some things seriously – he speaks with resolve about a range of social justice issues he hopes to address in his future career and is passionate about his future role as a teacher. Blaze does not however take himself seriously – he is self-deprecatingly funny. He also has a strong sense of personal agency and believes that he can make a difference in the lives of the children he will teach.

Blaze prepared thoughtfully for each interview - he had read and reflected on the interview questions before arriving at my office to share his story. The opportunity to prepare for each interview seemed to offer new insights with regard to his prior knowledge and experiences of Indigenous Australia. The interview process appeared to create a pedagogical intervention in his professional development (Olsen, 2008, p. 39).

Experiences of Indigenous Australia – the influence of family and school

Blaze’s parents profoundly influenced his decision to become a teacher, not in the coercive sense of the ‘helicopter parent’ who pushes their child into a particular career, but rather in nurturing Blaze’s sensibility that education can play a transformational role in the lives of young people. The found poetry fragments of Blaze’s educational history presented above tell the story of a slightly rebellious young

¹ Quotations from participant interviews are presented in italics. Short quotations are embedded in the sentence while larger quotations of 40 words or more are indented in a new paragraph.
person in the making, a non-conformist who was prepared to challenge seemingly pointless school rules, ...I would laugh out loud, openly mock [the teachers], what does it matter how a person is sitting! ...I never got the correlation that leaning against a wall when listening quietly to a teacher was disrespecting the school. As Blaze’s defiance and disrespect for authority increased into the early high school years, he was given an ultimatum by the school, ...I could come back in Year 10 if I had the last two terms of Year 9 somewhere else to settle me down. Blaze’s ‘sojourn’ at boarding school alongside an experience as an exchange student in Hong Kong provided the impetus for personal growth. In the case of boarding school, he received influential pastoral care that would steady his rebellious confrontations with teachers. Although, in hindsight, the Hong Kong exchange was viewed as a somewhat impulsive decision, ...looking back it was really weird, I just got on a plane and went off...I remember thinking...what have I got myself into. The experience served as a kind of cultural and educational awakening. Blaze spoke at length about the teaching and learning environment in Hong Kong that tested his prior assumptions:

> It was very strict. Totally different teaching style, like the teacher stood at the front of a classroom of 41, and you’re in the same class the whole day, so it was like primary school, but the teacher just came into your room for each subject. They just talked into the microphone in English for an hour or however long the periods were and then left, they had blackboards and a projector. There was no group work, there was no discussion.

As Blaze travelled back in time to reflect on these experiences and bring them into the moment, the resonance of the past in the present becomes apparent:

> It taught me a valuable lesson, it taught me that you can be in a context that you don’t particularly enjoy, like high school or just Year 9. But there are still positives....You might not want to be in it, but you are, so try to find something every day that’s positive or happy.

During his time in Hong Kong, Blaze experienced what Brown (2004a, 2004b) calls an
‘educational plunge’ into a cross-cultural encounter. Here his assumptions about a universal classroom pedagogy were tested:

*I think in many circumstances, you just think that the education system you were brought up in is somehow, like, the universal way that it is around the world. It also taught me, I guess, sociologically, the extent to which a cultural mindset or a culture impacts on the practices and the teaching pedagogy in education. And so, for a society like Hong Kong, or China more broadly, that’s very outcome driven and very related to your contribution to the economy and that idea of having a very solid knowledgeable, factual foundation. There was no, like interpretive, analytical, creative outlets in any way.*

Blaze acknowledged that some of his behaviours at school were driven by teenage rebellion ...*a lot of it was hormones as well, just fighting against authority and trying to take on as much power as you can.* The senior years of schooling provided a welcomed change for Blaze as the reins of the school’s authority were relaxed and students were accorded subject choice, trust and greater freedom of movement beyond the school grounds. He re-focused with fruitful outcomes ...*I loved it. Great friends, great teachers, great everything. I just never thought I’d be a person coming from that position in lower/middle school, to like, you know, loving school by the end of it.*

Boarding school and the exchange to Hong Kong appear to be critical events in Blaze’s personal growth. In each case he was cast into experiences that caused personal dissonance – however he was able to ‘make something’ of the circumstances, developing insight and a deeper sense of personal responsibility to make choices that would be respectful of his parents and to the school community.

Blaze had very supportive parents and this was an important ‘backstory’ during our conversations. Blaze recollected his family’s influence on his career trajectory with great admiration:

*My parents had a significant impact on me in terms of education and why I chose to become a teacher because both my parents grew up in relative poverty in Australia and both came from stigmatised groups on top of that, on top of*
Blaze’s father experienced bullying at school on the basis of religion. His mother was raised by her divorced single mother, *...a huge source of shame* during the 1960s. Blaze described the significance of education for his parents:

> Education was important to both my parents because free public education and free tertiary education enabled them to dramatically improve the trajectory that their lives would have otherwise taken, had they followed in the footsteps of their parents and siblings....School, at least for my mother, was a place where you were valued as a person separate from the context that you came from in the home environment. And so, whilst their neighbours had issues with the choices of her mother, or while they didn’t go to church because no church would take them on, at school it didn’t matter. She was an equal participant in classroom discussions, equally valued, the teachers didn’t know about her background, necessarily, so it didn’t matter and so, for her, education was an equaliser in terms of helping her improve her life.

While Blaze contemplated becoming a high school teacher specialising in English and drama, he decided against this because he was told it was very hard to secure a job and secondly he explained that primary teachers have more time with their students and can develop inclusive classroom cultures in the formative years of education:

> If you are an English teacher in Year 9 and your Year 9 class hates school, the best you can do is have them love your subject, but you’re not going to be able to reverse major systemic attitudes towards school and school attendance. And, I guess, again, relating it back to my parents, as a primary school teacher one of the most important things to me is making sure that irrespective of whatever’s going on at home, they can come to school and they know it’s safe, they know it’s secure, they know it’s going to be happy and positive. They’re aware of boundaries and they know that they’re not really going to get into that much trouble, ‘cause I think given my background, I’m quite lenient at letting the kid have their time and...I don’t get upset about uniform and stuff like that. So that for me is why I chose primary school, I think you can make a bigger difference in terms of attitudes towards school than you can in high school. Then, in saying that, I think professionally and personally, I would find it more engaging on a personal level to be discipline specific in a high school ‘cause you can land a fantastic Year 12 English class and talk about a text the whole time and I’d love it, but, I guess, I chose ideology in many ways over a preference in that way.

There was a determined sense that Blaze’s parents’ experiences have become
part of an intergenerational story – that is to say his parents’ stories have become part of his personal life story. His mother’s story of school as a place of ‘escape’ is retold as a significant event and Blaze often returned to discuss education as the great social ‘equaliser’ – a place where you can become empowered. A conversation he had with his mother during primary school resonated to this day:

*I’d said, oh, why do I have to go to school? And she would always say, because if you go to school, it doesn’t matter how well you do, it will mean that when you finish school you have way more options than other people who don’t go to school. And so the emphasis from my parents was never, ever, ever on going to university as sacrosanct and you had to do that, it was just about finishing school. I think it was an expectation that we’d go to Year 12, unless, like, we were particularly adapted to a trade, in which case we probably would’ve been allowed to leave when we were 16, if it just wasn’t working. But there was an expectation to finish school and then if you wanted to work in retail and be an unskilled worker for the rest of your life that would be totally fine with my parents, provided you joined a union [both laughing]. But, you had the option to do that, you don’t go into retail as an unskilled worker for the rest of your life because that’s the opportunities that you’ve rendered yourself to.*

Clearly though, Blazes’ trajectory was not a trade, and the “explicit” [Blaze’s word] messages about the transformational role of education propelled him into university. While Blaze attended a private school, he did not see his future teaching role within a private school context. He admitted though, to fleeting thoughts of choosing this path given the resources might be better, but ultimately Blaze had other priorities:

*But ideologically and ideally, I’d like to work in a public school because education for me is not about me… and my professional development so much as it is a social justice or social services program. And that’s the prism through which I view it. So that’s why I became a teacher.*

Blaze’s parents had a keen interest in Australian politics and this would often avail to him consequential learning about Indigenous Australia:

*The first memory…relates to Aboriginal Australia….I’ve always just grown up in a family where politics was personal and so doing things to help other people and engaging in debates about the way society should be formed…that’s personal and has an impact on people’s lives.*
Blaze’s father introduced him to politics and social justice issues surrounding Aboriginal Australia and he recalled conversations with his mother about Aboriginal spirituality. He also observed with humour that his education about Aboriginal Australia was supplemented through the government funded national broadcaster ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) TV which Blaze joked, ...we were only ever allowed to watch the ABC....So, you know, if it was privatised my parents would be the chief stockholders!

Blaze reflected on his primary school experiences of learning about Indigenous Australia in tokenistic ways where Aboriginal people were presented as ...past tense. He remembered questioning this approach ... so what do Aboriginal people do now? They’re not dead, they’re here! He could not however recollect the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives within his secondary schooling beyond that mandated in history and an elective subject (Studies of Religion), which he noted ...wasn’t an initiative by the school. He explained though, that the school was committed to Aboriginal education through its implementation of a program for Aboriginal children who were taught in a class separate to the ‘mainstream’. While Blaze understood the philosophy behind the initiative, he expressed doubts about the efficacy of this approach as a whole school Aboriginal education project:

*I don’t want to say tokenistic because it’s not tokenistic, it was coming from a genuine place and it was well received, I think, by people associated with it. But, all the easy things to do, put in a flag, do the Welcome to Country, celebrate the national apology, whole school things that you can just whip up and do, were done, but the really meaningful, like, you know, were any of the high school teachers given specific training in Indigenous education....I don’t think that this happened.*

Blaze reflected on his secondary education with disappointment, primarily because he perceived a disconnect between the school leadership’s projected public
commitment to Indigenous education in contrast to the lack of inclusion of Aboriginal curriculum perspectives for students in mainstream classes. He recalled the numerous times he noticed Aboriginal people on campus but didn’t have the opportunity to engage with them or understand their role within the school. He described one scenario:

_The Elders would be battling White kids down the hallway, pushed up against a wall because it was recess and so there wasn’t that idea that like, guys, this important person is coming and these are the protocols if you come into contact with them and, you know, if they look a bit lost, try and help them out or anything like that. It was just sort of like, it was as if they were someone who delivers the post at midday to the office. So, walking to maths, you’d walk past six elderly Indigenous people walking out from a meeting, but there was no explanation of why they’re there, who they are....in hindsight, when you go and read about these people that spoke at speech night, or that came to the school, these were eminent leaders in their communities._

Given the school’s resources, Blaze perceived the lack of Aboriginal community engagement with the non-Aboriginal student population as a lost opportunity for deeper, authentic learning about Indigenous Australia.

Blaze’s family and school experiences of learning about Indigenous Australia before University, make explicit some of the different aspects influencing his locale as a learner at the Cultural Interface. When thinking narratively about the metaphorical three dimensional narrative inquiry space (interaction, continuity and situation), the continuity dimension where “events under study are in temporal transition” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479) we see the locale of Blaze as a young learner, primed to grow an interest in social justice issues. Blaze’s story also illuminates the _sociality_ dimension of his parent’s explicit teaching that education can be emancipatory. Blaze’s home was a nurturing place to grow political insight and practise ways to express these.

Blaze’s intergenerational familial story of school as a ‘safe place’ where children can forget difficulties at home bumps up against the other story Blaze tells of his rebellion against what were perceived (from his teenage perspective) as punitive
school rules. However, as Blaze travelled back in time to recall the places and situations experienced during this time of rebellion, in hindsight he views these as significant in growing his interest in becoming a primary school teacher. The international exchange was a place for challenging his assumption of the universality of the Australian education system. Further, the boarding school experience was retold as a place for developing personal insight that taking on power through disrespectful actions was not necessarily constructive in the long term. As a consequence of this latter experience, Blaze asserted he is able to empathise with the rebellious child - for he was once this child too.

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) write about narrative unity as “a continuum with a person’s experiences … [that] renders life experiences meaningful through the unity they achieve for that person” (p. 74). Blaze found meaning in the powerful familial belief that education is a requisite for social transformation for people who experience some form of disadvantage. In many respects, Blaze’s story of his desire to become a primary school teacher is representative of research nationally (Manuel & Hughes, 2006; P. Richardson & Watt, 2006) and internationally (Menzies et al., 2015) indicating a key motivation for entering the profession is a desire to ‘make a difference’. Leading up to university, Blaze had a vague sense that he would want to make a difference to Aboriginal children’s lives yet had a rather narrow view about where and how this might occur:

Upon leaving school, did I have this ingrained idea [about Indigenous issues]? I was reflecting about this a lot on the weekend and there’s like this weird parallel thing that I have in my life and I don’t think that I rationally realised it in high school, but I always had an interest in Indigenous culture, language, spirituality, anything really to do with Indigenous communities that were on the ABC….I was fascinated by it. But I never really connected why....When I did the [mandatory Indigenous Studies] unit that interest was always just, sort of, bubbling. There was an interest and I thought, yeah it’ll be great to teach in a rural community where there’s lots of Indigenous people because I think I was
conditioned to believe that that’s where Indigenous people live, even though I went to a school with a campus of 30 Aboriginal kids but I still had this view that they were “out there”. Like, that just shows how powerful, the hidden curriculum is, in terms of, like, there can be a living embodiment or an example that you are literally brushing shoulders with every day [at school], but you still have this perception because it’s so widespread. So that was like a wow moment. ...yeah, so I left school thinking, I probably would have a class that was heavy on Indigenous perspectives and would like to, at some point, work with Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory or whatever, like, the great Australian vision, sort of thing. Red dirt country!

Although Blaze and I both laughed about this stereotype, later in our conversation he recalled that bringing this stereotype into consciousness was an important ‘light bulb moment’ that occurred as a result of completing the mandatory Indigenous Studies subject.

**University experiences of Indigenous Studies - the first year**

Blaze recalled two learning experiences in the first year of university that included an Indigenous perspective. By chance he was allocated a presentation topic in *EDUP1002: Language, the Learner and the School* (see Appendix 8 List of Units of Study) that provided an opportunity to think about teaching Aboriginal children:

*The only thing I can remember from first year is that week 6, semester 1, it was my turn to do the English presentation with four other people and our topic for that week was Aboriginal learners and English pedagogy. So we had to do a twenty minute presentation. I remember thinking at the time, the set readings, are very strange because it’s talking about Indigenous kids in a very homogenous way. [It was] more sort of framed as if you have a kid who is Indigenous, this is how you teach them irrespective of where they’re from. Because the literature was all about Aboriginal children learn best when, Aboriginal families really appreciate it when, this research sort of shows this - I was sort of reading it...like this doesn’t make sense to me because if you just replace ‘Aboriginal’ with ‘Iranian’ you’d sort of be like but what if they were educated in America? So I sort of did the presentation from a very, you know, this person recommends this strategy for Aboriginal students but I would argue it would be beneficial to everyone....the tutor liked that angle but it wasn’t an angle that I thought deeply about, it was more just because I was so uncomfortable doing a presentation where I thought I was just going to stand up and say Aboriginal kids learn totally differently.*
Blazed believed that assumptions were made about preservice teacher prior knowledge and that deeper contextual information on the diversity of Aboriginal learners would have assisted the research process:

*They [the authors] talked a lot about speaking clearly because Aboriginal children might struggle to hear you and I was like that’s racist, how can you [say that]? And I’m first year as well, so it’s my first real engagement with academic literature...how can you just say that Aboriginal kids struggle to hear? Like what? The readings assumed you knew about it [otitis media – a middle ear infection that can cause hearing difficulties].*

Blaze also recalled that a tutorial was set aside to engage preservice teachers in an interactive workshop that introduced the notion of Aboriginal kinship and community protocols. At the time, Blaze was unsure how the activity aligned with the content of the subject:

*It was in about week 3 or 4...so just as you’re starting to adjust to university and not even really understanding the difference between the four different subjects you’re doing or what’s this...lecture series? So to me at the time it was just saying I had to go to it...and I don’t really understand what it’s about. There was no background knowledge. It’s really interesting because...[the activity] just came up in conversation earlier this semester, we were in a class talking about...international education and we were doing Indigenous education, a comparative study between Canada, New Zealand and Australia and someone was talking about how great the kinship thing was because for the first time they understood what kinship meant and the complexities, the relationships, how having that knowledge is going to help them as a teacher. I think that I was just so new to university and so like, oh God, I’ve got to be at this thing...it wasn’t that I tuned out or I wasn’t listening or I didn’t find it interesting, it just didn’t resonate...because I didn’t understand why we were doing it...and so to be honest I really don’t remember anything about kinship from it. Anything I do know about kinship now is from readings that we’ve done for the compulsory subject in second year.*

While individual lecturers within the primary program clearly made an effort to include Indigenous perspectives, from Blaze’s perspective, the first year of university did not scaffold the Indigenous content such that it appeared relevant. However, he was upbeat nevertheless:

*I think, just it’s happened by coincidence, that every time there has been a generalist subject and there’s been any form of Indigenous week or topic I’ve
just happened to have it, it’s never been out of choosing it, it’s just what I’ve been allocated which is great but an interesting sign from God, I think!

University experiences of Indigenous Studies – the second and third year

The mandatory Indigenous Studies unit EDUP2006: Indigenous Australian Education in second year captured Blaze’s self-described “bubbling” interest in Indigenous education and also addressed some knowledge gaps perceived as being left unmet in the first year of university:

Well I think linking it back to what I was saying about first year with that English subject, it [the mandatory Indigenous Studies unit] provided the context underpinning that particular presentation. So like I knew or had an awareness of the life expectancy gap, discrepancies in health and education achievement outcomes...you know statistical data I was aware of, but no idea of how to address that or combat that or what schools were doing to try and reduce that or even just deal with that reality in a way....I felt that the unit was extremely valuable and probably one of the best units that we’ve done in the course because...Indigenous Australian education is almost its own discipline or school of thought because it incorporates so much in the sense that it not only dealt with Indigenous perspectives in the classroom, even if you don’t have a single Indigenous kid in your class that year, it dealt with how to deal with a school where 95% of the kids do come from an Aboriginal background. It dealt with the social problems, the history, the sociological history of education, treatment of Indigenous parents and how that impacts on their association with the school.

Blaze described another important transformative moment when completing an assessment task that required students to critically analyse the ‘hidden curriculum’ (Rahman, 2013; Seddon, 1983) within a text resource for stereotyping and cultural bias:

That was a particularly significant ‘wow’ moment for me because I think I did have a more homogenous model of thinking. It forced you to critically analyse what was actually being promoted and how you would combat that as a teacher or why you would or wouldn’t use it [a resource] or how you would use it. It just made you aware of the big gripes that Indigenous people and Indigenous educators have with a lot of resources which otherwise if you’re at a school you rock up for prac, say you never did the subject, you rock up...and they go okay, we’re doing Indigenous sport games this week, here’s a cool booklet and you get up and you go okay, we’re going to play a game called kangaroo tag.

This ‘light bulb’ moment along with the other previously discussed epiphany that he held stereotypes about where he might be able to work with Aboriginal students, are
both noteworthy in that this content did not require uncomfortable dialogue or emotional labour for Blaze to work through. Instead, it was a simple awakening to new knowledge, which attests to Mezirow’s (2009) theorising that transformative learning involves becoming alert to problematic frames of reference and sets of assumptions. Blaze’s self-described “wow” moment is representative of Elias’ (1997) description of transformative learning as “the process of critically analyzing underlying premises and the process of appreciatively accessing and receiving the symbolic contents of the unconscious” (p. 233). In the earlier example, Blaze became conscious of the fact he was educated alongside Aboriginal children which meant that his previously held stereotype that he would have to travel to the ‘outback’ to teach Aboriginal children was a little ridiculous. Taking a critical eye to texts commonly used to teach Aboriginal perspectives across the primary curriculum also illuminated the dominant discourse of Aboriginal people as homogeneous, a frame that Rose (2012) describes as “exoticism” and intellectually lazy (p. 71). The learning process that achieved this shift in thinking was encountered as a series of slowly altered meaning schemes and not as a painful or “epochal” moment (Mezirow, 1985, p. 24). This stands in contrast to Blaze’s experience of hearing racist attitudes about Aboriginal people in the context of his personal relationships. These experiences will be discussed later in this narrative.

Blaze suggested that the mandatory unit could do more to emphasise the locatedness of Indigenous knowledge systems to particular places in order to challenge preservice teachers to move beyond inadvertently presenting tokenistic representations of Aboriginal people. However, he was quick to emphasise the broader significance of the mandatory unit:

*But I think the most important aspect was actually getting people to understand not only the issues faced like otitis media, attendance, retention, community consultation, parents’ alienation from school community due to past*
experiences and sociological treatment of Indigenous people more broadly. All those things are so important because if the unit only focuses on how to incorporate Indigenous perspectives effectively that’s great but then a teacher’s not going to understand why parents might not want to come into the school to meet for parent teacher night or why an Auntie rocks up to a disciplinary hearing as opposed to the parents and then the staffroom says they don’t care about their kids, they’re on welfare, they’re drunk, you know, whatever it may be.

The mandatory Indigenous unit also inspired Blaze (and some of his peers) to take a critical position on the way Indigenous perspectives were being taught in other subjects. He recalls:

Well there are scathing stories from other units about the integration of Indigenous perspectives. One was a PE (Physical Education) subject that we did in third year. You did gymnastics for a couple of weeks, things on the oval and for about three weeks you did dancing. The last activity in the last week of dance was to perform an Aboriginal dance. We were given five options and they were like the seasons, the circle of life, something, I can’t remember the other three but I do remember one was the seasons and the other was the circle of life. You had to do it in groups. A music track was played, it wasn’t Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander from what I could tell, it was just sort of generic African spiritual Lion King-esque sort of ‘tribal’ [Blaze mimed and said the words inverted commas] music and we had to create this dance. No guidance, no worksheets about you know, where the dance is from or anything like that. It was purely self-invented so people ...were doing the seasons, one person was in the middle and then four people just went around in a circle. And so it was just make your own dance ...like the link to Indigenous Australia wasn’t there, the tenuous link was probably a racist throwback to Aboriginal dancing. That is a subject we did last year, at the University of Sydney.

Blaze went on to explain that a friend was ...particularly enraged by the goings-on in that lesson, and in hope to spur some change to the way Indigenous perspectives are included in future years, provided feedback on how to incorporate Aboriginal dance in a meaningful way:

[She] printed off, I think she said it was seventeen pages of a protocol document she’d found on the internet about consultation, inviting people in, asking permission, music, gender roles within dance and music, everything like that and attached that document...it was the last entry for that assignment as well. [She] did well in the assignment but no comment or anything [from the tutor] on the final entry.
While the pedagogical approach was a concern to Blaze, he also explained:

*The thing that I found most disconcerting was that in a tutorial of twenty or so, there was only me, her and maybe a couple of other people, who were facially alarmed [expressed a look of shock] or confused by the task and what exactly was going on. But everyone else, no one was sort of like ‘yay’, this is a great idea, but people just got on with it and did it.*

Both Blaze and his female peer exemplify Freire’s (1985) notion of *conscientization*, “the process in which men [and women], not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and their capacity to transform that reality” (p. 93). While Blaze was frustrated by the tokenistic approach to teaching Aboriginal dance, the compliance displayed by his fellow students also led to feelings of discontent. Blaze’s story highlights the tensions felt by learners at the Cultural Interface. Having developed a deeper understanding of Indigenous protocols in the mandatory Indigenous Studies unit, he was conscious that the lesson was trivialising a potentially deeper learning experience; yet the agency to challenge this unfolding event in situ is not so easy. A concern to maintain positive peer relationships beyond a brief learning moment may prevent an individual from speaking up. Further, the power imbalance between teaching staff who set the tasks and preservice teachers who just want to ‘get on with’ fulfilling the requirements of the lesson, may also restrict the desire to question an activity – particularly if it is not considered a politically charged or ethically challenging issue. Earlier in this research I examined key debates around the ‘creative tensions’ (Hayes, 2006, p. 2) that the Indigenous focused Australian Professional Standards for Teachers create in regards to their implementation beyond a ‘checklist’ approach (Burgess and Berwick, 2009). The above example demonstrates the significance of *conscientization* in the process of nurturing an activist preservice teacher identity. While some preservice teachers
develop critical consciousness early in their learning journey, the provision of opportunities to practice authentic scenarios where students might initiate difficult dialogue, became evident in Blaze’s narrative.

Another popular strategy to learn how to embed Indigenous perspectives across a range of curriculum areas occurs through the development of lesson plans submitted as part of the formal assessment process. Although well intentioned, Blaze described his concern about how this played out in a practical sense:

*If you are going to incorporate Indigenous perspectives in your teaching you can’t [should not] include them because you feel you have to or if you know your links are tenuous at best. Like we did a jigsaw group today where we heard from different people, one of the people doing ‘matter’, they were reading a Dreaming story...they’re talking about ‘matter’ in terms of how ‘matter’ is created and how it’s just always been there. And so their link, ‘cause you only required one, at least one, is to read a Dreamtime story and then just compare how different people have different understandings of how the world’s created sort of thing. You know, which is great for an assignment if that’s what you’re required to do, but it’s not what you would [should] do as a teacher.*

The comment above, …*you feel you have to... implement Aboriginal perspectives* was made in reference to the requirement to complete an assessment task - not because it is mandated in the curriculum. Blaze explained that incorporating Indigenous perspectives into a lesson plan provided an opportunity to develop knowledge in this area, however there were further knowledge based problems with this approach:

*One of my biggest issues is that the university and their courses are encouraging you to incorporate Indigenous perspectives, that’s great, but they’re encouraging...not deliberately, but a lot of students...I think continue to see Aboriginal culture as homogenous....and so, while it’s great that you’re incorporating Indigenous perspectives I’d maybe argue, perhaps controversially, that it’s better not to have this perspective since they’re only going to perpetuate this idea that culture is homogenous. It’s great to read a Dreaming story about the creation...but it has to be put within the context of this is this people’s story, this is where they’re from, this is their totem animal, this is the way their kinship relationship works, this story came about this way and you’re working in consultation like with that in a way.*

Blaze was also concerned about the lack of professional knowledge of the non-
Indigenous staff and the impact this has on authentically representing Indigenous knowledges. Blaze shared his thoughts about how Indigenous knowledges were addressed across a range of curriculum areas:

*There just doesn’t seem, at least from my perspective, to be that awareness amongst the student body or the academic staff...and I don’t think it’s intentional or malicious like they’re trying to push a covert racist agenda, but I don’t know whether it’s that they don’t have the knowledge or they assume that we [preservice teachers] have that knowledge. But then when they’re marking the assignments they’re not sort of saying [this is] stereotypical, homogenous, have you considered this?*

Blaze was concerned that staff expected preservice teachers to incorporate Indigenous perspectives without providing examples on how this could be done authentically and without scaffolding examples across a unit of work. He complained that, *...Indigenous perspectives are the tack-on rather than if we’re going to make a science unit that has an Indigenous perspective let’s start with the Indigenous knowledge and perspective.*

Indigenous educators have long called for an approach that ‘builds in’ rather than ‘bolting on’ Indigenous knowledge perspectives (Rigney, 2011b; Yunkaporta, 2009). Yunkaporta (2009) asserts that ‘bolting on’ marginalises Indigenous knowledges (p. 5) and Rigney (2011) argues that “universities and academics must have a reason to teach Indigenous perspectives and recognize quality teaching in this area” (p. 11).

Rigney’s (2011) report on *Indigenous Higher Education Reform and Indigenous Knowledges* provides a powerful argument that the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) - the peak government authority responsible for evaluating the performance of university degrees - should develop and monitor Indigenous education quality and standards at university. Certainly for Blaze there were a range of different experiences:

*In English we’ve been given examples of Indigenous pedagogy so I feel quite prepared for that in literacy. Maths, nothing, science, we have to do it as part of assignments but we’ve never been shown how to...do it well and just because a*
non-Indigenous marker says oh yes, that’s a great Indigenous perspective doesn’t mean shit, really. In HSIE [Human Society and its Environment], we’ve definitely done Indigenous perspectives and I would argue in meaningful ways because it hasn’t been on traditional lifestyles pre-contact, it’s been about...really relevant contemporary issues which is great. And I don’t know if this is just the focus of the lecturer...but she’s very interested in place and location and community and identity and so...we’ve often focused a lot about local community studies and local history studies. Of course part of that is you have 40 to 60,000 years of history prior to the past 200 of development in that area. So even though assignments and content like that haven’t been framed from an Indigenous perspective they just naturally bleed in to it. Then creative arts I wouldn’t say we’ve done really anything to do with Indigenous perspectives.

This conversation led to a discussion about any unnecessary duplication of Indigenous content throughout the degree. Blaze recalled that the Aboriginal Education Policy was given in-depth coverage in the mandatory Indigenous Studies unit and in a second year subject titled EDUF2007: Social Perspectives in Education (see Appendix 8 List of Units of Study for subject description and Appendix 5 for sequencing within the degree). Duplication was not necessarily perceived as problematic:

My advice would be for you to do what you think is most essential irrespective of whether there’s duplication because I find that often, like maybe academics are quite noble and they think that students always do the readings and always attend lectures and if they’re in lectures they’re listening and they’ll participate in tutorial discussions and they’re listening to their peers’ presentations so if you think something’s particularly salient, bugger duplication, just go with it because you might be hammering it home.

University experiences of Indigenous Studies – the final year

Blaze was enrolled in an Indigenous Studies elective EDUP4072: Koori Kids in School (A) and EDUP4073: Koori Kids in School (B) (see Appendix 8 List of Units of Study) conducted over two semesters during his final year. This elective challenged him to think about the need to develop a more nuanced and locally based understanding of appropriate ways to incorporate Indigenous perspectives across each Key Learning Area (KLA). The elective subject also accorded the opportunity to experience a
professional placement in a school with a high Aboriginal student population. Blaze was very much looking forward to this professional experience and just before he left I asked him whether or not he felt prepared to teach the Aboriginal children in his class? He had already planned a number of lessons and by coincidence there were a number of activities organised at the school which were part of a nationally recognised celebratory day for Indigenous Australians. He reflected though that he had not worked with Aboriginal people and this was going to be a new experience:

*I feel stupid saying this because you know I’m no expert, I don’t think on any of my pracs I’ve ever taught a student who’s identified as Indigenous but I wouldn’t necessarily know ‘cause I haven’t asked that question either but, I feel like an idiot saying this, and I don’t know whether this is just my thinking, whether it’s racist thinking...but I think that there would be a huge difference between teaching at a school in a remote area where you were in the minority as a non-Indigenous person as opposed to teaching in a city that you grew up in...I don’t think I’ve ever worked with another teacher or an Aboriginal Education Officer. So, not that this would be a huge deal, like I wouldn’t know how to function or communicate but I think that people do bring their culture and background into whatever context.*

While Blaze was not anxious about the personal influence of culture in the classroom he was alert to the fact that he was inexperienced in this professional context. On the other hand, he was feeling confident about building a classroom environment that respected Aboriginal English, engaging with Aboriginal parents and in regards to his teaching he was going to draw on his learning about …making things relational and about personal experiences and story-based and interested in where you’re [the students are] coming from which I find is a very natural way to teach anyway and is probably my style.

When I contacted Blaze three months later to set up our final interview, he replied by email:

*I had a fantastic time on prac and can’t wait to share my experiences with you - particularly in regards to what I learnt about having high expectations of ALL students and my initial anxiety about teaching Aboriginal content to Aboriginal*
During our final discussion, Blaze reflected on the deep insights gleaned from the professional experience. His class of twenty seven students were culturally and linguistically diverse. The majority of the students had come from non-English-speaking backgrounds and there were five Aboriginal students in the class. There were just two non-Aboriginal children who spoke English as a first language:

*Ironically both of those children weren’t born in Australia, one was born in New Zealand and one was born in Ireland so the number of children who were born in Australia or whose parents were born in Australia was like down to basically just the Aboriginal children which was really good in terms of discussion and diversity of experiences that they were bringing into the classroom.*

Blaze developed a deep respect for the work of Aboriginal staff employed at the school. In the process of observing the Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO) and an Aboriginal teacher, Blaze had an epiphany about the meaning of the often cited need for “high expectations” of Aboriginal students (Sarra, 2005; C. Sarra, 2011a, 2011b; Stronger Smarter Institute Limited, 2014):

*This was again about...moving from the theoretical to what it looks like in a hands-on practical way. In the second-year mandatory subject as well as in the elective in fourth year, [the need for] high expectations of Aboriginal students has always been a thing and you know there have been Aboriginal educators like Chris Sarra who have staked their career on trying to emphasise just that single point essentially. And you know when I was in the classrooms here at university and I heard that [research] I was sort of like - well obviously you have high expectations! You know you’re not going to think just because they’re Aboriginal my expectations are sort of lower, that’s racist...so I sort of dismissed it as a very obvious thing and could never really understand the Chris Sarra cult-like following of supporters that he has when I just sort of perceived it to be a very simple sort of [approach].*

I commented, “yes it seems obvious”, ....*yeah, to me it was - but I got it on prac, I understood it!* The experiences that transformed Blaze’s understanding involved developing confidence to address some challenging behaviours displayed by some of
the Aboriginal children. During the early stages of the professional experience, Blaze explained that some of the students (not specifically the Aboriginal children) were displaying problematic behaviours, *...such as hitting, spitting, kicking, pushing, punching, tackling to the ground, that sort of thing.* Blaze was particularly confronted by one incident between two Aboriginal students:

> I’ll never forget, there was this one moment and it was like the first or second lesson I was teaching and I was reading a story and we were all on the floor and...then one kid just goes whack - and hits another kid across the stomach, winds him, for seemingly no reason because we were silent and I was reading a story. So then I sort of go - what happened? And then before the perpetrator speaks, the victim goes, ‘oh it’s because at lunchtime I said that his mum was fat’. The conflict I found myself in, in that classroom was that these kids came from home environments where like being physically violent with someone wasn’t the sign of a deterioration of a relationship, that was just the way you deal with conflict resolution. And so it felt, I was stuck in this position because on one hand I was going - well clearly they’ve sorted out their issues, he said something that upset him, he’s hit him, the kid who’s been hit isn’t upset at all. He is not crying, he’s not seeking justice in any way but then on the other hand, that’s not appropriate behaviour to deal with conflict.

While Blaze wanted to uphold his student welfare responsibilities and teach constructive ways to deal with conflict, initially he grappled with the unintended consequences of his subject position:

> And then I was sort of stuck in this mindset, and this is where I think the high expectations came in, where I was like but...if that is, not necessarily a cultural practice of Aboriginality, being violent, because it’s not, but if that’s something that’s accepted in the homes that they come from or in their parents’ social circle...who am I to step in, White middle class Australian, to step in and go - I deem that behaviour to be inappropriate, your way of dealing with conflict is wrong. And so I was really stuck on that point because I believed it to be wrong but did that make it wrong?

However, through observing the relationships between the Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal students, he was able to work through his concern that he might act inappropriately:

> She was known in the school as being like, tough, like she wasn’t there to be your friend and she wasn’t mean or anything like that, but she didn’t take crap from anyone, either teachers or like in staff meetings she was just straight down
the line with you, a straight shooter. And so they [the students] would come in and they’d be misbehaving because they hadn’t eaten breakfast and that idea of high expectations with her kicked in because she went look, I know that you haven’t eaten breakfast but that isn’t a licence for you to behave like that so I’ve still got to follow through with a punishment for you. Whereas the more, like, bleeding heart approach to teaching would be, look you know they haven’t eaten breakfast so it’s really unfair to be expecting them to be doing this reading task. Where she was, like, on their arse the whole hour for that literacy session, being, like, do it, do it, do it.

The fact that the Aboriginal teacher dealt with problematic behaviour with clearly articulated boundaries helped Blaze to develop a sense of confidence:

_I was reassured by the other two Aboriginal teachers in the school ‘cause they were like, whoa, like with their expectations from student behaviour and they didn’t take any crap...not particularly from the Aboriginal kids but they just didn’t take crap from anyone and there were certainly no concessions for Aboriginal kids and anything like that...now I understand what people like Chris Sarra are talking about when they’re talking about high expectations, not to carry I guess for non-Aboriginal teachers the guilt complex of, like, I can’t dare intervene or say anything or do anything because I’m just, you know, perpetuating colonisation in a way by policing people._

There are complex issues that can be gleaned from Blaze’s experience in this primary education classroom. Aboriginal children were no longer imaginary, and without warning, Blaze was confronted by a situation (the punch) that he perceived as testing his commitment to Aboriginal education. The aggression of one Aboriginal student toward another Aboriginal student and the seemingly accepting response to absorb the ‘guilty’ punch was surprising – should he consider the ‘cultural’ context of these students to manage this behaviour in a ‘culturally appropriate’ way? For the first time, Blaze was conscious that he is a non-Aboriginal teacher with the power to address or ignore behaviour that, by his own professional and personal standards, was inappropriate.

Reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983, 1987) raised unexpected professional identity questions - Blaze did not want to be a teacher who is responsible for
perpetuating past colonial mistakes, in contrast he wants to be a culturally inclusive teacher. Blaze appeared to be ‘stuck’ trying to grapple with the anxiety of possibly making an error - for he understands how colonialism plays out in the education system. Rose (2012) argues that a ‘silent apartheid’ manifests “in the absence of legitimate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, space [which] is consumed by misnomers, untruths and stereotypes” (p. 70). Through fear of being labelled as racist or ‘politically incorrect’ teachers engage in ‘racism by cotton wool’, which Rose (2012) argues, is revealed in the classroom through the “execution of codes of discipline, standards of work, grading, professional distance and acceptable boundaries of school culture by ‘going soft’ on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students” (p. 71).

Similarly, Fielder (2008), a non-Indigenous academic, reflects on his “preoccupation with not being an assimilationist white” (p. 67) during the early stages of his academic career. Such thinking and pedagogy, he explains, were driven by a “moral vanity” and “white guilt” (p. 64) that inadvertently led to a lowering of expectations and achievement of the students he taught. While Blaze appears to have understood some of these traps at an intellectual level, he grappled with how to make high expectations authentic. The role of the Aboriginal staff in guiding his practice and sense of confidence was paramount here:

But you know, what it taught me in terms of my teacher identity was that you have to be very clear yourself about what is and isn’t appropriate behaviour...you have to make that clear to students and then once you’ve done that process you need to make sure that you regulate that behaviour according to that code and that code is explicit, and that’s high expectations. And then, in terms of academic work as well, to me high expectations doesn’t mean that you expect kids to all perform at this same high standard, it’s just about them trying their personal best and that was what the teacher was really good at emphasising. I’m not asking you to compare your work, I’m asking you to try your personal best.

Another transformative moment for Blaze during his professional experience
occurred when he first attempted to teach Aboriginal perspectives to his class however became self-conscious that he was inappropriately teaching these perspectives to Aboriginal students. As indicated earlier, Blaze embarked on the professional experience feeling confident in his knowledge of incorporating Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum, however unexpectedly he became very stressed about this responsibility as he explained:

*I think I had like, a moral breakdown. I found it overwhelming, everything I felt I’d learnt hadn’t prepared me...I felt it had only prepared me to teach non-Aboriginal kids who didn’t know a lot and then fix misconceptions and stereotypes they have. But at the school the Aboriginal kids obviously [didn’t have these] and the non-Aboriginal kids didn’t have those preconceived ideas because they’re quite young so they’re not necessarily aware of the negative stereotypes that exist about Aboriginal people in their entirety.*

Blaze was challenged by the thought that his students may have a range of understandings about Aboriginal people and speculated that the presence of the Aboriginal children in his class meant that for some of the children, stereotypes about Aboriginality were ...*erased by lived experiences of them knowing these are the Aboriginal kids and they look differently, [with] different colours across the spectrum.*

Blaze had also thought that he would have to address the misconception that Aboriginal culture is ‘doomed to history’ and not a living culture. Again, his assumptions were challenged as the children were involved in Aboriginal cultural activities at the school and had visited their Aboriginal friend’s houses ... *so it’s not a revelation, [that] they’re not from the desert or from the bush which [are]...two major stereotypes.*

Blaze’s so called “*moral breakdown*” arose in the context of planning lessons that embedded an Indigenous knowledge perspective in an English unit. He used the outside environment for inspiration:

*We were talking about using adjectives to describe nouns and how we can*
describe landscapes and make our descriptions more interesting instead of just saying there are leaves, there are green bushy leaves... The school had a fantastic private garden that came off our classroom, it had a totem pole, and there were Aboriginal murals and so we were trying... to use that knowledge of landscapes and looking at different landscapes and connection to land.

As a follow up lesson, he decided to compare this urban context with the desert setting and iconic Aboriginal site of Uluru:

And this was the thing ‘cause I sat at my laptop for hours trying to plan one lesson which was describing a landscape different to the city because we’d done the city so I was looking at the desert. And I was like well obviously Uluru, everyone would know Uluru so that’s a good starting point for the desert and then we could have a great discussion about the people from Uluru and what the rock means and why you can’t climb on it. If there were no Aboriginal kids in the class I’d have found that so easy to plan because I would have felt so comfortable just talking about it, but the fact that I was in a school were there was the possibility that an Aboriginal Education Officer could walk in at any time in the classroom and I’d be like, I’m busted. I felt like they’ll catch me out, they’re there to spring me [making mistakes]. I had really paranoid levels of fear. And then the kids as well, what are they going to go home and tell their parents? Is it going to be validating their identity? Are they going to be perceiving it as tokenistic? And all these sorts of ideas which kids probably that young wouldn’t even be thinking about but if you did something wrong it would stick with them. Maybe forever. And they’ll always remember me as ‘I remember in Year 1 or Year 2 there was this teacher called Blaze and he did this [inappropriate] lesson’.

I commented, “oh right so examples of mistakes we retell in tutorials?”

Yes, I didn’t know what to do so I just did the desert without the Aboriginal perspective and just totally shut it off. But then we’re doing it and I was reading them a book that I found about the desert and then one of the kids, non-Aboriginal kids, said... ‘cause the book was talking about people camping in the desert... they were travelling around Australia and... one of the kids goes, but no one lives in the desert, like, who would live in the desert... you can’t camp in the desert... And then one of the Aboriginal boys was like, no, Aboriginal people do. And then I was like, yes, there are Aboriginal people who live in the desert but do all Aboriginal people live in the desert? And then all of the kids, like, looked at me, like, are you for real? Like, where are you from? You’re in [look around you – there are a lot of Aboriginal people here] like, who are you? And that was sort of my only contribution.

Blaze explained that he felt ‘stuck’ as his students did not seem to have the stereotypical views of Aboriginal people that he was prepared to dispel. He wondered
whether he should consult with the AEO about his lesson on Uluru but eventually rationalised that this was unnecessary as he wasn’t taking the students on an excursion and had instead talked to his students about why climbing on top of Uluru was not considered appropriate by the local Aboriginal community. After the initial anxiety he explained:

So eventually I bit the bullet and we did it during the next lesson and nothing happened and the kids understood what a sacred site is. So it was all fine but that initial shock scared me ‘cause I feel like the mandatory course really prepared us for tackling misconceptions and not being that [kind of] teacher. Looking back on it...I didn’t even know or wasn’t aware of what to do when you actually did have Aboriginal children in the class.

Blaze believed that while the Indigenous Studies subjects had encouraged preservice teachers to validate the identity of Aboriginal children, they had not addressed the nuances of planning to teach Indigenous perspectives to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in the same class.

Blaze’s feeling of uncertainty about teaching Indigenous perspectives to non-Indigenous students exemplifies the tensions and reasons preservice teachers may lack agency at the Cultural Interface. It is somewhat counter-intuitive that his heightened understanding of the significance of respectful representations of Indigenous perspectives would, at an opportune moment, cause Blaze to omit Indigenous perspectives. However, Blaze’s experiences concur with McLaughlin and Whatman’s (2015) research on preservice teachers’ experiences of embedding Indigenous knowledges on practicum, where they noted, “there is much uncertainty and anxiety by non-Indigenous preservice, their supervising teachers and school site coordinators (often Deputy Principals) on why, how and when to embed” (p. 120). In the final report produced for the same research, McLaughlin, Whatman, and Nielson (2013) noted, when anxiety occurred this was overcome and success achieved when staff were
supported with their embedding process (p. 5). Consequent to this finding, a key theme that emerged from this research project, was the significance of “affirmation” for both preservice and supervising teachers during the practicum experience (McLaughlin et al., 2013). Certainly while Blaze was initially immobilised by his worry of making a mistake, eventually he found affirmation through observing and working with Aboriginal staff. A key question arising from their theme of “affirmation” was to ask; “from who or where” should this affirmation be established - their self-response was to identify teacher education programs as important in facilitating this affirmation process (Queensland University of Technology, 2016, para. 21-22).

The evaluation report prepared by Martin Nakata (included in McLaughlin et al., 2013, pp. 40-52) for the research project mentioned above, also provided important theoretical implications for unpacking Blaze’s experiences on professional experience. While acknowledging the important insights Critical Race theories can bring to such analysis, its employment as a means for enacting change between stakeholders on practicum was considered by Nakata to be less fruitful:

> Critical Race Theory, is much more focused on uncovering and describing the evidence of underlying colonial racism in existing practice. It is more deterministic in the interpretation process and does not necessarily provide room for dealing with complexity and contradiction in practice but nevertheless provides a much cleaner analysis to argue for systemic change. (as cited in McLaughlin et al., 2013, pp. 47-48)

While Rose’s (2012) analysis of the impact of “racism as cotton wool” might be employed to understand Blaze’s omission; the Cultural Interface helps to illuminate what was going on for Blaze in an open (and perhaps more forgiving) reflective manner. As Nakata argues, Critical Race Theories “strips agency from participants leaving avenues only for the identification of aggressors and victims” (as cited in McLaughlin et al., 2013, p. 48,). Indeed, preservice teachers like Blaze, who are
committed to embedding Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in their future classroom practice are “trailblazers” and require room to experiment (McLaughlin et al., 2013, p. 44) and support to work through these tensions.

**The influence of personal experience on storied identity**

As Blaze’s story unfolded, it became apparent that his learning in Indigenous Studies bumped up against his concurrent personal life experiences. Mockler’s (2011c, p. 521) model (see Figure 1 – Formation and mediation of professional identity model in Chapter 4: Teacher Professional Identity Formation) highlights the significance of the personal dimensions (such as gender, culture and sexuality) of teachers’ lives in influencing identity formation. Blaze tells the story of a growing consciousness of how his sexuality impacted on his emerging professional identity. In the second year mandatory Indigenous Studies unit he was allocated a presentation topic that required students to analyse media representations of Aboriginal people and how this might impact on Aboriginal students’ self-perception, he recalled:

> So if you [are] ... constantly surrounded in a culture where the only news articles are about alcohol abuse, foetal syndrome, domestic violence, poor housing, poor health, life expectancy gaps, how does that impact on your identity and what can schools do to moderate or counter this?

Blaze was particularly interested to consider how teachers might deal with the tension of discussing social disadvantage while at the same time not creating deficit discourses about Aboriginal people that might make Aboriginal students feel bad about their identity. By chance, in the Indigenous Studies tutorial, he met a like-minded person:

> The person who I was placed in a group with, which we didn’t choose, we were allocated, was a lesbian, and I’m gay. And it was weird because as we were doing this research project together, one day started talking about it, but no-one initiated the conversation, it was like both of us had been thinking about it privately for a long time. And we both just realised that we’d been interested in Indigenous education...and together, through this discussion, we were talking about why that is and we were talking about the intersection between the
Blaze explained that gay people are often portrayed negatively in the media and often experience hostility, and signs of acceptance of his gay identity at school were profoundly important:

*In second year, when we were learning about the importance of flying an Aboriginal flag in the school and the importance of acknowledging country, I can relate to that because even when I go into schools now for debating or on prac visits or observations or whatever and I see a rainbow flag, I automatically feel more, you know, that an [my] identity has been accepted. There’s recognition and affirmation, as well. And although it’s totally different between, sexual orientation or sexual identity versus cultural identity or ethnic identity, I see those parallels in a way. And so, I think, my interest in it [Indigenous education] has always been, I don’t know, it’s sort of like, it’s a culture within the mainstream of Australia, but a distinct culture, separate from it. Just like queer culture or gay culture is separate from heteronormative culture. And so...my real passion in terms of Indigenous education is just affirmation and valuing of culture and not just for the kids, but even if I was in a class with no Indigenous kids, it would still be... this is part of your history as Australians and your culture as Australians.

The interview process provided an opportunity for Blaze to reflect on his lived experiences as a gay man and understand how these experiences have provided particular insights into how stereotypes can impact on Aboriginal people. In coming to reflect on how diverse sexual identities are acknowledged by some schools – he built a relational connection and empathy towards Aboriginal people’s experiences of exclusion and lack of recognition in the cultural fabric of Australia. It is important to note here that although there is a significant body of research that examines the intersection of ‘race’, culture, gender and sexuality in the professional identity formation of teachers (Asher, 2007; Evans, 2002; Nelson, 1999; Vavrus, 2009), this research did not initially seek to explicate this intersection, rather it was a perspective that emerged during the interview process and like Asher (2007), I was challenged to reflect on:
What do we need to do to enable teachers to identify, engage, and unpack the nuanced, context-specific differences at the intersections of race, culture, gender, and sexuality that they encounter on a daily basis? How can we foster critical, self-reflexive ways of teaching that promote equity and democratic ways of being? And what are the implications of such for social transformation? (p. 66)

A consideration of these intersections highlight that when studying teacher identity formation “important aspects of our identity…are markers of relational positions rather than essential qualities” (Banks, 1993, p. 5). However the relational connections one person makes compared to another is not so easily determined. Blaze discovered that while he and his peer had both understood their experiences of being gay and lesbian as a way to build a deeper empathy and understanding of Aboriginal peoples’ experience, he learnt (somewhat personally catastrophically), this relational empathy does not always translate for all gay men or peers of his own age, both of whom he assumed would have developed a more sympathetic understanding of Aboriginal Australia.

Blaze described that ... *I’ve got into all out verbal brawls with people in very public places because of their views on Indigenous Australians.* The first time this happened Blaze had been backpacking overseas and met some other young Australians. While enjoying a meal one night, the conversation unexpectedly turned to Aboriginal people. Blaze was shocked by their racist comments and also by the fact they were all of similar age. He explained his fraught emotions as he attempted to challenge their racist beliefs:

*I have a lot of friends who are non-Indigenous, but are ethnic minorities in Australia and they talk about how a symptom of racism is to be shocked when a person of colour tells you an experience they’ve had of racism. If you react so violently and you’re shocked, you’re sort of saying, oh, this has never happened to me, so it’s just so shocking to me that this has happened, instead of just acknowledging that this was an experience that happened to them and it’s real and it doesn’t need to be hyper-dramatised. So I was walking the line between, to what extent do I show my shock at this opinion, but I was just never*
confronted with an opinion like that, like, I knew The Daily Telegraph and Andrew Bolt were right onto it, but I didn’t think that was, like, people who are what [our lecturer] calls Mabo’s children, born after Mabo, so have lived in a country their entire lives where terra nullius has been a historical thing of the past still had those opinions.

Blaze was particularly embarrassed as he was travelling with two girls he met in Europe and they had been having a wonderful time when suddenly, ... there was this sense of embarrassment, like, them watching this fight break out and them, sort of, being like, is this really what Australians think? And it got me thinking, well, is it? Until that moment, he had accepted the idea that such racist views about Indigenous Australians probably occurred in the older generation and were ideas from a fringe of society. Blaze’s conviction to speak up and challenge racism was also tested soon after this incident in an intimate relationship:

The second instance, though, is an example of where I thought someone was totally fine and then, bam, it exploded. And that was when I came back from [overseas] and immediately met someone and we started dating and I thought because we were dating, we had shared interests. I talk a lot, so presumably they would become familiar with where I was coming from on a lot of things quite quickly. I was talking about how, when I was in Year 6, I went on this two-week exchange to Darwin and there were Indigenous kids at the school. Obviously, in somewhere like Darwin, and he was like, oh, yeah, my brother used to be in the army and used to live in Darwin and I used to go up and visit him. Then I said, oh, I love Darwin, like, I’d love to move to Darwin, I think it’s fantastic, the weather and, you know, so close to Asia, cheap airfare, long days with beautiful sunset, everything, cocktails. And he was like, yeah Darwin’s really nice, it’s just got too many ‘C’ word for people of colour. And just like that, I had to double take... did I hear that correctly? Did he say, like, a cheese company [Coon is an Australian cheese brand] and then was pointing it out and just said it...I’d never heard someone say that word. I knew that that word existed, obviously, but I’d never heard someone use it in a serious context, as a valid opinion and this was someone who’s gay, who has probably experienced some form of oppression, surely, at some point in his life, but had no empathy and I was, sort of like, well, how would you feel if someone was saying Surry Hills had really nice architecture, but had too many insert whatever [an offensive word for gay people]. And he was like, oh, well they’re probably just be a dickhead. And I was like, well, hello [your are]!

Blaze was subjected to a ten-minute diatribe justifying why Aboriginal people
did not belong in the city of Darwin. He was deeply shocked that his friend used myth, anecdotal evidence and negative reports in the media about Aboriginal people to justify his opinion:

So all of a sudden this person you care about, there are people that you meet that you’re having a great time on a holiday with, come out with this stuff and so where do you go with that? It alters your whole perception of where it’s at. 
To the point where now, like, ‘cause you know, I have a list of, I think we all do, like when we’re dating or when we’re trying to just meet new people and see whether we want to be friends with them or not. We, sort of, have like a criteria, generally speaking, ideals or attributes, values that we’d like them to have because they’re our points of commonality.

Again, with self-deprecating wit, Blaze described the list of questions he asked during the first couple of dates with a potential new partner; do they believe in marriage, are they interested in having children, do they believe in union membership? While he had previously not thought about asking their views on Indigenous Australians:

But now that’s been right bunged up on the list and as I’ve been undergoing my own sociological experiment on the dates I’ve been going on since February or March, and I have to say, it’s really opened my eyes that even [gay] men, but...largely, White middle class men..., so they do have a position of privilege, but they are a minority group in terms of their sexual identity. But...they can’t see those points of connection. Not all of them are what I would call racist. Some have been [racist], but a lot have this whole attitude of, ‘I don’t have a problem with Aboriginal people as long as they have a job, send their kids to school, they’re not alcoholics’. They’re still framing their assessment [of Aboriginal people] as negative...And so that’s really opened my eyes and this is, like, a new thing this year.

The happenstance of meeting people with negative opinions about Aboriginal people in conjunction with his learning in mandatory Indigenous Studies was the precursor to confront his assumptions about the pervasiveness of racism in Australian society.

Somewhat ironically, he had fallen into the trap of essentialising a gay identity and this held particular implications for the way Blaze now understood his future role as a teacher.
This new knowledge was unsettling because it intersected with his growing awareness of racism and prejudice within the wider community:

*It makes you scared as well, if you’re going into teaching because, I think, straight away you feel really protective of the kids that you’re teaching if you know where they’re coming from, a background that other parents are going to be, whatever [discriminatory], or they’re going to wake up and see stuff on the news... I would be, at least as a teacher, far more protective of kids in my class who are refugees now, because of all the drama and political craziness that’s going on...when I hear those things, I’m not necessarily thinking about my anger or I’m not even necessarily thinking about Aboriginal adults, it immediately goes to the kids.*

Kitchen (2016) argues that “better understanding our gender identities and sexual orientations can help us as teacher educators become more responsive to the range of diversities in our students and communities” (p. 19). Kitchen’s (2016) narrative inquiry research and “journey of self-discovery” (p. 21) was driven by a desire to better understand how being gay has informed his identity as a teacher educator. Blaze’s personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 2012) shared in the above narrative illuminates the complexity of learner diversity at the Cultural Interface. Blaze’s honest retelling of the impact of his sexual identity on his developing personal practical knowledge, could guide future practice in the classroom. While not within the scope of this thesis, Blaze’s experiences raise important questions in regards to the possibility of developing more nuanced understandings of the tensions and agency at the Cultural Interface through the lens of Queer theory.

As Blaze became increasingly conscious that the world outside the classroom may be a hostile place to many of his students, he also awakened to the idea that teaching for social justice holds moral and political challenges beyond that which he initially assumed. Blaze’s articulation of his desire to protect his students continues the earlier storying of his classroom as a safe and caring place for all his students. Spalding
(2013) suggests that ‘caring’ teaching is multi-dimensional and incorporates the pedagogical, moral and cultural understandings of individual students (p. 293). A review of research on social justice education research by Wiedeman (2002) identified ‘care theory’ as one of seven theoretical perspectives implicated in the literature on teaching for social justice. Noddings (1988) developed the notion of an ‘ethics of care’ to articulate the significance of developing relationships as a cornerstone to social justice education. An ‘ethics of care’ requires that educators understand how the structural frameworks and personal relationships can be supported to develop caring relationships with students and advocate on their behalf (Wiedeman, 2002, p. 203). Indeed, how to maintain this ‘ethics of care’ was a significant thread in Blaze’s narrative.

Blazes’ expanding awareness of the complexity of his future teaching role brought with it a sense of concern about how this “uncertain journey” (Agarwal, Epstein, Oppenheim, Oyler, & Sonu, 2010) could unfold in a way that he would be able to uphold his commitment to social justice. Such concerns were raised in a number of contexts; the perceived conservatism of some of his preservice teacher peers and disinterest around embedding culturally diverse curriculum perspectives during professional experience placements, were seen as limitations to addressing social justice issues. However he also spoke about his peers in generous terms, for instance:

*Look, I haven’t come across any racism, I haven’t come across anyone saying that the [mandatory Indigenous Studies] unit is a waste of time or that the Indigenous perspectives incorporated in assignments are a waste of time and if when I hear about what other people have done in their assignments or whatever in relation to Indigenous perspectives and I think that it’s tokenistic or I think it might be perpetrating a particular negative stereotype, I don’t think personally that that’s coming from them wanting to promote that, that’s just their learning at school and the failure of the university in those subjects to effectively articulate what they actually mean by Indigenous perspectives. That’s where that’s coming from, not from a bad or ugly place, I don’t think,*
[but] I could be wrong.

He clarified though that some of his peers tended to exhibit a level of complacency and disinterest in social justice priorities such as Indigenous education. Blaze had constructed the idea the student body could be categorised into two ‘factions’:

I think that there’s a more progressive faction of people studying the primary education degree and a more conservative faction. Not necessarily politically voting pattern-wise but probably the divide would generally correlate that way but more just in terms of the actual philosophy of being a teacher and ...why they chose to be a teacher.

On the more conservative faction I find that they are largely women who come from... first English-speaking backgrounds, White backgrounds, middle class probably and Catholic or private school-educated as well. And they became a teacher because they see it as a great lifestyle to be a parent in the sense that you’re always guaranteed school holidays, you always get weekends off, you very rarely have to stay at the school past 6:00, you might still be doing work at home but you’re physically home at a reasonable hour, you can drop kids off on your way to school you know all these sort of lifestyle choices which I guess then feeds into income not being a deterrent from doing it as well....A lot of these people who are in relationships with men...they’re not doing social work and education, they’re... doing other things at the University of Sydney. I’m not critical of these people because obviously people can make those life choices but... it almost sort of feels in a way that if being a nail technician required you to go to university but gave you the same flexibility and lifestyle as what teaching apparently does - which I’m not necessarily sure it is as flexible as what they may believe it to be - then they’d become a nail technician...this job more suits the lifestyle that they aspire to. My huge concern I have for these people, and this is a genuine concern, is that it is based on the middle class myth of marriage, mortgage and the children and if that doesn’t work out ... like if you’ve staked your professional career not on what you want to do or what you’re passionate about necessarily, like I’m sure they like kids and they like working in schools but I’m not convinced it’s their passion in life.

The more progressive faction I find are people who’ve gone into teaching because that’s what they want to do as a profession, not a lifestyle and whilst a lot of these people in this faction will probably...maybe, I don’t know ... have children at some point, I’d imagine they’d have an intention to go back to work relatively quicker than what other people might and...that whilst it would be convenient to be a teacher while being a parent that’s not the primary motivation for selecting the course. The more progressive faction sees education as the vehicle of social change, not as a job and so these people are far more interested in, one, going into Department schools, two, going into Department schools in disadvantaged areas or communities and three, far more likely to want to work in special education, multilingual education, Indigenous
Blaze explained (in self-deprecating humour) that he saw himself as the ‘warlord’ of the progressive faction and taking on this role had led to ‘explosive’ debates in tutorials when, he went head to ‘head-to-head’ with the ‘warlord of the other faction’. He explained that when he challenged the ‘warlord’ of the conservative it was mainly in relation to his deficit framing of people living in difficult circumstances (e.g., single parents). In relation to incorporating Indigenous perspectives he believed the progressive faction would be more interested in engaging with Aboriginal communities in meaningful ways such as,

consulting with communities and addressing the issues that Indigenous people face because we genuinely believe that education is the best vehicle of social mobility. These people, of the conservative faction, I think are less likely to be interested in that because from their perspective this is a job that’s meant to be part of an easy, pristine, nice lifestyle and dealing with these issues or going to a rural community is something they would never do because why would they...that’s not comfortable, they haven’t pursued this career to be movers and shakers, they’ve pursued this career ... and they’re totally entitled to do that but they’ve pursued it to suit a particular lifestyle in Sydney or at least you know in areas similar to where they grew up, went to school and where they made friends.

As Blaze discussed his experiences of challenging conservatism, there was a sense that this opposing stance was an obstacle for creating the social change that he hoped education would deliver for disadvantaged students. When I enquired about this, Blaze indicated that:

It’s a bit disheartening when you believe something or are passionate about something and people who are in the exact same context as you, in that lecture, in that tutorial, participating in that discussion doing the same readings, doing the same assignments don’t have that level of passion. And then you start to question yourself and you go hang on, am I just being overly emotive about this? Or is my distress or is my passion or enthusiasm or happiness or delight, is that not warranted because there’s, you know, a majority or minority of people who aren’t experiencing that same level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with what’s going on?

You sort of feel in a way maybe, like, because you have experiences like that you
feel like you’ve got to lift more of the load in terms of the problems that are out... But then I think maybe my expectations of myself are too high or my expectations of other people are too high and there’ve definitely been moments throughout the four years where I’ve sort of questioned... maybe I do expect [too much]... 'cause when I go into prac schools it’s very mundane and sedated and so I sort of think maybe that passion just isn’t out there in the teaching community generally and so these people are just sort of like a taste of what’s to come ‘cause people always were radicalised and energised and enthusiastic when they’re younger and then, I don’t know what happens when you get older, I’m a bit scared. I hope I don’t lose my energy. To me they’ve got the attitude of someone who’s been working for the Department for 10, 20 years and are sort of a bit cynical about the system but to have that level of cynicism already I think is, one, unwarranted, and two, very dangerous.

Blaze’s palpable sense of frustration with his peers’ complacency alongside a foreboding sense that the profession he was entering would be ineffective in nurturing his Indigenous education interests provides a key systemic challenge for teacher educators and ongoing professional development to actively support such preservice and early career teachers who want to make a difference. A study by Agarwal et al. (2010) on the experiences of three beginning teachers who were committed to enact social justice education found that they experienced this process as an “uncertain journey” because it was a “complex enterprise wrought with tensions, conflicts and contradictions when they aim to translate their conceptions into viable pedagogy” (p. 244).

While Blaze was clearly motivated and moved by his experience of learning Indigenous Studies throughout the degree – he also expressed uncertainty about how he might maintain momentum and interest in a school context that may not be conducive to enacting Indigenous Studies and prioritising social justice. A key implication here is to consider more seriously, how teacher educators can support preservice teachers who are developing an interest in Indigenous education so that they are not swayed by the apathy or disinterest of uninspired peers. There are also implications for early career
teachers like Blaze to ensure they won’t be “derailed by the impact of imposed systems of curricular regulation or overly consumed by their status as beginning teachers” (Agarwal et al., 2010, p. 244) such that their developing activist identity would be quashed.
Chapter 8: Melissa

Found Poetry

Educational journey and learning about Indigenous Australia

Books,
very big part of our life,
created this idea of education.

A lot of Indigenous kids
at my primary school.

High school,
a fair few Indigenous kids.
I had friends that were Indigenous.

I liked doing Australian history,
no-one else liked it.
Everyone hates Australian history,
that’s a fact.

At that point,
I didn’t have a strong interest in
Indigenous education or
Indigenous issues.

We learnt about the
Freedom Rides
A big moment
It brought home
that idea
we don’t know enough.
It would have been
year 9 or 10.

Year 11 and 12
wanted to do TAFE.
Dad goes,
why don’t you not do that.
Found an Aboriginal studies pamphlet
last minute, oh I’ll choose that.

BEST decision!

Not going to uni
was never an option.
not that, it wasn’t my choice.
My brother doesn’t go to uni
for me it always made sense,
always wanted to do education.

I find it interesting reading,
learning about the Stolen Generation
it’s interesting learning history.

I want to work in social justice.
I want to work with these kids.
I want to be part of welfare.

Education is the key,
is where we’re going to make change
if we allow people to have skills
to create their own change
we’re actually investing.

When people say, you know,
public education is investing
in the future,
that’s the fact
that’s it!

If you enable someone
to access their mind
to access information
to read, write,
they’re light years ahead.
I think that’s fundamentally that.

Aboriginal Studies.
I just had this defensive nature
people always say shit like
it’s unimportant,
it doesn’t matter,
Just think it to yourself,
don’t talk to me about it.
Family influence and learning about Indigenous Australia

My parents are definitely passionate about education.

It was always important in our house. I think that shaped my professional identity, I’ve always valued education.

My brother, he played a lot, without being stereotypical, a lot of touch footy with a lot of the Indigenous boys.

The 2000 Bridge Walk, I went on that. Was big thing doing the Bridge Walk. I remember dad a big advocate really wanted the apology.

My parents are very knowledgeable. We were taught about the world, taught to be critical of the media.

Still, they see an article, and email did you read this? They like to stay up-to-date.

Parents were very open raised me with the idea didn’t believe in stereotypes. Don’t judge a book by its cover, value someone on their merit.

My mum was very much for everyone deserves a fair chance. You’ve got to help everyone out.
In Conversation with Melissa’s Narrative

“To believe in something, and not to live it, is dishonest.” Ghandi

Ghandi’s quote struck me for the way it encapsulated the energy and enthusiasm that Melissa brings to conversations about Indigenous education. Melissa believes that educational approaches that prioritise the welfare and education of ‘disadvantaged youth’ are paramount to achieving social justice in Australian society. For Melissa, engagement in Indigenous education has become one way to ‘live’ this belief.

Melissa (like Blaze) also came along to each interview having reflected on the interview questions. Her enthusiasm for the discipline of Indigenous Studies was unmistakable; there was a sense of excitement - at last she had found someone to talk to about her passion! On a number of occasions Melissa paused mid-sentence to declare ...just stop me... 'cause I’ll go on, ...I’ll just talk all day. Melissa spoke at rapid speed and as I listened, I imaged her as a young principal in a multicultural high school.

Melissa’s story is strikingly different from each of the other preservice teachers I interviewed because of her sustained learning engagement in Indigenous Studies that began in senior high school and continued throughout her university degree. Her story provides a unique insight to the tensions and agency experienced at the Cultural Interface over the period of seven years in many different classroom contexts. Her experiences illuminate the sustained emotional labour required to challenge peers who were sometimes apathetic, racist or pleased to find ways to try to humiliate her because of her interest in Indigenous education. Her narrative provides insights to the tensions involved in enacting a commitment to Indigenous education alongside mobilising agency in spite of the difficulties. Melissa expressed her locale as a learner at the beginning of her university study:

In terms of my interest in Aboriginal education, that definitely came from doing
Aboriginal Studies in the last two years of school. I came to uni with the interest and then subjects were either going to increase an interest or decrease it.

Experiences of Indigenous Australia – the influence of family and school

Melissa grew up in an inner west suburb of Sydney with her mother, father and brother. Her father was the first in his family to attend university. He left a small town in New Zealand to complete an undergraduate degree and then immigrated to Sydney where he studied at night and completed an Engineering Masters degree. Melissa’s mother ...moved here from Ireland at 14 and was made to drop out of school and work. So she got her school certificate at night and then she got a Diploma in library tech. Melissa consequently grew up surrounded by books and spent a lot of her childhood in libraries recalling that …books were the one thing that my mother would always buy, we’d read every night, both my parents read every night, so in that sense, I think, that really created this idea of [the importance of] education.

Melissa described her parents as being …very well educated and very knowledgeable, so the news was on every night at 7:00pm, the newspaper was on the table, 702 [a local ABC radio station] was constantly on the radio, so I was always exposed to the idea of social justice. Melissa tells of the important events that her family participated in such as the walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 2000 to support the Reconciliation movement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Her parents were, …big advocates of Indigenous social justice and were very interested in politics. Their interest in social and political issues were infused into Melissa’s day-to-day life:

We were taught to be critical of the media, we were taught about the world, [and] without even knowing it. I reflect on it now at 22, that obviously at seven I was like, I just want to watch Australian Idol....Still whenever they see an article they’ll email it to me or be like, ‘oh did you read this?’ While neither of them work in areas of social justice, or neither of them are huge protesters, they
both read and know things and like to stay up-to-date.

Melissa built friendships with Aboriginal people through the family’s participation in sport. Her parents also chose to actively engage their children in experiences that would raise their social consciousness. They regularly visited a Detention Centre and a year long friendship was formed with a detained family. Melissa described her parents as “very open” to her socialising with children from diverse backgrounds:

_They definitely raised me with the idea of, we didn’t believe in stereotypes, we don’t judge a book by its cover, you value someone on their merit. So therefore we were given the freedom to hang out with whoever we want. I wasn’t in one of those houses where my parents were kind of like, oh, let’s not have a play date with them, let’s have a play date with them instead. My mum was very much for the idea that everyone deserves a fair chance, you’ve got to help everyone out, that sort of stuff. That’s shaped my education point of view, in the sense that I believe everyone can succeed and everyone has potential and it’s a matter of circumstance that allows people not to achieve, whether that’s their own choices they’re making, whether that’s the choices that were made for them, whether that’s their environment, whether that’s a disability, whatever - it’s not in their inherent self that they can’t succeed._

Melissa recalls that she was highly motivated in primary school, _...a ‘straight A’ student_, who won a lot of awards. Her parents and teachers had very positive perceptions of her ability as a student and this impacted on her own self-belief, _...so while people were saying those nice things, ...subconsciously I was like, I am that perfect student_. Melissa’s academic success resulted in her relocation to a school that supported academically gifted children. Unlike her local primary school, the new school had a culturally diverse student body and this experience also broadened her worldview:

_It was a very different school, very multicultural, like, we learnt four languages, had a great variety of religions and I think that’s what shaped my interest in multicultural education as well as in working with students that aren’t of Anglo backgrounds. Without even realising it, because I was exposed to so much there, it was just normal life._
Melissa reflects that during her junior high school years she did not have a strong interest in Indigenous issues and further could not recall learning about Aboriginal Australia. In the latter years of high school, she developed a keen interest in Australia history, although she believed that …everyone hates Australian history! It was during a history lesson in year 9 or 10 (she wasn’t sure) that Melissa learnt about the Freedom Rides (see List of Definitions and Abbreviations for a brief explanation) and Aboriginal activism against discrimination. She reflects on these history lessons as a critical event in her personal and professional trajectory as they captured her interest in Indigenous issues:

*I think, actually that was probably a big moment I still remember. People were like up in arms about what was happening in America, what was happening in South Africa, but no one cared what happened here. And no one actually knew what happened here, and then this guy (Charles Perkins – see List of Definitions and Abbreviations) gets on a bus and drives around [to raise awareness about discrimination]. So I think it kind of, brought home that idea of, like we don’t know enough about here.*

In year 10 of high school, Melissa volunteered to tutor a year 7 Fijian boy who was struggling to read. This student had challenges at home that made it difficult for his family to assist with his low level of literacy. Melissa tapped into his interest in football and they would read magazines together and slowly they developed a trusting relationship such that the young boy enjoyed reading with her. Melissa’s unfolding experience of building a relationship with this young boy nurtured her social consciousness. She reflected on this as another critical event in her identity formation - describing it as an, …aha moment. She also came to learn of the barriers facing some students at school and that even the best teachers could lose sight of supporting disadvantaged students:

*Even his English teacher, who was my English teacher, who I loved, she even said to me at the time, he just doesn’t want to learn… But to him, the worst place to be was in the classroom, so therefore he would do everything he could*
to get out of the classroom because the thought that a teacher would go, ‘oh, can you read the next line’ and that would be hell, obviously.

During the interview Melissa’s tone changed as she expressed her anger about the injustice of this young boy’s situation and how this informed her decision to become a teacher:

*He had how many teachers? Seven teachers minimum at that time! Seven teachers and still no one picked up this kid can’t read. I was just so shocked, I think the main thing I was like, I can’t believe it, because everyone always talks about educating the third world and all that sort of stuff and I was like, but this kid grew up in the inner west, he grew up three suburbs from where I lived. And because of his situation, his mum, obviously, unfortunately didn’t have the skills to pick it up and then the school didn’t pick it up...That’s why kids drop out, because they can’t read and no-one picked it up, so what are they going to do? That kind of raised my idea about social justice in education and inequality. So, yeah, so that idea really started there and, I guess, that’s why I want to be a teacher. I don’t know...it’s hard to say I wanted to be a teacher, I just feel like I’m meant to be a teacher, I mean without that sounding really wanky, I’m meant to be a teacher.*

During the latter years of high school Melissa spoke with her teachers about her interest in education and she began to consider where she could have most impact. One teacher attempted to sway her from primary school teaching, *...she said I don’t think you should do primary, she said I think you should do high school teaching, we need more people like you in high school.* Initially Melissa doubted she had the confidence to deal with ‘teenage behaviours’ yet she believed that if she were able to establish a good relationship with her students, this might overcome the difficulties:

*In primary school, kids...they love you, it’s inherent for them to love you because they’re little and they admire you and you’re big. With high school kids, it’s inherent for them to hate you ‘cause you’re a teacher, but once you win them over, like, there’s a strong relationship there and they will back you, and you will make that really significant change. ...In education relationship’s number one.*

The experience of learning ways to gradually build trust with the Fijian boy nurtured her confidence to build relationships with students and this skill was applied in new
situations throughout her teaching degree. As a preservice teacher she worked hard to build positive relationships with students who were struggling and for whom, she perceived, other teachers had “cut themselves off”. Her father, as a constant guiding force, provided a cautionary warning that she might need to distance herself from some students:

_I understand there’s a need to, and my dad says you’re going to have times where you just walk away and all that, but I think you need to have that relationship to really allow students, especially students that I want to work with, to know you care. It’s hard for a student to hate you and not respond to you when they know you care._

Melissa’s story frequently returns to the significance of relationship building as demonstrating authentic care towards students. It is pertinent to return to Noddings’ (1988) work on the concept of an ‘ethics of care’ as highlighted briefly in Blaze’s narrative. Noddings (1999) has argued that the notion of justice, as it has been applied to address issues of equity in education is, by itself, inadequate (p. 7) and should coalesce with the notion of care:

_Care theorists usually seek ends compatible with justice, but we try to achieve them by establishing conditions in which caring itself can flourish. Out of this healthy environment of personal and community caring, solutions may emerge that will satisfy not only the criteria of justice but also the people who are the targets of our good intentions._ (p.19)

Noddings (2002) elaborates on this notion of care by differentiating between “caring-about” and “caring-for” others. By example, caring-about may manifest in caring intentions to help a disadvantaged child however maybe a disconnected activity with no response. Caring-for on the other hand describes “an encounter or set of encounters characterized by direct attention and response. It requires the establishment of a caring relation, person-to-person contact of some sort” (Noddings, 2013, p. 11). Shevalier and McKenzie (2012) argue that culturally responsive teaching must incorporate the “care-
based education” proposed by Noddings (2002). Shevalier and McKenzie’s (2012) key argument is that culturally responsive teaching involves caring-for students through building authentic and positive relationships.

Noddings argues that caring-for others is not an innate behaviour and must be modelled (2002, p. 16). Melissa’s parents modelled caring-for others through their effort to immerse their children in activities (e.g., their regular visitation to a Detention Centre) that expanded their understanding of social and political issues from a local and international perspective. Caring-for others also requires practice, dialogue and attention (Noddings, 2002, pp. 18-19). Melissa’s narrative acknowledges the enduring impact of the experience of building a trusting relationship with the Fijian boy. She discovered the value of paying attention to his interest in football in order to “learn what the other wants and needs” (Noddings, 2002, p. 19). A driving force in Melissa’s developing professional identity was to build a ‘capacity for connectedness’ (Palmer, 1998). For Melissa, the capacity for connectedness was aligned with being an authentic teacher.

The three dimensional narrative inquiry space helps to illuminate Melissa’s emerging ideas regarding her moral and ethical obligations in relation to being a ‘good teacher’ of disadvantaged youth. As Melissa attempts to perform (as best she can) this ‘ethics of care’, it is useful to employ Foucault’s ‘ethico-political’ axes of teacher identity formation (Clarke, 2009) (Refer to Figure 3 – Doing identity work) to better understand how Melissa constitutes herself as an ethical subject over time. The ethical substance of Melissa’s teacher identity involved a commitment to the emotional work of building relationships with her students (even in the face of rejection). Melissa’s sources of discursive authority were those that foreground student welfare and
challenged deficit discourses about ‘disadvantaged’ youth. Melissa’s *self-practices* then were located in her classroom efforts to create a safe learning space for all students. Attending to her students’ social and emotional wellbeing was prioritised before other learning needs. The *telos* of Melissa’s emerging teacher identity incorporated the notion of ‘making a difference’ with a focus on caring relationships as the pathway to reach this goal.

Melissa’s early interest in making a difference in the lives of young people led her to contemplate studying to become a youth worker through a Vocational education pathway. In year 10 when Melissa had to make decisions about the subjects she would study in her final two senior years of high school, her father encouraged her to choose subjects that would count towards admission to University:

> So I’m looking through all these things I’d collected and I found an Aboriginal Studies pamphlet, which I didn’t even remember picking up. I don’t even remember talking to anyone about it. And then it was like a last minute decision, oh I’ll choose that. Best decision I ever made. It’s the best subject. I’d gone through all of high school with good marks, but never feeling like I had the subject that, it was like, that’s my area. I had a friend that was a dancer and everyone was like, oh, she’s the dancer and I always wanted that thing, something that was mine and then I did Aboriginal Studies and that was my thing and everyone knew it. It was so interesting and it made sense and it was relevant and it was just like this big aha moment, like, this is it!

Melissa had stumbled across a discipline of study that gave purpose to her academic and socio-political interests. She reflected that …*Aboriginal Studies showed me the way Aboriginal history should be taught.* Melissa believed that when Indigenous perspectives are addressed in the history curriculum, oftentimes they are taught inappropriately so that it …makes people feel bad…then they shut off and we need to get around that and the way the Aboriginal Studies does it is with a focus on the now, and the moving forward is what we need to do.

The Aboriginal Studies teacher at her school was a non-Aboriginal woman who
was very committed to the subject and went to great effort to ensure the students learnt from Aboriginal people in the local area. The students went on a number of local excursions ...to Redfern, we went to the community centre, the health centre, the Aboriginal Legal Service, ...all those sorts of places. And seeing that really opens your eyes. Melissa’s teacher also took them on an excursion to a remote community. She explained it awakened her to Aboriginal disadvantage and inequity in Australian society:

That was a huge eye opener, like going there. A), being the minority because it’s 90% Indigenous and B), seeing, this beautiful tropical island and you get on a boat and then you see all these nice houses at the front, and they’re for the White people. Then there’s the school and then there’s the health centre and there’s the shop and all that and you just, you see it [the disadvantage] and you’re like, this is not in my same country.

Melissa found the subject to be academically demanding and interesting yet in comparison with other HSC subjects, there were fewer text books available to support her learning. This, coupled with the patronising comments about Aboriginal Studies from some of her peers, left her feeling dispirited. Ultimately though, perseverance was met with success:

I was frustrated ‘cause I was like, I need to put in so much extra work than everyone else and this subject doesn’t even scale well. I didn’t care about scaling, but I was like, this is shit...and I remember having people say to me, like, oh do you just study the colours on the VB [beer] can or whatever and I remember being, like, I can’t even have this discussion anymore. I’m so over justifying why I do this [and] why this is important. So, I just slaved away at it, did my notes and I remember I emailed them to another guy in my class who was also trying to get into uni...[and] he goes, ‘wow, I didn’t expect that many notes’. I’d made full on bodies of notes...I remember saying, if I don’t get above 90 for Aboriginal Studies, it doesn’t matter what I get for anything else. And I woke up that morning, I got my text message and the first one was Aboriginal Studies with 94! I ran into my dad’s room, it was 6:00am and I was like, oh would you look, I did it, I did it! I was so happy, it was the best because I’d worked so hard at it because I was so passionate. It was so fantastic then to get that mark.

At the time of the release of her year 12 results, Melissa was certain she wanted
to become a high school teacher and consequently had spent a lot of time researching the degree options. Melissa assumed that teaching degrees across the universities in the Sydney region would be very similar and consequently examined the Indigenous Studies offerings as a point of difference:

After doing Aboriginal Studies, I wanted to put it as a priority. And so then I was looking online and then found all the Koori Centre subjects and I thought oh this looks so great. I was also looking at, I forget what the centre’s called at [another local university], I couldn’t navigate it as well, so I think that was also part of the decision. I’m sure they have great courses over there, I just couldn’t read the information on them. The Koori Centre was great, I’d also come here once at high school. In amongst other things, it’s also local, but the Koori Centre was definitely a big reason that I chose Sydney Uni.

Although Melissa had done a lot of research to determine that the University of Sydney was the best choice, she was disappointed to learn that the pathway to be an Aboriginal Studies teacher would take longer to achieve than initially expected.

**University experiences of Indigenous Studies – the first year**

Melissa enrolled in a combined Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Humanities and Social Sciences) and Bachelor of Arts degree which meant that the subjects selected each year would need to align with the available Major and Minor teaching areas (see Appendix 6). Although Aboriginal Studies as a teaching method was introduced during the final year of her study, it was not an option at the time of her enrolment.

Browne (2015), a secondary Aboriginal Studies teacher, argues that in a maze of subject selections, students do not select Aboriginal Studies “because schools do not communicate explicitly or implicitly, its importance, why it matters and what is means for the individual student and society” (p. 7). Melissa’s experience of Aboriginal Studies as an undervalued discipline at school persisted into university:

*I’d sat down with my dad who’d said, do you want me to come to your*
enrolment with you and I go, no, no, no, I’ll be fine. We’d sat down, organised all the subjects I wanted, I had heaps of Indigenous Studies in there, had no idea how Uni worked, we thought, this is great, had it all done. Get there and they go, no you can’t do Aboriginal Studies as a method of teaching here. I called my dad, I was crying, I don’t know what to do…I was devastated ‘cause this is what I’d planned to do. I had it all written down, I’d said don’t come with me, I know what I’m doing, and I was just like, I think I was shocked and then I was like, well what am I going to do now? How do you become an Aboriginal Studies teacher?

Melissa attempted to challenge the university:

_I remember making like a big deal about it, I mean, you know they have Hebrew and Jewish Studies, which I’m not saying is irrelevant but surely in Australia, Aboriginal Studies should be available if that is. You know, not putting anything above anything else but we are in Australia and therefore all different cultures should be offered and Aboriginal Studies is greatly important._

Melissa subsequently selected English as her Major teaching area, and History as her Minor area. She would have completed a Major in English and a Minor in Indigneous Studies had the teaching method subjects been available. Nevertheless, English and History were considered an appropriate contingency ...I chose history because I figured I can hopefully do some Australian history and because then if I get placed in a history faculty, from there I can teach Aboriginal Studies. That was my line of thinking.

Like Blaze, Melissa recalled the Kinship workshop as the first occasion Indigenous Studies perspectives were included in the degree. Although Melissa found the activity of value she explained:

_Some people hated it...look people responded either way, some people were like oh why are we doing this - it is stupid. And some people were like, oh wow, this is amazing, I think it’s really well done. This is just what I hear from other people, [but they] usually don’t say these things to me which...it’s bad because I...can defend it but it’s also good ‘cause then I don’t have to listen to that stuff so that’s also good. But yeah, that was the first Aboriginal perspective._

In first year, Melissa’s subject choice was prioritised to fulfil the requirement of the English major and the history minor and she “nit-picked” subjects that embedded
Indigenous perspectives. She chose an Australian history unit *which obviously had some Indigenous history in it* and also selected a religion unit that included Aboriginal perspectives on spirituality.

There were however challenges beyond locating subjects that embedded Indigenous perspectives as Melissa had to yet again defend her interest in Indigenous Studies. This thread of emotional labour would return time again in each interview even though it was not the focus of the interview questions. Melissa recalls with some amusement, that the snide comments she received about studying Aboriginal Studies in year 12 had left her with a pre-emptive and assertive stance when making new friends:

*I actually remember when I first came to uni and I met someone...and I still cannot believe I said this...‘I just want to let you know, I’m really into Aboriginal education, so just in case you’re going to say anything bad, please don’t do it in front of me’*. Now we joke about the fact that I said that, but it was because I just had this defensive nature of, people always say shit like, oh it’s unimportant or, oh, it doesn’t matter or who cares and I was just so over hearing it, I was like, if you think something negative just think it to yourself, don’t talk to me about it!

Melissa complained that her peers often assumed that her interest in Indigenous education derived from some personal affiliation with Aboriginal people:

*The other thing I coped a lot was, ‘oh, are you Indigenous? Oh, do you have friends that are Indigenous?’ Oh, not really, like, none of my close friends are Indigenous, no I’m not Indigenous. [They then question] ‘Oh, why are you interested then?’ Like I’m only allowed to be interested if I have a personal agenda! It’s this idea that you have to have your own personal agenda or I have to have something to gain for my own people or my own community or something to want to care. I’d say, well, I’m doing it because I actually live in Australia and this is actually something I’m interested in and because it’s actually really relevant.*

During Melissa’s university study, she also did some part-time work as a teacher’s aide with a group of Aboriginal boys at a local primary school. The boys often asked Melissa if she was Aboriginal and although she confirmed she wasn’t, they persisted to intermittently ask her the same question. Melissa wondered if … they’d
cottoned onto, she cares about us, why would she care if she’s not Indigenous … like, she must be Indigenous if she cares. She must be Indigenous if she’s organising this. She must be Indigenous if she’s doing that. Melissa perceived their questions about her Aboriginality to be a positive reflection of her engagement and their growing relationship, …yeah, I think with them, it was just like a connected thing and, sort of, a how do I fit in their world?

University experiences of Indigenous Studies – the second year

During the middle three years of the five year degree, Melissa continued to select subjects that included Indigenous content and were cross-listed for credit with the English Major or History Minor …one Indigenous Studies subject crossed over with history. So that went towards my history minor which was good because I really tried to look for those and then I was also trying to look for English, and the Aboriginal literature subject crossed over [with English].

Melissa recalled the second year of study as offering the most extensive Indigenous Studies content over the duration of the degree and noted that two subjects in particular, EDSE2002: Indigenous Education: Secondary Schools and EDUF2007: Social Perspectives in Education ran concurrently in second semester (for a description of each subject see Appendix 8 List of Units of Study. See also Appendix 7 for the sequencing of these subjects within the combined degree). Melissa was looking forward to the mandatory Indigenous Studies subject and placed a lot pressure on herself to excel:

I’d always said, this is what I want to do, and then I was like, if I don’t get a HD that’s really bad. I’d never read as many readings for an essay, I was so prepared, it was done a week early… I got my HD. I got an 85 or an 86 so I was stoked with that because I’d worked really hard. It wasn’t pressure in a bad way, it was like, this is my opportunity and I’ve said to everyone, I wish I got to do this [as a Major] …and now I’ve got the opportunity I need to make the most of it. I really obviously enjoyed that subject, I enjoyed doing the readings for it.
I’d made myself the poster girl for why Aboriginal Studies should be compulsory so now if I flunk out people are going to be like, oh so you’re all talk!

Melissa found the first tutorial in the mandatory Indigenous Studies subject disheartening because many of her peers seemed to have only a very basic prior knowledge of Indigenous Australia:

At first I found it really disappointing, we had to say what experience you’ve had in Indigenous Studies…and I tried not to say too much but…then heaps of people said like, oh well, I’ve seen the film ‘Rabbit-Proof Fence’ [see List of Definitions and Abbreviations for an explanation] a bunch of times and I was like, oh, that’s not [much experience], like what! Who are you?

Melissa also remembered …a lot of people kept saying, oh why don’t we just do a multicultural subject? Certainly this suggestion from preservice teachers has been reported elsewhere in the literature (Mooney et al., 2003) yet has been resisted by Indigenous academics because as St. Denis (2011) writes from a Canadian perspective, Aboriginal curricular content and perspectives are silenced when incorporated as part of a multicultural framework.

While some preservice teacher education programs combine Indigenous and multicultural content into the one subject (see for example, Aveling, 2006; Kilgour, 2013), this approach is problematic as Aboriginal people do not necessarily regard themselves as “just another ethnic group” in Australia (Keeffe, 1992, p. 71). Similarly the notion of ‘cultural competence’ as a theoretical and practice framework to build student and staff knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Australian cultures, histories and contemporary realities so they can work effectively in Indigenous contexts (Universities Australia, 2011) has been criticised for its ‘multicultural’ agenda (Abrams & Moio, 2009) and for its potential to essentialise Indigenous cultures (Hollinsworth, 2013).
In supporting staff to develop cultural competence at the University of Sydney, the National Centre for Cultural Competence (launched in 2016, see http://sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2016/07/25/university-wide-commitment-to-cultural-competence-embraced-.html) focuses on cultural competence as a whole of university approach that will:

- Develop and integrate cultural competence through innovative learning, teaching, research and engagement. We will introduce these innovations firstly from the standpoint of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. The program will be expanded to fully embrace the cultural diversity of the University, our region and the wider international community. (University of Sydney, 2016, para. 4)

The National Centre for Cultural Competence was developed to create structural support to bring a whole of university approach to Indigenous education in preference to the ‘enclave’ model where “all matters ‘Indigenous’ rests with a single portfolio” (Houston, 2011, p. 5). This paradigm shift (Houston, 2011) resulted in the disaggregation of the Koori Centre’s academic programs and in 2013 academic staff were moved into the Faculty of Education and Social Work and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

Foley (2016) provides a damning account of the impact of the closure of a number of Indigenous Centres in Australia in recent times, arguing that “mainstreaming Indigenous academia without a strong Aboriginal centre is counterproductive to…the overall maintenance of Indigenous knowledge” (p. 59). Certainly the focus and energy directed to the cultural competence agenda, which conflates Indigenous standpoints with cultural diversity inclusivity, is problematic for the emerging discipline of Indigenous Studies and the units we teach. When such a conflation occurs, there is a greater chance of Indigenous priorities being put to the side and instead Indigenous academics get drawn in to a ‘politics of distraction’ (G. H. Smith, 2003). Indigenous
standpoints are lost to broad notions of cultural competence, detracting from the socio-political priorities of diverse Indigenous communities. Certainly for Melissa, the Koori Centre provided a strong enticement to enrol at the University of Sydney because she believed a university without an Indigenous centre was ...strike number one, against the institution. I found it curious that while a strong Indigenous academic presence on a university campus is considered important to Indigenous students, it might also be compelling to some non-Indigenous students.

Assessment was also an area that raised concern for Melissa. The first assessment task in the mandatory unit was a critical literacy task that required students to evaluate a teaching resource that could be used to embed Indigenous perspectives into one of their future teaching areas. Melissa was disturbed about the limited access to discipline appropriate resources for students enrolled outside of the humanities as she explained:

*I think that can be isolating for science, maths and human movement students...I had so much to choose from, they had to really push. And while that’s great and you know that’s testing them, that could also make them feel like well screw this, the history kids get to just pick something easy, for us it’s a lot harder.*

Melissa believed that discipline specific tutorial groups should be created instead of mixing the Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Humanities / Science / Mathematics) and Bachelor of Education (Human Movement and Health Education) cohorts. She believed this would allow teaching staff to better focus on the learning needs of maths, science and human movement students ...*it makes people feel more that it’s targeted at them and that they’re not...that afterthought.* Melissa had overheard her maths and science peers complain about the lack of suitable resources and was therefore concerned that these students would subsequently lose interest. Melissa saw this as an impediment to improving the status of the subject and a lost opportunity to encourage
curiosity:

*We don’t want those groups to feel like, oh well, well once again this is directed at English and history, because then they can start resenting the subject and that’s the last thing that the subject is trying to do, is get people to resent Indigenous Studies more than they already do - that’s not going to help anyone.*

Another assessment task for this subject involved teaching a lesson to peers that incorporated an Indigenous perspective. Melissa reflected that it was somewhat ironic that these students prepared some of the most interesting and innovative work...

...because they really had to think!

Melissa returned again to recall the distress and frustration she experienced when she overheard one of her peers complaining about the way the Aboriginal history was taught in the mandatory unit:

*I remember somebody coming out [of the lecture], being like, oh what an absolute Whitewash...he was referring to the fact that the lecture was some kind of indoctrination... he was totally offended... I have big issues with him overall as a human being and teacher but thankfully he’s always going to teach in the private system so I’ll never have to teach with him so that’s sorting out that.*

Melissa was particularly concerned that her peer was studying to be a history teacher and yet he had held such strong and antagonistic views about Aboriginal perspectives on Australian history. She had considered these negative reactions and provided suggestions on ways to improve the unit so that her peers would be less likely to be resistant:

*That’s the thing with Aboriginal history ... it needs to be taught in a contextual manner ‘cause people too often think oh history doesn’t matter, it’s over. Whereas we need to understand no, history’s continual, history is today, history is now especially when we look at Indigenous issues because it’s very now, this history is still happening in a huge way now. So I think that’s something that needs to be focused on.*

The mandatory Indigenous Studies unit incorporated a topic on the history of ‘race’ and racism in Australia including ways to challenge racism as a teacher. Melissa
believed this topic was important as it provided the historical context as to why some parents found it hard to connect with the school. Melissa believed however that the subject did not adequately engage with the literature on White privilege and this should be included in the future:

*Whiteness* I definitely think needs to be spoken about because people do not understand what it means to be White, they are not aware what comes with being White because they’ve always been White as have I. I’m just very fortunate that I’ve had a heightened awareness of it due to many factors but I think once you’ve read ‘Unpacking your invisible knapsack’ by Peggy McIntosh, once you’ve read about Whiteness you understand how your race can affect the way people see you.

Melissa was concerned about the statement used by a staff member...*if you can teach Indigenous children you can teach anyone*, which had been presented in a lecture in the mandatory Indigenous Studies subject. She was worried that the core message implied in this comment had not been appropriately conveyed and that some preservice teachers would apply their pre-existing negative stereotypes to inadvertently promote deficit thinking about Indigenous students:

*I do think that saying that can infer Indigenous kids are the worst without realising it. Although I hear it as, when you can adapt a curriculum, when you can increase [Indigenous] perspectives and make it inclusive, the classroom is good for all children. Although I think about it like that, other people would probably think you’re saying they’re the shittiest and therefore if I can teach them, I can teach everyone else. I think that can be problematic to an ignorant mind. I know there are a lot of ignorant people and a lot of people want their ignorant views validated.*

Brookfield (1995) warns that, “teaching innocently means assuming that the meanings and significance we place on our actions are the ones that students take from them” (p. 1). Melissa’s thoughts provide a helpful reminder that the stories we tell as teacher educators can inadvertently reinforce preservice teacher assumptions and be counterproductive to our educational goals.

Like Blaze, Melissa recalled that the second year subject *EDUF2007: Social*
Perspectives in Education incorporated content on the Aboriginal Education Policy.

While she had the opportunity to choose an assessment task on Aboriginal education, on this occasion she took the opportunity to expand her knowledge in a different field. She reflected that it was a “great ideas” subject as it provided students with “tasters” on a range of topics including gender, Aboriginal education and multicultural education through sociological and historical lenses. In their paper on teaching sociology within teacher education, Doherty, Dooley, and Woods (2013) refer to this approach as “‘tapas’ curriculum, that is, a spread of introductory tasters of relevant topics, with little systemic vertical progression synthesising these topics at more sophisticated levels” (p. 517). Although the Indigenous Studies subject ran concurrently with EDUF2007, simultaneously providing deeper learning about Indigenous issues, Melissa was critical of the ‘taster’ approach insofar as she believed some of her peers assumed they were now ‘experts’ on particular issues presented in this unit even though they had only covered a topic for one week. Interestingly, unlike Blaze who felt the inclusion of the Aboriginal Education Policy should remain in this unit to reinforce learning, Melissa felt that it should be removed as it was adequately covered in the mandatory unit.

There are important disciplinary considerations that come to light when taking account of Doherty et al.’s (2013) argument that the ‘tapas’ approach to introducing sociological perspectives on a range of education perspectives (such as Indigenous education) risks “building a coherent network, or plumbing disciplinary depth and rigour” (p. 527). While Indigenous Studies invokes multi-disciplinary theoretical frameworks – it is relevant to consider how teacher educators make explicit the intersection of disciplinary domains alongside championing particular disciplinary lenses. Walter, Pyett, Tyler, and Vanderwyk (2006) note that, “contemporary
sociological thinking and writing about Indigenous issues is largely occurring within academic disciplines other than sociology” (p. 343). Two Indigenous academic sociologists, Walter and Butler (2013) argue that Indigenous sociology is largely absent in university sociology curriculum. They suggest that often Indigenous disadvantage is the key focus of sociological inquiry and instead sociology educators should prioritise engagement with the social forces of ‘race’ and Whiteness. Certainly it is important that preservice teachers develop critical insight about how particular disciplines (such as sociology and history) have been used (or misused) in expanding or limiting Indigenous knowledges (Walter & Butler, 2013).

Professional Experience

Melissa was successful in her request to participate in a rural professional experience placement in the second year of her study. On spending some time researching the school, she was extremely excited to learn the school had a high Aboriginal population and offered Aboriginal Studies. Unfortunately Melissa’s memory of Aboriginal Studies as a vibrant and challenging learning environment was not emulated at this school:

_I actually found myself being a bit disappointed and it was probably because I had naive expectations but I went in and was like, oh Aboriginal Studies is going to be amazing. I went into the Year 9 Aboriginal Studies class, there were three kids, two of which I think left partway, one of them was really unengaged, the teacher who was Indigenous, had obviously just been disheartened over the years and said the students didn’t care and didn’t want to learn. Even she was really disheartened and so...I was like are you serious? This was what I wanted to see and I expected to see something magic._

Melissa described her time in this rural community as _….a huge experience_, particularly in regards to learning about the complex social impact of racism and lateral violence within this school setting. She described the town as being _…incredibly racist_ and this
had led to ongoing conflict within the school:

*There was a huge race fight at the school the week before we got there, there was another fight between two groups within Year 10, Indigenous/non-Indigenous in the playground, there had been stuff on the internet while we were there, cyberbullying about it, all sorts of shit like that.*

Melissa also witnessed the impact of lateral violence on student emotional wellbeing. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner (2011) described lateral violence as follows:

Horizontal violence or intra-racial conflict, [which] is a product of a complex mix of historical, cultural and social dynamics that results in a spectrum of behaviours that include: gossiping, jealousy, bullying, shaming, social exclusion, family feuding, organisational conflict and physical violence. (p. 54)

Melissa taught a year 10 female student who was experiencing lateral violence. This student had a ‘tough’ disposition and appeared to hate school. Melissa also had the impression that the student did not like her. Before a lesson one day, Melissa witnessed some peers yelling at this student before entering the classroom. Concerned by what she had witnessed, Melissa asked her to write down what was happening or how she was feeling. Melissa explained what happened:

*I came back later and I asked, are you finished? She goes, yeah, and I said would you like me to read it? And she goes, yeah, yeah, you can read it. When I read it was all sad sorts of things. Turns out there’s like this race issue and the problem was because she is Indigenous but she has friends that are non-Indigenous, the other Indigenous girls were saying like oh you’re a White, you’re trying to be White. There were other Indigenous girls that were being affected as well. It was a huge issue across all of Year 10 but this is just one issue that came to me.*

Melissa reflects that by the end of the professional experience she had developed a very good relationship with the student and enjoyed having her in the class. Melissa surmised that this student had experienced a form of “reverse racism” and added,

*…this idea of the Indigenous girl actually being mean to another Indigenous girl because she had White friends, that was a very interesting dynamic that I hadn’t seen*
Before. During our conversation, I was able to refer Melissa to literature on lateral violence and she then made connections to her reading about this phenomenon in the African American context. On this occasion the interview became an unanticipated chance to learn.

The school had a high number of Aboriginal Education Officers and Melissa (like Blaze) was highly impressed with their wide-ranging contribution to the school:

The AEOs at the school were amazing you know, they’d sit down with the kids and ate breakfast. I think they were good because they really knew the students, they really kept them in line and little things like one of them said she worked at the support unit there as they had a lot of kids with conduct disorder, intellectual, physical as well as behavioural disabilities. The teacher and an aide we’re doing one-on-one teaching and the teacher would teach them all the subjects and so the AEO was also an aide worker within the support unit. The AEO she said she’d have kids come to her house, ...her house was an open door so she’d have a lot of students come to her house and talk to her about stuff so she was a real connector between community and school.

While Melissa found the AEOs and her supervising teacher inspiring, she was troubled to observe that so many of the staff at the school appeared to be disengaged:

There were some teachers that were really great and really switched on obviously but then there were just others that it was a bit like they were broken by the system. I understand obviously it’s hard and you get broken down and the kids don’t give a shit and then you don’t give a shit, all those problems, I get all of that but it’s like you need to find something to rise above ‘cause otherwise you’re going to just get sucked down with that and you’re going to be depressed and be shit at your job. Or just get out, if you’re over it, just get out - which is easier said than done obviously.

Melissa was also equally concerned about hearing teachers talk so negatively about the students:

It was a shock for me because I was in a staffroom and I was in a faculty, I was no longer on the fringe as a student, I was being spoken to as a fellow teacher so I was hearing the stuff I never heard as a student. I’m glad that shocked me because I still like to think that will always shock me when I hear teachers say awful things about students, I think that’s good, I don’t want to ever be desensitised and think it’s okay to speak poorly about students or to say that somebody can’t learn. If I think that’s okay then that’s when I need to reflect on whether I should continue teaching.
Melissa’s reflections raise awareness of the role of informal staffroom talk in normalising deficit discourses about Aboriginal students. Pollack’s (2012) research which examined the ubiquitous ‘everyday teacher talk’ about students and families of colour in the United States is informative here. Pollock (2012) found that the pervasive deficit “storied shop talk” (p.4) about the children and their families was a concern because they could “become an especially powerful socializing mechanism for beginning teachers because of their ability to convey socially constructed meaning, beliefs, and values, while communicating justifications for existing structures, practices, and outcomes” (p. 25). While Melissa had already developed a critical stance and rejected these deficit narratives about her students, her experience highlights the need for teacher educators to develop preservice teacher awareness that “shop talk” is not always harmless but instead has an impact on teacher expectancy effects and socialisation (Pollack, 2012, p. 26).

University experiences of Indigenous Studies – the third and fourth year

Melissa found it difficult to recall other education units that included Indigenous curriculum perspectives in the third and fourth years of the degree (see Appendix 7 for the list of “Education Units”, “Curriculum and Professional Studies Units”) and was highly critical of this lost opportunity. A minor attempt was made in EDSE3044 Teaching English 1 and EDSE 3062 Teaching English 2 through the inclusion of a teaching resource developed by library staff which included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander literature perspectives. Melissa contemplated the range of possible reasons why staff were not skilled in incorporating Indigenous perspectives - perhaps staff had become complacent given they had taught the subject for many years or some did not grow up in Australia and therefore lacked background knowledge?
Melissa continued to compensate for these omissions through her own efforts, ...

*I made sure to do my own perspectives in that, for instance when we had to make a list of literature that students could read, I’m sure to use Aboriginal literature.* In the final year she completed an Aboriginal literature unit as part of her English Minor so highlighted that ...

*I would totally change the ones I used because now... I’ve heaps more that I could add to that [original list].* Most disappointingly though, the history methods unit did not embed Indigenous perspectives which she said, ...

*was shit.* Later in a more generous and contemplative moment Melissa reflected that even though Indigenous perspectives were not made explicit, there was flexibility to address this through the assessment process and she did this by covering the impact of the Stolen Generations on Aboriginal families including contemporary issues arising from the recommendations of the *Bringing Them Home Report* (see List of Definitions and Abbreviations for an explanation).

Although Melissa’s engagement in the mandatory Indigenous Studies unit enhanced her understanding of the importance of embedding Indigenous perspectives as a standard pedagogical practice, she had hoped each curriculum area would add depth of knowledge:

> Each of those curriculum areas needs to prove that they’re putting Indigenous perspectives in there. So then that goes into curriculum and then purely what you’re learning about in the Indigenous Studies unit is the needs of Indigenous kids and historical contexts.

The (over)use of the film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* was a referential point for Melissa to demonstrate the somewhat tokenistic approach to the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in high school history, which she believed subsequently impacted on preservice teacher engagement at university:

*History teachers...don’t know enough and then they’re scared to teach it and then they teach it like shit. I don’t think people [do it] intentionally...well some*
people do intentionally think, oh I don’t need to worry about it, but I think some people are very scared because it’s very sensitive information, the way you have to do it, you need to be very careful so I think a lot of people think I don’t know enough, oh I’m just going to show ‘Rabbit-Proof Fence’ like that’ll deal with it.

Walter and Butler (2013) argue that film or documentary is often used as an easy ‘fix’ to embed Indigenous content into the curriculum. They suggest that this approach is perceived as an easy solution for political concerns around who has the right to speak on behalf of Aboriginal people. Inadvertently perhaps, teachers absolve and distance themselves from engaging more deeply in critical discussion – particularly if the issues relate to race, racism and White privilege. Melissa reflects on the pedagogical approaches that were modelled by her Aboriginal Studies teacher at high school and used these as a framework for approaching assessment in the history methods subject:

I did the Stolen Generations and I chose to do that because I wanted to do an Aboriginal Studies perspective...what I see this as, is focusing on the future and how we’re moving forward and looking at the Bringing Them Home Report in that analytical way. [I] move away from like here’s ‘Rabbit-Proof Fence’, now feel bad about that, alright next topic... so I really enjoyed doing that [approach].

Melissa experienced Aboriginal Studies as a subject that meaningfully linked history to contemporary issues and this link was perceived as the most likely way to mobilise change. Her narrative concurred with Browne’s (2015) argument that, Aboriginal Studies matters because “it is a fundamental pillar in addressing our nation’s unfinished business” (p. 6). Melissa was not only focused on building her personal practical knowledge but also challenged her peers to do the same:

I try to say to people, like, you know, like my boyfriend was writing an assignment the other day on international education and language learning and I go, have you written anything about Indigenous language? And he goes, no and I go, well you should do that – A), because it’s important and B), because the uni is recognising that stuff more and I think people... whether they’re doing it for marks or not, I think you do get acknowledgement when you do have Indigenous perspectives in your work. And I think while people may do it for a tick, either way they still have to read...and learn something. So even if it is just for, oh that gives me some extra marks, it’s still good that they are still reading
Melissa believed that although Indigenous curricula content could be improved overall, her lecturers did value and reward students when Indigenous perspectives were incorporated by choice into assessment because …you’re showing that you’re thinking beyond the mainstream and it’s showing that you understand the changing face of education and you understand the extent of your role in education.

**University experiences of Indigenous Studies – the final year**

Aboriginal Studies as a teaching method was offered for the first time in 2014 so fortuitously, Melissa’s initial aspiration to be formally recognised as an Aboriginal Studies teacher was realised. Melissa completed two subjects EDSE5015 Aboriginal Studies 3rd Teaching Area along with an Indigenous Studies elective KOCR3602 Race, Racism and Indigenous Australia to meet the curriculum requirements (see Appendix 8 List of Units of Study). To the end, Aboriginal Studies remained her strongest discipline:

*I think in terms of my content I definitely feel most confident in teaching Indigenous topics. And most particularly the Aboriginal Studies curriculum and syllabus I could pick up, no worries. Like I don’t feel stressed about it, I wouldn’t … if I turned up at school one day and they said this is it, no planning, you have to teach Aboriginal Studies Year 11, go, today’s your first class, I wouldn’t freak out. In anything else I would, but with Aboriginal Studies I feel like I just know it in my bones … ‘cause I did at school and it was such a huge part of my HSC and ‘cause I did the intensive unit [Aboriginal Studies teaching methods subject] this semester, I just feel like it’s so ingrained in my bones that I just know it.*

While Aboriginal Studies remained her passion, during the final year of her study there had been a subtle, expanding shift in career focus:

*While I saw Aboriginal education as a key part of my professional identity, and I still do, I think a lot of it now, while I’m still interested in Indigenous education it’s shaped more by welfare now and an interest in disadvantaged education, which unfortunately often ties in with Indigenous education. Because now I’ve extended past just Indigenous education and it’s more I want to look at*
the most disadvantaged students and students that are in real need of welfare assistance as well as education. I believe education is the way you get students out of those situations.

In the short-term Melissa hoped to become a Head Teacher of Welfare as her strength in building relationships and assisting students was, she believed, a key requisite of this important role. At the time of the interview, Melissa was in the final weeks of her internship at a local high school. She was excited to retell a recent success story that demonstrated her ability to develop relationships with students. Melissa had been teaching a low ability class which had pushed her to do a lot more to engage them in class. The classes started at 7.30 and the students were not pleased that they had to come to school so early so Melissa used the lure of a free breakfast to connect with them:

Anyway I said I’d buy them breakfast as a treat so I bring them muffins and fruit. That got a few of the numbers up then one boy goes, oh Miss, I already buy myself breakfast, I buy manoush which is like a Lebanese pizza. So I said, oh feel free to bring me a manoush and today when he came to class he brought me a manoush and that was a big deal because this was a student who was like, I’m not coming to class Miss, I’m not staying in at recess, I don’t need to do this, I don’t need to do that, and then slowly...and I notice that it’s all through relationships and I know one of your interview questions is about what you find a personal strength and I think what I always find a strength in is connecting with students.

Melissa felt pride in her ability to connect with and prioritise pastoral care of children from a range of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. She believed that the mandatory Indigenous Studies subject provided important foundational knowledge regarding the significance of building authentic relationships with students:

As I developed that relationship and that understanding further, I realised that’s not an Indigenous kid thing, it’s a fundamental thing [for all students] they all need relationships, they need to know you care, they need to know that you’re not just there because it’s what gets money in your bank account. And you can’t fake it, you can’t fake that you give a shit because especially teenagers will see straight through that and they know that you don’t care. If you don’t care be an accountant, like do something else! If you don’t care after a while you’re not going to be A) good at your job because you’re not going to give a shit
anymore and B), because students know.

Melissa admitted that her commitment to maintaining relationships was not always easy and that she had recently found it difficult to connect with one of her students:

I had an Anglo student…I heard him say ‘go back to where you came from’, which just gutted me. Not to me, to another student and I was like, oh the things I want to say to you right now, but I was like no that’s not going to be productive so I sat down, said you know, what do you mean by that?

Melissa attempted to talk calmly with this student and challenge his thinking so that he would develop some insight into how inappropriate and hurtful this comment was. Unfortunately this “teachable moment” did not go as planned as he persisted to restate his opinions. Melissa decided to halt the conversation as it was unproductive and she had been exasperated. One week after the incident Melissa attempted to build a bridge with the student even though she found it personally challenging:

That kid I was talking about before…he’s quite awful but still when I see him [I say], hi, how are you today, oh nice haircut. I still engage like nothing’s happened. Or like [I say] looking forward to seeing you in class tomorrow. Every day’s a new day. And while inside I’m like why the hell…why am I bothering? This kid does not care! But I know I’m doing everything I can and that’s all I need to know. All I need to know is that I’m fulfilling my role and I’m making sure that I’m doing what I can to connect to that student and some kids you’re not going to connect to and that’s life.

Melissa used this experience to reflect on the congruence between her personal and professional identities, particularly in relation to her stance on anti-racism and social justice:

I think I have quite a strong personal identity, I think it is very connected to my professional identity as a teacher ‘cause I think teaching is something that is all encompassing…I think I do have a very strong sense of self and my time at university has strengthened that. Some subjects and some people I’ve met have really reaffirmed my identity…and a lot of the experience I had on prac…reaffirmed my passion for social justice and welfare. This is something that while I speak about it in a professional way, it’s something I value as a human being. So when that student was saying those awful racist comments in my classroom, it wasn’t upsetting me as a teacher, it was actually upsetting me as
an individual that lives in Australia to hear those sort of comments. As a teacher I could step in and be calm and try to discuss it and get him to question the things he was saying and not try to persuade him to think my way ’cause that wasn’t going to be productive but just to question why he was saying that, to go what do you mean when you say this?

Melissa felt empowered as a teacher to challenge offensive and hurtful behaviour:

It’s like kind of having an alter ego, I guess, I don’t know whether other people experience it but like I can manage things a lot better as a teacher like my emotions I can manage a lot better. Whereas, as myself it’s different, like, things that would upset me...like, things that people say to me or kids that are like, doing awful things at school, I can hold it together. Where as if it happened in the real world I wouldn’t hold it together!

The emotional labour involved in engaging in Indigenous Studies had nurtured professional emotional resilience in relation to dealing with issues of racism. Melissa recognised with some humour however, that while a calm approach is generally mobilised with ease in a professional setting, this professional stance is not always so easy to invoke in her personal life.

The final interview was held in November and Melissa had recently received notification that she was successful in gaining employment at a local high school. It was an opportune time for Melissa to contemplate her goals in the upcoming teaching year. Her intent was to focus on building relationships with parents and make contact with them about the positive aspects of their child’s participation and progress in her class:

No one ever calls about the good stuff. It’s bad that we’re in a culture like that and we are, and I’m not saying I’m going to be able to change the whole culture but I’d like to at least for parents of the students I teach, for them not to dread getting a phone call from me.

Melissa concluded our discussion with a confident and optimistic projection of her future teacher self:

I think my sense of self is quite strong and I think as a beginning teacher I feel quite positive about next year and quite excited about lots of parts of it. I think it’d be nice to have my own class. I feel I’m going to have a very busy summer preparing for fulltime teaching. I liked to be prepared and to have high
expectations.

Melissa was about to depart university with a sense of her own inner strength driven by a personal and professional commitment to Aboriginal education, social justice and the welfare of her future students. These commitments have manifested in Melissa deliberately prioritising relationship building as the precursor to engaging disadvantaged students. This was an important thread in her narrative and had become part of her ‘story to live by’ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Melissa’s narrative also highlighted the emotional responses evoked at the Cultural Interface particularly when defending Indigenous knowledges and perspectives as valid and significant to creating a socially just Australian society. While extensive literature exists around the role of emotions in teaching (Schutz & Zembylas, 2009) and the emotional labour involved in teaching Indigenous Studies (Asmar & Page, 2009), it is extremely important for scholars and teacher practitioners to examine the interplay between emotions and social justice education by exploring what emotions do in everyday discourses and practices in relation to social justice and by finding ways to translate such analyses into critical emotional praxis. (Schutz & Zembylas, 2009, p. 359).

Melissa’s efforts to raise awareness of the significance of Indigenous knowledge perspectives amongst some of her peers over the duration of the degree highlight her agency to speak up and assert its place in the curriculum. Although Melissa had developed some pre-emptive personal strategies to avoid confrontation or difficult dialogue with her peers (I’m really into Aboriginal education, so just in case you’re going to say anything bad, please don’t do it in front of me), the matter of hearing and responding to negative comments about Aboriginal education in personal peer interactions remained a tension for Melissa. In contrast, she was able to demonstrate agency to confront racism as a teacher (for example, challenging the student’s racist
As time moves forward and Melissa is employed as an early career teacher, she may come across peers who engage with negative or low expectation ‘shop talk’ about Aboriginal students. Further, the Cultural Interface will likely manifest in a new school environment, bringing with it points of contestation and negotiation between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems.

In my experience, there are relatively few non-Indigenous students who enter university with such a sustained and passionate commitment to Indigenous education – indeed it could be said that at the end of her degree, Melissa had developed an Indigenous education activist identity. Writing about the Indigenous Studies context at university, McLaughlin (2013) points out that there is little research focused on non-Indigenous educators who work in these complex cultural spaces and the impact of this engagement on their personal and professional practice (p. 251). McLaughlin (2013) argues that teaching Indigenous Studies from an Indigenous standpoint demands personal and political activism in order to develop a sustainable capacity within the academy to embed Indigenous knowledges. While Melissa’s activist approach to embedding Indigenous knowledge perspectives throughout the degree was inspiring, oftentimes she engaged in this work independently and with little support from staff or peers.

In recognising that Melissa’s ongoing commitment to Indigenous education required tenacity and emotional resilience to keep this pursuit in motion, I am inspired to reflect on the ways teacher educators can better support preservice teachers who share similar personal and professional priorities. Wenger’s (1998) work on building ‘communities of practice’ is insightful here. Belonging to an Indigenous education community of practice may encourage ongoing professional learning as such
communities help to sustain those involved through dialogue and reflection about one’s work. Collegial professional support of preservice teachers like Melissa who are transitioning into the first year of teaching may facilitate confident engagement in Indigenous education activities. Hart et al. (2012) highlight that “ad hoc instances and discussions” around embedding Indigenous knowledges must be replaced with sustainable systems, curricula and pedagogies (p. 718). Melissa’s story highlights the need to work at the institutional level to support academic staff in these endeavours so they will in turn nurture the activist preservice teachers in their midst.
Chapter 9: Thea

Found Poetry

Educational journey and learning about Indigenous Australia

Primary and high school,
a school for girls.
Same school from
kindergarten ‘til year 12.

I’m sure
Indigenous issues
were talked about.
I can’t really remember.

Oh I remember.

Year 4 you learn about
colonisation.
A very White view,
big tall ships
the people with hair in wigs.

We did a play
the landing of the first fleet.
No Aboriginal people depicted.
All convict stories.

In school
I never met an Aboriginal person
apart from people insourced.

Dancers
people came in.
A vague memory,
with clapping sticks.
We were sitting in a circle.

In high school
we did some
Indigenous art.
I don’t have
strong recollections.

History
I think I remember doing
a depiction of
an Aboriginal person.

Drawing
a stereotypical Aboriginal man,
a beard and spear.
Talking about
deciphering images.

English
A Christine Anu song,
My Island Home.

Indigenous issues
vulnerable populations,
low life expectancy.
I started to understand.

My view was,
the Indigenous,
a population that’s
deficient.

If someone asked me
where my passion
for Indigenous issues comes from,
I would say
I have absolutely no idea.

Not something
exposed to in childhood.

First big change
in educational experience,
coming to university.
It’s co-ed.

It was kind of a relief,
guys add a little bit of
something different.
Definitely ready
to come to university.
By Year 12,
you’re ready to go.

I took a gap year,
I needed a break.
A little bit of
life experience.

PE
I had to do.
I was striving to do my best.
University really great
opportunities to learn.

Now I’m not looking
through the lens,
of that North Shore girl
who was so sheltered
in everything.

Aboriginal education.
I don’t know why,
I don’t know where
the future will take me.
But, it flows through my veins.
I can’t help but think
about it all the time.

Family influence and learning about Indigenous Australia

My parents said,
you need to do
what you’re passionate about.

Dad lived in,
lots of different
colonised countries.
I think
he doesn’t understand.

Really close relationship
with my mum.
She’s very interested,
very open and listens.

So she’ll be like,
oh what are you working on?
She reads it,
oh that’s really interesting
I didn’t know that.

Dad, I think he believes
he is interested and listening.
Growing up
I have realised,
how closed minded he is.
In Conversation with Thea’s Narrative

Thea was the sole volunteer participant from the Human Movement and Health education degree cohort. She spoke with eloquence and exuded a quiet yet reflective self-assuredness. As Thea talked I imagined her in a crisis calmly corralling the panicked to safety. She is in her early twenties but took a gap year between high school and commencing university because, as she explained, ...I thought I needed a break from study and I could also acknowledge that going into the teaching profession, I wanted to make sure I was mature and that I had a little bit of life experience. Thea’s gap year between school and university was spent working and gaining a qualification as a personal trainer and she also travelled overseas for three months. Having been raised in an economically and socially privileged environment, Thea looked for ways to extend her world.

I have selected Thea’s story as the final of the three ‘conversations’ because her journey towards becoming interested in Indigenous education began very differently from that of Blaze and Melissa. However, in her final year of study, her story shared similar themes with theirs in relation to tensions experienced with peers who were not interested in Indigenous Studies. During the final interview Thea reflected that she was grateful that the opportunity to talk with me had arisen for she was better able to make sense of her experiences. This unintended pedagogical intervention (Olsen, 2008) highlights the important role of sharing stories of experience at the Cultural Interface so that preservice teachers are able to work through the tensions experienced both in the midst of experience and as a consequence of reflective engagement. I have previously used the notion of a ‘community of practice’ to describe the social context in which such stories may be shared productively. Similarly, Craig and Olson (2002) use the
term “knowledge communities” to explain “safe, storytelling places where educators narrate the rawness of their experiences, negotiate meaning, and authorize their own and others’ interpretations of situations” (p. 116). As I re-tell Thea’s story I cannot help but think that if the participants and I could travel back in time it would have been interesting to facilitate a meeting between them, for they shared many “commonplaces of experience” at the Cultural Interface. Craig and Olson (2002) point out that knowledge communities need not rely on bureaucratic dictates about what makes “good teaching”, but instead knowledge communities can be found and created to facilitate non-judgemental dialogue and reflection. While it is too late to bring my participants together, the next narrative gives insights to possible discussions for like-minded students who are navigating these learning situations in the future.

Experiences of Indigenous Australia – the influence of family and school

Thea grew up on the northern beaches of Sydney with her mother, father and older sister. She is first generation Australian as her parents were raised and educated in the United Kingdom. Thea attended an independent school for girls from kindergarten to year 12. She reflects on this as a unique experience however was looking forward to coming to university, ...I suppose my first big change in educational experience was coming to university, also obviously the co-ed environment which I hadn’t had before. While Thea had some early thoughts of becoming a chef, work experience in Year 9 made her realise that, ...I had to work in a profession that was A), outside and B), that you were interacting with people all the time and it wasn’t kind of high-stress. In reflecting on her interest in physical education (PE) she admits that:

*I did like PE but really post-school was when, if I’m going to be honest with you, I don’t know specifically why I chose the degree I did, it was just something that I felt like I had to do.*
Thea explained how her combined interests led her on the path to teaching, *...the outdoors, the content, I loved learning about the body and I loved the ability to work with people and exploring ideas, so I just thought PE teaching’s a good idea.*

Thea’s parents were both highly educated. Her father studied at Oxford and later attended Harvard University. Thea expressed a deep admiration and respect for her father for he excelled in a range of sports as well as academically:

*He says he didn’t study at all for the three years he was at Oxford, did it all in the last two months. I don’t work like that at all but yeah, he’s a very impressive man, he’s very intelligent. I respect my dad a lot.*

Thea’s mother also attended university in the United Kingdom where she studied nursing. Later in her career she became a lecturer at an Australian university.

Thea described herself as a high achieving and dedicated student. She found the senior years of high school study to be *...very high stress.* She adds, *...I wouldn’t say that my parents pushed me but they had high expectations and due to my personality I think that I like to fulfil those high expectations.* The high expectations of her parents did not however impact on her agency to make career choices with her own interests in mind and she was encouraged by both parents to pursue a career she was passionate about. Teaching was a career previously championed by other members of her extended family - her grandmother was a principal of a high school, and she had Aunties who were English and drama teachers *...so he [her father] was happy as he kind of saw it as ‘oh it runs in the family’.* Thea noted with contentment that she is the first human movement teacher in the family.

Thea spoke with fondness about the support her mother had given her while at school and at university. They shared similar interests and her mother provided a constant, reassuring and motivational role throughout her academic journey, however in
recent times there had been a disconnect between her own academic interests and those of her father:

_Sometimes he doesn’t really understand what I know and I think as well my parents still have, well not so much my mum, but my dad I suppose, has very strong English kind of traditional views. I think a lot of our content is quite at the forefront of new and changing ideas….I think he does find some of those quite confronting and challenging. He has very traditional views for example about sexuality those kind of things which I suppose are quite challenging. I also admit that he’s not confronted by them daily as say I might be in my course and I have to actually think through these questions. So yes we have clashed a few times about asylum-seeker policy and things like that where he’s like ‘no, this is the way it has to be’. I respect his opinion but I do find that hard sometimes because…he doesn’t really understand where I’m coming from, but that’s fine.

I think more so this year I’ve really realised that [we have different opinions]. I don’t think I realised that in the past but I’ve actually noticed and I think, growing up as well, I have actually realised how closed-minded he is and that’s fine, that’s you know, his choice but it has actually really confronted me in the last six months.

Thea’s parents have always been staunch Liberal voters, and it was with humour she described their attempt to persuade her to continue this tradition, *...when I turned 18 they encouraged me [to vote], they said you can vote for whoever you want but you know, the Liberal Party’s better to vote for*. Her new political views led to unanticipated family debate:

_The last, I suppose, heated discussion that we had was when I was completing an assessment for university on the film ‘One Generation’ which looks at the Northern Territory Emergency Response and it’s really, I suppose you could call it an unbalanced view where the purpose is to highlight the injustices within that policy and not really look at the positives but I was explaining it to my father and he said ‘what did you do at uni today?’ And I was like oh I presented on this and I was like you should really watch it, it would probably challenge you because it challenged my views on those things and I think I said a throwaway line like, oh I didn’t realise how racist John Howard was. He was deeply wounded and offended by that and he was like ‘I can’t believe you’d say that’. I think for me, I think we throw around the word racist a lot but I think for him it’s a term that is serious and is just very weighted._

_The purpose of this story was the fact that he did communicate that, ‘no, the Northern Territory Intervention was the best thing to do and it was important’. I think I was a bit saddened because I felt as though he wasn’t fully aware...I_
think he definitely had a one-sided viewpoint in that respect.

Thea clarified that although their views did clash from time to time, her father remained supportive of her passion for Indigenous Studies and he continued to send her relevant newspaper articles as a way to express this. Although Thea no longer agreed with many of her father’s views, she understood how they were formed of personal experience:

I wouldn’t call my dad overtly racist ‘cause he’s not but I would probably call him you know probably covertly. I don’t think he realises his impressions, I think he does come from that really imperialistic viewpoint. I mean interesting background for him, and this was a sore point for him because he’s like ‘I do understand what I’m talking about’ because he grew up in a number of countries and was exposed to lots of different races but lots of different colonised countries and so I think his impressions are still very much the White man helping the less fortunate...instead of that self-determining viewpoint. For me, in my understanding, it is a different form of racism. But we are able to talk about the issues and he is very sweet in making sure that he shows that he’s interested in what I’m interested in too.

Thea was clear to emphasise that despite these views her father should not be characterised as one-dimensional for he had (for example) provided philanthropic support in the area of Indigenous education. Her admiration for and relationship with her father ensured she was able to find a way to maintain dialogue. Experience of conflict with family as a consequence of personal ‘awakenings’ in relation to Indigenous Australia is not uncommon (Hollinsworth, 2014).

Hollinsworth (2014), an academic who has taught Indigenous Studies for many decades writes of his experiences of teaching students whose relationships had failed and “one mature student reported her mother hung up on her and also hurled a cup at her head on hearing what she was learning in Indigenous Studies” (p. 15). Notable here are the similar experiences of Blaze, Melissa and Thea – they too had been challenged by various associates because of their interest in Indigenous Studies. Each story brings
further clarity for the need to consider ways of supporting activist preservice teachers
during and beyond their graduation, or as Poole (2010) writes from the critical social
work perspective, what is required is to help graduate students to “hold on” and
maintain anti-oppressive approaches.

In the process of recalling her school experiences of learning about Indigenous
Australia, Thea brings a reflective lens to clarify how her thinking had changed:

I grew up in that Howard era. I mean, I think my reading has now informed me
and situated me and I have more understanding, in hindsight, of the reasons
why it was presented the way it was and it was that very White view of
colonisation of the big tall ships and the people with their hair in wigs. I just
remember as a kid those visual images. We even had a section of a play where
we did the landing of the first fleet - there were no Aboriginal people depicted in
that. And the convict stories were really the focus. I’m sure Indigenous issues
were talked about but I can’t really remember. I suppose ... then in high school
in art we did some Indigenous art or talked about art but I don’t really have
strong recollections of that. But in history again I think that we talked about the
quality of text, the primary sources, I think I remember looking at a primary
source, a depiction of an Aboriginal person ...oh I remember, it was a drawing
of a stereotypical Aboriginal man with a beard and spear and it was talking
about [how] you decipher images.

I asked Thea whether this was a critical literacy exercise and if she could remember if
her teacher was attempting to challenge stereotypes? ...Yes, I think so. And that’s
something I’ll definitely take into my teaching, I think critical media literacy is just so
important ‘cause you know we’re bombarded by these images every day.

In Personal Development Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) she recalled
topics on Indigenous health statistics, including the high rates of diabetes and low life
expectancy. During these lessons she began to understand the complexity of the causes
of poor Indigenous health outcomes. In regards to personal interaction with Aboriginal
people she explained:

But no, in school I never met an Aboriginal person apart from people that are
insourced. I believe that there would have been dancers and people came into
the school. For some reason I do remember that happening in the vague
memory with clapping sticks and we were sitting like in a circle. But yeah, I had
not ever even met an Aboriginal person or seen someone from Indigenous heritage. So if someone were to ask me where my passion for Indigenous issues has come from, I would say I just have absolutely no idea. Because it’s not something that I was exposed to particularly in childhood.

In the context of talking about the perceptions developed during her secondary schooling Thea reflected, ...I think my view was probably that view of the Indigenous population being a population that’s deficient... especially talking about the health statistics. Thea believed she had developed this view because of a lack of exposure to positive stories about Aboriginal people. At that moment in our conversation, Thea was stunned that she had not previously recalled that her first contact with Aboriginal people had occurred while on holidays in Year 9. While Thea’s memory of learning about Indigenous Australia at school was addressed quickly in our conversation, her subsequent interviews were infused with reflections on the significance of her experiences outside the formal school setting – mainly her volunteer work spurred on by her religious beliefs and affiliations.

During the secondary years of school, Thea regularly attended a youth group organised through her local church. During the mid-year holiday in Year 9, she was offered an opportunity to volunteer for ten days in a remote interstate community. Thea socialised with Aboriginal people and was part of a community-supported youth group involved in running after school games, healthy lifestyle activities along with some Biblical study. Thea clarified:

But really the focus was on just engaging with the kids and being kind of big sisters and brothers. I don’t think it was offered as like, this Indigenous experience which I think is really important to point out, I think it was just like, oh, all the kids are going to help some younger kids and play some sport with some kids. I don’t think it mattered that they were Indigenous.

As a young teenager, Thea found the experience to be very confronting and was a little nervous prior to her arrival because she had been informed that the community
had experienced high rates of suicide and there were safety concerns about staying in the community. However, her experiences of being with the children and getting to know each family had a lasting impact, and so she returned the following year. She explained:

*I had an immediate connection - straight away actually, straight away with culture and the community was so welcoming there. They cooked us turtle and had a huge community celebration for us. It was such a privilege being able to become part of community.*

Thea returned to Sydney with a strong belief that most Australians have a huge knowledge gap regarding the lived experience of some Indigenous Australians:

*I said before I don’t think you can understand unless you go, unless you see with your own eyes you know the kids and they’ve got, you know, they’re four years old and they’ve got rotting teeth because they eat so much sugar and, you know, they’re either so, so skinny or overweight ’cause their diet is awful and you know huge social issues. I remember, oh goodness, I remember sitting in a group and we were just, I think it was like a prayer activity or something and we were talking about what we were afraid of and I said ‘oh I’m afraid of the dark’ and you know I was thinking, little kids like what are they afraid of? They’re afraid of snakes and spiders and I saw this little girl, who said ‘I’m really scared when my dad comes home drunk and bashes up my mum’. Oh gosh, I get shivers even thinking about it.*

This confronting incident was reported to the Elders in the community and although she found this situation to be ...*terrifying*, otherwise she cherished the connection she had made with the children:

*But the way the kids lit up every day when they saw you and they got to know your names and you had certain kids that you know would follow you around all week and I still remember Stella [name changed], this is ten years or so ago - I still remember her and I think of her like really often, think where is she now? What is she doing?*

Thea’s personal ecclesiastical connections and volunteer work continued to deepen her interest in Indigenous issues from Year 9 and throughout her university degree. Returning to Mockler’s (2011c) model that highlights the “complex interplay of personal, professional and political dimensions of teachers’ lives” (p. 518) it became
apparent that Thea’s experiences as a youth volunteer exerted a powerful influence on her storied professional identity. Her experiences at university complemented and enhanced her knowledge of Indigenous Australia however the initial interest and impetus to act to make a difference in this area of education was driven through her extra-curricular activities. Thea staked this claim herself during a reflective moment in the first interview:

*Oh goodness, I wish that this interview could go on for like, half a day because I have...so many stories to tell of my experiences and I suppose the way that it has totally changed the outlook that I have in life.*

**University experiences of Indigenous Studies – the first year**

Thea recalled that during the first year of her study, Indigenous content was embedded in the unit *EDUH1006: Identifying Health Determinants* (see Appendix 8 List of Units of Study). This unit provided her with a good introduction to Indigenous health with opportunities to analyse how the social determinants influence health outcomes:

*One of the suggested books was a really good book, which is the ‘Social Determinants of Indigenous Health’. It was so great, so I actually bought that. It’s so good as a teacher though because, that book, the back is broken because I’ve just used it so many times.*

Although this subject was the extent of Thea’s recollections of Indigenous content covered in first year, there were more stories to share about her experiences outside of university. Initially she was unsure whether discussing these experiences would be relevant to my research:

*Again, this might be going off on a tangent...after my first year at uni I actually contacted a couple who were living in Alice Springs who did kind of pastoral care in the hospitals for Aboriginal people and went out to do some community visits and that’s again where my interest in Central Australia came in.*

As Thea’s story returned again to the influence of personal experience on her
developing professional identity, I came to realise that my interview schedule was flawed as it did not promote such discussion. When I wrote the interview schedule I had naively imagined that university would be the primary site of learning about Indigenous Australia during this time. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, the narrative inquiry process supported the stories that were “needing to be told” (Creswell, 2013, p. 104) and this included Thea’s somewhat serendipitous meeting with a young couple involved in missionary work in Alice Springs:

_And so I called them up [the organisation], I was like is there any work, do you want someone? I’m volunteering to just go out, I’ll go anywhere, take me. And they were like yeah, actually we’ve got a couple in Alice Springs. And they’re like, have you ever been to Alice Springs? I’m like no, like, I have no idea, never really travelled to central Australia. So, anyway that was it, I had the work!_

The work mainly involved visiting hospitals to talk with people along with offering colouring-in packs for the children or hygiene packs for the adults because:

_It’s so important as the people come from remote communities and they’re suddenly stuck in this room and they don’t understand the doctors and they’re trying to give them medicine and so just going in there and like having a chat is helpful._

Thea experienced a steep learning curve due to some unfamiliar interactions with Aboriginal people that initially left her feeling slightly uncomfortable:

_I didn’t understand culture and I didn’t understand you know, I didn’t want to make eye contact and so I tried not to make people feel uncomfortable as they were sick you know, lying in bed so I also learnt a lot more about the difference in Western culture._

There were also moments when Thea felt isolated as she spent a lot of her time alone. Despite this, after 6 weeks of volunteer work she had developed a new perspective on her own life:

_Life is so hectic here and life here [in Sydney] is so full of bravado and achievement and you know, I am sucked into that trap. I work so hard and going up to these places, you’re reminded of the true values and what’s important in life. That’s what I love about these places because it’s about family. It’s about_
community and it’s about just being present at the moment.

While it is difficult to recreate Thea’s calm, measured and deeply moving spoken words on a page, suffice to say I was moved by the way she reflected on this ongoing connection with the communities and people in Northern Territory since commencing her volunteer work:

So for the girl who’d never been, never experienced Alice Springs I now have been there seven times or something crazy in the space of three years. Again weirdly it’s like this path in life has been just carved out for me. I randomly go online and search for work - it could have been Dubbo, it could have been anywhere, but it was Alice Springs. Then going back, I have this connection to the red soil and the environment up there. I don’t know where it comes from, I actually don’t know, it’s like it flows through my veins and I’ve had so many people go ...do you have Indigenous heritage? I’m like no, I don’t know where it comes from.

University experiences of Indigenous Studies – the second and third year

Like Blaze and Melissa before, Thea recalled the mandatory Indigenous Studies unit, EDUH2018: Indigenous Perspectives in PDHPE (see Appendix 8 List of Units of Study) and EDUF2007: Social Perspectives in Education as the two units that incorporated Indigenous content during second year (note: EDUH2018 has the same content and is taught concurrently with the previously mentioned unit EDSE2002). In the process of recalling her learning in EDUH2018 Indigenous Perspectives in PDHPE, Thea’s memory was drawn to the lack of interest some of her peers displayed in tutorials. Students enrolled in EDUH2018 and EDSE2002 were taught as one cohort so as to minimise the number of requests for Aboriginal guest lecturers and promote preservice teacher cross-disciplinary engagement in Indigenous education. The combined tutorials provided an opportunity for the human movement preservice teachers to work alongside future maths, drama, English, history and geography teachers. Thea thought it was wonderful to meet people from other degrees but she
experienced some disappointment:

I felt like there was just a lot of ignorance, to be honest, and a lot of apathy especially from people like maths teachers, they were like, ‘why do we have to be here?’ and obviously for PDHPE in a way, on the surface it’s so much easier to say, oh yeah, it’s relevant, but I think through the semester...I learnt that, obviously, it’s a requirement firstly to incorporate it, but it’s actually a need. Even if you don’t have Indigenous students in your class...it’s so important to teach our young people.

Thea valued learning from her tutor, an experienced teacher who had worked in remote Aboriginal communities in NSW. She joked though about her final results, ...I have to say that I was a little disappointed with my mark, I didn’t do as well as I’d liked, which I think was a bit of an identity hit for me. At the time of completing the mandatory unit, Thea had already volunteered in the Northern Territory and in Alice Springs. These experiences in Indigenous community settings left her feeling confident in her knowledge but also a little conflicted during the tutorial discussions as she wanted to share her experiences but on the other hand did not want to monopolise classroom conversations and come across as arrogant. To manage these emotions Thea even tried to self-impose a participation limit:

I found it very hard to sit there and not contribute too much because I think ...there were things said, especially by the students, that were tokenistic or just plain ignorant, I suppose. But I [was thinking] ‘I’m the expert’ (Thea was laughing at herself at this point). But then I realised, that is such a poor attitude. I suppose as a person I’m very self-aware and I was like, ‘no, you’ve got to be quiet because you’ve got to let other people have their turn and learn’. I felt so self-conscious though, and I still do, in lectures and things I get teased for talking too much because I suppose I engage with the content really deeply and I think a lot, and especially about Indigenous issues, I could talk all day about them and when you’re in a class and you’re having a discussion, I would have to limit myself and say, okay, this tutorial I’m only going to talk three times, because I know also I want to let other people have a go.

Thea spoke of her concerns that a specific mandatory Indigenous Studies unit inadvertently ‘Others’ Indigenous students, which she believed, led to counterproductive ways of thinking:
We have these classes and these subjects, it’s like we’re going to talk about how Indigenous people do this and think this way and learn this way, but if you were to go down the school of thought that I just mentioned, that’s actually kind of inherently racist, if you think about, the exclusionary thing, and I don’t know, ... it’s like a catch 22, you can’t [stereotype] ... it’s good to talk about those things, but I obviously think it’s really important to emphasise that not all Indigenous people learn like this.

Thea used the example of a tutorial discussion focused on Yunkaporta’s 8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning (see https://8ways.wikispaces.com/) which she believed resulted in some of her peers stereotyping Aboriginal pedagogical approaches:

> It was like, oh yeah, I’m going to use story telling in my class when I’ve got Indigenous kids. I was like, well, if you use the story in [name of community] where I was, the kids would switch off or walk out of the class because they wouldn’t be hearing you and it wouldn’t be engaging for them. Those kids are much better if you give them tactile things and they’re working on the floor in groups, for example.

While Yunkaporta’s (2009) research explicitly warns against superimposing the 8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning framework in other community contexts and instead suggests it is essential that each school engage in dialogue to develop frameworks that suit local needs (NSW Department of Education Staff from the Wagga Network of Schools, 2016), Thea nevertheless identified the danger of essentialising Indigenous pedagogies and was genuinely concerned that her peers would depart university with simplistic ideas about how to best teach Aboriginal students.

While it is unclear whether or not the tutor did suggest that the 8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning framework was a universally ‘culturally appropriate’ approach, often the challenge for teacher educators involves the “dilemma of having to present at times, generalisations about Aboriginal people to make a particular point, while simultaneously making students aware of the importance of recognising the individual” (Thorpe & Burgess, 2016, p. 126). Thorpe and Burgess (2016) argue that tutors need to be acutely aware of, acknowledge and deconstruct this tension in their teaching and
ensure that preservice teachers are challenged to do the same (p. 126). Carey and Prince (2015) provide an insightful analysis of the impact of Indigenous Studies pedagogy that overtly or unwittingly reinscribes an Indigenous and non-Indigenous binary. I agree with Carey and Prince (2015) that it is important to “question those pedagogical models that exhort particular students to absent themselves from thought and action, or uncritically acquiesce to the positions of others, on the sole basis of ‘world views’, ‘cultural perspectives’ or historical experiences of colonisation” (p. 275). This is not to suggest such perspectives are unimportant or irrelevant to student learning but rather what is required is a critical engagement with how these binary positions impact in real life situations at the Cultural Interface of teaching and learning.

Brookfield (1995) offers another pedagogical consideration that shifts the focus from theory to practice and the important role of critical reflection in being alert to miscommunication, “teaching innocently means assuming that the meanings and significance we place on our actions are the ones that students take from them” (p. 1). Although teaching staff may have attempted to problematise such binary constructions of teaching Aboriginal students versus teaching non-Aboriginal students, it is enticing for preservice teachers to cling to these ideas for they appear to provide easy ‘solutions’ in unfamiliar and challenging environments.

Thea found the formal assessments in EDUH2018 to be uninspiring as they did not push students to engage deeply on a practical level:

I think in any teaching degree there comes a point where you’re like, ‘okay, there’s just so much theory here and there’s just so many different things that we could do’, … I know it’s difficult to organise, but we could go and sit at the back of the classroom or like we did for special education, for example, we all went out to a school where there were special education kids and we volunteered. Even getting people to sit at the back of the classroom, within an Indigenous context and to engage in that way would be much better because as I said before, people are just ticking things off the list, honestly, they’re just [getting] through and they’re like, oh resource evaluation [an assessment task],
Thea’s comment highlights the need for innovative assessment that develops the nexus between theory and practice. As Taylor (2014) notes, “assessments in teacher education are often separated from leaning experience in real teacher practice” (p. 136) resulting in an expression of understanding based on assumptions and conjecture. While there are some problematic logistical and ethical issues that could arise when attempting to provide hundreds of preservice teachers with the opportunity to observe Aboriginal children in a classroom (and could inadvertently lead to ‘Othering’ the children), Thea’s personal and professional transformation as a consequence of being immersed in an Aboriginal community led her to advocate similar opportunities for others. Burgess and Cavanagh’s (2012, 2013, 2015) research on a community led cultural immersion program for teachers in NSW attests to potential positive outcomes including attitudinal change, increased confidence to engage with the Aboriginal community and enhanced confidence in incorporating Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum. Burgess and Cavanagh (2012, 2013, 2015) found that even experienced teachers who have lived for many years in a community with a high Aboriginal population can feel unconfident when engaging with Aboriginal people. Thea recalled that her peers expressed similar insecurities during the final weeks of the mandatory Indigenous Studies unit:

I remember we did do a lot of reflective work and there were some people that were like, yeah, I’m actually really scared of teaching Indigenous kids, I just feel like there’s a lot of restrictions, what if I get things wrong, what if I offend people. I think all these kind of issues started coming out, like, I’ve never met an Indigenous person and I don’t even know what I’d say.

While it is not possible, nor the focus of this research to establish whether such views are widespread among this preservice teacher cohort; there is cause to investigate the level and source of such anxiety given this theme emerges elsewhere in the literature.
Some of the preservice teachers in Hickling-Hudson’s (2005) research reflected that their childhood socialisation processes had made them fearful of Aboriginal people. Research conducted by the Respect, Relationships, Reconciliation Consortium (2013) found that while non-Indigenous teachers agreed they should teach about Indigenous cultures, many were concerned they lacked knowledge and would inadvertently “do the wrong thing” (p. 2).

The positive impact created when there are opportunities for engagement in Aboriginal community settings is a thread that runs through Blaze, Melissa and Thea’s narratives. While the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers requires that graduate teachers develop an understanding of strategies to work effectively with parents and carers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2014), the Standards do not explicitly relate to Aboriginal community engagement (Burgess and Cavanagh, 2015, p. 53). Field experiences such as cultural immersion are recognised for their potential transformative learning moments (Auld et al., 2013; Lavery, Cain, & Hampton, 2014; Salter, Hill, Navin, & Knight, 2013) however the addendum to this claim is illustrated in the thoughtful analysis of “dangerous practices” preservice teachers exhibited while on a three week practicum in two remote communities in the Northern Territory (Auld, Dyer, & Charles, 2016).

Auld et al. (2016) defined “dangerous practices” as “those practices that run the risk of being counterproductive to the empowering and transformative practices of student learning and the ethical responsibilities associated with teaching” (p. 166). Stereotypes of Aboriginality mediated the deficit ways these preservice teachers spoke about the Aboriginal students in their classrooms. While well intentioned, the preservice teachers did not grasp the way their transient engagement potentially
perpetuated colonising relationships - the Aboriginal education professional experience became a commodity for their resumes. Identifying potentially “dangerous practices” brings a critical lens to “how well teacher educators have negotiated the constructs of race, remoteness, Indigenous knowledge systems and identity in the induction, teaching and debriefing sessions of this professional experience” (Auld, et al., 2016, p. 166). Relevant to this research is their suggestion to conceptualise the remote professional experience as an opportunity to work as ‘intercultural inter-allies’ (Auld, et al., 2016, p. 176). The idea of being part of a community of allies prevents inaction precipitated by fears of making a mistake. Here the Cultural Interface becomes a site of agency for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous preservice teachers to consider the theoretical and practical positions that collude to inadvertently manifest in counterproductive pedagogy.

*EDUF2007: Social Perspectives in Education* was recalled favourably by Thea for embedding Indigenous content:

*I loved that one, it was talking about populations who do not have as free access to education and because I love Indigenous topics, my presentation was on Indigenous exclusion in education. I remember looking at policy, I think that’s where I started being interested in policy analysis. Actually interestingly, then we had to do a research task and I didn’t do it on an Indigenous topic, I did it on sexuality education, which was very interesting. But, I think, I don’t know why I chose not to, but that’s weird for me, but I think I just needed a change or something or I didn’t come up with a good idea.*

By the end of second year Thea’s interest in Indigenous education had grown so much that she organised a meeting with the Program Director to try and establish how she could expand her learning in the field:

*I went to him and I said, ‘look, I’m really interested in Indigenous stuff, are there any other units I can pick up or anything that I can do that would help me to be able to teach Aboriginal Studies as well as human movement?’ He said, ‘I’m sorry, in human movement there’s no availability to do that because all your subjects are already lined up and we’re not able to do that. But what I’d advise for you to do is that in every subject, do an Indigenous [perspective], like*
if you have an opportunity to choose, do an Indigenous topic, then you won’t officially come out with something that is more Indigenous, but your understanding will broaden and when you go to the schools you’ll be able to discuss your knowledge with them. Or you can do a five year course and do an extra few subjects or come back and do postgraduate studies’.

Thea was not interested in prolonging the duration of her study and instead looked for assessment opportunities to extend her learning. During the second year professional experience Thea developed a lesson on Indigenous Olympians and elite athletes which her supervising teacher remarked was *the best prac class I’ve ever seen*. She also taught lessons on Indigenous games which sparked new areas of interest.

During third year, Thea applied for and was successful in gaining one of a small number of professional experience places in a remote Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory. Her supervising teacher was a new graduate who had relocated from Victoria with his young family. Thea explained *he certainly answered all my questions but didn’t have that experience that would have been really beneficial*. Thea found the professional experience emotionally draining as work spilled over into social life given she shared a home with her supervising teacher:

> It’s just the weirdest thing ever [to leave school] then go back and watch TV together because there’s nothing to do, after you leave school. I went for a couple of walks with the dogs and that’s really how I debriefed and I listened to music. There were so many nights that I went into my room and I just, I just cried just because it’s confronting, it’s hard, it’s lonely, it’s challenging and no one knows what you’re experiencing. And he was a lovely man but again you know he couldn’t provide the emotional support that I needed.

Although feeling isolated at times, Thea did have some support from another preservice teacher who was also staying with his supervising teacher. While they had little in common and were studying different degrees, a close friendship was formed during the month long professional experience:

> We have no relationship [now] but for those few weeks, yeah, we were like best friends...we watched movies together and like you know you don’t have anyone. And there were a few times where we went on a walk and I’d get a bit teary and
he’d … kind of pat me on the back and be like you’re right, you’re right, cry it out and then I felt uncomfortable ‘cause I was like I don’t want to make you feel uncomfortable but I can’t cope with this.

High staff turnover and teaching practices that were not responsive to student needs were perceived as impacting on student behaviour. Thea believed some of the teaching staff were using dated modes of teaching that were not responsive to students’ needs. Thea was concerned with the routine approach to teaching two hours of English in the morning, two hours of maths after lunch with other curriculum areas to follow:

*To be honest I was bored. I couldn’t deal with two hours straight of writing sentences. I wanted to get the kids out in the morning after they had washed their faces, brushed their teeth, had their breakfast just playing you know for the first half an hour of the school day, just getting them waking up and engaging them. The classroom environment was so static.*

Thea was equally worried about the lack of engagement some teachers had with the Aboriginal community:

*The interaction with the parents, it was just so removed and so, I don’t know, culturally insensitive. All the teachers live in one side of the community, there’s a school and the community’s on the other side and if you don’t go to church there, if you don’t go to the family things there, if you’re not invited into the community, whether or not a church is an interesting thing ‘cause I think whether you’re religious or not I think if you’re working in that community I think you should still kind of just turn up or turn up to the social events just so that they know that you are not just separated, you’re actually part of the community events that are happening.*

Thea also experienced resistance when implementing the Physical Education curriculum and had difficulty getting approval to do some activities with her students. She believed the principal was influenced by her own personal aversion to sport:

*One time we were putting away the equipment at lunchtime ‘cause they were bringing out some equipment for the kids to help them to stay at school … she was like ‘yeah, you know I was that kid that hid behind the PE shed at school, I hated it’.*

Thea lamented that for the children who were struggling academically, physical education could have provided important learning opportunities such as teamwork and
relationship building, as teachers and students could share positive experiences in the world outside the classroom. Thea was generally concerned that the teachers had not made enough effort to engage with and build relationships with the community. As a preservice teacher Thea felt that she was unable to challenge the status quo and it was difficult to experiment. Activities outside of the set routine were shunned, *...it was like this is the way we do it here.*

Although Thea had experience of living and working in Aboriginal community settings she felt this involvement did not completely equip her for the demands of teaching in this community and that the university had not adequately prepared her for this placement. A university staff member was responsible for mentoring preservice teachers across two schools, however he spent most of the time embedded at the other site. Over the 4 week period, Thea was visited at the beginning of the placement and then later for a formal observation. She felt disappointed by the lack of on-going support and was upset by the feedback received by her tertiary mentor on her teaching. Thea described the feedback as *...scathing* and believed it was unwarranted as her mentor did not appear to understand the unique context of the school:

> In our school you had kids walking out mid-lesson saying you know ‘F_ you’ and at your face, you know? Really confronting, things that I had never experienced... especially in kids that young I had never, ever seen before. And then having someone come in and say something like ‘you know you should have used that resource’ and I’m just thinking for my kids that wouldn’t work. The fact that they even sat in a circle and managed to get something out of the lesson is an achievement and a win and they were engaged at that moment in time. So that was hard I think for me but again because he didn’t know that because he hadn’t been there.

Thea believed that the tertiary mentor was out of touch and didn’t comprehend the type of mentoring that was required at that school. The two schools had very different histories and social circumstances, yet the mentor had assumed they were...
equivalent. Most of the staff were young and their performance was seemingly being compared with the other preservice teachers who were working in a school with relatively stable and senior staff to provide guidance. She believed an induction and follow up conversations would have improved the experience:

> Just having a bit more time to deal with it and to talk about it and like, a debrief session and we did a debrief session ourselves - we organised it ourselves and that was fine but because we were all students that had initiative we did that but yeah, it was just very interesting as it would have been nice to have had someone, as I said, a pastoral care kind of focus as well or an Indigenous person or just [someone with] the personality where people felt open to share, to share things as well.

The “tyranny of distance and lack of resource support, social and professionally” are recognised as impacting on high staff turnover in remote schools particularly for new recruits who often leave within the first year (Harrington & Brasche, 2011, p. 24). For preservice teachers on remote community placements there is significant potential for harm to occur if they are without adequate support. As Halsey (2005) notes, follow up and feedback of post professional experience in remote settings is essential for staff and preservice teachers, yet there is often considerable diversity of the form this takes. To address some of the concerns raised by Thea, implementation and evaluation of professional experience placements in remote Aboriginal communities could be shared with Indigenous Studies staff at university to identify knowledge gaps and inform curriculum renewal processes. Given the difficulty of securing staff in remote schools, it is imperative that all preservice teachers who are passionate about Aboriginal education are supported during their remote placement. As Harrington and Brasche’s (2011) research on the experiences of ten final year preservice teachers who worked in schools with high Aboriginal populations demonstrates, confidence and resilience can be built when they are given support to
build networks with teachers, parents and the wider community. Ongoing orientation and mentoring may be required for non-Indigenous teachers to develop an understanding of cultural diversity (L. Hall, 2012) and to increase their involvement and confidence in the school community.

**University experiences of Indigenous Studies – the final year**

Thea’s final year of study presented a number of opportunities to deepen her knowledge in Indigenous Studies. She chose to complete a unit of study *EDUH4053: Indigenous Sport, Education and Culture* (see Appendix 8 List of Units of Study) and conducted research in an Aboriginal community setting for her honours thesis.

*EDUH4053 Indigenous Sport, Education and Culture* incorporated field trips to local Aboriginal community controlled health organisations and sporting events. Thea gained a greater insight to the history of Indigenous people’s participation in sport and the link between sport and the social determinants of health for Indigenous Australians. The only disconcerting aspect related to the lack of engagement her peers expressed throughout the semester. Thea recalled one scenario that demonstrated this disengagement:

*We’d had a tutorial presentation from our peers on attendance and then we walked into another subject and we had to do a classroom activity and it was something like, if you could change a policy, what would you do? ...Anyway, this particular guy generally is quite engaged, and so, because we’d walked out of that Indigenous subject ‘cause obviously I’m thinking we’d been discussing [Indigenous]things in the tutorial and I kind of said, okay, so what do you reckon? If you were prime minister, how would you increase Indigenous attendance at school? What educational policy would you implement? And then I was actually really shocked by his answer, he said something like, oh, I think this is talked about too much, people talk about it all the time and there are other things more important to talk about than this, I think it’s really overplayed. I actually felt really awkward, it was one of those times that I think my face went red because I was like, how do you respond to that? I was like, oh okay, yeah...if people don’t want to talk about it, they don’t want to talk about it! I think it was just the general attitude [of apathy]. And it [our discussion from the other tutorial] was fresh in my mind and I was thinking, there are so many barriers to attendance and having been in an Indigenous community and...* 

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seeing it first hand, it’s very difficult. Anyway, so I was, kind of, reflecting on it - that’s really a shame, someone that’s sitting in these classes and is listening to the statistics and all these things and they’re saying, oh it’s in the too hard basket.

A few weeks later another friend commented to Thea that she was only doing the unit because she thought the assessment would be easier. It was then that it became clear why there has been such apathy:

I just can’t believe that people, I suppose, would pick it out of convenience, and then it makes sense why people disengage so much in that subject because really they’re just there to get their degree and I generally have found that the whole way through, is that, people are just there to play the game, get marks and go. It’s just a shame to me, because my view’s different. I feel a bit disappointed, a bit discouraged. It doesn’t mean anything [to them], it’s like researching, I don’t know, something that’s inanimate or it’s just something that’s there or a theory or a person that lived once in history, rather than living, breathing [people]. But it is there, it’s happening - it’s really hard and engaging in these issues actually matter, as a teacher. That’s what I find difficult is that they don’t understand that it’s relevant.

Thea’s honours thesis was a welcomed project throughout the year as she was able to engage with the community where she had spent her third year professional experience. Thea noted the profound impact that her return to the same community had on her developing independence and confidence:

I went back up there in February to do interviews and for the first time I stepped outside a church group or a school group and it was just me and it was just the community and that was quite confronting at first because it was like whoa, I’m actually here by myself and I’m in the community, I’m full-on, not able to drive out of the community every night and go stay somewhere else but you know, I’m engaged here with the people.

During the year Thea developed a deep friendship with Toni [not her real name] and they were in regular phone contact:

It’s odd but I do feel part of that community and like whenever I feel like everything here is just getting so stressful ... I know it sounds the most ironic thing in the world because there are so many issues - it’s a Northern Territory remote community, particularly this community is known for issues, but it’s kind of like my mind is half there and thinking of the people there and the community and the kids and for me it’s kind of like this thing where I’m torn between two places. I just love the people and I just love the community so you know as much
as I’m sure me chatting to Toni helps her and she talks to me about different things, I don’t think they understand how much they have helped me and grow me up and you know, made me aware of issues and talked to me and changed my world view completely so that I suppose now I’m not looking through the lens of... for lack of a better kind of example that North Shore girl that went to school who was so sheltered in everything. Yeah, it’s totally changed my world and my viewpoint for the better. I think although I’ve been exposed to all these social issues, I don’t know, I just have so much joy in thinking about that community and those people. I can’t explain it.

Thea’s return to the community throughout the year as part of the research process meant that she continued to do some volunteer work at the school and attend church. The deepening trust relationships developed during this period meant that people were happy to be involved in the research, ...

"I’d been volunteering at the school where they said, oh why are you here? I said, oh I’m just talking to some people about the language do you want to talk? [and they said,] yeah, we want to talk. The school athletics carnival was held during one research visit so Thea took some photos and put together a slide show with music. She explained that it was a fun opportunity to engage with parents:

All the kids and all the parents came in and sat in the classroom and some of them watched it like five times just over and over again and then were pointing and seeing their kids. And that is what I think is important in getting the parents involved ... you know there’s a picture of a kid with a funny face and they all laugh... so in that respect I think they are the things that can be done to incorporate the community in education.

While the ongoing relationship with this community had a profound transformative impact on her professional identity, when asked whether she would like to teach in a remote community, Thea reflected that it was a difficult decision and one that she had to contemplate recently when applying for work within NSW public schools. A separate interview process was organised for preservice teachers interested in teaching in schools with a high Aboriginal population:

I looked at the list [of schools] and for a lot of them they’re regional, obviously ... well not obviously, but there were more regional and it came down to the
point where I was like, I actually have to decide now, do I apply for that interview or do I just do mainstream? So I was weighing up positives and negatives of both and what I really wanted to do and just because of the stage that I am in life at the moment and obviously I’ve got a partner to think about who’s working in the city, it’s just not practical to be regional at the moment.

Thea had felt torn in making this decision because of the wonderful experience it offered however started to contemplate the other ways she could contribute to Indigenous education:

So if that’s not really a choice practically, how would it be beneficial or how would I feel about teaching in say a mainstream school with the knowledge that I have. I thought, well, that is still a really valuable thing, teaching mainstream kids about Indigenous issues, Indigenous health...so that’s where I’m at, at the moment. I’ll probably apply for mainstream schools, but in the interview I will bring my passion out through that instead. Then we’ll see what the future brings.

Our final interview was conducted in November – the exams were over and Thea had begun to collect the feedback from her final tasks. She was relaxed and focused on thinking about her future. Given she had started to apply for work and had prepared for our final conversation, she had reflected on the teacher she had become over the last four years. She was a little concerned to share this story – perhaps worried that I might think she was appropriating a professional identity that was not legitimately hers to ‘acquire’:

I hope this is not offensive, and I don’t know why it would be offensive but I just want to preface what I’m going to say with that [comment]. I feel as though when you have an issue that you’re interested in, it becomes kind of your identity as a teacher. So my degree, even though I am a non-Indigenous person, even though I have had experience, but still very limited experience, I would say, with Indigenous communities, people have identified me as the Indigenous researcher/teacher interested in [those] things. So whenever there were conversations in class and I’d speak about this, people would actually look at me when we were talking about Indigenous issues and expect me to know all the answers. It has actually become an identity thing for me. Yeah, because it’s that expectation.

With humour, she exclaimed ...I am the keeper of knowledge for human movement in
I’m the Indigenous expert! The self-deprecating humour, suggested that she did not wear the title of ‘Indigenous expert’ comfortably. Furthermore, at the school where she completed her final professional experience Thea was uncertain how to let staff know of her interest, …it took two weeks before it actually came up in the staffroom, that I was passionate about Indigenous education because the context that I was in, it wasn’t overly emphasised.

Thea was grappling with her agency as a non-Indigenous preservice teacher at the Cultural Interface. While others had come to expect her to ‘know all the answers’ she was not sure whether it was her place to be ‘all knowing’ and besides, she informed me, her honours feedback had not been as she had hoped. On hearing this disappointing news her peers had remarked …but I don’t understand because you, you’re good at this, this is what you know, this is what you do!

Despite the recent jolts to her confidence (including missing out on work at a school with Aboriginal boarders from remote Aboriginal communities), Thea remained optimistic. She was philosophical, there would be other jobs and recently she had been offered an opportunity to publish and encouraged to enrol in a PhD. Thea’s thoughtful reflections during her final interview demonstrate an activist identity in the making but in search of a community who will share her passions and grow these in ethical ways:

But I think it would just be time and it will settle itself out but I think what’s coming out of this is that having an interest in this particular area, it has given me a sense of identity of what and who I am as a teacher but it hasn’t limited me to that so I’m not walking into a school and I’m not saying I am your Indigenous expert here, let me see your programs and see where you can incorporate Indigenous perspectives more. What I’m doing is that if the opportunity comes up and schools need assistance I am very happy and passionate to do that. And once I am situated in a school, and I’ve written this in cover letters [of my job applications] before, I’m happy to contribute to the way that Indigenous perspectives are incorporated into the school curriculum. And obviously my own teaching as I make choices around how to present content, what content to teach, what social groups to discuss in class, what activities to use. I’ll definitely be incorporating Indigenous knowledges and
histories and stories into that. I think it’s very important in doing it in a genuine way but it hasn’t limited me in that sense so I think it has been useful.

But I would have liked though to have had a little more opportunity to refine and to study a little bit more especially in this area. I think the university does need to recognise that there are some people that will want to step out of the particular box and I think at such an amazing institution like this, there needs to be structures to allow people to do that and I think certain people need to be picked up and go, ‘well you have a really good interest in that, let me foster that by doing this’. I suppose in honours you are able to do that but if I hadn’t chosen honours because of life circumstances or whatever I wouldn’t have had that experience so it’s kind of an interesting thought.

Indeed this is an interesting thought as not all preservice teachers achieve grades that allow their participation in the honours program and there will be a number of those who, in Thea’s words, ...step out of the box they were in when they entered university. I turn now to bring together the findings and recommendations arising from the three narratives presented.
Chapter 10: The Narrative Coda

A story is not
A beginning, a middle and an end
A story is much richer than that
A story is almost an interval in the enchantment of living.

(Okri, 2007)

The term *coda* is used in music to bring a music piece to an end. Kim (2015) explains that a coda in music has the power to reverberate beyond that moment. When applied to narrative inquiry, the coda must evaluate what the stories mean - it brings the “so what” of the pieces of the research together into the present - the “where to now” (Kim, 2015, p. 229). While this chapter brings this thesis to an end – the three participants’ story lines are but intervals in the trajectory of becoming the teachers they aspire to be and the themes they have identified will certainly have further iterations.

This research explored the ways three preservice teachers’ life experiences prior to entering university and subsequent engagement in Indigenous Studies curriculum and pedagogy at university influenced their professional identity development. Blaze, Melissa and Thea’s stories were selected as they emerged as those “needing to be told” (Creswell, 2013, p. 104) given the depth of insight they brought to the complex pedagogical space of the Cultural Interface. The Cultural Interface illuminated the influence of biography on the locale of each learner as well as the agency and tensions they experienced over time (*temporality*) and in a range of social contexts (*sociality*) and *places* while engaged in Indigenous Studies at university. Furthermore it was found that tensions were experienced at the Cultural Interface during informal conversations with strangers, peers and family when discussing Indigenous Australia.

There are two salient findings of this narrative inquiry that require future
attention in preservice teacher education. The first is the identification of preservice teachers who were developing an Indigenous education activist identity yet at times needed further support or guidance during this process. Their experiences at the Cultural Interface involved emotional labour and each participant would have appreciated the opportunity to connect with like-minded people especially during their times in schools and other learning contexts. Implications arise for teacher educators who need to be alert to the presence of these activist preservice teachers in their midst in order to facilitate communities of practice so that their dedication to being actively involved in Indigenous education is supported. Secondly, the experiences of these research participants indicated that while there were many teacher educators and teacher mentors in schools making an effort to embed Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in a range of curriculum areas, there is still much work to do in developing deep and nuanced Indigenous content that is thoughtfully scoped across the degree and beyond. This narrative coda identifies the resonating features of the three narratives that I intend to bring forward into my work and I hope other teacher educators will similarly need this need.

**Nurturing an Indigenous Education Activist Identity**

At the time of our final interviews, Blaze, Melissa and Thea were about to embark on their teaching career with a resolute commitment to enact pedagogy that contributed to social justice for Indigenous Australians. While their life stories were unique, they shared a commitment to prioritise Aboriginal education in their future careers. Their narratives were inspiring in many ways, for each person found meaning, personal and professional growth as a consequence of their developing interest in Indigenous Studies.
Sachs (2001) argued that an activist teacher identity grows from democratic discourse, collaboration and the collegiality of people who have faith in the capacity of individuals and collectives to influence change. Activist teachers are inclined to form communities that are “passionate, strong and lead to rethinking of areas of practice” (Sachs, 1997, p. 62). Activist teachers identify with and are committed to social justice and the political and social transformational work of teaching. Social justice agendas in education are commonly part of the rhetoric in higher education yet are in danger of being rendered meaningless (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008) if the process and strategies to achieve these outcomes are not clearly established in local contexts. Day (2004) argued that “the idea of an activist agenda suggests the need for courage, confidence, and a clear understanding of and passionate commitment to a set of moral purposes” (p. 44). The moral purpose of the Indigenous education activist embodies the activist identity but also includes a commitment to personal actions that will support Indigenous student outcomes and promote the teaching of Indigenous knowledges, perspectives and content. Indigenous education activist teachers are vigilant and reflective about their actions in achieving these goals.

Risking personal rebuke, the participants in this research were learning to ‘step up’ and challenge others who engaged in negative or racist conversations about Aboriginal Australians. This research has identified that social justice work can be emotionally demanding, so the strength to maintain this commitment was not easy when surrounded by the antipathy of others. Consequently, Blaze, Melissa and Thea often felt they were the ‘odd one out’; unanticipated interlopers in deficit conversations about Aboriginal people which left them feeling shocked or troubled. On such occasions they tried their best to summon the agency to defend an Indigenous
knowledge position or challenge ignorant or racist opinions about Aboriginal people, however the interviews illuminated an underlying sense that during their studies, the people who might support the emotional labour they experienced at the Cultural Interface were not easily located.

Earlier in this thesis I explained that the interview process became an unintended pedagogical intervention (Olsen, 2008) when the participants sought feedback on how they had reacted to a range of situations they found confronting, or as Thea indicated, ‘I actually just want to have a conversation with someone about how passionate I am. How big a part of my life, this is for me, but it definitely alienates you somewhat from your peers because they go ‘what are you talking about?’’. The Cultural Interface presumes there will be tensions and therefore challenges for preservice teachers who navigate this inter-subjective space. Nakata (2012) has argued that tensions at the Cultural Interface are manifest in a “tug-of-war” that is “physically real, and both informs as well as limits what can be said and what is to be left unsaid in the everyday” (p. 7). This point asserts the power of holding and defending an Indigenous knowledge position as it can be experienced physically in the body when it is deemed contentious by others. Dewey wrote about felt difficulties which Hildreth (2012) explained, “are signaled by an emotional response: we may become angry, confused, doubtful, scared, or surprised at these new developments” (p. 924). Indeed Blaze, Melissa and Thea articulated their insecurities that manifested as a result of experiencing incongruence between the ways they reacted to confronting situations (e.g., challenging racism or dealing with peers who expressed antipathy towards Indigenous Studies) and the teacher they aspired to become. The participants’ memories of their encounters and emotions at the Cultural Interface are informative for they
elucidate the diversity of preservice teacher responses that teacher educators need to consider to foster resilience in these educational contexts.

Melissa was the most adept at managing felt difficulties given she commenced Aboriginal Studies in her high school years. She had a well-rehearsed protective response as a consequence of her experiences of the negative comments hurled her way (...oh do you just study the colours on the VB [beer] can?). One convenient response involved subverting difficult dialogue so as not to engage in confrontation with peers. While this pre-emptive action is useful to reduce conflict in personal relationships; in an educational setting it raises the important issue of how to prepare preservice teachers to challenge racism or to advocate for the inclusion of Indigenous content in schools when there is resistance. This may be particularly difficult, for example, where there is a power imbalance with longstanding staff who have established careers. As a classroom teacher on professional experience, Melissa felt confident to address racism (e.g., challenging the student who told his peer to “…go back to where you came from”), however admitted that she would likely lose her composure with peers if they had expressed something similar. Vass’ (2017) research uncovered the shock of a preservice teacher on professional experience who witnessed a staff member using the offensive term “Abo” in the staffroom, yet went unchallenged by his colleagues. A confident and tactful rebuke of such racism is required and preservice teachers should have the opportunity to practise these emotionally demanding scenarios during the teaching degree - for what hope is there for social justice in Indigenous education while bystander inaction in effect condones racist remarks?

Zembylas’ (2010) work acknowledges both the challenges and opportunities of the role of emotion in leadership positions and argues for teacher leadership programs
that assist social justice leaders to develop “critical emotional reflexivity” (p. 612). This involves the creation of opportunities to engage in active reflection on the emotional experiences of oppositional politics, peer resistance alongside feelings of disappointment, anxiety and anger about socially oppressive structures. Reflection on the influence of these complex emotions assists in developing strategies that will sustain teacher agency. Zembylas (2010) found that a range of emotional strategies were important such as “keeping balance; keeping things in perspective; talking to close friends and colleagues” (p. 621). These strategies highlighted the significance of social justice as a collective effort and the need to think through how emotions are implicated in this endeavour – for example, how one’s reactions may impact positively or negatively on the collective. Furthermore, Zembylas (2010) argues, “if leaders for social justice are to be successful, they need teachers with similar viewpoints” (p. 621).

While Zembylas’ (2010) paper focuses on leadership programs for teachers, teacher education must also take up the responsibility to mobilise the numbers of preservice teachers who might have a disposition to connect with other peers to build a community of practice throughout the duration of the degree. The creation and maintenance of an Indigenous Studies interest group that brings together preservice teachers from across the year and disciplinary cohorts would provide them with the opportunity to join as their interest is awakened. An Indigenous Studies interest group for preservice teachers could combine academic and social opportunities that broaden their engagement with Indigenous Australia and their local communities. A reading group and invited guest speakers may be a starting point for making connections, developing into social events, such as attendance at Indigenous films, theatre, dance, exhibitions, festivals and community events and protests. Through the combined
academic and extra-curricular activities, this community of practice would be supported to *imagine* “‘how to be’, ‘how to act’ and ‘how to understand’ their work and their place in society” (Sachs, 2005, p. 15) in relation to Indigenous education.

Maxine Greene’s (1995) work on social imagination resonates here in regards to linking imagination to agentic change:

> We have our social imagination: the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, in our schools. As I write of social imagination, I am reminded of Jean-Paul Sartre’s declaration that ‘it is on the day that we can conceive of a different state of affairs that a new light falls on our troubles and our suffering and that we decide that these are unbearable’. (p. 5)

In addition, John Dewey’s (2003c) notion of *imaginative rehearsals* provides further inspiration of a way to nurture professional identities confident to act to bring Indigenous Studies content and pedagogy into their classrooms for all students. The role of imagination in learning as Dewey (2003c) contends “is the vision of realities that cannot be exhibited under existing conditions of sense-perception. Clear insight into the remote, the absent, the obscure is its aim” (p. 355). Australia is only now beginning to emerge from a past that has been responsible for a “cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale” (Stanner, 1969, p. 25) in relation to Indigenous history. This long-standing “structural matter” (Stanner, 1969, p. 24) has normalised a habit of mind that constructs Indigenous knowledges and Aboriginality as primitive and deficit to Western knowledges.

> Amongst the wide range of pedagogical strategies available to teacher educators, Greene’s work inspires a consideration of the role of imagination in illuminating that which remains ‘remote’, ‘obscure’ or ‘other’ to preservice teachers. Blaze, Melissa and Thea envisioned their positive contribution to Indigenous education, however there were setbacks in maintaining this social imagination. During the
interview process, it became apparent that some of their experiences would have been better discussed a year or two earlier in the midst of the unfolding event, compared with the chance opportunity of our meeting at the end of their degrees. While participation in an Indigenous Studies interest group could assist on such occasions, imaginative rehearsals of authentic experiences at the Cultural Interface would also be helpful. As Dewey (2003a) wrote:

> Deliberation is actually an imaginative rehearsal of various courses of conduct. We give way in our mind, to some impulse; we try, in our mind, some plan. Following its career through various steps, we find ourselves in imagination in the presence of the consequences that would follow: and as we then like and approve, or dislike and disapprove, these consequences, we find the original impulse or plan good or bad. (p. 275)

Imaginative rehearsals cannot replace life experience for learning but they can offer a supportive pedagogical tool to examine the complex tensions and agency experienced at the Cultural Interface. Appealing to preservice teachers to engage in imaginative processes drawn from real life experiences of other recently graduated preservice teachers would provide an opportunity to experiment with a range of knowledge positions within the relative safety of the Indigenous Studies classroom at university. As Dewey writes, “an act tried out in imagination is not final or fatal. It is retrievable” (p. 133). Ethical dilemmas and the difficult dialogue around race, racism and controversial contemporary debates can be unravelled and their implications considered from a range of perspectives framed as imaginative rehearsals within the Cultural Interface.

Drawing partly on the work of Dewey, Nussbaum (2006) uses the term narrative imagination to describe the kind of pedagogy that should be used to promote “the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story” (p. 390). In other words,
“imagination makes empathy possible” (Greene, 1995, p. 3). Imaginative rehearsals have the potential to lead preservice teachers to more complex positions of empathetic understanding instead of taking sides in an Indigenous versus non-Indigenous contest. How then does one promote the role of imagination and build narrative rehearsals into the wide repertoire of pedagogical responses required in Indigenous Studies?

Part of the answer to this question lies in the application of the Arts such as storytelling, poetry, painting, photography and drama, to create “new understandings of process, spirit, purpose, subjectivities, emotion, responsiveness, and the ethical dimensions of inquiry” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 59) about Indigenous Australia. Quality arts experiences and processes can be the catalyst for social transformation and inclusivity and the means through which it can happen (Ewing, 2010) and as Greene (1995) stated “art offers life; it offers hope; it offers the prospect of discovery; it offers light” (p. 133). The narratives presented in this thesis are examples of those which could be adapted for classroom use with preservice teachers in order to imagine future scenarios and how they might respond constructively. Through the enactment of such stories, preservice teachers can imagine possible actions as well as the emotional responses that will likely occur (see Sanders, 2015). As Dewey (2003b) stated, “we do not use the present to control the future; we use the foresight of the future to refine and expand present activity” (p. 215). This epitomises the power of narrative to connect past, present and future. Sharing narratives of past experiences and the ways preservice teachers have mobilised agency in Indigenous education contexts could be powerful for those who are seeking more complex ways of understanding how they can ethically participate in Indigenous education.

Blaze, Melissa and Thea each explored the ethics of their pedagogy during the
process of sharing their stories. Becoming an ethical teacher embodied the idea of working in culturally responsive ways with Aboriginal people and communities. Foucault presented ethics not as a moral code (that stipulates what is right or wrong) but rather as a means whereby identity can be ethically self-formed through one’s own critical thinking and action (Infinito, 2003). Foucault (1985) stated that ethics is:

A process in which the individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal. And this requires him to act upon himself, to monitor, test, improve and transform himself. (p. 28)

Blaze, Melissa and Thea’s open-mindedness to partake in reflective dialogue (see Hatton & Smith, 1995) throughout their learning journey was key to their ethical development. While they examined, recognised and tried to practice culturally responsive teaching, it was not always clear them if in fact their actions were appropriate from an Indigenous standpoint. Given the telos (endpoint) of their identity work was to ‘make a difference’ in Indigenous education, not knowing if their actions were ethical proved to be challenging, and self-doubt crept in – particularly during the professional experience.

Blaze for example, had a “moral breakdown” when he unexpectedly developed ethical concerns about teaching Indigenous perspectives to the Aboriginal students in his class. As a non-Indigenous teacher, he worried he was a ‘fraud’ and that he would make a mistake that would diminish his professional standing and be damaging to the Aboriginal students (...is it going to be validating their identity? Are they going to be perceiving it as tokenistic?). Thea had been labelled by her peers as the “keeper of knowledge” and became concerned that she did not have the right to speak on behalf of Aboriginal people during her university tutorials. Part of their identity development
therefore involved a struggle to determine and articulate their locale as a learner and as a teacher of Indigenous content at the Cultural Interface.

MacLure (1993) presents teacher identity formation as a continuing site of struggle, one that is not fixed nor “something that people have – but as something we use, to justify, explain and make sense of themselves in relation to other people, and to other contexts in which they operate” (p. 312). Blaze, Melissa and Thea were developing quite sophisticated ethical stories to live by, yet required guidance in developing a relationally responsive position from which to teach Indigenous Studies. Yunkaporta (2016) argues that developing a relationally responsive pedagogy is grounded in respectful dialogue and working with local knowledge to develop an understanding of the obligations, boundaries and ethics of knowledge production at the Cultural Interface:

If you follow this way, responding to authentic relationships, you will be able to read the warning signs that will prevent you from overstepping, offending and transgressing. Even better, you will be able to co-create the shared meanings and language needed for genuine (and productive) inclusion of Aboriginal people and perspectives. (para. 9)

Relational work is an important part of the Indigenous Studies curriculum and pedagogical development because the people involved in this relational work can start to make sense of the role and contribution of their work in relation to others in localised contexts. Relational work is nurturing of an Indigenous education activist identity because the process is also nurturing of a community that shares their passions. The next section addresses the key findings and implications of the participants’ narratives in relation to Indigenous Studies curriculum and pedagogy.

**Indigenous Studies Curriculum and Professional Development**

The participants in this research experienced a sense of good will on the part of
their lecturers to provide them with an opportunity to engage with Indigenous content. Their experiences align with research conducted by Norman (2014) at the University of Technology Sydney, who found the majority of academics were interested in the embedding of Indigenous content in their subjects and considered this an important intellectual project for themselves and their students’ professional development (p. 50).

Blaze, Melissa and Thea considered mandatory Indigenous Studies to be an important foundation from which to grow their knowledge. Furthermore it promoted a broader view of the positive contributions they could make in Indigenous education. Opportunities to engage with Indigenous content in other units predominantly occurred through a focused weekly topic with associated reading material and in the assessment process, through the provision of an option to select a research topic or incorporate an Indigenous perspective into a lesson plan. While such opportunities were available, the participants found that authentic and non-tokenistic ways to embed Indigenous content required further development. Blaze articulated this when he stated:

*I don’t know whether it’s that they don’t have the knowledge or they assume that we [preservice teachers] have that knowledge but then, when they’re marking the assignments they’re not sort of saying [this is] stereotypical, homogenous have you considered this?*

The call by each participant to experience a greater depth of Indigenous content across their degree highlights the need for a sustained commitment to the embedding process across the full range of discipline areas taught by the Faculty and suggests professional development is needed for teacher educators. Melissa’s concern that there were few resources for preservice teachers completing mathematics and science resonates in the literature. In research aimed at improving Indigenous students’ participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), the then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Advisory Council (2015) identified the need for
universities to action the “embedding Indigenous world views and knowledge into the curriculum and pedagogy for all preservice STEM teachers” (p. 5). No Australian university has Indigenised their science curriculum (Hauser, Howlett, & Matthews, 2009); consequently further research is required to establish STEM teacher educator interests, knowledge gaps, forms of resistance and opportunities to embed Indigenous knowledges appropriately in the university curriculum.

In the school context, the need to assist teachers to develop deeper, nuanced and scaffolded approaches to embedding Indigenous curriculum content is not a new idea (Nakata, 2011). This need holds gravitas given research conducted with teachers expressing a lack of confidence and concern that they do not possess the knowledge required to authentically teach about Indigenous Australia in their discipline areas (Baynes, 2015; N. Harrison & Greenfield, 2011; Michie, 2002; Quince, 2012). Furthermore, as discussed earlier in this chapter, some teachers also hold a “fear of overstepping” their authority to speak on behalf of Aboriginal people (Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009, p. 63). In the university context, Norman’s (2014) research similarly found the barriers to embedding Indigenous perspectives included resistance or disinterest from the student body, worry about offending Aboriginal people, anxiety and perceived lack of skills to confidently teach Indigenous content along with the dearth of quality resources to guide this process (p. 50). These examples across educational sectors call for structural change in the form of curriculum and professional development.

In the context of analysing the curriculum work yet to be done in Indigenous Studies, Nakata (2011) argued that the early iterations of the Australian Curriculum (see List of Definitions and Abbreviations) required greater attention to the scaffolding of
Indigenous content across the years to build knowledge and visibility across the entire schooling experience (p. 7). Further, Nakata (2011) drew attention to gaps in teacher development in a range of different areas including managing the conflict that arises at the Cultural Interface and deeper critical engagement with the selection and inclusion of sequential and nuanced Indigenous content so that “what it means to be Indigenous Australian should be able to emerge in all its complexity” (p. 6).

Later, in a scathing analysis of the Australian Curriculum, Lowe and Yunkaporta (2013) assert there has been a failure to develop deep levels of cognitive engagement further surmising the current inclusion of Indigenous content is “weak, often tokenistic and overwhelmingly unresponsive to historical and contemporary realities” (p. 12). This work by Nakata (2011) and Lowe and Yunkaporta elucidates how the superficial rendering of Indigenous knowledges and content remain entrenched across our education systems despite knowledge gains in this field of inquiry. I draw attention to these criticisms to give context to the milieu within which Indigenous education activist preservice teachers are located. While the Australian Curriculum is, and will continue to be the preeminent guiding force for content delivery, “schools and teachers are responsible for the organisation of learning and they will choose contexts for learning and plan learning in ways that best meet their students’ needs and interests” (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority & Education Services Australia, n.d., para. 1). This is a reminder of the powerful influence of teachers already employed in schools to either support or subvert the attempts of preservice teachers to embed Indigenous content. Blaze, Melissa and Thea’s engagement with their teacher mentors while on professional experience provided a mixed experience of the embedding process. I move now to draw conclusions on the influence of the
professional experience as either nurturing or thwarting the work of preservice Indigenous education activists.

**Professional Experience at the Cultural Interface**

Some of the most challenging and transformative moments for the participants occurred while trying to put theory into practice during their professional experience. By observing Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal Education Officers, Blaze began to understand how high expectations relationships (Stronger Smarter Institute Limited, 2014) could be established with Aboriginal students. While on a rural placement in a school with a high Aboriginal population, Melissa was inspired by her supportive teacher mentor and the diverse work of Aboriginal Education Officers. Such experiences give hope that as early career teachers they will be supported in fulfilling their commitment to social justice in Indigenous education.

However, the participants’ narratives also highlight the potentially damaging influence of the teacher mentor and school culture on discouraging Indigenous education activist preservice teachers. Melissa was shocked when she observed the lack of enthusiasm portrayed by an Aboriginal teacher who had engaged in deficit conversations about the Aboriginal children in her class. Melissa observed that some teachers appeared to be …*broken by the system.* Blaze also worried that …*when I go into prac schools it’s very mundane and sedated and so I sort of think maybe that passion just isn’t out there.* Thea struggled with some of the demands of the professional experience in a remote school which she perceived had normalised inflexible, boring and culturally inappropriate pedagogy that impaired the learning potential of Aboriginal students.

Early in this thesis, I outlined that such experiences of teacher apathy and low
expectations of Aboriginal students can have a socialising effect on preservice and early career teachers. Similarly Vass’ (2017) study of a group of preservice teachers who attempted to implement culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum on professional experience, discovered a number of barriers generated by their teacher mentors. These preservice teachers felt that their teacher mentors were responsible for perpetuating low expectation approaches to teaching and learning by actively encouraging them to limit the scope, depth and vision of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Furthermore, their teacher mentors were resistant to experimenting with and valuing culturally responsive approaches. One preservice teacher even gave up trying to implement culturally responsive pedagogy out of fear of failing the professional experience (Vass, 2017, p. 9). Similar power imbalances were experienced by Thea while on her professional experience in a remote school when she was informed, …this is the way we do it here and was discouraged from adapting physical education activities for the Aboriginal students she was teaching.

Facing such barriers, Vass’ (2017) research identified the important role of guided reflections and building a sense of collegial support:

Across their necessarily brief practicums, the ITEs [initial teacher educators] were encouraged in this regard by sharing in and out of the classroom encounters that illustrated to them that genuine and meaningful connections with culture in schooling can be restorative and protective. Expanding on these interpersonal moments is beyond the scope of this article; however, it was encouraging to hear Alice, Fran, and Kelly remain positive about the potential of CRS [culturally responsive schooling] despite encountering the sorts of barriers they did. (p. 10)

While Blaze, Melissa and Thea also remained positive, and were able to draw on some transient peer supports to navigate the tensions at the Cultural Interface, implementation of initiatives that support an exchange of knowledge between preservice teachers and teachers in schools are required. Thea’s experience of feeling isolated and unsupported
during the remote professional experience (...I just cried just because it’s confronting, it’s hard, it’s lonely, it’s challenging and no one knows what you’re experiencing) also highlight the need for dedicated preparation, tertiary mentoring and post placement reflection opportunities so that preservice teachers are better equipped to make sense of and learn from their remote professional experience. Taking into account the wider structural context, further work is required to build connections between teacher education, school leadership, teacher professional development (Vass, 2017) and the Aboriginal communities they serve. Each sector has a powerful interconnected influence on the agency of preservice teachers to enhance their knowledge and develop confidence to implement Indigenous Studies curriculum and pedagogy while learning to become teachers.

**Conclusion**

This research has placed the stories people tell about themselves and give meaning, purpose and unity - the stories we live by - as significant to understanding identity formation (McAdams, 1993). Similarly, Clandinin and Connelly’s (1998) work positioned teacher knowledge within this narrative life history to bring insight to the personal, professional and external political contexts that influenced each preservice teacher’s professional identity development. Blaze, Melissa and Thea’s experiences at the Cultural Interface have provoked a new focus to my work as a teacher educator. Narrative inquiry research that engages preservice teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds and disciplines, particularly those enrolled in STEM teaching degrees are required to better understand their locale as learners to develop ways to inspire Indigenous education activists. The participants’ commitment to thoughtful and sustained conversation for this thesis obliges a reciprocal response to act to address the
unfinished business of the inclusion of authentic, sophisticated approaches to embedding Indigenous content across each teaching degree. It is also incumbent on those who teach preservice activist teachers to keep our eyes and hearts open to their presence so that these individuals don’t waste time muddling along and instead experience a greater sense of connectedness to those who can support their journey. This discovery has been powerfully transformative in my personal learning journey for it inspires hope.
Epilogue

During December 2016 and January 2017, I met on separate occasions with Blaze, Melissa and Thea to hear how life and their work as early career teachers was unfolding. This epilogue provides a brief snapshot of a storyline that the four of us hope to continue in the coming years.

Blaze

Blaze had recently re-read his completed research narrative and reflected that he was surprised how much easier he found the transition into teaching compared with what he had anticipated. He had been placed in a school in the south of Sydney with a supportive and collaborative school culture. There were many Asian children who were focused learners with few behaviour issues to address. He described his *unique experience* of arriving at a school that was very much committed to learning about Indigenous Australia. The school was much more progressive than he had expected. Each week students attended a dedicated Aboriginal Studies class and also learnt the local Aboriginal language. The teachers didn’t appear to be very passionate about embedding Indigenous perspectives but they were doing it in a *meaningful, relevant and contemporary way* because the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers had mandated this process. Blaze had been making an effort to give a *constant gentle reminder* of Aboriginal Australia in all that he taught. He had learnt about the requirement to develop Personal Learning Pathways (see List of Definitions and Abbreviations) at university and had raised awareness of this process for the Aboriginal students at the school. Teaching in this school had become a little too easy – he was looking to *shake things up a bit*. In 2018 he plans to move to London for two years and on his return hopes to teach in the Northern Territory. He is looking forward to
teaching Indigenous perspectives in a school in London and talking about colonisation with British children.

**Melissa**

Melissa was working at an inner west school in Sydney. She had been hired to get Aboriginal Studies up and running at the school. Her first year of teaching Aboriginal Studies had been highly successful – she took the students on a week-long excursion to visit some Aboriginal communities in rural areas. She hoped she was doing … *a really good job of not crushing kids.* When I asked her if she had become the teacher she had read about in her narrative, Melissa replied:

*I think so, but I also think that the things my dad said about being part of a system and not being able to do everything I want has rained down on me a bit. But ultimately I am in control of what happens in my classroom and I have been working on creating a really safe place for students even when they are having a bad day. My behaviour management is loving my kids, I say to them things like my heart is so full when I’m with you guys.*

There was, however, a sense of disappointment that her workplace lacked collegial support with Melissa identifying her stressful moments, … *in the first year I cried twice, not because of the students, but my supervisor.* Nevertheless she had been recognised for her work in Aboriginal education at the school. Her next plan is to teach in a juvenile justice centre.

**Thea**

Thea was a targeted graduate and had been working in a coeducational state high school. Given her elite private school background, she never imagined she would end up teaching in a state school. Nevertheless, she described her school as feeling *like home* given she had been accepted and welcomed by her new colleagues. She hoped to stay there a while because … *it has allowed me to change myself a lot – I feel a very different person now…more confident.* Thea was still in contact with the
Aboriginal colleagues she had met on her remote professional experience – they had stayed with her in Sydney. She was excited to tell me about her programing and embedding Aboriginal perspectives in her teaching and student assessment. She brought along the hard copies of the activities she had implemented in the classroom. Teaching these perspectives was ...a way to pass on my passion. There were other teachers at the school who had taught in remote areas and the school had a remote sister school. Thea had been working with a team of teachers who had ...revolutionised the NAIDOC week (see list of Definitions and Abbreviations) to make it much more meaningful. She described her colleagues who were passionate about Indigenous Studies as the ...glue that sticks you together. We wink at each other when we pass each other in the corridor - we are on the same wavelength. Our shared narrative journey had been a powerful experience as Thea explained, ...reading your narrative was like looking back at who I once was, I find that curious, I haven’t had that experience before. I wish that when I had left school, I had met you and then you could have told me what I was like before I started uni, because I know I was very different then.

Another Narrative Beginning


There are about 30 students cramped in the room. The air-conditioning is working but two students don’t have a chair and are sitting on the desks. I remember the “good old days” when 20 students in a class was the norm. I am getting ready and welcoming them as they enter the room. Some are busy with Facebook. I scan the room and I’m wondering, where are the activist doppelgangers of Blaze, Thea and Melissa? Are they in this tutorial or another? How and when will they make themselves known?

It’s five past the hour. They are here – but they just might not realise it at this moment. Let the difficult dialogue begin by sharing a story.
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**Appendices Index**

1. Participant Information Sheet
2. Participant Consent Form
3. Contact Details Form
4. Interview Schedule
5. Degree structures of the Bachelor of Education (Primary),
6. Bachelor of Education  (Secondary: Human Movement and Health Education)
7. Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Humanities and Social Sciences)
8. List of Units of Study.
Narratives of professional learning and identity formation: the influence of life histories and Indigenous Studies education on becoming a teacher.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

1. What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a study that will investigate the life histories and learning experiences of preservice teachers who engaged in Indigenous Studies pedagogy and curriculum while completing a Bachelor of Education degree at the University of Sydney.

2. Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Katrina Thorpe, Lecturer and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Professor Robyn Ewing, Professor of Teacher Education and the Arts.

3. What does the study involve?

Participation in the study involves being interviewed and having a conversation about your life experiences that influenced your motivations to become a teacher, as well as your experiences of Indigenous Studies while completing your degree. Each interview will be audio taped, transcribed verbatim and then returned to you for your comment and feedback. From these interviews I will write a narrative of your experiences which will form part of the thesis. The interviews will be conducted in a place and time suitable to you. It is anticipated that at least 3 interviews will be conducted however if after reflecting on our discussions, you feel there is something you would like to add, there could be up to 6 interviews over semester 1 and 2.

4. How much time will the study take?

It is estimated that each interview will be between 30 minutes to 1 hour duration. To help you prepare for each interview I will provide you with an outline of the topics which will form the focus of our conversation. After each interview I will provide a copy of the transcript (which will take approximately 15 minutes to read) so that you can check the accuracy and provide feedback.
5. Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney, the Faculty of Education and Social Work and the researchers.

You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

6. Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

7. Will the study benefit me?

This study offers the potential of benefiting future preservice teachers engaged in learning Indigenous Studies at University, however I cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from the study.

8. Can I tell other people about the study?

You are free to discuss this study with other people.

9. What if I require further information about the study or my involvement in it?

When you have read this information, Katrina Thorpe will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Katrina Thorpe on 02 9351 5720 or email: katrina.thorpe@sydney.edu.au.

10. What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact The Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, ...........................................................................................[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project.

Title: Narratives of professional learning and identity formation: the influence of life histories and Indigenous Studies education on becoming a teacher.

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that any research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.

5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.
6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I consent to:

   • Audio-recording    YES □ NO □
   • Receiving Feedback YES □ NO □

If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback” question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option

Address: __________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________

Email: ________________________________________________

Narratives of professional learning and identity formation: the influence of life histories and Indigenous Studies education on becoming a teacher.
3. Contact Details Form

Thank you for your interest in participating in the research project:

Narratives of professional learning and identity formation: the influence of life histories and Indigenous Studies education on becoming a teacher.

Please provide your contact details so that I am able to follow-up either via email or by phone. You do not need to provide your phone number - only do so if you find this more convenient.

Kind regards

Katrina Thorpe
PhD candidate
The Faculty of Education and Social Work
University of Sydney
Ph).9351 5720

Name:
University email:__________________________

Phone:
4. Interview schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

I’d like to talk with you about yourself and your experiences of undertaking your studies. Everything you say will be treated confidentially and are purely for the purposes of research. This research may be of help to other students in the future and to educational institutions in developing curriculum and pedagogical practices in teaching Indigenous Studies.

Name:
Age:
Address:
Marital Status:
Number of children and ages (if applicable):
Year of starting undergraduate studies:
Program of study:
Full-time/part-time:
Year of study:
Occupation prior to beginning studies:
Partner’s occupation (if applicable):

Exploration of personal background and educational experiences

1. Description of personal background – where are you from, family / community connections etc.

2. Description of educational background – including positive, negative experiences.

3. How old were you when you first went to school? (includes preschool, daycare, etc)

4. Where you given any lessons by anyone before going to school? Who?
5. What type school/s did you attend (public/private/day school/boarding school/religiously affiliated/Montessori etc)?

6. How would you describe your experience of school? Who or what made your experiences positive or negative?

7. When you were growing up, did you have any experiences with Aboriginal people/culture? How would you describe these experiences (friendships, a classmate, neighbour, conflict relationship, avoidance, community events)?

8. How would you describe your family’s perceptions and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people/culture? Did their perceptions and knowledge influence your ideas?

Motivations for becoming a teacher

9. What motivated you to become a teacher?

10. Did you have a particular vision or values that underpinned your motivation to become a teacher (social justice, discipline/subject interest, address disadvantage, share a passion for learning)?

11. What did you expect teaching to look like, feel like? Is it as you visualised? What is similar, different in so far as your professional experiences to date?

12. Are you currently living/working in the community that you grew up in or did you move to Sydney to complete this degree? Do you intend to stay in the city to teach? Would you like to move to a rural or remote area to teach? Why/why not?
The nature of the preservice teacher’s experiences of Indigenous Studies during primary and secondary schooling

13. What were your experiences of Indigenous Studies during primary and secondary schooling?

14. How would you describe your experience of learning about Aboriginal people’s and cultures (positive / negative / neutral / boring / interesting / indifferent)? Why?

15. What kinds of impressions / understandings did your high school experiences leave you with in regards to Aboriginal people and cultures? Did your school experience reinforce or challenge your family’s perceptions / understandings of Aboriginal people?

16. Do you remember learning any thing about Torres Strait Islander people at school? What do you remember learning about? Was this experience different to learning about Aboriginal people?

17. How did your experiences of learning about Aboriginal people / cultures during your primary and secondary schooling equip your engagement in the mandatory Indigenous Studies unit?

Experience of the teaching degree and experiences of Indigenous Studies

18. What degree are you enrolled in? Why did you choose this particular course?

19. Describe your overall experiences of learning to become a teacher. What learning situations / subjects did you really enjoy / find difficult / interesting / challenging / off putting / problematic? Where there any “aha” moments for you which changed something about your thinking about a certain topic or issues? What were these and what do you think created this moment / change in thinking?

20. Describe your experiences of learning about Indigenous issues / perspectives / content across the entire degree – in those units where Indigenous Studies was embedded in a unit of study. What learning situations / content did you really
enjoy / find difficult / interesting / challenging / problematic? Where there any “aha” moments for you which changed your thinking about a certain topic or issues in relation to Indigenous Australia? What were these and what do you think created this moment / change in thinking?

21. Describe your experiences of the mandatory Indigenous Studies unit. Did you enjoy it, look forward to it, dislike it, consider it a waste of time and money (HECS)? What were the key learning outcomes for you on completing this unit?

22. Thinking back over your degree, was there anything missing from the Indigenous Studies unit that you hoped would be covered? Is there anything that was included that you think should be omitted in the future?

23. What other units covered Indigenous topics / content? Did these units complement the mandatory Indigenous Studies unit or was there some repetition?

24. What content or learning experiences in relation to Indigenous Australia / culture / teaching do you think were most successful and which units need to be developed further in order to adequately prepare students to become a teacher of Indigenous Studies and Indigenous students?

25. Do you think your experiences in your degree have prepared you to teach Aboriginal perspectives in your subject / discipline area? Why / why not?

26. Do you think your experiences in your degree have prepared you to teach Aboriginal students? Why / why not?

27. Do you think your experiences of learning Indigenous Studies have prepared you more generally for your future teaching career? Why / why not? If so, in what ways?
Professional identity formation

28. What factors do you believe have shaped your identity as a preservice teacher? (could include personal background such as Aboriginality, age, education, gender, etc)

29. How have these factors impacted on your professional experience i.e made it easier and/or more difficult?

30. What is your perception of your professional identity as a preservice teacher? (i.e. personal / professional identity separate / interconnected).

31. Which learning experiences within your degree challenged or influenced your professional identity? Has the experience of Indigenous Studies influenced your personal or professional identity? If yes, how? If not, why not?

32. As you are reaching the final stages of your degree, how would you describe your sense of self as a beginning teacher?

Other’s perceptions

33. Do you feel you are perceived by staff as the same or different from other preservice teachers (this will depend on their disclosed background and may or may not be relevant or appropriate to ask e.g., an Aboriginal preservice teacher or mature age)? What indicators were there of this?

34. Do you feel you are perceived by your peers (preservice teachers) as the same or different compared to other preservice teachers?

35. Does this impact on your professional identity? If so, how?

36. For Aboriginal preservice teachers: Do you feel that other people’s perception of you as an Aboriginal preservice teacher results in unique pressures on you?

37. What aspects of teaching do you feel come naturally to you and what do you feel
you have to consciously work on?

38. To what extent do you find teaching emotionally demanding and how do you try to balance the emotions?

Support

39. Do you feel you have enough support as a preservice teacher – what other support do you think would help? (include support from all areas – school, uni, home, community, other students).

40. In what ways do you think the university could better support your preservice teaching experience? (consider coursework/theory as well as practical aspects)
5. Bachelor of Education (Primary Education) Degree Structure

Candidates must complete 192 credit points of units of study comprising:

YEAR 1
In the first year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, comprising:
- 12 credit points of Education One units;
- 24 credit points of Curriculum and Professional Studies units; and
- 12 credit points of Junior (level 1000) units of study, chosen from Arts and Social Sciences Table A or Science Table 1 or the Business School.

Education One Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of study</th>
<th>Credit points</th>
<th>A: Assumed knowledge</th>
<th>Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUC1018 Education, Teachers and Teaching</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>N EDUC1011</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUC1019 Human Development and Education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>N EDUC1012</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Curriculum and Professional Studies Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of study</th>
<th>Credit points</th>
<th>Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUC1002 English, Literacy and Learning</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUC1004 Science Concepts 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUC1001 Creative Arts 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUC1003 Mathematics and Numeracy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

YEAR 2
In the second year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, comprising:
- 12 credit points of Education Two units; and
- 36 credit points of Curriculum and Professional Studies units.
Education Two Units

**EDUF2006**
Education Psychological
Education Perspectives on Education
6
P (EDUF1018 and EDUF1019) or 30 junior credit points
Semester 1

**EDUF2007**
Social Perspectives on Education
6
P (EDUF1018 and EDUF1019) or 30 junior credit points
Semester 2

Curriculum and Professional Studies Units

**EDUP2002**
English: Learning to be Literate
4
P 48 credit points including 24 credit points of Primary Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units
Semester 1

**EDUP2004**
PDHPE1: Physical Activity
4
P 48 credit points including 24 credit points of Primary Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units
Semester 1

**EDUP2006**
Indigenous Australian Education
4
P 48 credit points including 24 credit points of Primary Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units
Semester 1

**EDUP2007**
Creative Arts 2
6
P 48 credit points including 24 credit points of Primary Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units
Semester 1

**EDUP2005**
Mathematics Education 1: Early Number
4
P 48 credit points including 24 credit points of Primary Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units
Semester 2

**EDUP2008**
Science Concepts 2
6
P 48 credit points including 24 credit points of Primary Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units
Semester 2

**EDUP2009**
Intercultural Understanding in HSIE K-6
4
P 48 credit points including 24 credit points of Primary Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units
Semester 2

**EDUP2010**
Professional Experiences 2 (Primary)
4
P 48 credit points including 24 credit points of Primary Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units
N EDUP2003, EDUP2027
Semester 2

YEAR 3

In the third year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, comprising:

- 48 credit points of Curriculum and Professional Studies units.

Please note, candidates must complete EDUF3031 in semester 1.

Curriculum and Professional Studies Units

**EDUF3031**
Positive Approaches to Special Education
6
P 96 credit points
Semester 1

**EDUP3001**
PDHPE 2: Active Healthy Primary Schools
4
P 96 credit points including 60 credit points of Primary Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units
Semester 1

**EDUP3002**
Human Society and its Environment 2
4
P 96 credit points including 60 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units
Semester 1

**EDUP3003**
Teaching in Multilingual Classrooms
4
P 96 credit points including 60 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units
Semester 1
Bachelor of Education (Primary Education) - Education and Soci... file:///Users/Katrina/Downloads/handbooks_2014/education_soc...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credit Points</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUP3008</td>
<td>Creative Arts 3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 60 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUF4044</td>
<td>Reading and Designing Research</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including (EDUF2006 and EDUF2007)</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP3004</td>
<td>Mathematics Education 2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 60 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP3006</td>
<td>English: Becoming Literate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 60 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP3007</td>
<td>Professional Experiences 3 (Primary)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 60 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP3009</td>
<td>Science and Technology 1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 60 credit points of Primary Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP3034</td>
<td>PDHPE 3: The Health Promoting School</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 60 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units and EDUP3001</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Honours Pathway

ADMISSION TO HONOURS

To qualify for admission to the honours degree a student must have a WAM of at least 70 across the following second and third year units (with the third year weighted double): EDUP2002, EDUP2004, EDUP2006, EDUP2007, EDUP2005, EDUP2008, EDUP2009, EDUP3001, EDUP3002, EDUP3003, EDUP3008.

Candidates who are eligible for Honours must complete the 6 credit points of units of study listed below instead of EDUF4044 from Semester 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credit Points</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUF4020</td>
<td>Education Honours Preliminary</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P WAM of 70 or more</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Department permission required for enrolment

Students must achieve a mark of 70 or more to proceed to the Education Honours unit

YEAR 4

In the fourth year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, including:

- 28 credit points of Curriculum and Professional Studies units; and
- 8 credit points of Primary Four Optional units; and
- 12 credit points of Education Three Optional units.

Curriculum and Professional Studies Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credit Points</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4018</td>
<td>Science and Technology (K-6)  2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4074</td>
<td>Mathematics Education 3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4076</td>
<td>English: Being Critically Literate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4079</td>
<td>Professional Experiences 4 (Primary)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units including EDUP1002 and EDUP2010</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Code</td>
<td>Course Title</td>
<td>Credit Points</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4017</td>
<td>Professional Experiences Internship</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units and EDUP4079 Semester 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Note: Department permission required for enrolment in the following sessions: Semester 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4077</td>
<td>Teaching Children with Special Needs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units Semester 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4080</td>
<td>Human Society and its Environment 3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units Semester 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Primary Four Optional Units**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credit Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4007</td>
<td>Primary Languages A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4008</td>
<td>Primary Languages B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units and EDUP4007 Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4009</td>
<td>Special Education (A) Special Course</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4010</td>
<td>Special Education (B) Special Course</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units and EDUP4009 Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4066</td>
<td>IT in the Primary Classroom A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4067</td>
<td>IT in the Primary Classroom B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units and EDUP4066 Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4068</td>
<td>TESOL (A) Special Course</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4069</td>
<td>TESOL (B) Special Course</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units and EDUP4068 Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4070</td>
<td>Integrated Arts (A) Special Course</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4071</td>
<td>Integrated Arts (B) Special Course</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units and EDUP4070 Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4072</td>
<td>Koori Kids in School A (Special Course)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUP4073</td>
<td>Koori Kids in School B (Special Course)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Primary Curriculum and Professional Studies units and EDUP4072 Semester 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Honours Pathway**

Candidates who are eligible for Honours must complete the 6 credit points of units of study listed below instead of one Education Three Optional unit from Semester 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credit Points</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUF4021</td>
<td>Education Honours Dissertation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P Meet requirements for EDUF4020 with a grade of 70 or greater Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Note: Department permission required for enrolment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 Bachelor of Education (Primary Education) - Education and Soci... file:///Users/Katrina/Downloads/handbooks_2014/education_soci...
CALCULATION OF HONOURS WAM

The Honours WAM (HWAM) is calculated by averaging the following third year (level 3000) education units (weighted 2), fourth year (level 4000) education units (weighted 3) and the honours units (weighted 6): EDUP3002, EDUP3003, EDUP3008, EDUP3009, EDUP3034, EDUP4018, EDUP4074, EDUP4076, EDUP4077, EDUP4080, EDUF4020, EDUF4021.

EDUCATION THREE OPTIONAL UNITS

for Year 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credit Points</th>
<th>Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUF3023</td>
<td>Sport: Contemporary Educational Issues</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUF3027</td>
<td>International Education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUF3032</td>
<td>Curriculum and Evaluation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUF3026</td>
<td>Global Poverty and Education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUF3028</td>
<td>Mentoring in Educational Contexts</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUF3029</td>
<td>Psychology of Learning and Teaching</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUF3030</td>
<td>Australian Schooling Systems</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Human Movement and Health Education)

## Degree Structure

Candidates must complete 192 credit points of units of study comprising:

### YEAR 1

In the first year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, comprising:

- 12 credit points of Education One units;
- 24 credit points of Curriculum and Professional Studies units; and
- 12 credit points of Junior (level 1000) units of study, chosen from Arts and Social Sciences Table A or Science Table 1 or the Business School.

### Education One Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of study</th>
<th>Credit points</th>
<th>A: Assumed knowledge</th>
<th>P: Prerequisites</th>
<th>C: Corequisites</th>
<th>N: Prohibition</th>
<th>Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUF1018 Education, Teachers and Teaching</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>N EDUF1011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUF1019 Human Development and Education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>N EDUF1012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Curriculum and Professional Studies Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of study</th>
<th>Credit points</th>
<th>A: Assumed knowledge</th>
<th>P: Prerequisites</th>
<th>C: Corequisites</th>
<th>N: Prohibition</th>
<th>Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUH1005 Professional Practice in PDHPE 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUH1007 Pedagogy for Physical Education 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUH1006 Identifying Health Determinants</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P EDUH1005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUH1017 Sports Mechanics</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>A No assumed knowledge of Physics N PHYS1001, PHYS1002, PHYS1901</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### YEAR 2

In the second year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, comprising:
- 12 credit points of Education Two units; and
- 36 credit points of Curriculum and Professional Studies units.

### Education Two Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Prerequisites</th>
<th>Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUF2006</td>
<td>Educational Psychology</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(EDUF1018 and EDUF1019) or 30 junior credit points</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUF2007</td>
<td>Social Perspectives on Education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(EDUF1018 and EDUF1019) or 30 junior credit points</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Curriculum and Professional Studies Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Prerequisites</th>
<th>Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUH2016</td>
<td>Health of Young People 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48 credit points including 24 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units.</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUH2017</td>
<td>Pedagogy for Physical Education 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48 credit points including 24 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUH2020</td>
<td>Applied Anatomy and Physiology</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48 credit points including 24 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUH2018</td>
<td>Indigenous Perspectives in PDHPE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48 credit points including 24 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUH2019</td>
<td>Professional Practice in PDHPE 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48 credit points including 24 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUH2029</td>
<td>Outdoor Education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48 credit points including 24 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### YEAR 3

In the third year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, comprising:
- 48 credit points of Curriculum and Professional Studies units.

Please note, candidates must complete EDUF3031 in Semester 2.

### Curriculum and Professional Studies Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Prerequisites</th>
<th>Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUF3023</td>
<td>Sport: Contemporary Educational Issues</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>42 credit points</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUH3017</td>
<td>ICT and Behaviour Management in PDHPE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>96 credit points including 60 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUH3018</td>
<td>Pedagogy for Physical Education 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>96 credit points including 60 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUH3020</td>
<td>Professional Practice in PDHPE 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>96 credit points including 60 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUF3031</td>
<td>Positive Approaches to Special Education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>96 credit points</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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EDUF4044  
Reading and Designing Research  
6  
P 96 credit points including (EDUF2006 and EDUF2007)  
Semester 2

EDUH3010  
Health of Young People 2  
6  
P 96 credit points including 60 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units and EDUH3020  
Semester 2

EDUH3019  
Pedagogy for Physical Education 4  
6  
P 96 credit points including 60 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional studies units and EDUH3018  
Semester 2

Honours Pathway

ADMISSION TO HONOURS

To qualify for admission to the honours degree a student must have a WAM of at least 70 across the following second and third year units (with the third year weighted double): EDUF2006, EDUH2016, EDUH2017, EDUH2020, EDUF2007, EDUH2018, EDUH2029, EDUH3023, EDUH3017, EDUH3018.

Candidates who are eligible for Honours must complete the 6 credit points of units of study listed below instead of EDUF4044 from Semester 2.

EDUF4020  
Education Honours Preliminary  
6  
P WAM of 70 or more  
Semester 2

Note: Department permission required for enrolment
Students must achieve a mark of 70 or more to proceed to the Education Honours unit

YEAR 4

In the fourth year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, comprising:

- 36 credit points of Curriculum and Professional Studies units; and
- 12 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Four Optional units.

Curriculum and Professional Studies Units

EDUH3029  
Training for Performance  
6  
P 144 credit points including 90 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units  
Semester 1

EDUH4004  
Professional Practice in PDHPE 4  
6  
P 144 credit points including 90 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units  
Semester 1

EDUH4051  
Community Health Issues  
6  
P 144 credit points including 90 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional units  
Semester 1

EDUH4005  
Pedagogy for Physical Education 5  
6  
P 144 credit points including 90 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units  
Semester 2

EDUH4006  
Internship  
6  
P 144 credit points including 90 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units  
Note: Department permission required for enrolment in the following sessions: Semester 1

EDUH4050  
Sports Medicine  
6  
P 144 credit points including 90 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units  
Semester 2

Human Movement and Health Education Four Optional units
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credit Points</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUH4003</td>
<td>Sport Psychology</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>84 credit points of Professional Studies in HMHE including EDUH2019 and EDUH3020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUH4053</td>
<td>Indigenous Sport, Education and Culture</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>144 credit points including 90 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional studies units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUH4057</td>
<td>Administration of PDHPE and Sport</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>144 credit points including 90 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUH4007</td>
<td>Athlete Development &amp; Coaching Pedagogy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>144 credit points including 90 credit points of Human Movement and Health Education Curriculum and Professional Studies units</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Honours Pathway**

Candidates who are eligible for Honours must complete the 6 credit points of units of study listed below instead of one Human Movement and Health Education Four Optional Unit of Study from Semester 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credit Points</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDFU4021</td>
<td>Education Honours Dissertation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Meet requirements for EDFU4020 with a grade of 70 or greater</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CALCULATION OF HONOURS WAM**

The Honours WAM (HWAM) is calculated by averaging the following third year (level 3000) education units (weighted 2), fourth year (level 4000) education units (weighted 3) and the honours units A and B (weighted 6): EDUH3019, EDUH3010, EDUH3029, EDUH4004, EDUH4005, EDUH4051, EDUH4055, EDFU4020, EDFU4021
7. Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Humanities and Social Sciences) and Bachelor of Arts

Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Humanities and Social Sciences) and Bachelor of Arts

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK (UNDERGRADUATE) HANDBOOK 2014

You are here: Home / Education and Social Work / Undergraduate / Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Humanities and Social Sciences)/Bachelor of Arts

BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (SECONDARY: HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES) AND BACHELOR OF ARTS

Units of study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of study</th>
<th>Credit points</th>
<th>A: Assumed knowledge</th>
<th>P: Prerequisites</th>
<th>C: Corequisites N: Prohibition</th>
<th>Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Candidates must complete 240 credit points of units of study comprising:

YEAR 1

In the first year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, comprising:
- 12 credit points of Education One units of study;
- 12 credit points of Junior (level 1000) units of study in a first teaching area (the Major sequence), chosen from Arts and Social Sciences Table A;
- 12 credit points of Junior (level 1000) units of study in a second teaching area, chosen from Arts and Social Sciences Tables A or B; and
- 12 credit points of Junior (level 1000) units of study, chosen from Arts and Social Sciences Table A.

Education One Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of study</th>
<th>Credit points</th>
<th>A: Assumed knowledge</th>
<th>P: Prerequisites</th>
<th>C: Corequisites N: Prohibition</th>
<th>Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUC1018</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>N EDUC1011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUC1019</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>N EDUC1012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Semester 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

YEAR 2

In the second year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, comprising:
- 12 credit points of Education Two units of study;
- 12 credit points of Curriculum and Professional Studies units of study;
- 12 credit points of Senior (level 2000 or 3000) units of study in the first teaching area (the Major sequence), chosen from Arts and Social Sciences Table A; and
- 12 credit points of Intermediate or Senior (level 2000 or 3000) units of study in the second teaching area, chosen from Arts and Social Sciences Tables A or B.

Education Two Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of study</th>
<th>Credit points</th>
<th>A: Assumed knowledge</th>
<th>P: Prerequisites</th>
<th>C: Corequisites N: Prohibition</th>
<th>Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUC2006</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P (EDUC1018 and EDUC1019) or 30 junior credit points</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### YEAR 3

In the third year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, comprising:

- 36 credit points of Curriculum and Professional Studies units of study including 24 credit points of teaching area units; and
- 12 credit points of Senior (level 2000 or 3000) units of study in the first teaching area (the Major sequence), chosen from Arts and Social Sciences Table A.

Please note, candidates must complete EDUF3031 in semester 2.

### Curriculum and Professional Studies Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credit Points</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3072</td>
<td>Craft Knowledge and Prof Practices 2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and EDSE2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3073</td>
<td>Professional Experience A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including (EDSE2001 and 12 credit points from (EDSE3037, EDSE3038, EDSE3040, EDSE3041, EDSE3042, EDSE3043, EDSE3044, EDSE3045, EDSE3046, EDSE3047, EDSE3048, EDSE3050, EDSE3051, EDSE3076, EDSE3078, EDMT5610, EDSE3080))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUF3031</td>
<td>Positive Approaches to Special Education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Teaching Area Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credit Points</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3080</td>
<td>Teaching Aboriginal Studies 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and HSTY1089 and one of (ANTH1001, SCLG1001, GCST1601) and KOCR2600 and one additional unit of Indigenous Studies (including cross-listed units)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3081</td>
<td>Teaching Aboriginal Studies 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and EDSE3080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDMT5610</td>
<td>Classical Hebrew &amp; Judaism Curriculum 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P EDMT5610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDMT5660</td>
<td>Classical Hebrew &amp; Judaism Curriculum 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3076</td>
<td>Teaching Commerce/Business Studies 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and (one of (WORK2201, WORK2210, WORK2217, WORK2219)) and 6 senior credit points of (Work and Organisational Studies or Political Economy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Code</td>
<td>Course Name</td>
<td>Units</td>
<td>Credit Points Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3077</td>
<td>Teaching Commerce/Business Studies 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and one of (WORK2201, WORK2210, WORK2217, WORK2219) and 6 senior credit points of (Work and Organisational Studies or Political Economy) and EDSE3076 N EDSE3067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3050</td>
<td>Teaching Commerce/Economics 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 intermediate credit points of Economics or Political Economy N EDSE3076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3067</td>
<td>Teaching Commerce/Economics 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 senior credit points of Economics or Political Economy and EDSE3050 N EDSE3077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3042</td>
<td>Teaching Drama 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 senior credit points of Performance Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3060</td>
<td>Teaching Drama 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 senior credit points of Performance Studies and EDSE3042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3044</td>
<td>Teaching English 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 senior credit points of English or Australian Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3062</td>
<td>Teaching English 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 senior credit points of English and EDSE3044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3041</td>
<td>Teaching Geography 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 Intermediate credit points of Geography and/or Geology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3059</td>
<td>Teaching Geography 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 intermediate credit points of Geography and EDSE3041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3040</td>
<td>Teaching History 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 senior credit points in History or Ancient History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3058</td>
<td>Teaching History 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 senior credit points of History or Ancient History and EDSE3040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3047</td>
<td>Teaching Languages 1A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 credit points of senior Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3065</td>
<td>Teaching Languages 2A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 senior credit points of a language and EDSE3047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3048</td>
<td>Teaching Languages 1B</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 credit points of intermediate Languages in an additional language C EDSE3047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3071</td>
<td>Teaching Languages 2B</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 senior credit points of a language and EDSE3047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3045</td>
<td>Teaching Mathematics 1A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 credit points of intermediate Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3063</td>
<td>Teaching Mathematics 2A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 intermediate credit points of Mathematics and EDSE3045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3043</td>
<td>Teaching TESOL 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 senior credit points of either Linguistics, English, or Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Course Title</td>
<td>Credits</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE3061</td>
<td>Teaching TESOL 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including 36 credit points of Education including EDSE2001 and 12 senior credit points of either English, Linguistics or a language and EDSE3043</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**YEAR 4**

In the fourth year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, comprising:

- 36 credit points of Curriculum and Professional Studies units of study including 12 credit points of teaching area units; and
- 12 credit points of Senior (level 2000 or 3000) units of study in the first teaching area (the Major sequence), chosen from Arts and Social Sciences Table A.

**Curriculum and Professional Studies Units**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Semesters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDSE4042</td>
<td>Craft Knowledge and Prof Practices 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points from Education including EDSE2001, EDSE2002, EDSE3072, EDSE3073</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE4043</td>
<td>Professional Experience B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points from Education including EDSE2001, EDSE2002, EDSE3072, EDSE3073</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE4046</td>
<td>Language, Literacy and Diversity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Education C EDSE4042, EDSE4043</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE4044</td>
<td>Information Technology in Schools</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points from Education including EDSE2001, EDSE3072, EDSE3073</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUF4044</td>
<td>Reading and Designing Research</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 96 credit points including (EDUF2006 and EDUF2007)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teaching Area Units**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Semesters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDSE4050</td>
<td>Teaching Aboriginal Studies 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points of Education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDMT6610</td>
<td>Classical Hebrew &amp; Judaism Curriculum 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 48 credit points of Master of Teaching units including (EDMT5610 and EDMT5660)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE4045</td>
<td>Teaching Commerce/Business Studies 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points from Education including EDSE3076 and EDSE3077</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE4033</td>
<td>Teaching Commerce/Economics 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points from Education including EDSE3050 and EDSE3067</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE4025</td>
<td>Teaching Drama 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points from Education including EDSE3042 and EDSE3060</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE4027</td>
<td>Teaching English 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points from Education including EDSE3044 and EDSE3062</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE4024</td>
<td>Teaching Geography 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 144 credit points including 72 credit points from Education including EDSE3041 and EDSE3059</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EDSE4023
Teaching History 3
6 P 144 credit points including 72 credit points from Education including (EDSE3040 and EDSE3058)
C EDSE4042 and EDSE4043

EDSE4030
Teaching Languages 3A
6 P 144 credit points including 72 credit points from Education including (EDSE3047 and EDSE3065)
C EDSE4042 and EDSE4043

EDSE4031
Teaching Languages 3B
6 P 144 credit points including 72 credit points from Education including (EDSE3047, EDSE3048, EDSE3065, EDSE3071)
C EDSE4030, EDSE4042, EDSE4043

EDSE4028
Teaching Mathematics 3A
6 P 144 credit points including 72 credit points from Education including (EDSE3045 and EDSE3063)
C EDSE4042, EDSE4043

EDSE4026
Teaching TESOL 3
6 P 144 credit points including 72 credit points from Education including (EDSE3043 and EDSE3061)
C EDSE4042 and EDSE4043

EDSE4021
Teaching Visual Arts 3A
6 P 144 credit points including 72 credit points from Education including (EDSE3037 and EDSE3056)
C EDSE4042, EDSE4043

Candidates may need to complete an additional unit of study in the Faculty of Architecture Tin Sheds program

EDSE4022
Teaching Visual Arts 3B
6 P 144 credit points including 72 credit points from Education including (EDSE3037, EDSE3038, EDSE3056 and EDSE3057)
C EDSE4021, EDSE4042 and EDSE4043

Candidates may be required to complete and additional unit of study in the Faculty of Architecture Tin Sheds program

Honours Pathway

ADMISSION TO HONOURS

To qualify for admission to the honours degree a student must have a WAM of at least 70 across the following third and fourth year units (with the fourth year weighted double): EDSE3072, EDSE4042, EDSE4046, and Teaching Area Units 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A and 3B.

Candidates who are eligible for Honours must complete the 6 credit points of units of study listed below instead of EDUF4044 from Semester 2.

EDUF4020
Education Honours Preliminary
6 P WAM of 70 or more

Note: Department permission required for enrolment
Students must achieve a mark of 70 or more to proceed to the Education Honours unit

Semester 2

YEAR 5

In the fifth year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, comprising:
- 24 credit points of Curriculum and Professional Studies units of study; and
- 24 credit points of Senior (level 2000 or 3000) units of study, chosen from Arts and Social Sciences Table A or B.

Curriculum and Professional Studies Units

Candidates must complete 24 credit points of units of study from one of the following options:
Option 1

one Education Three Optional Unit and the following units:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Credit Points</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDSE5010</td>
<td>Meeting the Needs of Cultural Diversity</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>P 144</td>
<td>C EDSE5008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE5008</td>
<td>Internship</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 192</td>
<td>EDSE5008 (EDSE3073 and EDSE4043)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Department permission required for enrolment in the following sessions: Semester 1

Option 2

one Education Three Optional Unit and the following units:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Credit Points</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDSE5011</td>
<td>TESOL as a Third Teaching Area</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>P 144</td>
<td>C EDSE5008 and EDSE5012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE5012</td>
<td>TESOL Professional Experience</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>P 144</td>
<td>EDSE5008 and EDSE5011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE5008</td>
<td>Internship</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 192</td>
<td>EDSE5008 (EDSE3073 and EDSE4043)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Department permission required for enrolment in the following sessions: Semester 1

Option 3

one Education Three Optional Unit and the following units:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Credit Points</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDSE5013</td>
<td>Responding to Diverse Needs in Schools</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>P 144</td>
<td>EDUF3031 EDSE5008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE5008</td>
<td>Internship</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 192</td>
<td>EDSE5008 (EDSE3073 and EDSE4043)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Department permission required for enrolment in the following sessions: Semester 1

Option 4

one Education Three Optional Unit and the following units:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Credit Points</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDSE5014</td>
<td>Teaching International English</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>P 144</td>
<td>EDSE5008 (EDSE3073 and EDSE4043)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDSE5008</td>
<td>Internship</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P 192</td>
<td>EDSE5008 (EDSE3073 and EDSE4043)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Department permission required for enrolment in the following sessions: Semester 1
8. List of Units of Study

EDSE2002: Indigenous Education Secondary Schools

The unit of study is a compulsory unit within the combined degrees program. It prepares students to become effective teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and develops an understanding of the current social, political and economic challenges faced by Aboriginal peoples and communities. This provides students with a sound foundation upon which to address issues impacting on the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. A shared history approach provides an inclusive and multi-perspective framework to explore the diversity of Indigenous cultures as well as equip students with culturally appropriate teaching and learning strategies to meet the educational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The unit also provides an overview of Aboriginal educational policies and priorities which impact on all students in NSW schools and firmly emphasises the importance of ongoing consultation and engagement with Aboriginal communities and key stakeholders. Through studying this unit, students will continue to construct their teaching identity and acquire the knowledge and skills to become proactive creators of innovative and inclusive classrooms.

EDUF2007: Social Perspectives in Education

The aim of this unit is to critically examine the social, political and economic contexts of education. Key issues concerning difference and inequality in education are explored through sociological and historical approaches.
**EDUH1006: Identifying Health Determinants**

This core unit of study explores the ways in which meanings about health are socially and politically constructed in contemporary Australian society. The unit introduces a health determinants approach to explore a range of factors that impact upon individual and/or community health - gender, age, genetics, education, race and ethnicity, globalisation and geographic location. Students will develop an appreciation for and understanding of the ways in which meanings of health are constructed, change over time and are institutionalised through health policies and practices. Students will investigate upstream approaches to health education and health promotion that empower teachers, individuals and communities and lessen the burden on primary health care.

**EDUH4053: Indigenous Sport, Education and Culture**

Indigenous Sport, Education and Culture will provide students with a socially critical perspective on Indigenous people's participation in sport and education as dynamic aspects of society and the ways in which this positions them in Australian society. This unit of study examines the ways in which sport and education are tied into the reproduction of social, economic and health disadvantage for Indigenous Australians. While sport plays a part in the reproduction of disadvantage it is also a highly visible area in which Indigenous people have excelled in Australia. This unit of study also examines the ways in which sport can be, and has been, used to address Indigenous disadvantage in contemporary Australian society. These issues are studied within the context of the history of White Australia as viewed from the perspective of Indigenous Australians. The unit of study provides students with first-hand experiences of Indigenous culture and issues examined through the provision of field trips. Informed by lectures and unit readings, the field trips make an invaluable contribution to a learning journey over the semester. There will be extra costs incurred in the field trips for this unit.
**EDUP2006: Indigenous Australian Education**

This unit of study examines Australia's shared history and the diversity of Indigenous cultures, communities and perspectives. The unit supports students to expand their understanding of Indigenous cultures and equips them with the knowledge to address the learning needs of Indigenous students in diverse community settings. It also highlights the significance of embedding Aboriginal content and perspectives in the curriculum for all students. It emphasises the importance of consultation and ongoing engagement with Indigenous communities and assists students in identifying key stakeholders in Indigenous education. This unit will also examine Aboriginal education policies and strategies that can be implemented to improve educational outcomes. Students will develop a knowledge and understanding of culturally inclusive teaching and learning strategies for all students.

**EDSE3044: Teaching English 1**

This unit of study is the first in a suite of curriculum methodology units designed to equip you to teach secondary English 7 - 12. This unit will introduce you to the principles of teaching and learning in subject English, develop your understanding of the theories underpinning the secondary English syllabus documents and raise your awareness of the debates and issues relevant to teaching Secondary English.

**EDUP4072: Koori Kids in School A**

This unit of study aims to develop skills and knowledge that will enable students to address the many issues that face Indigenous students in the school environment. The unit focuses on the application of Aboriginal Studies in primary education and builds on the knowledge and skills gained in EDUP2006 Indigenous Australian Education. It is structured so that students, through lectures and workshops throughout Semester 1, are prepared to undertake their Practicum at a primary school with a significant cohort of Indigenous students and an Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO). Students will be guided in the application of more extensive consultative mechanisms with Aboriginal communities, organisations and individuals.
EDUP4073: Koori Kids in School B

This unit of study will build on the knowledge gained in Koori Kids in School A. The focus of this unit will be to further develop skills in preparation for their final practicum (internship) at a primary school with a significant cohort of Indigenous students and an Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO). Students will participate in workshops given by Department of Education and Training personnel concerning Indigenous education within districts throughout NSW. This unit of study will deepen the understanding of contemporary and traditional Indigenous Australian culture, skills and knowledge and how this affects learning through practical engagement with Indigenous students, educators and communities.

EDSE3044: Teaching English 2

This unit will examine the current syllabus documents and explore the ways in which contemporary theoretical perspectives underpin and inform these. The unit will continue to examine the practical uses of information technology in teaching and learning in English. There will be a focus on planning, programming and implementing teaching programs for Stage 6 English and preparing students for the Higher School Certificate. The unit will continue to examine the pedagogies appropriate for the teaching of English, including practical uses of information technology and addressing the needs of the full range of students.

EDSE5015: Aboriginal Studies 3rd teaching area

This unit of study prepares preservice teachers for Aboriginal Studies in Stages 4 and 5 and Stage 6. Particular emphasis will be placed on consultation and engagement with local Aboriginal communities by valuing their knowledges, experiences, and skills. The course will focus on critical and culturally responsive pedagogical approaches to meet the diverse cognitive and affective needs of learners within a holistic framework. Class activities will be team-driven to build collaborative learning cultures and commitment to lifelong learning and active citizenship informed by social justice and human rights values. Ethical research methodologies and multi-modal literacies will develop preservice teachers as multi-skilled, pro-active critical thinkers, intercultural communicators and educators in the field of Aboriginal Studies and in the wider education community.
EDUP1002: Language, the Learner and the School

This unit of study begins the exploration of children's language learning. The unit provides an introduction to professional experience in the primary classroom through exploring K-2 literacy development and teaching practice. The professional experience will focus on preservice teachers developing subject content knowledge and how to teach it; knowing their students and how they learn and communicating effectively with their students (NSW Institute of Teachers Professional Teaching standards, Elements 1 2 & 4). Students will become familiar with the fundamental components of literacy, supported through observation of teachers and children in classrooms and interaction with small groups of children emerging in literacy.

KOCR 3602: Race, Racism and Indigenous Australia

This unit explores theories of race and racism focusing on Indigenous Australian race relations. Opportunity is provided to understand the development of Racism as an impact on individuals - victim and perpetrator; and systemic systems at local, national and international levels. The unit explores what racism means in the social justice agenda through issues such as: equity and anti-racism; in particular the direct impact of racism as a tool in the creation of social and economic disadvantage in Australian Indigenous communities.